

# **The Real Insider's Guide to Military Basic Training**

**A Recruit's Guide of Advice and Hints to  
Make It Through Boot Camp**



*"Written by a recruit for a recruit.  
The most valuable book you can  
own if you enlist in the military"*  
by

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(former Military)**

**Universal Publishers  
1998**

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I would especially like to thank Specialist Mark H., for helping me before I enlisted in the military and making me realize the tremendous need for this type of book.

Finally, my gratitude is given to my younger brother Sean Thompson, who was first to enlist in the military and recounted his intense experiences in Basic Training and while patrolling the DMZ in Korea.

\*It is the sincere hope of this author that the combined experiences of all the people who gave their insights for this guide helps a new recruit quickly adjust to thier new military life.



# TABLE of CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. Important Benefits and Limitations of This Guide .....	7
2. Advice Before Making a Big Decision .....	11
3. A Close Look at Military Benefits .....	18
4. Advice <u>Before</u> You Sign Your Enlistment Contract.....	36
5. What To Expect During Basic Training.....	48
6. Basic Training Commandments for a New Recruit .....	97
7. Military Life After Basic Training .....	105
8. Putting It All Together .....	114
APPENDIX .....	120
IMPORTANT ITEMS TO KNOW BEFORE BASIC TRAINING .....	120
SPECIAL NOTE: DIFFERENCES & SIMILARITIES OF ALL BASIC TRAININGS.....	121
GLOSSARY OF MILITARY TERMS .....	122
MILITARY ALPHABET .....	124
STRUCTURE, RANK, AND CHAIN OF COMMAND.....	125
RANK .....	126
MILITARY TIME .....	130
SALUTES AND HONORS .....	131
DRILL AND CEREMONY (D AND C).....	131
GUARD DUTY.....	133
GENERAL ORDERS (FOR THE ARMY) .....	133

MAP READING .....	134
MAINTAINING YOUR M-16 .....	135
FUNCTION CHECK .....	136
CLEARING YOUR WEAPON.....	136
SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT WEAPONS TRAINING .....	137
PROTECTIVE MASK (GAS MASK).....	138
BASIC FIRST AID.....	138
REVIEW OF ITEMS YOU NEED TO KNOW FROM YOUR HANDBOOK.....	139
GENERAL ENLISTMENT INFORMATION .....	140
JOBS IN THE MILITARY (MOS).....	141
PAY .....	141
GENERAL ENLISTMENT QUALIFICATIONS.....	142

# CHAPTER ONE

## Important Benefits and Limitations of This Guide

This book provides concise and very useful information which gives a military recruit an edge during Basic Training (**Basic**). Moreover, this guide is not only for people who recently enlisted, but for those considering signing up in any of the four major branches of the military. Although Army and Marine recruits will find this guide particularly helpful.

The reader should be aware of the format and features of this book. This book is designed to be an easy-to-read, quick, reference guide. The chapter summaries and helpful hints sections are especially important when a review of the major points is necessary and time is limited.

To receive maximum benefit from this book, read the contents thoroughly--even if the information seems like common sense. If the reader has already enlisted, then read this guide as many times as possible and be familiar with the major points before Basic Training begins. Reviewing the chapter summaries frequently before going to sleep will also prove valuable.

### **The Benefits**

The main benefit from this guide is the wealth of practical information which you can immediately utilize. The contents of this book are not sponsored by the government or special interests. This reference provides straightforward information without all the hype and exaggeration. Most importantly, the advice comes from an-

other enlisted soldier who recently went through training. This book was written by a previous recruit for a new recruit.

There are few books that provide unbiased information on how to make it through Basic. Most recruits enter military service without any useful information on what to do and how to behave during Basic Training. Fortunately, this guide has clearly stated and sound advice which will make your life much easier during the stressful initial training phases of military service.

The majority of new enlistees simply do not receive sound practical advice prior to enlisting. You will benefit from my past experiences and education in the armed services. Even though I went through the Army's Basic Training at Ft. Benning Georgia, any person enlisting in the military will find some of the information useful. The previous sentence is supported because all initial entry training cycles have common core components. However, even general information and suggestions will improve a recruit's life during training. Knowing what to expect, and understanding the reasons behind specific training military tasks will surely reduce a trainee's anxiety and stress level.

Besides providing an understanding of the official rules of Basic Training, this guide provides simply stated comments on how to avoid punishments, how to learn more effectively, and how to reduce stress.

## **The Limitations**

There is no book on the market that will make Basic easy. This guide only makes it easier, not easy. Initial entry training will be tough physically and emotionally. Do not believe anyone, or



any book, which says Basic is easy if you just follow a few simple steps.

The best this book can do is to reduce your stress level with specific helpful hints. You will see that most recruits learn the hard way. However, while other soldiers, sailors, or airmen are registering "10" on the stress meter, you will be closer to "5" if you follow this book's advice.

It is up to the reader to prepare himself / herself emotionally and physically. This guide can only suggest ways to prepare; however, you must act on these suggestions. Ultimately, no book can make you do anything, it is up to you to put the information into action.

Another limitation is that no two Basic Training cycles are identical. Therefore, not all information and advice will be applicable, or useful to you. Army and Marine recruits might find more suggestions to use than a Navy or Air Force recruit. Regardless, the reader must use common sense when to use any given suggestion. It is important to note that at no time does this book advocate violating any stated rule or regulation. Again, as always, common sense must accompany the advice given.

The last limitation of this book concerns for whom this book is intended. This book is not for individuals seeking highly specialized, professional military jobs. Such professional jobs include, but are not limited to, lawyers, pilots, or doctors. Furthermore, this book is not intended for officers. Although any person who will undergo initial entry training (Basic) will find this book extremely useful, it is designed primarily for people enlisting at the pay grade of E-4 or lower.

Overall, the benefits of this book far outweigh any limitations. If the reader only utilizes a handful of the suggestions given, then it will surely be worth the cost of this book. After reading this guide, you will be far ahead of other recruits who do not have such knowledge.

## **Chapter Summary**

What this book provides:

1. A way for you to balance what the recruiters and military advertisements tell you.
2. How to avoid making mistakes before you enlist.
3. What to expect during Basic Training (Basic).
4. Ways to make your life easier during Basic Training.
5. What to study and know before shipping off to training
6. The benefits of training and the military life.
7. Understanding the limitations of military benefits.
8. General information that will be useful in some way. Remember, knowledge is power.

## Chapter Two

### Advice Before Making a Big Decision

If there is one thing I wish to convey to the reader, it is the seriousness of enlisting in the military. Joining the military will surely be one of the biggest decisions of your life. The military is a unique experience and is radically different from the civilian lifestyle. It is critical that you do not take enlisting lightly or join for the wrong reasons.

There are many reasons to sign up, and many reasons not to do so. First, I will briefly outline the benefits of the military. Then, I will point out a few reasons people should not enlist.

#### Reasons to Enlist

**1) Training and Job skills.** Regardless of the branch of service you are considering, the military offers some very sound benefits and exciting experiences. One of the primary reasons for military enlistment is for quality job training and meaningful work. Almost every civilian job has a counterpart in the military. Another benefit is that the high-tech military skills training is free of charge once you enlist.

For example, if you wanted to be an operating room technician in the civilian world, you would spend more than three thousand dollars at a technical school for training. After the training was completed, you would be on your own to find a job.

On the other hand, if you enlisted in the military for the same medical position, not only is your training free, but your food and

housing are paid for as well. When your education is complete, you step right into a job which is waiting for you.

As you can see from the above example, the military offers an outstanding opportunity for someone beginning their adult life with limited education and employment related skills. The service makes sure you receive competent training and job security.

**2) Money for Education.** Many high school graduates have difficulty finding the finances to attend college. The cost of college tuition, books and housing has dramatically risen over the past ten years. This usually results in students taking out private loans for thousands of dollars which then takes them years to pay back.

The good news is that if you do not have a wealthy family, Uncle Sam may have the money you seek. The government realizes that educating its soldiers through the GI bill is one of the most efficient means of keeping America strong. In fact, the government has recently raised the amount of funds given to soldiers who wish to pursue a higher education. The amount of money provided for an education can be as high as \$60,000. Of course, there are restrictions and the money is dependent on which program you choose. Still, if you want to pursue a degree at a vocational school, college, or even a masters program, the military can usually help finance your education.

**3) Other Noteworthy Benefits.** If you are not ready to pursue a civilian degree, or have limited resources to explore life, the military may be your calling. If your contract is a standard four year enlistment, chances are you will travel abroad while you work

and experience new places and cultures. Also, depending on your military job (MOS), you may experience things which your civilian counterparts may never do in their lifetime. If you seek adventure, your recruiter can point you to an MOS which is likely to reward you with a wealth of experiences.

Besides a steady paycheck and solid training, a new recruit does not have to worry about paying for housing, food, or training. Although you will not be living in luxury, for someone graduating from high school, or for someone who is unemployed, the military provides a sound structure. The military also offers full medical coverage for you and your family. Thus, Uncle Sam provides most of the necessities of living, then sweetens the deal with added perks such as health insurance, educational money and other bonuses. Many people use this structure as a foundation to build a productive life.

The last benefit concerns intangible skills. The military can be a means for young people to build leadership and organizational skills. The service offers individuals serious responsibilities and supervisory roles early during their careers. The military creates an avenue for inexperienced individuals to experience new places, meet interesting and diverse people, and perform useful tasks. With limited supervision, young soldiers assume duties which entail meaningful employment responsibility.

### **Reasons Not to Enlist**

For all of the good benefits just outlined, do not forget the old adage that nothing in life is really free. You do not receive the

military's benefits without giving up something. Military service members work long hours and give personal sacrifices.

Much of the following may seem common sensical, but I have witnessed many people joining the military for all of the wrong reasons. If you can not say publicly why you are joining the military, then you may reconsider enlisting—at least temporarily.

For example, the military is not a place to hide from your problems. It is not wise try to seek refuge from the law, creditors, or others by hiding in the armed forces. Chances are, the officials you are running from will find you.

Many people join because they have personal and emotional problems. Hiding from your problems only creates more problems. Even though the military can be an avenue to build a better life, it is wise to have a your problems solved before signing up. People with moderate to severe personal problems have great difficulty adjusting to the stressful environment of Basic Training. You need to have a clear head and a good attitude before you commence any serious training.

Do not sign up for frivolous reasons. I had a friend who signed up just to get into physical shape. She definitely was in top physical condition after her Basic and advance training, but she wanted out soon afterwards. Unfortunately, she had to wait five and a half years before her obligation was finished.

Lastly, it should be emphasized that the military is a very rigid way of life. There are many more rules to follow than in the civilian world. The cost of the many military benefits is usually paid through personal sacrifice and strict discipline. Remember though, jobs that are too easy are rarely worthwhile.

Whatever the reasons for enlisting, make sure it is a solid, positive reason. Signing up for six years because you feel you have to, is not a good reason. Try listing as many reasons for enlisting as possible, then list the liabilities. Is the balance leaning toward the benefits or the liabilities?

### **Making it Final**

Whether you decide to enlist, or not to enlist, make sure the decision is final. Do not be flimsy in your decision, it will only cause you grief and regret.

It is acceptable to delay a decision for a good reason, but make sure it is not just an excuse. One reason to delay signing up might be an illness to you or a family member. Finishing school may be another reason to delay your enlistment. However, it is not good to say to yourself, "Well, I can always enlist a couple of years from now if I still feel like it." If your reason for joining, or not joining, is sound, then do not waste time--do it.

The benefit to making a firm judgment is that it keeps you from developing anxiety and regrets. It is important for you to weigh all the factors. If necessary, talk to a respected professional or career counselor. Whichever you decide, making it definite is important to your well being.

### **Advice and Hints When Deciding to Join**

1) To help you decide whether you should enlist, take a piece of paper and write three carefully thought out reasons why you want to enlist. Ask yourself, can you live with this decision for at least three years? Are the reasons you listed better than your rea-

sons for not enlisting? Last, can you tell your reasons to your friends or parents without being embarrassed? If you answered yes to all the questions, then you should talk to a recruiter.

2) If you are having difficulty deciding if you should enter the service, talk to a career counselor. This is not superficial advice; qualified career counselors are specifically trained to assist people with these decisions. Most of the time, career guidance is free. Local public high schools are a great source, as well as public colleges. Call the nearest school and ask if they can assist you, or whether they can suggest somewhere else to go for help. Usually, you will find these people eager to help you as it is their job.

Furthermore, I suggest that every person searching for employment take a career test. Specifically, I recommend the Strong, or Kuder Interest Inventory. The test is a well known career guidance test and it will tell you if the military is a good option for you.

3) Even though the final decision to enlist rests with you, seek advice from people you respect. I would select three people and talk to them about entering the military. Try asking a parent, or other family member, a high school or college teacher whom you like, or someone who has been in the military recently.

It is a good idea to talk with people who have been, or are currently in, the military. If you know which MOS (military job) you desire, find a person who is in that particular MOS and ask him or her several questions.

Note, asking people for their opinion is good if you can balance what they say. Remember, everyone has their own opinion



and no one should "force" their ideas upon you. However, so you do not become too confused, limit yourself to three or four outside opinions.

## **Chapter Summary**

1. There are many good reasons to enlist and many poor reasons to enlist. Make sure your reasons are perceived as positive and solid.

2. Sound reasons to enlist are to learn a skill, to receive money for higher education, to develop leadership skills, and to experience many aspects of life.

3. Poor reasons for enlisting are to hide from people or personal problems. Make sure your reasons are not superficial and that you can live with a long term commitment.

4. The military offers several legitimate benefits, some which can be used to build a better future. However, nothing is for free and you will earn those benefits through hard work and sacrifice.

5. Whether your decision is to enlist or not to enlist, make it a final decision. Do not have regrets and do not look back once you make your decision.

6. To help you decide, write three reasons to list and three reasons not to enlist. Which side appeals to you most?

7. If you need help deciding, talk to a local career counselor at a public institution. Take a career interest test--which are not usually expensive. Finally, talk to respected friends and someone who was recently in the military.

