



Lesson Plan

Followership

10 May 2022



Table of Contents

About the Lesson	3
Before the Lesson.....	4
Presenting the Lesson	5
Appendix: Required Materials and Handouts	12

How to Use this Lesson Plan

This lesson plan is divided into three key sections and an appendix containing supporting material.

The **About the Lesson** section outlines the lesson and identifies requirements for its effective use. Course Directors should use this section to (a) understand the purpose and context of the lesson, (b) learn about lesson pre-requisites, and (c) guide the selection of facilitators.

The **Before the Lesson** section provides details on the preparation required for this lesson, including student prerequisites (if any), recommended facilitator pre-course readings, and guidance on how to prepare the classroom.

The **Presenting the Lesson** section contains the actual lesson plan. It provides the recommended outline, discussion, and slide prompts along with actual *questions* and *recommended language* for the facilitator to use in the classroom.

The **Appendix** includes any required in-class handouts or exercise material.

For more information on how lessons are structured, or how to use them in the course, see the **Course Director's Handbook** or **Facilitator's Resources**.

Contact Us

Commercial: (334) 953-4231

DSN: 493-4231

Email: flightcommandersedge@us.af.mil

Website: <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/GCPME/FlightCCEdge>

Postal Mail: *The Flight Commander's Edge*
c/o Air University Global College of Professional Military Education
51 East Maxwell Boulevard
Maxwell AFB, AL 36112

About the Lesson

Followership

Overview

This lesson examines the intersection of followership and flight command. Students discover how followership skills link directly to leadership skills through exercises and activities. Building on this sense of discovery, the lesson identifies key elements of effective followership and provides methods for students to both model and foster effective followership in their flight to enhance their squadrons. The lesson ends with a self-assessment designed to support future learning and growth.

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Identify characteristics of effective followership.
2. Interpret guidelines for followership in practice.
3. Develop strategies and actions that foster effective followership.

Recommended Prerequisites

- None

Recommended Time

- 50 minutes

Recommended Facilitator Qualifications

This lesson is designed for a facilitator with the following minimum qualifications:

1. Subject matter knowledge
2. Command-level experience

Subject matter knowledge can be developed using the information presented in **Preparing the Facilitator** section of this document.

Before the Lesson

Preparing the Participant

- None. There is no pre-work for this lesson.

Preparing the Facilitator

All student preparation, plus:

- None.

(Optional) Additional deep-dive preparation materials are available on *The Flight Commander's Edge* website.

Preparing the Classroom

- Adequate classroom space for separate small group discussions.
- White boards or easels with butcher block paper (one per group).
- Computer and projector (internet connectivity not required)

Preparing Required Materials

Prepare one copy of each handout below for each student. Do not distribute handouts before the class.

- Air University Global College, *Checklist for Effective Followership* (2022)
- Air University Global College, *Ten Rules of Good Followership* (2022)
- Air University Global College, *Follower Action Plan Worksheet* (2022)

Handouts are available in the Appendix.

Presenting the Lesson

NOTE: This lesson is designed for up to five (5) groups of participants. Groups should be no larger than five (5) members to maximize participation during small group discussion.

Introduction (5 minutes)

The introduction to the lesson sets the stage for future learning through a group exercise used to define “effective followership.”

Slide 1: Followership

Introduce the lesson.

Slide 2: The Exemplary Follower

Continue the introduction.

Carnegie Mellon University professor Robert E. Kelley is considered the founder of “followership management” studies.

He contends it is important enough to be an equal component to leadership.

To him, the best – or exemplary follower – is one that “is motivated, has intellect, is self-reliant, and is dedicated to achieving the mission of the organization.”

As a flight commander, you are both a leader and a follower. You must effectively follow your commander and you must teach your followers to effectively follow you.

What does this mean? What exactly is an effective follower *in the Department of the Air Force*? Why should leaders understand and/or care about followership?

This lesson provides you tools to get you started.

