



# THE CYBERSENTINEL

The official newsletter of CyberPatriot – AFA's National Youth Cyber Education Program

OCTOBER 2025

## CyberPatriot 18 →

- Important Registration Dates
- Changes and Clarifications
- Competition Requirements
- Things to Remember
- Training Opportunities
- Participant Kits

## CyberPatriot Alumni Spotlight →

## Scholarship Opportunity →

## CyberCamp Highlight →

## CyberPatriot Items Available on ShopAFA →

## CyberPatriot in the News →

## CyberPatriot 18

### Registration Dates:

**October 1 – Team Registration Closed.** Teams do not need to have completed any other registration tasks by this date.

Directions on how to register teams can be found on the [CyberPatriot website](https://www.uscyberpatriot.org) and questions regarding registration can be directed to [info@uscyberpatriot.org](mailto:info@uscyberpatriot.org). If you are a returning team, you must re-register for the new season. Team registrations do NOT carry over each year.

# CYBERPATRIOT 18

**October 22 – Competitor Registration Deadline:** The last day to register competitors and finalize team rosters.

**November 5 – Payment Deadline:** The last day to pay the registration fee, request a fee waiver, submit a Purchase Order, or request a payment extension.

### CyberPatriot 18 Changes and Clarifications:

**Image answers will be released for Rounds 1 & 2 (including the Middle School Introductory Round).** This change is meant to foster critical thinking and learning. The goal is to help teams understand the logic behind solutions and not just make a checklist of fixes. Some of the answers released this season can help guide teams to solve more complex problems in later round images. Fixes in the images become more complex as the season advances. Answers that are basic in the early round become more complex in the State Round and Semifinals.

- Round 1 and Round 2 – answers will be available strictly on the Coaches' Dashboard
- State Round and Semifinals – only vulnerability categories will be released

**No sharing between teams.** Teams cannot share scripts, scoring reports, or how-tos with other teams - even within the same school or organization. This reinforces that CyberPatriot is a team-based competition, and each team must earn its score independently - even if they are from the same school, organization, or have the same coach or mentors. This rule aims to prevent unfair advantages and maintain a level playing field.

### Unique ID Change

On October 20, new team Unique IDs will be posted on the team's Coach's Dashboard. Teams will use the new Unique IDs for competition rounds and Training Round 2. Any team participating in Training Round 1, which ends on October 22, should continue using the old Unique IDs for that round.

## Online Packet Tracer

Online Packet Tracer will be used beginning Round 2/Middle School Introductory Round. Training materials will be available during Training Round 2. Round 1 Packet Tracer will likely be the traditional Packet Tracer application as used in past seasons.

## CP-18 Competition Requirements:

### Cisco Content Training Course Access

- Coaches should use their CyberPatriot-registered email address to access Cisco Training Materials and add competitors, so they have their own access.
- Coach Cisco NetAcad credentials will only work if they match the CyberPatriot volunteer account email
- *Full Cisco Content Course Instructions can be found [here](#).*

### Cisco Competition Course Access

- Coaches need to have enrolled in the Cisco Competition Course by October 16, 2025
- Each team must have a unique email address
- Emails from previous seasons CAN be
- used again
- No required format. Choose any format for the email address
  - Tip: Coaches with multiple teams can use Gmail aliases to simplify setup and save time. (you can find more info [online](#))
  - *For example: JonesHS+Dogs1@gmail.com, JonesHS+Dogs2@gmail.com*
- Coaches will need to enter team emails into the Coach Dashboard when instructed
- *Full Cisco Competition Course Instructions can be found [here](#).*

## Things to Remember:

Competition Windows	Reduced Competition Period	Image Difficulty Level	Middle School Division Schedule
CyberPatriot 18 will have a 4-day competition window. Rounds will kick off on Thursday and go through Sunday. Please note, the Semifinals Round will be a 3-day event, running Thursday through Saturday.	Each competition period will be <b>4 hours</b> for the CyberPatriot 18 competition rounds. Teams must complete all images or tasks within a consecutive 4-hour time block.	The challenge difficulty levels will now be geared toward new teams in Round 1 and 2 for high school teams and the Introductory Round for middle school teams. Overall, there will be fewer images for middle school and Silver Tier teams.	The Middle School Division will again have a different competition schedule than the High School Divisions. The Middle School Division will start with the Introductory Round, November 13-16.