## **Chapter Three**

### **A Close Look at Military Benefits**

As mentioned in Chapter Two, there are several outstanding benefits which the military offers. For many people starting life with limited skills and resources, the armed forces is an excellent way to begin a productive life. Young individuals frequently leave the military with essential skills and knowledge that will last a lifetime.

However, there are some restrictions and obligations required of personnel in order to receive military benefits. The intent of this chapter is to illustrate both sides of military life - the good, and the not so good. The information is designed to help you decide whether the military is the right path for you.

As you are reading the following section, do not be too dismayed at the personal sacrifices you may incur in the service. Most legitimate endeavors involve hard work and sacrifice. At the same time, do not be too eager to enlist for the advantages. Sometimes, people are not as pleased with military life as they had hoped. Moreover, if you enlist to receive a specific benefit only to find it not to your liking, you must serve out your enlistment contract. This is why I emphasize that the reader should make a conscientious and well-informed decision. Do not take enlisting lightly.

## **Benefits Examined**

### **1) Your MOS (Military Job)**

MOS stands for Military Occupational Specialty. Your MOS is the job position for which you enlisted and is written in your contract.

There are hundreds of MOS's within the military. In most instances, an occupation in the civilian world can also be found in the military. The best part of your MOS is that you do not have to have previous knowledge and experience to apply for these jobs. You pick which job you like and mark it in your enlistment contract. Obviously, employment in the civilian sector does not operate the same. Landing a good position in the civilian sector is usually much more difficult and entails having to be trained in a specific field prior to securing a full time job.

One of the largest areas of employment in the military is the combat arms section. Examples of combat arms are infantry, armor (tanks), and artillery. Under each of these fields are many subspecialties. For instance, under infantry there are airborne soldiers, the special forces, and anti-tank specialities. Supply jobs and administrative positions are also very large in number. Positions range from computer programmer to maintenance specialist. Jobs in this area are usually very similar to their civilian counterparts with similar hours. But how do you know which MOS to choose?

First, to find out for which job you are qualified, you must take a 3 hour test called the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). Generally, given your test score you will have several MOS's from which to choose. A recruiter will then help

you to find an MOS for which you are qualified, as well as one which you like. The MOS that you and your military counselor choose is then reflected in your enlistment contract.

However, there are some crucial factors you should know prior to signing your contract. First, if you do not meet the minimum ASVAB score for your MOS, you must find another job specialty. It is wise not to choose second best in this situation. You can always take the ASVAB test again to improve your score. Second, since you will spend at least three years in your chosen job, make absolutely certain you will like the position. Once you sign, you can not change your MOS.

I have seen many recruits become were very excited about their chosen MOS only to dread it later. Most of these recruits went to great lengths to try and change their jobs, but were not allowed to do so. Generally, switching your MOS is forbidden and rarely occurs.

Also, many job specialties (especially combat arms) entail extended hours in the field. Most soldiers, sailors, and airmen, have little free time. Several jobs have such lengthy job duties that it is virtually impossible to study for school or see family. Again, if you are enlisting, make sure you know everything about your MOS, including the time commitment involved before you sign anything.

Another consideration about your MOS is the length of training which each MOS requires. Each job specialty entails different training times. For example, an infantry MOS is usually only five months from Basic to the end of advanced training.

However, a medical specialty MOS may last as long as an entire year.

This time factor is important to consider because training is usually very intense and consuming. Even though you are paid throughout training, you are restricted to what you can do and who you can see. Training times are also difficult on relationships. It is important to weigh how much you want to train for an MOS. Also, if you have many interests, pick an MOS which is in demand in the civilian sector. Make sure you will like the job you choose, but also consider if you will be able to easily profit from your skills later.

Many people sign up for the adventure of combat arms, only to tire of it after three or four years. When these people leave the military, they are often limited in their civilian employment choices. On the other hand, military personnel who enlist for medical, computer, or mechanical jobs usually find good paying jobs fairly easily in the civilian market--but their jobs may not be totally exciting. Additionally, these specialties do not usually incur extended hours - unlike many of the other military jobs.

## **2) Education Benefits**

Education benefits are a big military enticement and have been a favorite selling point for the military since World War II. The government realizes that a highly educated military is a strong military. Thus, each year tens of thousands of young people pay for higher education through their military service. Keep in mind, very few civilian companies will pay you to work and give you

money to go to college or technical school. Since this benefit is open to all recruits, take advantage of it.

There are many ways the service can help you conquer the high cost of quality education. An individual can sign up for the GI Bill which is a special college fund set up by a particular branch of the military. Usually, the soldier contributes \$100.00 out of their pay check every month for a year. The military then sets aside several thousands of dollars which is earmarked specifically for educational use by the recruit.

When a person within the educational program leaves the service, they will receive a monthly check for educational purposes. The size of the check depends on which program the person participated in, and the length of their service. For example, if you sign up for two years in the Army, there is a college fund of \$20,000 available. However, people enlisting for 6 years might have over \$50,000 available for school.

If a person decides to make the military their career, they can use educational money to attend school while serving. The money can pay for correspondence courses, technical courses, or college degrees.

Another program the military offers is the loan repayment plan. If a person enters the military with a degree and college loans, the government may pay off a portion of the loan for each year the person serves. For example, a sailor with a \$15,000 student loan can choose to have the government repay \$5000 of their loan in the first year. The next year the sailor serves, the government may pay another \$5000 under this particular program.

Thus, if the educational money is your primary concern, talk with your recruiter about the details. There are many programs, each with their own terms. Remember, the government can pay you for your job and your education at the same time.

Please keep in mind, however, that there are some restrictions and possible drawbacks to these educational programs. The first consideration a recruit should be aware is that the more money the government is willing to give you for education, the more time you will spend in the service. For example, \$20,000 will entail approximately a two to three year commitment, while \$40,000 will generally entail a five year commitment.

Another consideration is how the educational money will actually be paid to you. Once you leave the service, you must enter a public college. You must be enrolled full time to receive the full monthly stipend from the government. You will not receive the full amount in a lump sum. Rather, the money is given to you in small fractions of the total amount you have in the education fund. For example, if you have \$20,000 in your fund, the government may only give you a check for \$300 per month. If you drop out of school or finish early, you will not receive the remainder of the funds, even if you have only spent \$1000.

Many people try to defraud the military by signing up for classes to receive their money, but soon drop the classes and keep the money. They attempt to do this every semester, tricking the government into believing they are students. However, this is not a good idea and the penalties are stiff. The government has recently become aware of this problem and has begun cracking down on un-

scrupulous people. Unfortunately, in some instances, this tactic also delays or prevents money from going to deserving students.

The last thing to remember about the military and education is that the military always comes first. You might be led to believe that you can go to civilian school while in the military. Even though this is possible, many military personnel find it exceedingly difficult to take even one class. This is due to the extended hours, extended training exercises, and frequent moves. It is very frustrating for the new recruit, but the military simply can not conform to personal schedules. This is not to say many commanders are not sympathetic, but the job always comes first. Moreover, finding quality educational programs close to base is sometimes difficult, if not impossible. Keep in mind that most night programs only offer limited classes and degree programs.

### **3) Medical Benefits**

This is one area the military really shines. As a member of the armed services, you will enjoy unlimited medical care. You do not have to fill out complicated medical forms, or show proof of coverage. If you are sick or wounded, simply go to the nearest military medical facility. Usually, the facilities are conveniently located on base. If you are in combat arms, you will be under the constant supervision of medics and field doctors.

Another benefit is that your family enjoys the same medical coverage. You will receive free or low cost prescription drugs, X-rays, dental work, and operations. Very few civilian employees are covered as well as their government counterparts.



The only caution concerning medical care might be the quality of service. Even though the overall majority of military medical care is very good and modern, some areas may not be up to civilian standards. Realistically, the best medical specialists and surgeons are probably found in such places as the Mayo Clinic or Johns Hopkins Hospital, not in the military.

However, with the rising price of health insurance and the mediocre service provided by civilian health maintenance organizations (HMO's), the military is a real bargain.

#### **4) Bonuses**

There are many types of monetary bonuses the military offers. Your first encounter with a bonus is usually during your initial enlistment. A recruiter can offer you several thousand dollars if you enlist in a particular MOS. Some enlistment bonuses can go as high as \$10,000.

Before dollar signs reflect in your eyes, remember that bonuses are used to entice you to sign up for a hard to fill job. These jobs are hard to fill for a reason. Many of these jobs entail physical danger, longer hours, or much more work. A mortar crewman might sound exciting, but lugging a 70 pound mortar plate on your back for three years might not be worth the extra money.

Another concern is how the bonus is paid out. You will not receive a lump sum. Usually every paycheck you receive will incorporate only a portion of your bonus. So a \$9000 bonus for four years works out to be \$188 extra per monthly paycheck.

It is extremely important that you sign up for an MOS you really like first, then worry about a bonus. Do not be easily lead astray by money, in this case it may not buy happiness.

## **5) Housing**

One of the biggest expenses civilian workers have is their house mortgage, or apartment rental. Service personnel can choose to live on the military base and not pay anything for housing. This can save a family several thousand dollars per year. Not having to worry about paying the rent is one of the best benefits the government offers its recruits.

Military housing is not luxurious, but it is not sub standard either. Most housing is on par with an average apartment complex. Base accommodations usually are more secure and crime free due to front gate security. Moreover, there is usually military recreational and food facilities nearby. Again, this is a superb benefit for a young individual embarking on a first career.

The drawbacks to housing is that it tends to be somewhat cramped. Your neighbors are very close and the living space in your house/apartment is limited. If you are married, the accommodations are slightly better than the single personnel. Singles usually share rooms much like a dormitory. In this case, privacy is limited. On some bases, single soldiers must keep neat living quarters in case of inspections by superior officers.

If privacy and more living space is what you desire, you can always live off base. Of course you will have to pay for private housing yourself. Also, soldiers opting to live off base must live within close proximity to the base.

## **6) Physical Training**

The military is one of the few employers which actually pays you to stay in shape. In fact, the better condition you are in, the more likely you will be promoted. After all, the military needs personnel who are consistently strong and capable of completing their demanding missions.

The minimum physical requirements vary from service to service. However, meeting the minimums are not too difficult. Even if you are out of shape, most people can work out several weeks before their bi-annual physical and pass the test. Individuals in combat oriented MOS's work out almost every morning as required by their commanders, so keeping in shape is not really an issue. Other MOS's might be a little softer on daily physical training **(PT)**.

A typical military day starts off with PT around 6:00-6:30 am. As a group, you will do push ups, sit-ups and run approximately two miles every day. The level of intensity will vary depending upon your MOS. Unless you are on sick call, you are required to attend morning formation and exercise every work day. Obviously, this can be tiresome, especially when you are told when and how to work out. This is just part of the job. In the long run, staying in good physical condition helps you to stay healthy and maintains well-being. Also, keep in mind that your PT during Basic Training will be much more rigorous than after training. Do not confuse Basic Training exercise with active duty exercise.

## **7) Adventure**

Without question, if adventure is what you seek in the military, you will find it. Several jobs offer excitement unsurpassed by civilian jobs. For example, running down trees in a 60 ton tank while shooting at a target vehicle can not be matched in a civilian job. Blowing a target drone out of the sky with a Stinger missile can only legally be done in the military. The list of titillating activities is endless.

Besides the tasks themselves, there are different environments and countries you might find appealing. Chances are that if you enlist for anything over three years, you will be stationed in a foreign country. You will experience different cultures, food and customs. Moreover, you will experience these adventures at the government's cost.

The downside to the adventure aspect is that your excitement might be less than expected. Do not misinterpret what was just mentioned, the adventure aspect is certainly there if you want it. However, when you factor in the long hours and separation from family, the shine might be dulled.

The normal course of events is that recruits are overwhelmed with new, exotic things. In just a couple of months, recruits are trained, polished and shipped off to a foreign country. Their heads spin as they learn how to shoot, participate in war games, and do things they never dreamed before their military life. It is all very exhilarating.

After the soldier becomes accustomed to their new duty assignment and station, the strict military lifestyle begins to take effect. Soldiers realize they can not see relatives, spouses, or friends

easily. Many military jobs will require 10-15 hour days, and the work might be dirty and tiresome. Again, this is not to say adventure is not available, it just might be you are too tired to enjoy it fully.

## **8) Money and a Steady Job**

One of the truly outstanding benefits to the armed services is that a person with limited skills can select jobs they want, undergo quality training, and be paid for the whole process. This simply does not happen in the civilian sector.

It used to be that military pay was sub-standard, and it was the non-monetary benefits that appealed and supported service members. However, the pay scales have changed and many military personnel make almost as much as their civilian counterparts. (See the appendix for a copy of the pay scale). When you factor in the benefits such as free food and housing, the military is an attractive option for most young people.

Unlike the civilian world, there are very few times military members will go without pay. Working for the government is very steady work and you receive your paycheck on time every month. Even though there have been cutbacks and downsizing in the armed forces, many people know at least a year in advance if they will be cut. Most of the time, the military allows people to finish their current contract if a reduction is necessary. It is safe to assume that a young recruit signing up for four years will complete all four years of service.

Here is an illustration of what a recruit's pay could be like the first couple of years. A recruit just out of high school and attend-

ing Basic Training can expect to earn about \$850.00-900.00 per month. They will receive this money no matter how many hours they work. There is no punching a time clock. Even though one must pay taxes on this money, the remainder is personal spending money. Also, keep in mind that a new recruit does not have to pay for expenses such as food, medical, and housing.

If a person has more than two years of college, or a degree, they will probably enter as a specialist at a pay grade of E-4. This is an important benefit. Not only do they get paid more (\$1115.00-1150.00 per month), but a higher rank gives them more flexibility, authority and privileges.

There are a few cautions concerning military pay. Individuals with a high school degree tend to do better financially in the military than those high school graduates in the civilian world. However, the real disparity occurs between college degree holders and military personnel. Depending on which discipline a person studies, a college degree holder has the potential to make much more money than an enlisted person.