Slide 3: Objectives

This slide lists the lesson objectives.

After students have reviewed the lesson objectives, continue.

Slide 4: Small Group Discussion

Distribute the **Air University Global College, *Checklist for Effective Followership (2022)*** document.

When complete, continue.

Divide the participants into small groups (4 or 5 members) and prompt the groups with the following experience.

Let’s begin by talking about effective followership.

Like good leadership, we “know good followership when we see it.”

Kelley’s definition from earlier, shown on your handout, is a good start. What else is there to good followership?

In your groups, take about five (5) minutes and answer the following question:

What characteristics do good followers *in both the US Air Force and the US Space Force* demonstrate?

Pretend you are developing a personalized *checklist to evaluate good followers* and fill in the worksheet provided. For this exercise, you don’t need a group answer, but the sharing and discussion of answers is desired.

In a few minutes, we will discuss your ideas.

Monitor students’ discussions for activity. Be prepared to address any confusion on the development of the checklist. Groups should have conversations around the followership definition provided on the previous slide and identify additional skills and behaviors (identified here as characteristics for simplicity) they believe are tied to effective followership.

Note: For now, ignore the rating scale in the right-side column of the worksheet. This column will be used later in the lesson.

After five (5) minutes, continue.

Initial Discussion (10 minutes)

The initial discussion builds on the small group discussion in the introduction and provides each student the opportunity to expand their own definition of the characteristics demonstrated by good followers. The discussion is focused on self-discovery of effective followership skills and behaviors, which leads to better modeling of effective followership as a flight commander.

Before continuing, write the following on the white board, with ample space for fill-in responses:

Characteristics of Effective Followers

When complete, continue.

Slide 5: What Did You Learn?

Reconvene the large group and ask members of the class to share the items on their personalized checklists.

What characteristics do good followers in the Department of the US Air Force demonstrate?

Why are these characteristics important?

Record student responses on the white board. Encourage participation (don't let one person monopolize the conversation).

Anticipated Responses: Answers will vary but should focus on the sample skills and behaviors listed below. Use of the actual terms below is not necessary. Examples are provided as a prompt only if needed.

Effective Followership Skills and Behaviors

Exhibits integrity
Selfless – collaborates and shares credit
Consistent candid communicator
Trustworthy – lives core values
Fosters spirit de corps – adds to a team
Commitment to shared goals
Refrains from public criticism
Shares authority in getting tasks done
Ethical – enforces standards
Loyal but not a “yes man”

At the end of the activity, highlight that each participant can select from the sample skills and behaviors discussed to expand their own personal definition of effective followership.

Remind participants to continue updating their “checklist” throughout the remainder of the lesson, as they will use it during the last lesson activity.

When complete, continue.

Content Presentation (15 minutes)

This section of the lesson expands on the general characteristics (skills and behaviors) of effective followers and offers practical advice for what followers need to do to succeed.

Slide 6: Followership in Practice

Continue the presentation.

Following is an often-unrealized part of leading. Ensuring you know how to be an effective follower will aid you on your path to becoming a better leader.

Understanding the characteristics of effective followers – the general skills and behaviors we’ve just looked at – is important, but how do you put followership into practice? Are there some rules you can follow?

As a matter of fact, there are.

Pause to distribute **Air University Global College, *Ten Rules of Good Followership* (2022)**.

When complete, continue.

Slide 7: Rules of Good Followership

Continue the presentation.

Take five (5) minutes in your groups to review the “Ten Rules of Good Followership.”

These rules, written by former Dean of the School for Advanced Airpower Studies and prolific airpower author Colonel Philip S. Meilinger, have been used at Air University for almost three decades. While they have stood the test of time, it doesn’t mean you can’t improve on them.

Discuss these rules and consider:

What would you add? What would you change?

Come up with ONE new rule to augment (or replace) a rule on the handout. When you are ready, send one member of your group up to write it on your easel.

Monitor group discussions to stay on track. Conversation should focus on the existing rules or adding new rules.

