



CHAPTER 4: ONLINE COMPETITION ROUND RULES

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4001. GENERAL. CyberPatriot operates under the premise that all Coaches, Mentors, Team Assistants, and Competitors conduct themselves with the highest ethical standard. The following rules have been instituted to prevent the perception of misconduct that would jeopardize the integrity of the competition and ensure a fair and equitable competition between all teams. Coaches are encouraged to work with the CyberPatriot Program Office to resolve questions regarding these rules before the competition. The following rules apply throughout the CyberPatriot competition season, to include competitions and events outside of competition rounds that involve CyberPatriot images or tasks. Violation of any of the rules in Paragraphs 4002-4009 may lead to penalties (see Paragraph 4012).

4002. TIME RESTRICTIONS

1. **Competition Window.** Teams shall not compete outside of the specified Friday to Sunday competition windows designated for each round (see paragraph 3002).

2. **Competition Period.** The competition period begins when a team successfully opens their first image within a round's competition window and lasts for six consecutive hours, regardless of the image or team running time indicated on the image Scoring Report page. The following rules govern the competition period.

- a. A team shall have only one competition period to complete *ALL* tasks for an online competition round.
- b. The six consecutive-hour period begins when a team's first image is opened in a VMware product. It does not begin when the Unique Identifier is entered.
- c. Teams may only begin their Cisco Networking Challenge after the first image is opened and must end it before the end of the team's six consecutive-hour competition period.
- d. Teams are not allowed to open an image for any reason before they are ready to compete. No "sneak peeks" or tests of the software are allowed outside of downloading images, verifying their checksums, and using the provided connection test software.
- e. The times on the Scoring Report page are for reference purposes only. It is the responsibility of the team to ensure that *ALL* work, including the Cisco Networking Challenge, is completed at the end of the six consecutive-hour period that begins when the *FIRST* image is opened.
- f. Technical issues affecting a team's performance will not result in extra time unless the issue is competition-wide.
- g. The Coach is responsible for obtaining the team's Unique Identifier and Cisco Networking Challenge login credentials from the Coach's Dashboard at www.uscyberpatriot.org. If the Coach's Dashboard is not available, Coaches must contact the CyberPatriot Operations Center to receive their Unique Identifier and login credentials. They will not be emailed as part of the competition emails. It is recommended that Coaches secure this information as part of preparing for the round.

h. **Unique Identifier Required.** Entering a Unique Identifier in the Set Unique Identifier utility shall be the team's first action when opening an image after clicking the CyberPatriot Competitor's Agreement. The Unique Identifier used must be the one provided to a team on the Coach's Dashboard and shall be validated with the scoring server. The Unique Identifier is a 12-digit alphanumeric hash and is not the Team Number (i.e. not 10-XXXX). Unique Identifiers will not be part of competition emails to teams but will be found on the Coach's Dashboard at www.uscyberpatriot.org.

4003. REGISTERED COMPETITORS. Only the Competitors *REGISTERED* with a team shall compete with that team.

1. Only Teams that have been verified by their verification official and approved by the CyberPatriot Program Office are eligible to compete. Coaches who have not been verified and approved will not receive competition related emails.
2. No fewer than two and no more than five Competitors may compete at a time.
3. A team's other registered Competitor may be substituted for any of the two to five competing Competitors at the Coach's discretion. Once a substitution is made, the Competitor that has been removed from the competition may not return in that round. See Paragraph 4004 for rules concerning team members who are not competing.
4. Teams that do not have all of their Competitors registered by the deadline will not receive competition-related emails for subsequent competition rounds.

4004. NO OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE. Competitors are responsible for their team's performance during the competition and may not receive or request assistance outside of their team's competitors. Once a competition period begins, Coaches, Mentors, Team Assistants, Competitors on other teams, and other non-team members shall not coach, assist, collaborate, or advise Competitors until the completion of the competition period.

Competitors on a team who are not competing (e.g., sixth member of a team, substitute, alternate) may observe the competition. They shall not advise or assist the team or be advised on the competition by Coaches, Mentors, or non-team members until the competition period has ended.