Even though officers are paid almost on par with their civilian college counterparts, business graduates soon outpace military personnel in five years. The key word is "potentially" more money. The military is on a set pay structure, so no matter how hard you work, the pay is the same. Military personnel must remain at a given level for a set period of time before promotion. However, civilian workers can be promoted at any time and advance in pay every year.

Furthermore, graduate degree holders typically make six figure incomes. Only a very select few of the highest ranking military officers are authorized to make above six figures.

Another related caution is the employment "at will" philosophy. A civilian worker who is unhappy or burned out of his/her job can usually quit and find something more suitable. In many states, an employee can quit at will anytime they want. In the military, there is no such system. If you do not like your MOS, spend too much time away from home, or are just unhappy, you can not quit. The penalties for leaving, or quitting a military position without permission is very harsh and usually entails prison time.

Usually, most personnel in the military find job satisfaction. There are many types of counselors and assistance for those having difficulty. For an initial career, the military offers a respectable job at a good salary. The majority of military recruits do not enlist to make a fortune, but join to receive the other benefits such as skills training and/ or education money.

## **9) Leadership and Responsibilities**

As with civilian employment, the amount of responsibility and management potential depends on the type of job you select. It is generally understood that people in combat related positions are promoted faster and assume more responsibility earlier than most other jobs. Combat jobs usually involve operating multi-million dollar machinery of tremendous destructive power. Naturally there are serious responsibilities that accompany these activities.

However, on average, all military positions incur a fair share of real responsibility. The government entrusts young adults in their early twenties with the security and welfare of the United States. A typical twenty year old combat soldier can be expected to risk his life for the lives of others at a moment's notice.

The promotion structure and training programs assures young enlistees that they will incur management responsibilities within two years. Under supervision, military personnel will learn how to be accountable for other people, expensive supplies and equipment. Usually, the road to leaning leadership skills are well laid out.

After the rank of buck sergeant (E-5) pay grade, promotions become harder. An individual who does not like supervisory roles, does not have to assume more leadership positions. However, people who bypass positions of greater responsibilities will not receive a promotion for a long period of time. In today's military, people who are passed over for promotion more than twice usually do not stay in the service.

After your first enlistment contract (about 4 years), you can count on assuming more responsibility at a higher rank. If not you do not seek out promotional opportunities, chances are you will not be around very long after your second contract.

## **10) Sacrifices**

This last item concerns the limitations of military benefits and the sacrifices not normally advertised. Most civilians understand and probably appreciate the fact that military personnel make sacrifices. The extent of these sacrifices is probably less understood.



The task of safeguarding a country and keeping America the world's only superpower is an immense undertaking. It stretches our forces very thin, and consequently many in the military are asked to go beyond a normal job duty.

As mentioned earlier, men and women in uniform can expect to put in several 10-15 hour days. They will go without seeing family or friends for a year or two. Some jobs are very dangerous and dirty. Moreover, military tasks must be carried out in a strict military manner.

Strict discipline and respect for the rank structure reflects the quality of a military force. Many soldiers, sailors, and airmen have great difficulty with the rigid military lifestyle. For example, there are many more rules to follow in the service than in the civilian world. You must wear your uniform properly, be groomed a specific way, be ready for personal inspections, and follow orders without hesitation.

If you fail to follow orders, or be disrespectful, severe punishment will result. A soldier who talks back, shows poor attitude toward authority, or fails to do work can easily end up in prison. On the other hand, a civilian worker who shows disrespect can only be fired. The civilian is free to pursue other jobs without penalty.

Once a person enlists, they are legally obligated to finish their contract. The government can dismiss a soldier, but the reverse is not true. Only in extreme circumstance are you allowed to leave the military prematurely. All other times, you must finish what you start even if you dislike the military.

People entering the service need to be aware of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). The UCMJ are laws special to

the military and govern people in uniform. If you violate any laws, you could find yourself in front of civilian *and* military courts. Also, be aware that military laws and courts are very different than civilian courts. Your legal rights are different in the military.

The bottom line is that the military has tight control over its people. Once you sign up, you automatically give up many civilian rights and privileges. You become property of the government and are held to strict standards.

Most people adjust to military life in several months. Some people have problems adjusting, or never fully adjust. The people who do adjust and serve out their obligations make tremendous sacrifices which are sometimes overlooked by the public. This is why the military is called the "service", because before all else, the military is a service to our country.

## **Chapter Summary**

1. There are several outstanding and legitimate benefits to the military. However, make sure you understand the details of all benefits you wish to acquire.

- 2 Some benefit programs, such as money for college, require extra duties, or payments that are not always disclosed in advertisements.

3. Ask your recruiter about specific benefit details. Ask if there are special requirements which might make receiving the benefits more difficult.

4. Ask yourself about the potential downside to what the military offers. There are usually cautions to be heeded. Remember, you do not get something for nothing.

5. On average, there are many benefits to joining the military. You can expect decent pay, medical coverage, adventure, free food, housing, and clothes. For these benefits you will be required to work hard and live with strict discipline.

6. The military is a service to your country. In general, the public respects the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform. However, joining the military can entail being separated for months at a time from family, following strict discipline, and being ordered to perform dangerous, tasks.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Advice Before You Sign Your Enlistment Contract**

This chapter outlines a few crucial things you should do immediately before you sign your contract. Failure to understand the importance of certain factors can lead to a much harder time in not only in Basic Training, but also your entire time in the active military.

#### **The Recruiter and Military Advertisements**

After long hours of seriously weighing the benefits and limitations of the military, let us assume that the military is right for you. Obviously your next step is to contact a recruiter.

Most military recruiters are highly trained professionals and conduct themselves accordingly. Contrary to what is portrayed in movies, recruiters are not habitual liars, nor do they use fraudulent means to make people enlist. They are well educated people who can answer all of your questions.

Keep in mind, however, that a recruiter's primary mission is to make the military attractive to potential recruits. They are the military's best spokespeople who can offer interested individuals a change of life. As noted in the preceding chapter, recruiters have many items to sell recruits. They can sell education money, skills training, and a steady paycheck to name only a few of the benefits.

The government spends tens of millions of dollars on training recruiters and fancy advertisements. Again, recruiting is a respectable arm of the military, but a person should be aware of how the

government entices new recruits. First, the military must "sell" itself to people as a good way of life. Like any company selling a product, their point of view is heavily biased. There is always a certain amount of fluff when someone sells something.

Do not let the military's commercials be the sole reason you enlist. Hopefully, your decision lies in much more research than a 30 second TV spot. Recruitment commercials are produced by the best in the advertising industry. Commercials try to make you emotional. Typically, Army commercials show action--a 60 ton tank plowing over trees. The Navy advertises a small town recruit enjoying sailing to far away exotic ports of call. It's all done to strike an emotional chord in you.

It is critical that you do not make judgments based on emotions. You should be rational and be able to logically justify your decision to enlist. The decision to sign up will affect at least three years of your life, so think it through with a clear head.

### **Your Visit to the Recruiting Station**

The night before you talk to a recruiter, write out specific concerns you have about the military. Ask about details regarding the military benefits which appeal to you. It is important to write out your questions; do not go in empty handed.

There is no need to be excessively nervous when talking to a recruiter, nor should you be defensive. Think of your visit as an informational interview. It is a time where both parties can see if you belong in the military. You might want to be aware that the recruiter is not going to dwell on the downside of the military. However, the good news is that the recruiter must answer all your ques-

tions truthfully - so do not hesitate to ask all the questions needed. Do not be shy. This concerns your future.

A recruiter's first mission is to find out what makes you tick and why you are sitting in their office. If you say you need money for college, he/she will show you their educational benefits program. If you say you need adventure, the recruiter will show you an action packed video. Rest assured, whatever reason you give, a recruiter has a package to show you. The information a recruiter shows you is valid and useful, but be aware of its emotional component.

After your first meeting, go home and think about the recruiter's offer and statements. Ask yourself if you can live with what was said (take notes during the meeting if needed). If you are still interested, schedule a second interview to take the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery, or ASVAB.

### **Taking the ASVAB and Choosing an MOS**

To understand which military jobs (MOS) you are qualified for, and where your interests lie, you must take the ASVAB. The ASVAB is a three hour series of written tests. You will be asked questions about mechanics, electronics, math and various other items to determine your skills and interests.

To prepare for the test, the public library and bookstores have several books on the ASVAB. I suggest buying Barron's or Arco's book on practice ASVAB tests. The best way to prepare is to simply take as many practice tests as possible. Some recruiting stations even have a short practice version you can take which pre-

dicts your score. It is imperative that you take these practice tests because they will determine your options in the future.

The recruiter usually brings you to a station called MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Station) to take the ASVAB. You will arrive around 5:30 am to take the test, so make sure to sleep a solid seven to eight hours beforehand. Also, eat a medium size breakfast because the test is draining. If you can not take the test early, sometimes there is a night schedule. Most sections of the test are timed and carried out under strict supervision.

Even though taking the test does not obligate you to enlist, the military environment in which it is administered makes you think differently. Do your best to relax and focus on the test. Never leave any item blank. When the administrator informs you there is only one minute left, start filling in all the blank ovals.

Your test results are usually ready the next day or two. Your recruiter (who is assigned to you now), will go over your scores and tell you which MOS you can select. Usually, most people can select 75% of the jobs available. If you scored low on the test and do not meet the minimum score for your favorite job, take the test over. You are allowed to re-take the test.

Above all, never settle for second best in your job selection. Either retake the ASVAB to secure your favorite MOS, or do not enlist. If you have multiple interests, then a second option is acceptable. However, do not be "talked" into something you do not feel is right for you. Also, do not sign up for an MOS just because of an attractive financial bonus.

## **Signing Your Enlistment Contract at MEPS**

After confirming your ASVAB scores and speaking with a recruiter about your MOS job selection, you will visit MEPS once more. You are required to take a full medical physical examination. It will last about 3 hours. Sometimes the ASVAB and physical exam can be given in one day--which makes for a very long day.

As with the ASVAB, you will take your physical with a group of other people. The process is strictly controlled and it is usually your first real contact with military discipline and order. The environment might make you nervous, but you should try and relax as much as possible.

About forty five minutes after you complete your examinations, you will be called in to a military counselor's office to discuss your contract. The counselor is usually a sergeant who is knowledgeable about all MOS's and their starting dates.

If you scored high on your ASVAB, the counselor will most likely say you can choose any military job available. You then proceed to tell him/her what specific MOS you want. The counselor will look at a computer screen to see when the training times are available. After a training time is agreed upon, you will discuss extra benefits such as money for college and enlistment bonuses. Next, the counselor will hand you your enlistment contract which outlines your MOS, your ship out date for training, and promised benefits.

It is absolutely crucial that you pay close attention when you are talking with your contract counselor at MEPS. Your enlistment



contract is a legal document and the government will enforce all the promises made by you and the military. Once you sign, you can not back out. So remember, this is not the time to be shy - your future is at stake! It is in your best interest to read the contract carefully and ask as many questions as possible.

After you sign your contract, you will be ushered into a room with other new recruits for the official swearing of your oath. You will raise your right hand and repeat after the commander. Afterwards, you will either go home until your ship out date, or leave immediately for training from MEPS.

Most of the time you will go back home for a couple months until your Basic Training cycle starts. The day before training starts, you will have to go back to MEPS for a spot physical. Then, a bus/van picks you up and you will be escorted to an airport, or bus terminal. From either transportation area, you will be officially flown or driven by the government to your training base.

It is extremely important that you are not late for departure. Most of the time your recruiter will keep you informed before you leave for training. However, always know what you should do and when you should do it--this is your responsibility. The penalty for being late or not showing up for Basic is very severe and can entail legal action.

Listed below are the most important steps you should follow when you are at MEPS preparing to enlist in the military.

1. Do not be talked into a military job that you feel is not right for you. Double check the MOS as it is written into your

contract. A simple typographical error could send you to the wrong job.

2. If you are joining the service for full time active duty, try to schedule your training in the early spring, or early fall months. This is important because the extreme heat of the summer, and the extreme cold of the winter, makes training miserable. Also, keep in mind that it tends to rain more in the spring which terminates some tasks during Basic Training.

3. Whatever is promised to you, make sure your counselor writes it into your contract first before you sign the document. If a promise is not written out, then it will not be honored. This means promises for education money, training times, stations of choice, and bonuses must be clearly stated in the contract. For example, some people in my unit left Basic Training early because a specific date was written in their contract identifying when they had to return. Try to get the earliest end of training date possible.

4. Before you sign the contract, read over everything and ask questions. Pay careful attention when you are promised to return from training and any other written promises. Double check everything!

5. Make copies of all documents given to you. Keep these documents in a safe place. Give a copy to your family to hold just in case you loose yours.

6. Never give the military your actual birth certificate, social security card, or other hard to replace personal documents. Clear copies should be sufficient for your recruiter. The military is a large operation, and like any large company, may misplace your documents. Copies are very important.

7. Try to secure a good station of choice--the first military base you will live. This must be written into your contract and usually entails some restrictions. However, if you signed up for four years, chances are high that you will be stationed overseas.

8. Last, never be pressured to sign something you do not want to sign. If you think something is legitimately wrong with your contract, then you are under no obligation to sign a contract even though you may feel pressured at the time. There may be several official personnel "leaning" on you to sign the contract, but do not be too worried. You might not be able to leave the premises immediately, but you do not have to sign.

However, to avoid such undesirable confrontations, you should be clear about enlisting before you enter the MEPS station. MEPS is the place to go when you are definite about the military. Ninety-nine percent of the people who walk in as civilians, walk out enlisted. The time to be unsure is at the recruiting station, not MEPS. Talk with your recruiter about any problems you have before going to MEPS.

### **Recommendation on Enlistment Terms**

If a young person came to me and asked me about enlisting in the military, my first response would be, "give me three good reasons". If the person answered my question sufficiently, I would then ask them about their long term goals. Do they want to make the military a career? Do they want to be a professional in the civilian world? Do they want to go to college?

