

98 FTS – Overview of Operations

Parachuting programs at the United States Air Force Academy began as unsanctioned, club-type, off-duty activities in 1964 by Fort Benning static line graduates.

In the spring of 1966, the programs were formalized as military activities. With Air Staff approval to teach military parachuting, the Parachute Branch under the Airmanship Division was born. In 1982, parachuting became a flight under the 94th ATS. In 1994, the Parachute Flight grew too large and was designated the 98th FTS.

What started as a club, training 25 students a year, has grown into a premier character development program that trains 600 to 1,200 cadets annually, and fosters nationally recognized competition and demonstration teams.

In 1995, the latest evolution took place. The Parachute Flight became a squadron, the 98th Flying Training Squadron. The basic AM-490 program, which used round parachutes since its conception, evolved with the use of modern piggy back container systems and square parachutes for both the main and reserve. Each student is equipped with a radio so all landings will be assisted from the ground. The basic program trains 1,200 students per year with the majority of positions given to USAF Academy cadets. AM-490 is now offered to ROTC cadets during the summer training periods.

98 FTS Programs – Airmanship 490 - Basic Jump



Gear Check



Waiting for the Plane



Out the Door

The United States Air Force Academy is the only location in the world where a student will complete a solo freefall with their own parachute system on their very first skydive. Airmanship 490 is the basic freefall course instructed by members of the Wings of Blue. Students enrolled in the course must successfully complete a physical fitness test consisting of push-ups, sit-ups, a 1 ½ mile run, and a flexed-arm hang. For the flexed-arm hang the student must grasp the bar with thumbs around the bar and palms facing toward the body. The student raises his/her body until the chin is over the bar and the arms are flexed at the elbow. The student must maintain the flexed-arm position for at least 10 seconds in order to be admitted into AM 490. During the course students undergo more than 30 hours of ground training that introduces and develops procedures and techniques for high altitude freefall and for operating a steerable parachute system. The course focuses on safety and emergency procedures, which enhance student confidence and maximize performance under extremely stressful situations.

98 FTS Programs – Airmanship 491 – Wings of Green



Wind Tunnel Training



Parachute Packing



Advanced Freefall Training

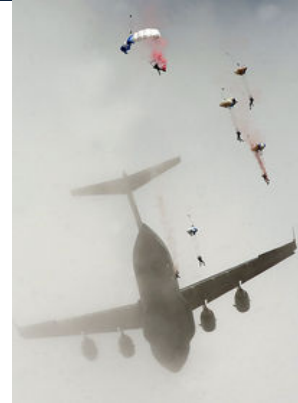
In order to become a member of the United States Air Force Academy Parachute Team, Wings of Blue, you must first train for a year as a member of the Wings of Green. This team is made up of 25 sophomores selected from more than 200 applicants, all of who completed the Airmanship 490 course the summer after their freshman year. During their year on the Wings of Green, they will learn Advanced Freefall parachuting, how to pack their parachute, become qualified jumpmasters, and how to be instructors for the Airmanship 490 course. Of course, team camaraderie is also a key part of this year.

98 FTS Programs – Airmanship 496 – Wings of Blue



The United States Air Force Academy Parachute Team, Wings of Blue, is composed of 50 elite parachutists who are highly successful in intercollegiate parachuting competitions and worldwide demonstrations. Each team member is a qualified jump instructor in the Air Force Academy Parachuting Program. They train more than 800 skydive students each year, the finest of whom will be awarded a place on the team. The Wings of Blue is comprised of two groups: Demonstration Team and Competition Team.

Wings of Blue – Demonstration Team



The Demonstration Team is made up of 30 cadets, 15 seniors and 15 juniors. They showcase their parachute piloting skills before millions of spectators at more than 30 events each year. These events include televised college and professional football games, air show, and civic functions around world. When the team is not performing, they are practicing for upcoming demonstrations.

Wings of Blue – Competition Team



The Competition Team is made up of 20 Cadets, ten seniors and ten juniors. This team displays their skydiving techniques during competitions at College, State and National Levels. When they are not performing, they are honing their skills in the air and in vertical wind tunnels across the country.

The 98th Flying Training Squadron Wings of Blue Parachute Team has dominated the collegiate national championships winning parachuting championships 29 of the last 37 years