Outside assistance includes direct and indirect advice, suggestions, hands-on assistance, and electronic communication such as email, blogs, forums, Yahoo Answers, and other social media. That is, questions may not be posted to any website. However, pre-existing answers to questions may be queried to address issues encountered during the competition. Coaches, Mentors, and Team Assistants may only assist teams with:

1. Administrative issues before the image is opened.
2. Entering the Unique Identifier and Cisco Networking Challenge login credentials.
3. Timekeeping.

4. Local area network outages and other connectivity issues that occur outside the competition image.
5. Issues with the host system unrelated to the competition image itself.
6. Dangerous or threatening situations that require adult intervention.
7. Maintaining team's saved scoring data at the end of the competition period.

4005. SHARING AND ACCESSING OF COMPETITION IMAGES, SOFTWARE, DOCUMENTATION, AND INFORMATION. Coaches are entrusted with competition round images and software and should treat them as examination material. Competitors shall share images and other information only within their team space to avoid giving a competitive advantage to other teams. Furthermore, participants shall:

1. Structure a competition space or procedures in the competition area so that other teams' Competitors may not gain useful information or a competitive advantage. In competition areas where competition spaces are in separate rooms, a team's Competitors may not enter another team's room, except for competitor safety or protection.
2. Have only a single connection to each image. A console login, RDP, SSH, etc. all count as a connection to the image. The connection to the image must be limited to the competitors in the same physical location as the running image.
3. Strictly limit distribution of CyberPatriot competition and practice images and software to their teams. Coaches shall ensure that the images and Cisco Networking Challenge materials (e.g., Packet Tracer submissions, copies of quizzes) are deleted after each round per the competition email. All images distributed by the CyberPatriot Program Office are the property of the Air Force Association, not CyberPatriot participants.
4. Not share information about the competition images with anyone outside of their team.
5. Not transfer or cause to be transferred copies of images to persons who are not currently registered CyberPatriot participants. Transfer of the images to non-CyberPatriot participants is a violation of the End User License Agreement.
6. Work only on the images assigned to their division and tier.
7. Ensure that images and passwords are not transferred outside of their team.
8. Not assist or provide any unfair advantage to teams that have not yet competed or are competing in a given round.
9. Not post, teach, email, store, or share answered or unanswered quizzes, questions, challenges, exercises, vulnerabilities, information from within images or competition websites (e.g., www.netacad.com), from the competition. This includes scenarios, webpages, readme.txt files, and other documents associated with images and challenges.
10. Examples. Examples of image or information sharing violations are:
 - a. Passing vulnerabilities, information, or answers from a team that has competed or is competing to a team that has not yet competed in a given round.

- b. Posting or re-posting information on or from images, competition software, or answers on social media, blog, or other website or through text or email even after a round of competition.
- c. Using an image or software from the present or a prior competition round for training.
- d. Requesting answers or other competition assistance on a blog or social media.
- e. Teaching or briefing an image or task's vulnerabilities or answers to anyone who has not competed.
- f. Teaching or briefing an image or task's vulnerabilities to other teams that have competed even if they have the same Coach or Mentor.
- g. A team from one tier or division viewing or training on another's images or tasks.
- h. Assisting another team with their image or task.
- i. Posting a competition document or quiz with or without answers.
- j. Sharing screen captures of images or image contents.

11. Control of the Competition Area

a. The Coach or approved Coach Alternate of a team must be present (i.e., onsite) to administer all competition rounds. The competition area is the location where one or more teams compete (e.g., school multipurpose room, computer lab). A competition space is a location where one team competes within a competition area. During their competition periods, team members of different teams competing in the same competition area shall not communicate with members of the other teams. Independent observers monitoring the competition must not communicate with or interrupt the competitors, or otherwise threaten the integrity of the competition or safety of the Competitors.

b. Multiple Teams. In cases where a competition area contains more than one team, Coaches and Mentors shall take appropriate action to ensure that no purposeful or inadvertent communication or collaboration occurs between teams. Examples of appropriate action include keeping teams as far away from each other as possible or in separate rooms, keeping the volume of discussions to a minimum, and ensuring that any written notes are only visible to individual teams.