Many young people do not know the answer to these profound questions. In my opinion, several individuals want to serve

their country in the armed forces, but are not sure they want to stay in for many years. This is not unusual in today's society where people are free to explore several career paths over the course of a lifetime.

There are certainly tremendous benefits to serving in the military, especially for a recent high school graduate. However, because many people are not definite about their future, I would recommend that a recruit sign up for the shortest term possible. In the Army, this is two years; the Navy, Marines, and Air Force, is either three or four years, depending on many variables.

The reasons to sign up for the shortest time possible are many. First, if you sign up for two years in the Army, and find the lifestyle too strict and demanding, then you can leave two years earlier than a standard enlistment. Second, even though a shorter enlistment term does not garner all of the extra benefits such as college money, or sign up bonuses, you still receive a good portion of them. Third, if you want to stay in the United States, recruits with short term contracts usually (not always) stay stateside. Last, if you find out you like the military, you can easily re-enlist (re-up), usually for a respectable bonus.

Therefore, a shorter contract lets you sample the military, while still retaining most of the benefits. However, some restrictions apply to shorter contracts. For example not all MOS's are open for a two year term. Check with your recruiter for more details.

Another recommendation I would give a person not absolutely sure if they should enter the military is to explore opportunities with the Reserves/ National Guard. Find your MOS which is

available in the nearest Reserves unit and sign up for the shortest amount of time possible. In the Reserves, this is usually three years.

A recruit in the Reserves is called to active duty and trains in an active duty unit. In other words, there is no difference between a regular service member and Reservist during training times. After Basic and advance training is over, the Reservist goes back home to continue their civilian life. For one weekend per month and fourteen days in the summer, they attend drills.

During drills you maintain your MOS training and qualify with your weapon. You receive pay for every drill and also most benefits. Even though there are limitations, the Reserves are the least restrictive way to experience the military. Many times, a Reservist can go into the active component if they like their experiences.

Note that many MOS's are not available in some Reserve units. A person might have to travel to another nearby unit to find an open MOS. Also, the National Guard is usually more combat oriented, while the Reserves are support oriented. It is sometimes believed that Reserves are called up to active duty more often than the Guard. Either way, your obligation to the Reserve Components is very serious.

## **Chapter Summary**

1. Remember that the government spends millions of dollars on advertisements and recruiters. Do not enlist just because you see an emotionally charged advertisement. List logical reasons why you wish to enlist. Think from the head and not the heart.

2. Your recruiters are highly trained professionals. Treat them with respect and as a source of valuable information. But remember, their primary mission is to make the military attractive to you.

3. You must take a series of small tests called the ASVAB. This test helps you to decide where your interests are and what job (MOS) you qualify to take. This test is extremely important. Prepare for it by taking practice ASVABs and looking at related books at the public library or bookstores. Rest and eat well before any test.

4. If you do poorly on the ASVAB, do not settle for a second choice MOS. It is your life and you should sign up for the job which best suits you. You are allowed to re-take the ASVAB to better your score.

5. MEPS is the large processing center for all branches of the service. You will take your ASVAB and physical at MEPS. The whole process takes several hours. Plan on being there from very early in the morning until late afternoon. MEPS is a military installation and you will have to follow orders there.

6. After your test and physical, you will sit down with a counselor, or your recruiter, to discuss details. If you are having serious doubts about enlisting, then do not sign up. However, you should work out any emotional problems and concerns before you walk into MEPS.

7. Make sure you understand everything in your contract before you sign it. All promises, benefits, and bonuses must be included and written clearly in your contract before you sign. This is very important.

8. When discussing training times, try to schedule your training in pleasant, cooler months. Early fall and spring are good seasons for Basic Training.

9. After you sign your enlistment contract go over it with your counselor and clear up anything you do not understand. Do not be shy. Ask questions before you leave your counselors office.

10. Make copies of any documents the military gives you and keep them in a safe place. Never give the military official original documents such as birth certificates or social security cards.

11. If you are not sure you want to enlist for a standard term, try talking with the Reserves, or National Guard. The Reserves may be able to satisfy your desires without undo obligations. Sign up for the minimum time allowed - you can always re-enlist.

12. Make your decision to sign up, or not to sign up, a final decision. Do not look back with any regrets.

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## Chapter 5

### What To Expect During Basic Training

Several people buy this book for the sole purpose of learning more about Basic Training. Consequently, this is the longest section of the book. I have already told you what to do before enlisting and some cautions about military benefits. This chapter informs you of what you can expect in the military and how to avoid mistakes that will make your life very difficult during Basic Training.

Please note, however, this section primarily provides an account of *my* training cycle. As mentioned before, most Basics are a little different, but all have common core components. Even though the information in this chapter will be useful to you regardless of which branch you serve; just remember to use common sense when considering the advice given.

Basic Training is where many recruits have trouble adjusting to the military lifestyle and experience the most stress. Therefore, read the following pages slowly and carefully. The reason Basic is so stressful is because the military changes your whole way of life. During training, anything comfortable, or familiar, is gone and you will be indoctrinated into a strict military lifestyle. As the old saying goes, "they will break you down before they rebuild you".

Changing your civilian ways and lifestyle is difficult and sometimes extremely uncomfortable. However, the military could not function effectively if its soldiers were not well disciplined and prepared for tough physical and mental standards.



Basic Training will be one of the hardest couple of months of your life, regardless of what other people say. Maybe when it is all over, you will think it was not too bad. Nevertheless, when you are going through the rigors of training, it can be intensely difficult. After all, it is not normal to wake up at four in the morning, do physical training, then march ten miles, and practice on live firing ranges all within one day. Without a doubt, you will be extremely tired and fatigued during training. Most nights you will get only a couple hours of sleep. You will be constantly aggravated and stressed. Expect bruises, scrapes, calluses, and blisters - they are the norm. You will be so tired and exhausted that you will not know what day it is, and you do not get days off! However, there is a reason for going through this emotional and physical turmoil. It helps facilitate the change from being a civilian to a disciplined soldier.

You might participate in a non-combat arms training station which are generally not as tough - although I did have some medics, truck drivers, and supply people participate in my infantry training cycle. If you signed up for a "soft" MOS like supply, office worker, or mechanic, you stand a good chance of attending slightly easier training. But it is not a good idea to bet on this. If you mentally prepared for the worse training cycle, it will make it seem easier when you actually go through it.

The most helpful idea before Basic Training is to understand the great majority of enlistees survive it. The odds are very much in your favor of making it to graduation. When things get really stressful, just tell yourself, "Well, if they can do it, so can I".

Also, stay focused on the positive aspects of Basic. You will get into top physical condition, learn combat skills, meet new friends, and know the true meaning of team work. If you start feeling tired and burned out, remember nothing lasts forever, and Basic will end in approximately three months.

### **The Basic Training "Game"**

Basic Training is primarily designed to indoctrinate you into military life. The military must teach young soldiers to follow orders without question before any real training takes place. Civilian life is very different from military life, so you must rid yourself of old habits. Even though much of the training is very physical, it is also mental. You will find that Drill Sergeants will play mental games with the recruits to make them conform to military ways. It is a crude, but effective means of training.

During Basic, Drill Sergeants will make you believe they have total control over your life. Even though this is not all true, 99% of the recruits believe the Drill Instructors (DI's) can do anything they want to them. The sergeants accomplish their control by withholding information on what to expect. Fear of punishment is the tool sergeants use most often. Positive reinforcement and rewards are hardly given, if at all. Therefore, you are led to believe the worse will happen and you will do things out of fear. Your biggest enemy during Basic is not the sergeants, but yourself and fear of the unknown. \*(**Note**, the terms "Drill Sergeant", "Drill Instructor (**D.I.**)", and "sergeant" are interchangeable and have the same meaning.)

It is wise not to dwell on the difficulty of Basic Training, or have negative thoughts. However, the D.I.'s want you to think this way. This is part of the stress "game". The sergeants will do things to make recruits frustrated on purpose. The reason the military creates a highly stressful environment is to make recruits conform quickly and completely.

When the D.I.'s are in your face making chewing you out, do not let it upset you. In reality, you are just a number to them and they do not know you personally. The sergeants see thousands of soldiers every year. After you leave, they will not remember you or wish to remember you.

The Drill Sergeants must control a group of 200 men/women and do not care about you as an individual. They want you to be a team player, and if you do not keep up with the group, the sergeants will make your life extremely difficult by making you do punishment exercises until you give out. In other words, individuals are nailed down and the team concept is built up.

Another game the Drill Sergeants play is the confidence game. This is where the sergeants build confidence in recruits. During Basic, you will certainly achieve things and feel a sense of accomplishment. At first everything you do will be criticized and punished, even if it is done perfectly right. Then, mid-way through the training cycle, your unit starts receiving some breaks. For example, the D.I.'s may stop yelling at you for improperly making your bunk in the morning, even though you have been making it the same way since day one. Or, you may begin to get some personal time (a couple hours off) on Sunday.

Remember, the games take place in your mind. The sergeants try to make you believe things that are not so. For example, they may say you do not have any more ten mile hikes, but you will have one the next day. For them to win, they must make you stressed or frustrated to the point you show emotions. For you to win, you must not take anything personal. Do not let anything they say or do upset you. The sergeants can not (or are not supposed to legally), physically hurt you. If you can make it most of the way through training without them knowing your name-- which means you keep out of trouble-- you win the game.

Again, Basic is not meant for you to learn a skill or trade-- except how to take orders, march, do group work, and shoot a weapon. Basic Training really teaches you discipline and how to deal with stress associated with military tasks. The training is designed to separate you from being a civilian and put you into the military way of life. After Basic Training, you will learn real job skills during your advance MOS training. If you understand what the military is trying to do during training, then it becomes easier to play the game.

## **THE BASIC TRAINING SCHEDULE**

### **I. Week 1: Reception Battalion**

People from all over the country fly into your initial training station. Most military jobs (MOS) combine Basic Training with MOS training at one military base. In many combat jobs, you can not even tell when Basic stops and your MOS training begins. This type of training is called OSUT, which means One Station Unit

Training. OSUT training is long and usually lasts a minimum of four or five months - so prepare to be separated from anything remotely similar to civilian life, including family, for an extended period of time.

When you first arrive at the training base, you must wait at the Reception Battalion until they have enough people to form a company ( a company is about 200 soldiers). Once they have enough personnel, they will send you "down range" to start training. Note, other units already in training could delay you from a quick start, so be prepared to wait in Reception for many days.

It is a very time consuming task to coordinate and admit thousands of new recruits converging on one base. Everyone must have several official documents and military records completed before beginning actual training. I was delayed at my Reception Battalion for almost ten days before Basic Training commenced. Some recruits stayed for only three days before being shipped out to permanent training. The time you spend in Reception Battalion can vary widely.

The name "reception" can be misleading. Military discipline is strictly enforced at the reception hall. There is no talking, laughing, or horse play. You might arrive at any time, but you will usually be tired from flying all day. Immediately upon arrival, the sergeants establish total control by asserting their rank and taking away your personal freedom until you graduate months later. There is no mistaking the fact you are no longer a civilian. The sergeants tell you what to do and when to do it.

Everything during Basic is done by groups. When you arrive with your group, you will be given several processing forms to

complete. The papers are very easy to fill out, but do not go beyond what is instructed. If you make mistakes, you will do push ups until your arms give out.

Next, you are asked to go into an amnesty room to release items you should not have brought to Basic Training. Items such as knives, drugs (including aspirin or vitamins), candy, and tobacco will be taken from you. If you place items in the amnesty box, you will never see them again. However, it is the only time you will not be punished for having contraband.

I remember a recruit brought a very nice pocket knife which his dad gave him. He was forced to give it up, and did not get it back. It is unfortunate, but if they catch you with contraband after this brief time, you will either be punished or go to jail. Do not try to sneak items into Basic - the items are never worth the harsh punishment.

If you arrive at night, a sergeant will lead your group to the barracks for sleep. The small metal beds are about as comfortable as sleeping in the back seat of a car . Do not be surprised if you only receive one or two hours of sleep during your first day at Reception. I learned very quickly that sleep deprivation is one of the ways the military controls recruits. From the day you arrive, until the day training is over, you will be very tired.

The drill sergeants also use fatigue as a conformity tool. If you make mistakes, you can count on having more time taken from your sleep. The sergeants know that taking sleep privileges away from recruits makes recruits even more frustrated and irritable. Be aware that everything recruits do is reinforced by negative means or punishment--like sleep deprivation. If you do something good,

the D.I.'s usually ignore you, which is good. It is a good idea before you ship out (or sign up), to practice sleeping for only four hours a night. This will give you a taste of what to expect.

During week one you are assigned to a temporary unit while at Reception. You are known only by a number. This is intended to make you less of an individual. New recruits at Reception get all medical shots and go through several medical tests. Everyone is being prepared to go down range and begin full training. You will notice during Reception time, that the 200 new recruits running around are strangely quiet. Most of what you hear is the yelling done by the Drill Instructors. Getting use to the screaming takes a while, so be prepared.

Also, while at Reception, you are issued military clothes called BDUs and dog tags. You will receive more written records and attend classes regarding pay, benefits, phone cards, insurance, etc.

After your paperwork is in order, your head is shaved bald. No matter how much hair you have, the barbers grab your head and shear off all hair in two minutes. The military wants everyone to lose their previous identity and become anonymous. Everyone looks the same. You are in the military now- - you are no longer a civilian so uniformity and group work is the rule.

During the first three days, you will never stop being active and will be very tired. The new stressful environment is fairly tough for most people to adjust to quickly. The Drill Instructors (D.I.'s), also called "Smokey's" because their hats are similar to forest ranger hats, make it worse by constantly yelling and "dropping" people to do push-ups - an exercise commonly referred to as

being "smoked". From the start, you are taught to fear the D.I.'s and you realize they do not joke around.