## CP-18 Training Opportunities:

### Training Round: September 4 – October 22

The Training Round is still available! This is a great resource for teams since it comes with answer keys for each image. Scores do not count towards the competition. The CP-18 Training Round has three practice images: Ubuntu 22, Windows 10, Windows 2019 Server.

### Practice Round: October 6 – October 20

It is important that all teams participate in the Practice Round to test the new CyberPatriot Competition System. The new connection test software for CP-18 is the CCSv14.0 Test Connection. Any local network issues with school or organization systems should hopefully be resolved during this round. Teams should score on at least one image to test the system.

## Training Round 2: October 28, 2025 – January 20, 2026

Season 18 will have a second Training Round to allow teams access to practice intermediate level practice images. The training images will have answer keys available.

### Windows 11 and Mint Training

Updated training materials are available on the Coach's Dashboard. The following units contain basic training on Windows 11 and Mint 21.

- Unit 5 - Security Tools for Windows 11
- Unit 6 - Security Configurations for Windows 11
- Unit 9 - Introduction to Mint

Side-by-side comparisons of Windows 10 and 11 are contained in Units 5 and 6.

### CP-18 Participant Kits:

2025-26 Participant Kits include a CP-18 t-shirt and sticker for every registered team member. Coaches will receive one box with gear for themselves and their competitors only. \*Mentor and Team Assistant gear is sent separately (directly to the volunteer) and is not included in the team order.



## CyberPatriot Alumni Spotlight

Rohan Ahmad | CyberPatriot 17



### What are you up to now?

Right now, I am focused on advancing my skills in cybersecurity and networking. I've earned over 500 certifications from organizations like Cisco, IBM, Amazon, Google, and BASIS Tech. Beyond that I'm currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in MIS from GGC and plan on transferring to UGA.

### How did participating in the CyberPatriot competition influence your plans for your future?

As the team leader in the CyberPatriot Competition, I gained valuable experience in leadership and effective team management. This role taught me to appreciate diverse perspectives and how to motivate others while keeping the team focused on our shared goals. Leading under pressure boosted my confidence in guiding and supporting a group, and these skills have inspired me to continue developing as a leader in my future career.

### What was the most valuable lesson you learned from CyberPatriot?

The most valuable lesson I learned from CyberPatriot was the importance of teamwork, patience, and trust. Throughout the competition, I saw firsthand how relying on each other's strengths and perspectives made us stronger as a team. Patience was key when we faced challenges or setbacks, and trusting my teammates allowed us to collaborate effectively under pressure. This experience taught me that success isn't just about individual skill, but about supporting and believing in your team to reach a common goal.

### What is your advice for the next generation of CyberPatriot?

You're going to hit a lot of roadblocks during CyberPatriot, and there will be times when you feel like giving up. But if you take a step back, breathe, and think rationally through the task at hand, things will start to make sense. Always communicate with your team, trust each other, and never let frustration break that connection. The

challenges might feel overwhelming, but persistence, teamwork, and calm thinking are what carry you through. Don't give up — keep pushing forward, and you'll be surprised by how much you can accomplish.

**Fun Fact:** A fun fact about me is that I play over three instruments. I've been playing the violin for nearly a decade and play the guitar and piano. I'm also multilingual, speaking four languages, and I have a passion for poetry and songwriting.

**Do you want to be featured in an issue of the CyberSentinel?  
Complete the [survey](#) and your story could be in the spotlight!**

## Scholarship Opportunity



The Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholarship-for-Service Program is a combined educational and workforce development opportunity for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students funded by the DoD.

The SMART Scholarship is a merit-based opportunity for students pursuing STEM degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. In 2023, SMART expanded eligibility to incoming college freshmen with no prior college credit, extending the opportunity to high school seniors. [Click here](#) to learn more about these opportunities and to review eligibility requirements.