12. Approved Virtual Teams. Approved virtual teams shall follow the same rules relating to sharing and accessing of competition images, software, and information as physical teams, to include the single connection to an image. Virtual team competition areas and spaces must meet the requirements of supervision and the requirements of physical competition areas and spaces.

4006. ONE INSTANCE PER COMPETITION IMAGE AND SOFTWARE. A team may open only one instance of each image or competition software at a time during a competition round. An instance is defined as each time a competition image or competition software is opened in a virtual machine player, Internet browser, or other software program.

1. **Instances of Different Images.** If a competition round involves more than one image or other competition software, then only one instance of each distinct image or software may be opened at a time. Teams may have one instance of every distinct image open simultaneously.

Example. If a round has a Windows 8 and a Windows Server 2012 image, one instance of both the Windows 8 and Windows Server 2012 image may be open at the same time. The team may not have more than one instance of either image up at the same time.

2. **Shadowing.** Shadowing, following, parallel operations, training, or any other use of a second or more instance of an image or scoring client, online or offline, is NOT permitted.

3. **Additional Compressed (NOT UNZIPPED) Image Downloads.** Teams may place an additional *ZIPPED* download of each image in a given round of competition on other host computers. If the host computer fails or the original download is corrupted or deleted, the team may use this compressed image. Coaches shall ensure that the zipped images are deleted after the round of competition.

4. **Re-Opening Images.** A second instance of an image may be opened if only the original image is corrupted or malfunctions. In this case, the original instance must be closed and deleted before the team opens another instance. If the original instance is not closed, the scoring engine will show multiple concurrent instances of the image, which is grounds for an inquiry and a penalty. The competition period time will continue regardless of time required for opening a new image.

5. **Image Snapshots Prohibited.** Using image snapshots or similar capabilities is strictly prohibited. Snapshots include the use of host system file copy mechanisms to create a backup copy of an image. Snapshots or backups cannot be used to roll back to a previously known good state. If the competition image becomes corrupted or unusable, the team must start from the beginning with a clean image extraction from the zipped file.

4007. INTERNET CONNECTIVITY TO COMPETITION SERVERS AND WEBSITES REQUIRED. Teams are responsible for their own Internet connectivity to for the entire time in which they compete. An image or competition challenge may not be worked offline with never connecting to the competition server. An image or competition challenge without a valid Unique Identifier or login credentials will have a score without a matching history, which is possible grounds for disqualification for the team using it.

1. **Mandatory Website Access.** Internet access to www.uscyberpatriot.org and its webpages is mandatory for the competition. Access to www.netacad.com and its webpages is mandatory for teams with a scheduled Cisco Networking Challenge. A list of websites required for the challenges is located at <http://uscyberpatriot.org/competition/technical-specifications>.

2. **Coach's Dashboard.** Coaches should safeguard an up-to-date screen capture or printed copy of their team information on the Coach's Dashboard to mitigate a network or website outage.

3. **Competing During a Network Outage**. If a team experiences a network outage, the Competitors should continue competing on their images while waiting for network restoration. The scoring engine will track the team's progress and report it when the network is restored.

4. **Air Cards**. Internet connectivity is the sole responsibility of the team even if using a provided AT&T air card.

5. **Backup Plan**. Teams should have a backup plan so that they can still compete in the event of a network failure. Backup plan examples include the pre-arranged use of a library or a private residence with sufficient adult supervision and deemed safe by the Coach.

4008. OFFENSIVE ACTIVITY AND TAMPERING PROHIBITED. Participants shall not conduct offensive activity or tampering against other teams, Competitors, the competition systems and servers, documents, tasks, or non-participants to gain a competitive advantage for them or others. Additionally, participants may not actively seek or exploit vulnerabilities in images, competition systems, competition software, or tasks at any time. Offensive activity includes:

1. Hacking.
2. Interference with another team's ability to compete.
3. Social engineering or posting of false information to platforms including the CyberPatriot Facebook page, Twitter, text, chat, email, etc.
4. Tampering with, copying, or modifying components of competition images, the competition scoring system, or other competition software or hardware. Copying an image in its entirety to be used as a backup is not permitted.
5. Changing or tampering with host systems, clients, or host timekeeping devices.
6. Tampering with or modifying documents belonging to other participants or the CyberPatriot Program Office.
7. Any other activity aimed at manipulating or deceiving other Competitors, the CyberPatriot Program Office, or competition staff.
8. Posting or otherwise communicating vulnerabilities in an image or task except to the CyberPatriot Program Office.
9. Penetration testing competition images or competition systems or tasks.
10. Attempted or successful unauthorized entry into competition systems.