After five (5) minutes, continue.

Review each group’s contributions at their easels. Ask one group member to present the new (or augmented) group rule and provide a rationale for their change.

When complete, continue.

Application Activity (15 minutes)

Up to this point, the lesson has focused on effective characteristics (skills and behaviors) for followership and practical advice for being an effective follower. This part of the lesson builds on those key concepts to help flight commanders develop a roadmap (action plan) for encouraging effective followership in their subordinates.

Distribute the **Air University Global College, *Followership Action Plan Worksheet (2022)*** to all participants.

When complete, continue.

Slide 8: Followership Action Plan

Begin the activity.

As a flight commander, you have a responsibility to develop your own followership performance, and your subordinates' followership performance. Given this, our next questions are simple:

What should you do to improve followership in yourself?

What should you do to build followership in your flight?

Leadership expert Robert Kelley recommends that you develop a specific ACTION PLAN for followership development. This plan should address actions and strategies you can take now to improve yourself and improve others.

An example is provided on the front of the handout, use the backside for your own Followership Action Plan.

Take about 10 minutes and fill in this worksheet for yourself and your flight. If you have questions, discuss them in your small group.

The goal – at the end of the exercise – is for you to have an actionable plan which will immediately produce results for both you and your team.

Monitor progress.

After ten (10) minutes, continue to the group out brief.

Slide 9: Followership Action Plan

Conclude the activity by asking the following question to the large group:

So, what did you come up with?

How can you foster followership in your flights?

Note: The in-group question specifically does not address how the individual participant can improve his or her followership. That information, unless voluntarily released, should remain private.

Anticipated Responses: Answers will vary but should focus on actions such as shown on (but not limited to) the sample action plan provided on the ***Followership Action Plan Worksheet*** (see below).

Create a Flight Commander Followership Action Plan

- ✓ Devise strategies to **build effective relationships with leadership**
 - Show up prepared to perform.
 - Clarify your role with the commander.
 - Adapt to the commander's leadership style.
 - Recognize and complement the commander's weaknesses and limitations. Contrast with the commander's strengths.
 - Keep the boss informed. Bad news doesn't get better with age.
 - View my own and the commander's success as interdependent.
 - Summarize and restate the commander's organizational objectives.
- ✓ Build **cooperative relationships with flight members**
 - Show a willingness to listen.
 - Lend a hand as needed to help others.
 - Think the best of others – wait to be proved wrong.
 - Acknowledge shared interests, values, goals, and expectations.
 - Develop informal communication links with others in the flight.



Adapted from Robert Kelley. *The Power of Followership*, New York: Doubleday, 1992.

When complete, continue.

Lesson Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

The final lesson activity is a self-assessment of effective followership skills and behaviors.

Unlike other lessons in this program, a self-assessment is not provided. Instead, participants evaluate themselves using the criteria they have developed over the course of the lesson using the ***Checklist for Effective Followership*** worksheet.

Slide 10: Self-Assessment Exercise

Initiate the self-assessment.

At the start of this lesson, you were issued a *Checklist for Effective Followership* worksheet. Over the last hour, using this worksheet, you have defined, refined, and expanded your own set of effective followership characteristics.

Those characteristics are the skills and behaviors needed in an effective follower.

You can use this checklist to evaluate your subordinates back at your units...and you can use it to evaluate yourself.

Take a moment to consider yourself in light of the skills and behaviors you have selected. You will use this to rate yourself using the column on the right.

How do you stack up?

If you need more time, you can go into the break.

Keep this worksheet with your course materials. You will need it again for the last lesson of the course.

End. Break (10 minutes).

Appendix: Required Materials and Handouts

- Air University Global College, *Checklist for Effective Followership* (2022)
- Air University Global College, *Ten Rules of Effective Followership* (2022)
- Air University Global College, *Followership Action Plan Worksheet* (2022)

Checklist for Effective Followership

Developed by the Air University Global College

"The exemplary follower is motivated, has intellect, is self-reliant, and is dedicated to achieving the mission of the organization."