When a recruit is caught violating a rule, he is harshly confronted by a D.I.. No real physical harm is done, but the recruit is usually embarrassed in front of a platoon and told to do push ups until muscle failure. If a recruit can not do any more push ups, the D.I. will make him run in place with his arms extended until he physically gives out. Sometimes, the D.I. will make the recruit alternate between push-ups, leg lifts, and stomach exercises in rapid succession. Keep in mind that while this type of punishment is tough, it is meant to also bring you into top physical condition.

While at Reception, you learn small things which will help you at your permanent training unit. The Reception sergeants teach you basic marching steps. They also teach you basic protocols and standards like saluting, standing at attention, how to make your bed, and shine your boots. This may sound easy, but there are many commands and orders to learn. Like anything new, it takes time to fully understand all of these commands and rules.

The best piece of advice I can give you before Basic Training starts is to learn as much as possible before being shipped out. Use your time wisely because it is even tougher down range. If possible, secure a copy of the Initial Entry Training (IET) handbook from your recruiter. The IET handbook tells you everything you need to know about Basic Training. The handbook demonstrates how to march, provides the commands you must understand, and lists what you need to memorize. These helpful hints make it a lot easier to enter Basic Training. If possible, bring a copy of the IET book to Basic.



Another important hint is to start physically working out every day. Begin working out at least one or two months before you are shipped off to Basic. If you are not accustomed to rigorous exercise, you will be at a great disadvantage. Your body needs time to adjust to hard exercise. There is nothing worse than being sore for the first two weeks of training. The better shape you are in prior to Basic, the easier training will be for you. Do not wait until the week before Basic to begin your physical training!

To review, your first week at the Reception Battalion may be very stressful because of the unfamiliar and strict environment. You will be tired, which adds to your stress level. However, Reception is meant to prepare you for your permanent training station down range. After four or five days in Reception, you will begin to become accustomed to some aspects of the military lifestyle. Also, the D.I.'s intensity begins to drop on the sixth day because they must begin drilling the new arriving recruits.

### **I. Week One: Observations During Reception Battalion**

> Recruits eat in the "chow" hall three times a day. At first, one might welcome eating three square meals a day. But then, you may feel overfed. In fact, after the third day, most people dread the chow hall because you are eating more than usual. The dining atmosphere is extremely strict and tense. Recruits can not talk and must sit very still. Last, everyone must eat everything on their plates before they are allowed to leave the chow hall.

On a positive note, military food is not bad. Most meals are well balanced and tasty.

>Shining boots is very important. The shinier, the better. Have at least a minor shine at all times. Some recruits brought liquid wax to help make the polishing easier. Bring as much wax and shiners as possible.

>The combat boots you are issued might hurt your feet for the first several days. This is normal. Your feet must adjust to a rigid, protective boot. Expect to develop a few minor blisters. To help with the problem, buy new sport insoles, or heel cups for your boots. However, do not buy thick insoles because that makes your foot crowded and might worsen the break in period.

>It takes a long time to become accustomed to the yelling and constant orders issued by the sergeants. Once you realize the yelling is the Drill Sergeants' way of communicating and nothing is personal, you will adjust easier.

>Do not expect breaks or rewards for the entire training cycle. If you do not expect rewards, you will not be let down.

> Do not hesitate to obey orders given by the sergeants. However, use common sense when listening to threats. Regardless of what others say, recruits are given some leniency when in Basic. You will not necessarily go to jail, or have to pay the government money if you can not finish Basic Training. The threats are generally used to motivate the unit and to establish control.

> The sergeants love to make recruits do push-ups for not wearing their cap correctly. Never wear your BDU cap inside a building. Always wear your BDU cap when you are outside.

> For the first couple of weeks, recruits will take physical tests (PTs) to establish a physical condition record. Do not be surprised if the D.I.'s are unreasonably tough on your first set of scores. Your P.T. scores will improve by the end of your 8 week training cycle. You usually receive ample rest between record work outs, and you will feel stronger once training is completed.

>The sergeants will make you run everywhere you go. Recruits caught walking are punished. Make sure you run in a small group at all times so the sergeants can not single you out.

### **Hints and Advice for Reception Battalion**

1. Do not stand out. If you have long hair, make sure you cut it before you are shipped to your reception battalion (not a full military shave though). Wear regular, plain clothes. Do not wear flashy items like jewelry, or tie dye t-shirts. Do not wear anything resembling military attire. In other words, do not do anything to call attention to yourself. Blend with the crowd as soon as possible.

When you are in a formation with other recruits, try to get the position near the end, but not the end itself. The middle of the formation is generally a good place, but sometimes the sergeants know that is where people hide. If you do not want to be

singled out, stand about four or five people from the end of the formation. Do not be the first in a formation line.

2. Never volunteer for anything. You will not be rewarded, or paid for any extra work. In fact, you increase your odds of getting in trouble if you volunteer. Especially do not volunteer for the platoon leader position during the first couple weeks. Even though it may seem like an honor, you will be put under tremendous stress. You will be accountable for everyone else in your platoon, including the people who screw up the most. I have never heard of a platoon leader making it all the way through an entire cycle without getting "fired". The platoon leader position during the final phases is usually more desirable.

3. Always lock your possessions. Keep a close eye on them. Stealing is a big problem in the services, and you will get in a lot of trouble if you lose something-- regardless of how it was lost.

Only bring \$30.00 to \$40.00 in cash to training. The military will give you some money to spend when you arrive. Buy extra locks if needed. Be very, very careful with your possessions! The less you bring to training the better. Packing light for training is certainly a good suggestion.

4. Blend in. This is similar to number one, but you may have difficulty hiding some of your physical attributes. If you have any kind of impairment which makes you different from other recruits try to hide it. If you have a speech impediment, talk with an strong

accent; or if you are bold legged, try not to let it show for the first two weeks. The longer you blend in, the easier the training.

5. Do not "max" out on your first physical test. If you stand out physically and show how good you are, you might end up as a road guard. You do not want this position because it is a lot of hard work for nothing in return. Road guards must run much more than other recruits. Remember, everyone during Basic will get into outstanding physical condition regardless if they are a road guard or not.

6. Read and re-read your handbook. Memorize as much information from your handbook as possible during your time in Reception. If possible, read your handbook before you even arrive at Reception. You will have little time to learn when you are shipped down range to begin actual training.

## **II. Weeks Two and Three: Basic Training - Phase I**

Drill Instructors meet their new recruits at the Reception Battalion. Everyone stands in a tight formation waiting for the sergeants to come from "down range". They will call your number; then you run to a large rig (truck) which tows an enclosed cattle trailer. (It is said you arrive as cattle, but leave as soldiers.)

The D.I.'s cram these hot aluminum cattle trailers with scared recruits. Fear boils over as the D.I.'s scream out threats to shove in one more trainee. You and your heavy duffel bag are physically pushed into one another to the point you can hardly breath. You will feel a sense of excitement, but this is where the D.I.'s want to

create a sense of confusion and stress. The sergeants do not want recruits to know what is going to happen. Again, it is important to realize this is a form of control.

My unit took a twenty minute ride down range to our permanent barracks. When the four cattle cars stopped, the large doors swung open and we were greeted with muscle bound, black shirted military police with drug dogs. The D.I.'s were yelling, barking out nonsense orders, and trying to scare everyone. Arriving down range was pure chaos fed by fear.

Indeed, when a 240 pound Drill sergeant is screaming two inches from your ear, " You stupid testicle head, get your goddamn ass over here", anyone would get very nervous. Anything a recruit does at this point will not be fast enough because of the heavy duffel bag. Do not be surprised if everyone in sight is doing push ups on the hot cement for punishment.

Remember, the chaotic environment is all done to confuse and disorient you. Mostly it is to try to scare you so the sergeants can control a large group of recruits by intimidation. It works well, and you should immediately respond to their orders. Keep in mind, if you understand the "game", it is easier to play. Unless you do something real stupid, like hit a Drill Sergeant, you will not be harmed-- but you will be scared. In time, it may even seem humorous after training ends.

After the yelling and obscenities have stopped, the sergeants make everyone stand in formation away from their bags. Then the drug dogs sniff through your personal gear. If a dog so much as pauses by your sack, the D.I.'s empty everything out, throw it all over the place, and you are left to account for it all.

At this point, and for the entire time you are in Basic, the Drill Instructors will do and say anything to get you to become emotionally stressed out. Whatever you do, never show any kind of emotion and remember that a sergeant's threats are used as a tool. Sometimes sergeants mix truths with half truths to gain control and to break you down. The sergeant's job is to make anything you do during Basic seem very difficult.

### **Establishing Total Control**

A training company is approximately 200 soldiers. These 200 soldiers are divided into four platoons of fifty people each. Each platoon is assigned three Drill instructors (a cadre of instructors). Immediately after the brief contraband search with the dogs, you and your new platoon are ordered into assigned barracks. During your permanent training barracks assignment, the sergeants are extremely strict for the first three to four weeks.

During your first hour down range, the sergeants work hard at instilling fear into you and letting everyone know who is in control. Do not be surprised if you spend your first night in the training barracks doing exercises until muscle failure.

For the first two weeks, you are under what is called "total control". For example, recruits are dropped to do push ups, even when tasks are done correct. In other words, you can not do anything right. Your task is either too slow, or not the proper form. Sometimes the sergeants make up violations so that everyone must perform exercises for punishment. This is part of the "game" the sergeants play. Your cadre of sergeants want to aggravate you and make you fight among yourselves during this initial phase. This

"total control" is designed to build platoon cohesion and team spirit over time.

The Drill Instructors' job in the first week is to show you who is boss. They will threaten you and make you feel like your life is in danger. They will make you do strange and painful exercises for punishment. However, do not be too fearful. Drill Instructors will not severely hurt you and you will get stronger from the exercises.

At first, just try to become used to not being able to perform the tasks the sergeants are ordering. The activities are designed to be impossible for a reason. The main reason for this type of strict behavior is to make your platoon more efficient at following orders and performing military activities.

Also, during the first couple weeks, the D.I.'s try to discover who is "squared away", or reliable, and who is a "screw-up". People who have trouble reacting fast to commands, or who do not keep their lockers neat, will be reprimanded by sleep deprivation, extra duties, and push ups. Recruits who constantly make mistakes will find themselves doing undesirable tasks and will be isolated from others in the platoon.

Punishing everyone for one recruit's mistake is officially not allowed, but in some isolated instances mass punishment still occurs. For example, if someone moves while at the position of attention during formation, the sergeant will say the person's name out loud and make the entire platoon assume the front leaning rest position. The leaning rest position is the starting position for a push-up. It becomes very painful to hold for more than 5 minutes.

Note that mass punishment and revenge fights are not common, but it still occurs on some occasions. A recruit's best bet is to



make at least two good friends and be a team player by helping others. Also, keep a positive attitude regarding punishment exercises. The sergeants are well aware that these exercises are designed to strengthen you as well as correct mistakes. You will find this type of training will toughen you mentally and physically. The strict environment and frequent reprimand exercises are extremely efficient at making you strong very quickly.

### **Sleep and Fatigue**

Sleep is very valuable, but you get very little of it. Since you are exercising rigorously and waking up at 4:30 in the morning, even the strongest people become very fatigued. To make it worse, for the first two weeks, you are crammed into a room to watch boring indoctrination films. You must sit very still and rigid as you view films on military traditions, health care, and regulations. This sounds easy, but remember - from the time you arrive at the training station, you are allowed only a couple hours of sleep. You will be surrounded by people desperately struggling to keep their eyes open.

The sergeants make the room and films purposefully boring so the recruits are likely to nod off. Trying to stay awake is one of the most difficult things you will fight. If the sergeants catch you beginning to shut your eyes you will be in for some very nasty wake up calls.

I have no advice about sleep other than if you can sneak it in when you are out in the field, do so. Even shutting your eyes for 2 minute intervals will help. Make sure you will not be caught. Remember, lack of sleep makes people irritable and want to fight.

This is how D.I.'s use sleep as a training tool. They would love for you to slip up and roll your eyes, or do something to show your emotions. Again, part of Basic Training is learning to control yourself and your emotional states.

A favorite sleep deprivation tool of the Drill Instructors is the use of perimeter guard duty. This is when half the platoon wakes up in the middle of the night and dresses in full combat gear - gear which takes you 10 minutes to put on. Then you stand outside and stare at a staircase, or field full of rocks. After one hour of standing still, you are relieved by the other half of the platoon. This cycle is alternated, trading sleep for guard duty every hour until morning exercises at 4:30 a.m.. You are lucky to have one decent hour of sleep. Being deprived of sufficient sleep for twenty four hours makes everyone irritable the next day.

You will also learn how to perform regular "fire guard" duty. You and a buddy are assigned an hour to watch for fire, or people trying to sneak away at night. This too eats into your couple hours of sleep you are allowed per night.

Hint: When I pulled fire guard, I used the time to do my laundry. Have one person watch the platoon while you go to the laundry room. Laundry time is very valuable; use it wisely.

Take comfort in the fact that there is an initial entry training rule that states you must have four hours of sleep per day. The four hours may not be continuous, but do not let the sergeants mislead you by saying there is no sleep rule. There is a regulation, and it is usually enforced. (Marines may have a different sleep regulation.)

## **Preparing for the Real Training**

The first two weeks of Basic are really to prepare you for the real training in the field which occurs during the third week. The military will try to put extra weight on most of the recruits before beginning the rigorous exercises and training. You will eat much in your first two weeks until you hate the chow hall. (Ironically, after you start real training you can not wait to eat.)

Overweight recruits, or as the sergeants say, "fat-boys," are put on a strict diet and extra strenuous exercise program. Again, the first couple of weeks are designed to prepare all recruits, establish control, and to break you in before real hands on training.

The training through the third week is primarily mind games. Hopefully, you will not stand out and will do as you are told as quickly as possible. Everything you do should be done seriously and quickly. Do not be tempted to horse around with your buddies. Be serious.