Warning: Unauthorized copying of competition scoring software components from the virtual machine may damage the systems to which they are copied.

4009. RESOURCES

1. **Internet Resources**. During competition rounds, Internet resources (e.g., FAQs, how-to guides, existing discussion forums, company websites, documentation, software, shell scripts, batch files, registry exports) are valid for competition use under the following conditions.

- a. The resource is ***free***, and access has not been granted based on a previous fee, membership, employment, purchase, credit card, or other monetary instrument.
- b. No token, smart card, common access card, etc., is required to access it.
- c. The resource is publicly and reasonably available to all teams.
- d. The resource must ***not*** be specifically created for the CyberPatriot competition or any event using CyberPatriot software.

Resources located on www.uscyberpatriot.org may be used during competition. Use of any resources created by other teams or by Coaches, Mentors, or Team Assistants is a violation of this rule.

2. **Printed Material**. Printed or handwritten reference materials (books, magazines, checklists, etc.) are permitted in competition spaces. Competitors shall choose and collect their team's printed material for the competition round *WITHOUT* the assistance of Coaches, Mentors, other teams' Competitors, or non-Competitors. Competitors are not required to reprint existing material.

3. **Electronic Media and Communication Devices**. Coaches shall ensure that their teams compete without outside assistance through electronic media or communication devices. The following stipulations apply to this rule.

a. **Electronic Media**. Because inconsistent Internet connections among teams may cause a competitive disadvantage, electronic media as defined below may be used in the online competition rounds under the following conditions.

(1) Permitted electronic media is defined as memory sticks, flash drives, removable drives, CD-ROMs, or other similar storage devices.

(2) Media must be prepared by a team's competitors. Coaches, Mentors, other teams, and non-Competitors shall not prepare a team's electronic media.

(3) **Authorized Documents and Data**. Patches, updates, and other Internet resources and software tools authorized in the "Software Tools" paragraph in this chapter are permitted on electronic media.

(4) **Offline Copy of Online Resources**. A team may use an offline copy (on electronic media) of an otherwise freely available Internet resource, subject to the same definitions and restrictions as 4009.1 and its sub-parts.

b. **Communication Devices**. Cell phones, smartphones, and other wireless or wired devices are allowed in the competition space, but shall *NOT* be used to communicate in the competition space. Answering and making calls, texting, etc., shall be done outside of the competition space. The devices shall not be used to send, receive, or obtain competition information.

c. **Staging Resources**. Teams shall not stage or access unauthorized resources on the Internet, networks, systems, servers, storage devices, communications devices, etc.

Emailing or otherwise transferring unauthorized tools, scripts, and data to the image host computer via another computer or device is prohibited. Secure FTP sites may not be used.

4. **Software Tools**. Competitors shall set up and use software tools without outside assistance. Internet resource conditions also apply to software tools.

a. The tool must be searchable on the public Internet with Google and Yahoo search engines. *ALL* Internet users have access to the tool(s).

b. Competitors have access and are authorized to use their MSDN DreamSpark accounts.

c. WinMD5, 7-Zip, and VMware Player Workstation 12.5.7 are competition software and are authorized for the online rounds of competition. Teams using other software tools that do not meet competition technical specifications compete at their own risk. (See Chapter 3.)

d. Teams should not delete, disable, or tamper with anything in the CyberPatriot folder or the CyberPatriot Scoring Service on their images. Furthermore, they should ensure that any antivirus or antimalware software that is installed on competition images does not interfere with this folder or service.

e. For purposes of the competition, scripts created by the Competitors of a CyberPatriot team are not considered software tools. Teams shall not use scripts or software created by members of other CyberPatriot teams, Coaches, Mentors, or Team Assistants.

5. **Posting or Publicizing Resources**. Publicly posting, distributing, or otherwise publicizing scripts, software, or other resources that were created for the CyberPatriot competition or events involving CyberPatriot software is prohibited.