Robert E. Kelley

Professor, author, and founder of "followership" studies

**What characteristics do good followers
in the US Air Force and/or US Space Force demonstrate?**

Item	Characteristic / Definition	Score (1 – 5)
Ex.	Motivation – the follower is self-motivated.	Use this block when prompted at end of the lesson
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Ten Rules of Good Followership

Developed by the Air University Global College

When considering effective followership, general skills and behaviors are important, but they must be made concrete through experience. This list, developed by Air University's Colonel Phillip Meilinger, has served as a foundational staple of the Department of the Air Force "good followership" guidance for almost three decades.

After reading, is there one rule you would change? Would you add a new rule?

The Ten Rules of Good Followership by Colonel Phillip Meilinger

1. Don't blame your boss for an unpopular decision or policy; your job is to support, not undermine.
2. Fight with your boss if necessary; but do it in private, avoid embarrassing situations, and never reveal to others what was discussed.
3. Make the decision, then run it past the boss; use your initiative.
4. Accept responsibility whenever it is offered.
5. Tell the truth and don't quibble; your boss will be giving advice up the chain of command based on what you said.
6. Do your homework; give your boss all the information needed to make a decision; anticipate possible questions.
7. When making a recommendation, remember who will probably have to implement it. This means you must know your own limitations and weaknesses as well as your strengths.
8. Keep your boss informed of what's going on in the unit; people will be reluctant to tell him or her their problems and successes. You should do it for them, and assume someone else will tell the boss about yours.
9. If you see a problem, fix it. Don't worry about who would have gotten the blame or who now gets the praise.
10. Put in more than an honest day's work, but don't ever forget the needs of your family. If they are unhappy, you will be too, and your job performance will suffer accordingly.

Source: Meilinger, Col Phillip S. "The Ten Rules of Good Followership," in AU-24, *Concepts for Air Force Leadership*, eds. Richard I. Lester, PhD, and A. Glenn Morton, PhD (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 2001), 99-101.

Following is an often-unrealized part of leading. Ensuring you know how to be an effective follower will aid you on your path to becoming a better leader. As Flight Commanders, you are in the center of a chain-of-command that relies on your ability to lead and to follow. Knowing how to follow effectively will allow you to model it *for* and foster it *in* those you lead.

Followership Action Plan Worksheet

Developed by the Air University Global College

As a flight commander, you have a responsibility to develop your own followership performance, and your subordinates' followership performance. Given this, the question is simple:

What should you, as a flight commander, do to improve followership in yourself?

What should you do to build followership in your flight?

Leadership expert Robert Kelley recommends that you develop a specific ACTION PLAN for followership development. This plan should address actions and strategies you can take now to improve yourself and improve others.

A sample (partial) ACTION PLAN is shown below.

Create a Flight Commander Followership Action Plan

- ✓ Devise strategies to **build effective relationships** with **leadership**
 - Show up prepared to perform.
 - Clarify your role with the commander.
 - Adapt to the commander's leadership style.
 - Recognize and complement the commander's weaknesses and limitations. Contrast with the commander's strengths.
 - Keep the boss informed. Bad news doesn't get better with age.
 - View my own and the commander's success as interdependent.
 - Summarize and restate the commander's organizational objectives.
- ✓ Build **cooperative relationships** with **flight members**
 - Show a willingness to listen.
 - Lend a hand as needed to help others.
 - Think the best of others – wait to be proved wrong.
 - Acknowledge shared interests, values, goals, and expectations.
 - Develop informal communication links with others in the flight.



Adapted from Robert Kelley. *The Power of Followership*, New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Use the worksheet on the reverse to develop your own **FOLLOWERSHIP ACTION PLAN** and develop your subordinates.

Followership Action Plan Worksheet (cont.)

What should I do to improve followership in myself?

What should I do to build followership in my flight?