**Applications will be accepted until December 5, 2025 – [Apply Now!](#)**

## AFA CyberCamp Spotlight

The CyberTexas (CyTX) Foundation hosted four AFA CyberCamps this past summer at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas - AKA Cyber City USA. They hosted over 75 students across the four camps, with students from across the San Antonio metropolitan area. One of the camper's parents drove her roundtrip each day from Killeen TX, a nearly three-hour drive. That is true dedication, sacrifice and desire to learn!

Another camper, who attended all four camps, said she "would tell someone who is thinking about going to camp next year, that it is really fun when you stop thinking about what you don't know and start thinking about how you're going to improve your skill!"



*Co-ed Advanced Camp, St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas*

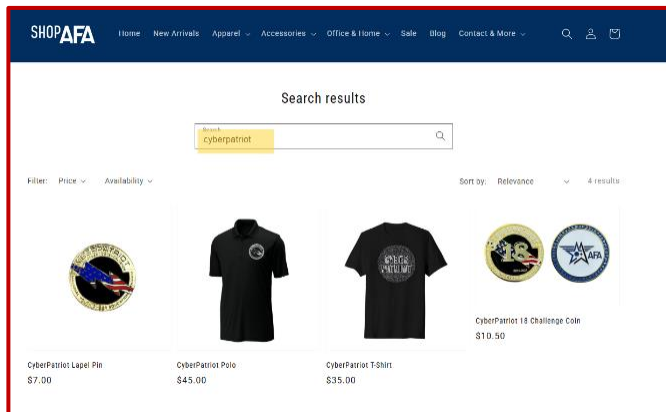
Technology always brings its share of challenges, and the campers get to see that firsthand during the week of CyberCamp. When issues came up, they were able to watch the instructors troubleshoot, adapt, and sometimes even bring in extra expertise. This is a great reminder that the cybersecurity field is constantly changing, and that patience and critical thinking are just as important as technical skills. CyberCamps are important because we are all living in a digital world, and no industry is untouched by it.

The goal of CyberCamps isn't to create only future cybersecurity experts; it's to make sure the next generation feels confident navigating the field. By giving students, the tools, role models, and opportunities to explore, CyberTexas is helping them step into the future ready to keep themselves, and everyone around them, safer.

The 2025 camps included a co-ed Standard Camp, an All-Girls Standard Camp, a Co-ed Advanced Camp, and an All-girls Advanced Camp. Each of these camps were taught by CyberTexas instructors. The CyberTexas instructors made the camps possible, fun and engaging, and the camps would not have been possible without their many generous sponsors.

Host registration for the 2026 AFA CyberCamps will open in January 2026. To learn more about AFA CyberCamps, visit <https://www.uscyberpatriot.org/afa-cybercamps/overview>.

## ShopAFA



CyberPatriot 18 challenge coins are available on ShopAFA. You'll notice we've also expanded the CyberPatriot collection!

Check out [ShopAFA](#) today and see what new items are available!

## CyberPatriot in the News

### [How Pitt's CyberCamp is drawing high schoolers back to the University](#)



High school students participating in Pitt's annual CyberCamp program walk away with not only a better understanding of the threats that exist in an increasingly hostile digital world, but also a sightline on a globally necessary career path.

### [North Central Region Academy Focuses on Cybersecurity](#)

The academy at Dakota State University in Madison, immersed participants in comprehensive cybersecurity education, covering essential topics from cyber ethics and virtual machine operations to advanced networking concepts involving routers, switches, and internet protocol configurations. Cadets gained hands-on experience with Windows security policies, Linux command line operations, mobile device forensics, and real-world threat-monitoring systems.



### [CyberPatriot 17 - Mentor of The Year Award \(Youtube Video\)](#)

The TitanTurtles CyberSecurity Club recently celebrated Coach Yang's achievement of CyberPatriot 17 Mentor of the Year. The team hosted a small awards ceremony at their club meeting, where Coach Yang was presented his official Mentor of the Year plaque.



## Hondo Owls in the Cyber Sky: Coaching, Competing, and Connecting in a Hyper-Connected World



In this episode of #CyberChats, we dive into the world of cyber competitions with Frederick Hall – Cyber Education Leader for Texas District 23 and CyberPatriot coach for both the Medina Valley High School AFJROTC and the Hondo Cyber Owls – alongside Jessica Counselman, Team Captain of the Hondo Cyber Owls CyberPatriot team.

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