4010. OVERSIGHT

1. **Oversight Visits to Competition Areas and Spaces**. Coaches shall allow the CyberPatriot competition staff and AFA officials to visit their competition areas and spaces so they may observe the conduct of the competition and fulfill their oversight role. An oversight visit does not relieve the Coach of their authority and responsibilities for the team.

2. **Entry into a Competition System**. During the competition, the CyberPatriot Program Office staff may request to view teams' systems for oversight, competition administration, and troubleshooting purposes. CyberPatriot staff will not change teams' systems. Teams shall allow the competition staff immediate access to their system(s) when requested.

4011. INQUIRIES. In cases of apparent violations of the rules in Paragraphs 4002-4009 or scoring irregularities, the National Commissioner may appoint a CyberPatriot staff member to conduct an inquiry. The following items may be part of an inquiry.

1. **Competition Images**. Images that involve rule violations or scoring irregularities require special handling of competition images by Coaches.

a. **Security**. The Coach of a team that is the subject of an inquiry or who has team members that are subjects of an inquiry shall secure and take measures to prevent access to the competition images. Images shall not be opened, modified, or otherwise tampered with unless requested by the investigator. Forensic analysis of images may be done during the inquiry.

b. **Transfer or Upload**. When required, the Coach shall transfer or upload of the competition images to a designated location.

2. **Interviews**. Interviews conducted in the course of the inquiry may be held in-person, by telephone, or by other means.

3. **Questionnaires**. The investigator may request that participants involved in an inquiry respond to a questionnaire concerning the inquiry.

4012. PENALTIES. A team or participant that does not cooperate in an inquiry may incur a penalty to include the disqualification, suspension, or ban of an individual or team as determined by the National Commissioner. Any and all of the penalties below may be applied for any violations of the rules in this document to include misconduct.

1. **Minor Penalties**. In the event of a minor rules violation, the National Commissioner may impose competition penalties on a team including:

- a. Score reduction.
- b. Time disadvantage in future competition rounds.
- c. Invalidation of a team's competition round score.

2. **Disqualification**. If the National Commissioner rules that a participant or team committed a major rules violation, they may be disqualified. Disqualified participants and teams are ineligible for awards and recognition to include sponsor scholarships and internships and are subject to:

- a. **Suspension**. The terms and time limit of a participant or team suspension from the competition are at the discretion of the National Commissioner.
- b. **Termination**. A participant or team is immediately terminated from the CyberPatriot Program for the entire season.
- c. **Ban**. A ban is the permanent disqualification of a participant or team from the CyberPatriot program. It is the most severe administrative penalty that can be imposed. Reinstatement is at the sole discretion of the National Commissioner.

3. **Other Penalties**. Other penalties invoked by the National Commissioner may affect a team's final score or advancement.

4. **Replacement Teams**. If a team that has advanced to the Semifinals or the National Finals Competition is suspended, unable to compete, or banned, a replacement team may be

chosen at the discretion of the National Commissioner. In the event the National Commissioner decides to designate a replacement team, the following criteria will be considered:

a. Open and Middle School Divisions

(1) The team that would have next qualified but did not advance.

(2) If a State Wild Card team is to be replaced, then the team from that state that would have next qualified but did not advance will become the State Wild Card.

b. All Service Division

(1) The team that would have next qualified but did not advance.

(2) If a Category Wild Card team is to be replaced, then the team in that Category with the next highest qualifying score from the preceding round that was not advanced will become a Category Wild Card.

c. Teams that did not compete in the Platinum Tier Semifinals for their respective category shall not be considered for the National Finals Competition.

d. If a designated replacement team does not respond with the information required for the competition or logistics when requested, the National Commissioner may revoke the designation of the replacement team.

4013. BACKUP DATE REQUESTS. Backup dates are used only for extreme weather or other widespread emergencies. Only Coaches may request backup dates through the appeals process. Circumstances that are not grounds for competing on the backup dates include, but are not limited to, those listed in paragraph 4015.

4014. SCORE CORRECTION REQUESTS. Score correction requests allow Coaches to contact the CyberPatriot Program Office if they believe their teams' online round scores are incorrect. The following rules apply to score correction requests.