Time is extremely important during training. If you need to wake up earlier than most to shave or clean your area, then do it. If you have any extra time, help your neighbors to become "squared away". Remember, if they screw up, everyone gets in trouble.

In the beginning, the reason the sergeants make it impossible for anyone to do things right is because they want you to understand the efficiency of team work. Work as a team as early as possible and you will accomplish a much more and have more free time.

During Phase 1, the sergeants also make notes regarding their platoon. They want to know who is a leader, who has trouble per-

forming the tasks, and who can handle the tough jobs. My advice is to blend in and be an "average" recruit for as long as possible.

## **Mail Call**

You will start receiving mail during the third week. Receiving letters from home during mail call is a very big deal. Mail is very important to your mental health. Mail is one of the few lines connecting you to the outside world. Even the toughest recruits would wait eagerly just to hear from home or a friend. Do not underestimate the power of letters while in Basic. Have parents send you nice long letters. Only positive news should be received in all correspondence.

Tell your family, or friends to send NO BAD NEWS! If you have a girlfriend/boyfriend, make sure your relationship is solid. If your mate wants to break up, tell her / him not to mention it in the letters. Many recruits have committed suicide over "Dear John" letters. Training is stressful enough and you will not be allowed to take time off for personal problems.

## **Observations During Phase I (Weeks Two and Three)**

>Generally speaking, you will only experience strict and negative events during this time frame. Phase 1 is a very strict because the sergeants make sure you know how to react to orders without hesitation. The reason for "total control" is to make recruits realize the military must have respect for the chain of command. Also, recruits learn the benefits of teamwork. Total control will end during Phase II.

>Recruits do not have any privacy. Recruits share bathrooms, showers, and lockers (although there are locks on personal drawers). You will always be within five feet of someone for the entire training cycle.

> The cursing and yelling during this time is an effort by the sergeants to force recruits to show their emotions. The good news is most people will learn quickly to control their emotions. This is a form of self-discipline the military is famous for instilling.

> Even though no recruit was ever severely hurt by a D.I., the sergeants made us think they could use physical force. Threats of punishment were more the norm than the exception. Keep telling yourself it is just a "mind" game and keep your emotions under control.

> We were dropped to the ground for punishment exercises very frequently. Just accept it and realize nothing anyone does will be done right for the first two weeks. Punishment exercises, although uncomfortable, are also a way to build strength--so focus on this positive result.

> During Basic Training, you will attend mini instructional classes. Some are taught in the field, or classrooms. Most of the information is not difficult if you have read your IET book before you shipped out.

> The military only supplies eight washing machines and dryers for 200 recruits. The only time you have to do laundry is

late at night when you need sleep the most. People steal uniforms, so watch your possessions closely in the laundry area. Make wise use of your guard duty to do laundry (if you have help).

> Make sure you do not stink - you or your clothes. The Drill sergeants will find you and embarrass you. They will also make you do punishment exercises if you have poor hygiene. Keep a clean and manicured look at all times.

> Everyone will lose weight during Basic. You will burn off everything you eat. (I lost 10 pounds and I was in good shape going into training.)

> On Sunday, you have the option to attend church services. You will march to the chapel, where you can pray that training will end. I highly encourage everyone to attend (escape) to a nice air conditioned church on Sunday. It is the only time you will not hear cursing or yelling by the D.I.'s

> The summer is very hot and humid. Most recruits should not expect anything resembling cool air conditioning. You will always have a thin layer of sweat if you attend Basic in the summer. Basic is much cooler in the early Fall or Spring so try to attend during those months.

### **Hints and Advice for Phase I (Weeks two and three)**

The best advice for the first two weeks down range:

**1.** Do not stand out. **2.** Do not volunteer for anything. **3.** Never show emotion--Even if you are happy because you ran faster than everyone on your five mile morning run, do not show emotions. Never smile, smirk or blink when being spoken to by a sergeant. Be a stone. The sergeants look for emotions and will reprimand you when you show them. In my opinion, it is best to make yourself emotionally "even". Try not to be happy, or sad; keep it all on an even keel.

If you find yourself being yelled at by the sergeant, let the insults and threats roll off of you. A wise recruiter told me to be a Teflon skillet - let nothing stick. Also, do not take any insult too seriously or personal. As hard as it may seem at times, a sergeant's job is to train you to become tough mentally and physically. Remember, training will end in a few weeks. Remain focused on the positives and the end of your training cycle.

### **III. Fourth through Sixth Week: Phase II**

Phase II is generally considered the longest part of the cycle for many reasons. This is when the real training and useful classes begin. Primarily, the physical training and "common task" education is longer in duration. You will learn many new military procedures and tasks during this time frame. However, Basic Training is designed mainly to indoctrinate soldiers who are used to civilian life. First and foremost, Basic shows you how to unquestionably follow orders and live with military discipline. Recruits will come to know the meaning of having a "military bearing".

Besides strict discipline, Phase II will teach you about mental stress. The sergeants will expose you to all levels of stress with which you must learn to cope. In several ways, Basic Training attempts to simulate a mild version of combat stress. You think and act differently under these extreme conditions, but you are learning valuable coping skills. Recruits should note that learning under stressful conditions takes much longer than if the stress was not present. It is for this reason recruits should learn as much as possible before being shipped off to Basic.

In many ways, Phase II is just as stressful as earlier phases. The reason for this is because most recruits are emotionally drained from being under pressure for a long time. Also, most recruits experience a week when they feel more physically fatigued than others.

To counteract these stressors, it is critical you keep calm and remember that Basic is an impersonal game. Do not take what the sergeants say personally, and realize they want you to focus only on the task at hand. Realize there are games the D.I.'s play to make everyone more frustrated, stressed and tired. They like to keep recruits in the dark as to the true nature of training. If you do your assigned jobs well, keep a low profile, and make a good friend, your stress will decrease. Also, talking with your friends and writing letters to de-stress helps maintain your stability.

## **The Gas Chamber**

The gas chamber is a small empty room where you learn your gas mask can protect you from combat chemicals and gases. (I



could have just taken the military's word on this fact.) To be blunt, the gas chamber is very painful. The gas is like being sprayed in the face with mace. The good news is the gas chamber exercise does not take long, and the pain stops relatively quick.

You will be lined up in front of a small house while wearing your gas mask. The line is long because they only let in about 15 soldiers at a time. As you are waiting in line, you watch the other recruits who just went in, come out the other side. Everyone is coughing, throwing up, and gagging -- but only for a few minutes.

Recruits go into the chamber wearing their gas mask and are told to stand in a large circle. In the center of the room is the training sergeant and a large canister of CS tear gas. The sergeant seals the exit door. The whole room fills with smoky gas which decreases visibility in half. Your skin begins to tingle slightly, but you are breathing easily without pain.

Next, the sergeant orders you to remove your protective mask. In that split second, your eyes involuntarily close and your tear ducts start to flow. You notice that once you breathe in, your lungs experience a burning sensation. Being exposed to concentrated CS gas makes even the toughest recruit humble.

About a minute later, the door opens. Everyone scrambles out and the fresh air immediately stops the pain. Of course your eyes and nose are still running freely from the tear gas, but the worse is over. However, do not think the D.I.'s who are nearby will be easier on you just because everyone is coughing and wheezing. The sergeants remain very stern all the time because they want you to remember this training.

The military has a good reason for such training. First, it builds a soldier's confidence in their equipment, such as the gas mask. Second, because the nature of chemical warfare is particularly gruesome, the military wants to make sure soldiers do not underestimate it.

Remember the following: If possible, do not hold your breath when you take off your mask. Take extremely shallow breaths with your nose. Do not try to breath normally like some will tell you. Also, close your eyes before you take off your mask. Try to remain very calm. Remember the trainers will open the doors within several seconds; it just seems like a long time. The best advice to make you feel better about the chamber is, once you experience the chamber, you will never have to participate in gas training again.

### **Firing your Weapon**

One of the primary tasks you will learn in Basic (Army particularly) is how to handle a weapon. Actually, marksmanship is a skill which most people learn well. In fact, you spend more time working with your weapon than anything else in training. I believe marksmanship and weapon skills are emphasized because it builds confidence and confirms the feeling of being a soldier. Most recruits enjoy weapons training because it is novel and exciting.

We went to several different types of ranges and most were modern with moving targets. In addition to shooting, we spent much down time collecting ammo, cleaning weapons and waiting to fire.

During this "down time" away from the immediate firing range you can sneak in some rest. Make good use of the hidden rest time. The ranges are very large and spread out. It is difficult for sergeants to monitor everyone. The D.I.'s are usually too busy ensuring that some stressed recruit does not go crazy with a loaded assault weapon. (We always heard rumors there were snipers hiding around just in case some recruit actually did start shooting something other than his target.)

When you are at the firing range, make sure you pay extra attention to safety procedures. For example, make sure you always point your weapon down toward the target area. Make sure you never put ammo in your pocket, or take a bullet off the firing line. If you break the rules at the firing ranges, you can and will get in serious trouble. It is the only time the sergeants have authority to physically harm you. However, if you are extra careful and blend in with the crowd, the ranges can be a welcome time to relax.

You will be issued a M-16A2 assault weapon. Always refer to your M-16 as a weapon, not a gun. Do not regard your M-16 as a cool toy. Treat it as a tool specifically designed to take a human life. You will learn that the M-16 is very good at its primary function and mistakes are almost always deadly. Without extra precautions, a recruit can kill others, including him/herself. So, always treat your weapon with great respect.

**(HINT)** The two most important things to remember concerning the M-16 is to memorize and write your rifle's serial number in your handbook. Second, never ever let your weapon out of your hands. Do not ask someone to hold your weapon while you go to the bathroom. Do not put your rifle down to eat chow. Once

you check out your weapon from the armory, always have it in your hands. You will go to jail quickly if you lose your weapon!

Your rifle will probably look new and shiny, but most of them have been abused by hundreds of other people before you. Therefore, the M-16 will be loose and somewhat inaccurate. Most people score better with newer weapons after Basic Training.

The good thing about the M-16 is that you can drop it, or throw it without much damage. Do not be afraid of your combat rifle. It is an iron tool that is made for tough use. You will shoot better the sooner you become comfortable with your rifle.

## **Physical Training during Phase II**

You will notice the tempo of your P.T. (physical training), is faster during this phase of Basic. Every morning about 4:00 or 5:00, you will begin your P.T. You stand at attention, dressed in issued gray gym clothes and running shoes. The sergeant marches the large formation out to a large exercise field. You are led in various exercises while in a uniform rectangle formation. Many times, no matter how well your platoon works out, it will not be good enough for the Drill Sergeants and the platoon will be punished. Remember, if you expect to be punished, training is much easier. The sergeants reprimand the entire platoon so they can build physical and mental conditioning.

For punishment, you will usually sprint a quarter mile to get hot and sweaty. Then, you are ordered to roll around like a log in wood chips or sand. Once everyone is covered with sand, mud and sweat, you will do various exercises until your muscles ache. Fo-

cus on the positive aspect of training; you are getting in the best shape of your life.

**(HINT)** The above example is why it is wise to enter training in good physical condition. Always make it appear you are doing your best at P.T. Also, if possible, do not give up at any physical task--try your best but do not stand out.

As noted, P.T. is where the D.I.'s find fault with your platoon. Usually before you do P.T., you must mop and clean the entire barracks. This is why you must wake up at 4:00 am. When you are out in the field getting dirty, one drill sergeant inspects the barracks. Undoubtedly, he will find it unacceptable, and the next thing you know you are doing butterfly kicks in the mud because you failed inspection. You can guess what happens when the platoon goes back into the barracks full of mud. Not only do the barracks become dirtier, the platoon must work harder to clean the entire barracks again.

The good news is after Phase II, the P.T. becomes more like real, meaningful exercise rather than a tool for punishment. When Phase II is over, expect to pass inspection at least once. Keep thinking positive and remember, you are becoming stronger because of Basic.

## **Road Marches**

Personally, the hardest part of Basic was road marching. (Ironically, people who did great in P.T. did poorly on the marches and vica versa.) During road marches, your whole company of 200 men march in parallel lines just off the roadside. This may not

sound difficult, but you must carry a heavy backpack with an 8 pound weapon in your hands, and march in uniform formation. At the end of just a couple of miles, that 8 pound weapon feels like 40 pounds.

What makes these marches even more difficult is the fact that you will be wearing long pants, shirts, a helmet, and your boots will be stiff. The heat sucks the energy out of you and your feet swell. The extra weight of the pack pulls at your back and wears on your legs.

Typically, you will start out with an easy one mile road march in Phase I. On this short march, you will learn to maintain the proper distance between each other and how to wear your combat gear. If you fail to maintain the proper distance, you will find yourself running around the entire platoon which is spread out over a great distance. Every week the sergeants slowly increase your marches to eight, ten, and finally twelve miles. When you finish a long road march with full combat gear, it feels incredible (even though you do not celebrate). Personally, I have never been so happy to get something so unpleasant finally finished. You will feel a great sense of accomplishment.

**(HINT)** There are some tricks you can do to help make it through these long marches. First, soak your feet in cold water and trim your toe nails the night before. Take care of all blisters beforehand with "moleskin". Keep your feet dry with powder and pack an extra pair of socks.

Second, drink lots of water about six hours before the march. Really drink until you can not drink anymore. Last, on the march itself, do not think about what you are doing. Think about how you

are going to spend your paycheck, or about letters to your family and friends. Try to get lost mentally in something else besides marching. If that does not work, try to actively involve yourself in the cadence (marching songs that keep you in step with the platoon). You might notice how cool it is to see and hear 200 soldiers marching to their destination. It is quite a sight and sound.

Remember, Basic Training is mostly a mental game and the marches will test your mental abilities. Try to minimize everything negative and focus only on the positives. The tough road marches are an opportunity to strengthen your emotional discipline and physical stamina.

### **Phase Testing**

As mentioned earlier, during Basic you go through three different phases. Since all Basic Trainings differ slightly, each phase might be a little different. During my first phase, we learned simple first aid tasks, three general orders (which you memorize), the chain of command, putting your gas mask on in six seconds, military protocols, drill and ceremony, and how to do guard duty. When you are phase tested, you stand in front of a sergeant. If you pass a specific test you get a "go" on a record card. If you fail, you get a "no go", then you have to repeat it.

Sounds easy, but remember it is a very stressful environment. The D.I.'s are yelling at you when you are completing the testing, and you feel pressured. Anything is hard to learn when you are under stress. Again, that is why it is important to learn the tasks before you are shipped off.

During Phase II, recruits primarily work with their weapon and the testing is more serious. For testing, you must know how to properly fire your M-16, break it down, and clean it. Recruits must shoot and hit a target at various ranges to "qualify". Everyone must qualify before leaving training. It is a very good idea to qualify your first time at the firing range. This will make your life easier, and you will not bring unnecessary attention to yourself.

Phase III is the easiest and last phase. This is due partly because the D.I.'s are not watching you all the time and you are accustomed to some of the stress after 5 weeks. Phase III tasks are not as hard. You learn how to do Basic map reading, more ceremonial things, and how to handle land mines (fake mines).

The only advice I can give about phase testing is to know as much as possible about the tasks before you are shipped off for training. Also, remember that training is set up to be very hard in the beginning and easier towards the end. This format makes helps build confidence and team spirit.

### **Grenades:**

As with shooting the M-16, throwing grenades has some appeal because it is novel. Most recruits look forward to this task.

Recruits are trained by sergeants on how to hold and throw a grenade. You throw many practice grenades at various ranges. At our grenade range, the company lined up behind a thick concrete shelter. When it is your turn to throw, the sergeants put a heavy flack jacket on you. One sergeant looks at you in the eye and asks if you are ready. If he sees you are nervous, you will not go.



You throw one grenade at a time as the sergeant stands right by you. Once you throw it, you hit the ground hard. Three seconds later, the earth shakes and you hear the grenade detonate with a thunderous boom. If you do not hit the ground, and instead watch the grenade land, the pit sergeant literally throws you on the ground forcefully.

Like the live firing range, the instructors do not hesitate to enforce the rules. The sergeants have the right to physically control you at any live range. It was amazing to me the destructive force one baseball size grenade has. One grenade can lift a car off the ground; imagine what it could do to a human body. This is why the D.I.s are extra strict at the ranges.

### **Drill and Ceremony:**

Drill and Ceremony, or "D and C" as it is called, is basically fancy marching, movements, and formations. There are several ways to march and stand in formations. Some people liked it, but others will not care for D and C.

The D.I.'s are always watching closely . If you mess up when doing synchronized steps, it will show and you will get in trouble. Again, practice as much as possible beforehand. Ask your recruiter for help if you have a long time before you are shipped out. He will also have the IET book which has everything you need to know about D and C.

Helpful hints during D and C include positioning yourself mid-pack and not on the very ends, or in the front of formations. When you stand at the "position of attention", do not move at all. D.I.'s love to catch flinching recruits in formation. If you so much

as blink at "attention" the entire platoon will be doing push ups on the hot cement thanks to you. Even if a bee lands on your neck, do not budge while doing D and C. Just look straight ahead and remain dead still.

D and C looks very impressive once your platoon masters the movements. You will be surprised how quickly everyone learns D and C. The entire company will march in unison and demonstrate fancy maneuvers upon graduation.

## **Inspections**

Inspections are designed to make you nervous. Again, plan on failing your first couple inspections even though you are perfect. Your whole platoon will be doing punishment exercises outside until the point of exhaustion. Then when you go back inside, the entire barracks will be turned upside down. Drawers of clothes are emptied on the floor and beds are thrown aside by the D.I.'s. It is all done on purpose to make you frustrated, but primarily to force the platoon to work as a team.

You will be tired and want to blame each other. The D.I.'s plan to make you emotional. This is where cooperation and teamwork must come into play. Control your emotions and remember the sergeant's game. Tell the platoon to pull together, not apart. Resist the temptation to get frustrated. **(Hint)** Before inspection, always keep your gear in neat order. Do not wear all your clothes. Always keep clean, but you can do this by wearing only two BDU (clothes) sets. Keep two sets to "show" and two sets to wear. Remember, the more you soil your clothes, the more

you have to clean. Besides, using the washing machines are very time consuming.

Also, minimize your work by always keeping one set of boots nicely polished. You need to break in both pairs of boots, but afterwards keep one to wear and one to show. Ask for help from your buddies if you need help.

## **Observations on Phase II**

>This was the longest phase, it is the hump you need to make it over before you go into the close of the cycle. Keep focused on the end. Try to look forward to the little things like shooting, or throwing grenades.

>Rumors are cheap and add to your stress. We heard the wildest rumors while we were in training. Typical rumors center on training being overcrowded, so you will be getting out early. Do not believe any rumors you hear.

>Sometimes the sergeants might begin rumors. For example, after a very long eight mile road march in the heat, a D.I. might tell your platoon there are no marches remaining. Then, the next week you will do a ten mile march.

>More recruits go to "sick call" than any other time during Phase II. Sick call is when you stand at the front of morning formation and wait for permission to see a doctor. The sergeants inquire about your physical problem. Once a recruit is officially cleared, they march down to a medical clinic for treatment. Note

the sergeants strongly discouraged recruits from going to sick call. Sometimes the D.I.s can deny a recruit from seeing a doctor, but it is not often. If you are legitimately sick or hurt, go on sick call and seek medical attention. Do not risk serious injury because you are shy.

>As in the first phase, do not expect rewards, or positive reinforcements. The less you expect, the better.

>The Drill Sergeant's threats are more focused in the fourth week. If the sergeants know your name, expect to be called on more frequently for unpleasant tasks. It is wise to keep a low profile as long as possible.

>Phase II is when most recruits are introduced to the "low crawl". Low crawl is dragging yourself across the ground as low as possible-- face down. In combat situations, this movement is very useful. As a punishment, the low crawl is very unpleasant.

>Be prepared to march everywhere you go during Basic. In addition to all the other types of exercise, marching strengthens you. Some estimate that recruits march over 100 miles while in Basic.

>Sergeants make fictitious reasons to punish the platoon. Realize this and do not worry about trying to do things perfect because you will not be able to perfectly perform all of the tasks.

>The firing ranges are a welcomed distraction. You can get away from the stress when you are off cleaning your weapon. You will spend many hours and many days here. Everyone will "qualify" with their weapon. The instructors make sure that you can at least hit a target 24 out of 40 times.

> You will march to the PX (military supply store) to get personal supplies during this phase. You also get another buzz cut at your expense.

## **Hints and Advice for Phase II**

Be aware of what to expect during this phase. As in Phase I, realize you can not do anything to please the D.I.'s during this phase. You will perform punishment tasks for things made up by your sergeants. Just go with the flow. Tell your friends the sergeants are trying to frustrate the platoon as part of their game to make you work together. The sergeants want you to "unite" against them and work as a unit. Work as a team as soon as possible. Remember, Basic Training is designed to make you control your emotions and to foster unit cohesion (team spirit).

There will be three drill sergeants assigned to your platoon. One is the leader, the other is the "tough one", and the last one is usually somewhat personable. However, do not ever try to be friendly to any of them. Do not talk to them unless they address you first. Do not be rude, but be short in what you say to them. It is best to keep a low profile.

Always call your friends by their last names. Do not say "thank you" or "sir". Only call officers "sir", not the D.I.'s. Again, try to blend in and stay away from the sergeants.

Write letters home. It is important for your mental health. Tell family and friends what you are learning. Mostly tell them to write back. (Tell them not to call the base to check on you!) You can not receive any contraband in the mail like pornography, tobacco, or candy. All mail is examined by the sergeants for illegal contents prior to the time you receive it.

Remember to rest as much as possible. Economy of motion is important; do not waste your energy. You may be able to rest at the firing ranges.

Last, always remain focused on the positives. Focus on the last day and remember training will end in just a few weeks. Deal with stress by talking to a good friend. Above all, do your best and do not take anything personal.

#### **IV. Weeks Seven Through Nine (Phase III)**

Most Basic Training cycles last eight to nine weeks, but when you include your time at the Reception Battalion, the total time is slightly over nine weeks. The Marines' boot camp lasts three weeks longer. During the last phase, the D.I.'s ease up slightly. However, recruits can still get into trouble, so do not let your guard down. During Phase III, "total control" should be over, and at night your platoon is left to patrol itself. Also, on Sundays you now have more personal time. The D.I.'s want to see if the platoon has matured and has mastered self discipline.

It is very important to caution others not to be too relaxed going into the close of training. Some recruits (the trouble makers) will want to sneak out at night to use the phones or soda machines somewhere on base. The whole platoon will suffer greatly if this happens. Be serious and focused until you leave the training base. Do not breach the confidence the sergeants give you in Phase III. Once the platoon loses the D.I.s trust, the last weeks will be extremely harsh.

In sum, the last phase is more tolerable because you know there are only two weeks left. Many tasks have become routine now, and although still hard, there are not many surprises left. By knowing what to expect, things are actually easier in your head, but in reality they are just the same. The D.I.'s do not keep you in the dark about schedules and you have regained some personal control. You should start to feel more confident and proud that you are accomplishing something difficult.

For example, you know when you will be dropped for push-ups. Your daily tasks are routine and there is more time to do them correctly. The sergeants do not trick you anymore by pretending to be nice one day, then being strict the next day. The mental games have decreased slightly and Basic becomes more like a regular job.

You will notice too, the D.I.'s are almost as tired as you. They have families and responsibilities outside of their long work days. The sergeants also want the training cycle to end. They figure if you have not changed into a military machine there is nothing they can do at this point.

Now, the only tasks for you to overcome is the long road march (10-12 miles) and the 8-10 mile run. If you have made all

the other shorter runs and marches, you will make it through. Do not dwell on how hard the physical tasks might be; just finish them. Stay focused and positives.

### **Phase III Testing**

During the last part of Basic (Phase III), you learn about maps, types of warfare chemicals, mines, other weapon systems, basic radio communication and night warfare. You will spend two to five days sleeping in the field, called bivouac. (Note: bivouac is not like camping. There is much work to be done, and it is difficult.) The Navy and Airforce may substitute different activities for bivouac.

Recruits are tested on all of the above mentioned tasks. Phase III testing seemed easier to me, but I made sure I studied whenever possible. Once you take your last phase test, you will get the feeling you are just buying time to get out, usually in a couple days. Again, you still have to be very cautious around the sergeants, but during the last few days recruits can relax more.

After Phase III testing, you will be fitted for your dress uniform and learn how to wear it. At a distance, the green polyester uniform (Army) looks crisp and sharp. Some people will associate it with pride, others will not forget how hard the uniform was to earn. You will feel pride, but mostly you will be happy just to be moving on and out of your training station.

### **Map Reading**

Map reading during training is elementary and not difficult. However, before shipping out to Basic, you should familiarize



yourself with topographical maps. Topographical maps are available at most hunting supply stores and some public libraries. Your IET book also has exactly what you need to know about maps and land/sea navigation. Most recruits have trouble with new geographical terms like contour interval, spur, and saddle. If you have any down time, usually at the firing ranges, read ahead in your IET book regarding land navigation. Do not underestimate the power of studying ahead - I can not emphasize this enough.

For testing, you will have to pick out features on a simple map. You will also have to read compass points. Again, the only thing that makes these tasks difficult is the pressure you will be under-- so know it beforehand.

### **Land mines and Chemicals**

You will learn about different types of land mines, chemicals, and weapons. The mines are fake plastic models and are simple in design. Our instructors made us dig around the fake mines and remove them carefully. Mine recognition and clearing is a simple task. You might even have a demonstration on detonating various "live" mines.

Learning different warfare chemical names and the methods used to detect them might be a challenge. Recruits learn how to adequately detect and identify several combat chemicals. Trainees use special papers or air detectors. There is also a class on how to decontaminate yourself and treat victims of chemical poisoning.

If you take the classes seriously and do not show you are bored, you can relax more during phase III. Again, tell your pla-

toon not to take training too lightly even though it seems easier during this time frame.

## **Radio Communication**

You will learn to communicate using combat radios in very specific military ways. Tactical communication class was very difficult for many soldiers. Everyone must memorize certain codes and the military alphabet. Since memorizing things in Basic Training is hard due to the stress, learn the military codes and alphabet early.

During our training cycle, we used binoculars to look at small models of equipment (about the size of baseballs). These models were located 40 feet from us. Then, we reported what we saw using the radio and proper procedures.

Most recruits will use the SALUTE method to report over the radio. SALUTE stands for, **S**ize of the enemy, **A**ctivity, **L**ocation, **U**nit, **T**ime of contact, and **E**quipment. A Drill Sergeant will be on another radio asking quick questions regarding SALUTE. Many recruits will be nervous because it is their first time utilizing a military radio.

The sergeants take a long time teaching us about various types of radios and how to use them. Use any extra time here to study areas of the IET book which give you difficulty.

## **Bivouac and Night Warfare**

Bivouac is when your company is taken to a heavily wooded area and sets camp. The area is usually within a mile of a large firing/training range. When we arrived at our site, the ser-

geants were very strict-- probably to distract us from becoming excited that we were doing something new. It is in your best interest to pay attention to details and take bivouac seriously. Of special caution, watch your weapon when you are in the field. Sleep with it! All M-16s look alike and people confuse weapons easily. If you return a weapon which does not have your serial number, you will regret ever enlisting. If you misplace your M-16 you can be imprisoned.

Bivouac made most recruits highly fatigued. You shoot all day in the hot sun, low crawl under barbed wire, and do "three second rushes" for about 200 yards. You repeat this all day, then you do it with real ammunition. Be careful who your buddy is when you are on "live" ranges. For example, my partner did three second rushes at my side while not realizing he was pointing his rifle at me when he ran. Needless to say, the D.I.'s punished him by making him pull all night guard duty and gave him food restrictions.