1. **Deadlines.** The deadlines for Score Correction Requests are:

a. **Qualification Rounds (Rounds 1 and 2).** 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, the second workday after the competition round scores are published.

b. **Elimination Rounds (State Round and Semifinals).** The time designated in the Preliminary Score Email, which will be *before* scores are published.

c. **One Scoring Request per Image per Round.** Teams may only submit one score correction request per image per round.

2. **Originator.** Score correction requests must be submitted by the team's Coach per the Download Instructions or StartEx email instructions for the round. Normally the requests will be submitted on an online form.

3. **Documentation.** Score Correction Requests may be submitted without supporting documentation. However, Coaches who document a scoring error may expedite the correction process and further their team's case. Valuable documentation includes the following.

a. **Scoring Files.** Scoring data stored on the image (C:\CyberPatriot\ScoringData folder) is the best documentation to prove a scoring error. The data may be copied from the image and emailed to the CyberPatriot Program Office. To ensure that an image is not damaged, Coaches should copy the data and not remove or alter it.

b. **Full-Screen Capture of the Scoring Page.** If the screen capture of the scoring page is cut off or modified, it will likely not be considered. The screen capture should be easily readable and include:

- CyberPatriot Logo
- Report Generated Time
- Current Unique Identifier
- Known Issues Fixed
- Penalties Assessed
- Score
- Copyright Information
- Connection Status

c. **Competition Scoreboard Screenshot.** Complete screenshots are helpful, but not required.

4015. APPEALS PROCESS. The appeals process is a formal procedure that ensures competition fairness by considering unforeseen conditions that impact a team's ability to compete. The process is *NOT* a vehicle for a team to pursue advancement in the competition by other means. The following rules apply to appeals. The National Commissioner is the final decision authority on all appeals.

1. **Deadline.** Unless otherwise published by the CyberPatriot Program Office, appeals must be received by the CyberPatriot Program office before 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the second day after the completion of the round. All appeals must be emailed to cpoc@uscyberpatriot.org.

2. **Originator.** Only the team's Coach may originate a team's appeal.

3. **Grounds Not Considered for Appeals**

- a. Issues stemming from non-VMware virtualization software or VMware versions other than VMWare Workstation Player 12.5.7.
- b. Failure to receive competition email
- c. Ignorance of the original competition round dates
- d. Failure to secure a Coach Alternate
- e. Failure to access the competition space
- f. Scheduling conflicts
- g. Internet connectivity issues that are not due to uncontrollable circumstances
- h. Failure to properly work out connectivity issues with IT department (e.g., firewall exceptions, using the Connection Test software)
- i. AT&T air card failure

- j. Issues caused by changing default VMware Workstation Player settings (e.g., memory, processors).
- k. Coach or team-caused use of incorrect Unique Identifiers or Cisco Login Credentials after Round 1.
- l. Issues related to the use non-Windows host systems (For compatibility issues, teams should have access to least one Windows host computer that meets hardware and software technical specifications.).
- m. Issues related to Windows host computers and software that do not meet technical specifications listed in the Rules Book or competition email (e.g., no 64-bit system, virtual technology disabled, etc.)

4. **Scored Vulnerability Fixes or Remediation.** Any appeal concerning an alternative scored-vulnerability fix or an alternative remediation method must be certified by the registered Coach. The certification must follow the format for Appeals Concerning Scored Fixes and Remediation of Vulnerabilities in Appendix VIII.

a. A statement certifying that the team members did not read, discuss, overhear, post, or otherwise receive, share, or publicize the vulnerability fix or remediation with any other team to include those in the same organization or school or those teams coached by the same Coach.

b. A statement certifying that the team actually tried the fix or remediation that is the subject of the appeal

c. A description of how the team found out about the scored vulnerability.

d. A full and detailed description with the commands and actions taken to fix or remediate the vulnerability.

5. **Format and Documentation.** The format for appeals can be found in Appendix VIII. All appeals must come with appropriate documentation, such as letters from school principals and news reports outlining school or organization closures.

6. **Notification of Results.** The CyberPatriot Program Office will email the Coach the results of their appeals.