At night, your work does not stop. Recruits will go through night fire exercises and learn about night flares. This is very strange to watch and is a good distraction from the constant mental stress. You crawl under razor wire for about one hundred yards while live rounds and flares are flying over your head. The bullets glow (tracer rounds) in the dark and look like they are just inches away, but this is an illusion. The bullets are actually much higher than you think, but do not try standing up until you are told.

On the last night of bivouac, we shot our weapons with tracer bullets. The tracers bounced into the air like flying candles. We also peered through night vision gear. It was all very interesting to

do, but it is brief and everyone is so tired people actually fall asleep standing up. (I actually did this in Basic many times.)

Note: the Army and Marines have bivouac of various intensity and durations. However, the Air Force and Navy, sometimes have different activities to substitute.

### **Observations During Phase III of Basic**

>The D.I.'s alternate days of being less strict then very strict. The sergeants want recruits to let their guard down and misbehave, then they punish them for it. However, on average the stress decreases during Phase III.

>Even though most recruits adjust to the stress, this last phase is still very physically demanding. Between the bayonet assault course and the night fire range, you will receive several bruises and scrapes. On the bayonet course, you will crawl on your backs in a ditch full of muddy water.

>Recruits are introduced to the obstacle course during phase III. It is enjoyable, but climbing a twenty foot wet rope might give you nasty blisters. Most platoons compete with the other platoons, and the losing team does extra exercises. The obstacle course is something to look forward to if the D.I.'s are in a good mood. You will surely get muddy and tired, but the obstacle course is entertaining.

>Trainees start taking inventory and cleaning equipment more during this last phase. They are preparing for the next group of recruits who arrive only hours after you leave.

>There might be an odd day which everyone does "base duty". Our platoon was divided into small groups. Then, active duty soldiers from the base would pick the small groups for cleaning chores. My group had to cut grass on a pistol range for the entire day. We talked to the active soldiers who were sympathetic to our situation. It was relaxing to be away from the D.I.'s and the stress.

>You will learn more hand to hand combat during this stage. All recruits receive classes on hand to hand combat throughout training. The last class is longer and you are allowed longer breaks (largely due to the heat). Hand to hand combat drills are interesting to learn. However, to become a skillful fighter takes months of dedicated training. Only the fundamentals are taught during Basic.

>We started pugil stick competition during this time frame. Pugil sticks are padded sticks which look like large cotton swabs. They are used to simulate bayonet and close quarter fighting. A recruit puts on a helmet and pads, then is pitted against someone selected by the sergeant.

Starting out back to back with your opponent, the platoon surrounds the fighting arena. The whistle blows and you hit each other to score points. Recruits can not really hurt each other, but your ego might get bruised if you lose. The competition is a good distraction and somewhat fun. **Hint:** When fighting with the pugil sticks, constantly duck and jab straight at your opponent, do not use wide swings with your stick.

> During the sixth week, your platoon might be granted permission to use the phone for two minutes per person. However, if do not *expect* to use the phone, you will not be disappointed and become frustrated if you don't. The sergeants will use the phone as something to "motivate" you. Most of the time they will say you can use it, then make up a reason not to let you use it. Losing phone privileges is often used as a punishment.

### **Hints and Advice for Phase III**

The advice during this phase is really just a combination of everything you read so far. There will be a tendency for you to buddy up to the sergeants who are sometimes deceptively nice towards the end of training. Do not try to be overtly friendly. Sergeants sometimes act nice to get information out of the platoon. Remember, you are not out of training until you are on the bus leaving the base.

At night when the sergeants are gone, you can laugh and joke with your friends more than in Stage II, but always be on the look out. The moment you see a D.I. in the area, let everyone know to keep themselves under control.

Use any down time during to clean and shine your boots. Also, always be ready for locker inspections. You should help your buddy clean his area or do laundry.

I should emphasize that recruits should try to talk with friends and socialize during any down time. Maintaining friends during Basic Training reduces stress. Continue to write letters home, or re-read old ones. Start collecting phone numbers of

friends you wish to remain in contact with after you leave. Stay focused on the last day of training.

### **Chapter Summary--Important to Review**

This chapter takes you through your time at Reception and three distinct Basic Training phases. Reception is where the military processes all of your official military papers. It is also the place where recruits are issued all of their military gear and receive several vaccination shots. From the minute you arrive at the Reception Battalion, from the time you finish training, you will be under very strict military rule.

Approximately one week after you arrive, recruits are shipped "down range" to their permanent training station. Phase I is the harshest and strictest phase. All recruits during this phase are under "total control" and lock down. The reason for this tight control is to make all recruits obey the chain of command, acquire a military bearing, and work as a team. The training may be rough, but it is quick and effective. It is a good idea to remember that Phase I only lasts two or three weeks.

Phase II is where you learn more meaningful tasks. Most recruits will learn weapons training, drill and ceremony and various tactics. The environment is still stressful, but the tasks you must learn will help distract you from thinking about the pressure.

The last phase is generally easier and recruits are given more time to complete tasks. The sergeants are still watching closely, but they focus more on training than controlling. However, do not think you are finished. D.I.s still punish recruits with little reason. Stay focus and be serious until you leave.

It is important to emphasize the most important advice given in this chapter. First, never make yourself stand out. Blend in with the crowd as much as possible. Second, do not volunteer for anything until maybe the last phase. Third, always keep a close watch on your possessions and weapon. Fourth, study your training book as much as possible before training. Fifth, rest and economize your energy. Last, try to understand the mind games the drill sergeants play to make you show emotions. Do not take the sergeants too seriously and let stress roll off you.

If you can make it most of the way through Basic Training without the D.I.'s knowing your name, you will not have a hard time. Again, do not show frustration, and keep focused on the positives. Basic may seem long and difficult, but it will end. Before you know it, training will be over in just a couple months and you can start enjoying the benefits of real military life.



## Chapter 6

### Basic Training Commandments for a New Recruit

#### Summary of Helpful Hints During Basic

This is the most important chapter of this book. This section lists those things which will help make your life easier during Basic Training. These commandments are not definite, but serve as a *guide*. . This review of hints put the odds of a less stressful training time in you favor . It is important to use these tips with common sense and appropriately.

Many hints are lessons I learned from others who made painful errors. Be smart and learn from other people's mistakes while you are in training. Remember, there is no extra pay for extra work, and your primary objective is to get punished as little as possible. Basic Training is stressful enough without adding more stress.

Note that I am not supporting laziness, or not volunteering. You will have obligations and duties in Basic. Do your job and do it very well. Help others when possible and use teamwork. Go into training with a positive attitude and learn as much as possible.

In the end, you will feel stronger physically and mentally. Your military experiences will have no equal, and will undoubtedly enrich your life. Make no mistake though, it is very difficult regardless if you think you are tough, or even if you were a star high school athlete. So, when you are feeling down and frustrated during Basic Training, remember "what does not kill you, only makes you stronger".

## **The Commandments of Basic Training**

1. The first major commandment is to know your rights as a new recruit before you enlist. Once you know you are going to enlist, ask your recruiter to write your rights and other promises in your contract.. That way, if rules are violated during training, you may have a means to contest your enlistment. Remember, any promises made by the recruiter must be written into your contract.

2. Start seriously exercising at least a month before you ship out for Basic Training. You should run 2 miles almost every other day, do 40 good push-ups, and sit-ups. It is crucial that you are in top condition before you start Basic.

3. Study the Initial Entry Training (IET) book before you ship out. This book has everything a new recruit needs to know. Practice marching and learn the commands. Memorize the 3 general orders and the military alphabet. Your recruiter can help you with the IET book before you ship out.

4. Do not do anything to draw attention to yourself while in Basic. Your Drill Sergeant should not know your name until the last day of training.

5. During drill, ceremony, or inspections, try to become invisible. Mix in with your platoon and stand in the middle of formations. Become part of the crowd as soon as possible.

6. Never volunteer for anything--at least not until Phase I is over. Volunteer work is extra stressful work for no extra pay. This is only for the Basic Training period. Taking the initiative *after* training has many benefits.

7. Tell your family and friends to write letters often. You should write at least twice a week. Good news only. Be positive in your replies.

8. Do not take anything the sergeants say personally, or let them make you upset. Let daily frustrations roll off of you. Realize the mind games sergeants play. They are merely trying to frustrate you. It is crucial you never show emotions.

9. When standing at the position of "attention" never move or flinch, even if a wasp lands on your nose.

10. Stay away from any sergeant while in Basic (unless you are hurt). Do not try to talk with sergeants (unless necessary), or be friendly to them until after you are released from training.

11. After you break in your combat boots, keep one pair highly polished for inspection. Have one pair to wear, and one pair to show. Do the same with your clothes/ BDU's.

12. Always wear clean clothes, but keep laundry to a minimum. Laundry is time consuming and interrupts your sleep time. Try to wear only two sets of BDU's.

13. Always keep your locker and bunk area neat in case of a surprise inspection. Remaining organized will give you more time for rest when you need it later.

14. When issued your weapon, memorize the serial number and weapon number. Never let your weapon out of your sight! The penalty for losing it is jail time.

15. Be very careful when you go to the firing ranges. Listen to orders carefully and do not daydream while at the firing range. Penalties for safety violations are severe.

16 Always point your weapon down range at the targets. Also, make sure your weapon is on "safety" when you are not firing your weapon.

17. When you are at the cleaning area near the firing range cleaning your weapon, try to relax and rest. Look for hidden "down" time. Remember, economize your energy at every appropriate opportunity.

18. Do not fall asleep during boring films or classes. The sergeants love to catch recruits asleep during these times and institute severe punishment.

19. Bring as much extra boot polish and cleaners as possible. A high quality liquid wax is recommended. Also, buy extra Q-tips and pipe cleaners to clean your M-16.

20. Do not bring more than \$30.00 to \$40.00 to Basic Training. Do not bring extra clothes or jewelry. You will be bringing a large amount of gear back with you and you will need the room on the return trip. Pack very light when going to Basic Training.

21. Keep copies of all your records and military papers in your personal possession. Always make copies of records and never give out the originals.

22. Do not be a loner. Try to make at least two good friends you can rely upon during stressful times. Having friends is very important during training.

23. Never let your guard down, especially towards the end of training. Remain serious when you have a task to complete. Do not joke around until the D.I.'s have gone home for the day. (D.I.'s do not go home until Phase III).

24. Never fall asleep during your guard duty, or unsupervised task. Punishment is harsh.

25. Understand that the D.I.'s will be less strict one day, then very hard for no reason the next day. It is part of the game to pit you against them and each other. Never try to joke with, or buddy up to, a sergeant - even if he makes it seem O.K.

26. You should be in good physical shape going into Basic, but do not let it show. Stay mid-pack when doing exercises with

your platoon. If you do too good in the beginning you will draw attention to yourself. Control the urge to show off.

27. Always lock up your gear. Not only do the sergeants look for unlocked equipment, stealing is rampant during training.

28. Tell the leaders in your platoon to have a platoon meeting as soon as possible. Working as a group is extremely important and you should divide up morning tasks to different squads immediately. Assign tasks to specific people. Assigning yourselves tasks is the easiest way to get things done. The keyword for your platoon should be "teamwork".

29. Realize that you will be punished often for no reason in Phase I. Even if you do things perfectly, it will not deter the sergeants from reprimanding you. Just expect it and do your job as best as possible. After Phase I and II, it will get better.

30. Go to church. Even if you are not religious, now is a good time to find your religion. It is a great escape from the pressure.

31. No matter the situation, never show emotion when a sergeant is near. Do not make facial expressions, laugh, or complain. Even though this rule has been mentioned, self control is a critical skill everyone in the platoon must learn early.

32. Do not believe rumors. You will hear many--especially about going home early.

33. Take care of your feet. When possible, soak them in cold water if they are swollen. Keep them manicured and dry with foot powder. Buy a good pair of thin insoles for your boot. Also, buy "moleskin" for blisters.

34. Keep focused on the last day of training. No matter how hard it becomes, training will end. You will have down time after the first three weeks. The sergeants will let up once in a while. Look forward to shooting your weapon or throwing the grenades, or whatever gets you through the hard times. Try to be positive and do not waste energy fighting your situation. Training slowly gets better.

35. If you are really hurt or sick, go to "sick call". Even though your D.I. may yell at you, be persistent. Permanent injury is not worth being shy.

36. Do not believe every threat made by the sergeants. Many threats are empty and are used to control recruits through intimidation and fear. However, threats regarding safety at the firing ranges, stealing ammo, losing a weapon, and obeying orders should always be taken extremely seriously.

37. If a recruit is constantly in trouble, do not gang up, or resort to violence. Help him or her to perform better. Pull together, not apart. Again, teamwork is paramount.

38. Always complete tasks assigned to the best of your abilities, unless it brings unwanted attention to you. For example, your first P.T. test should be average.

38. Remember, most people make it through Basic. Millions have done it and so can you. Training seems long, but it actually lasts only a couple of months. Make the best of it, be positive, learn, and keep focused.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Military Life After Basic Training**

After Basic and advance training, the real adventure begins. Recruits are given new duty station orders. If you enlisted for more than two years, you most likely will be stationed at an overseas base. Some foreign bases allow for family relocation expenses. Unfortunately, some duty stations do not allow family members. These stations are called hardship tours and usually last only one year. There is little a new recruit can do about their new duty assignment, so whatever you receive try to enjoy it.

As stated many times in previous chapters, the military way of life is dramatically different from civilian life. It is not worse, or better, just very different. Some people find military life exciting and adapt easy. Some enjoy the economic security and benefits. However, on average, people in the military make tremendous sacrifices in the time they work each day and the separation from family members. The cost of protecting our country is very high in terms of the individual sacrifices. For this reason, there is respect and high regard for people in uniform.

Some military jobs are very similar to civilian jobs with regard to duties and hours. Non combat-oriented MOS's do not usually entail as much sacrifice or hours. Listed below are some major differences between the civilian and military life.

#### **Differences Between the Military and Civilian Life**

1. The military has more job security than most civilian jobs.

2. The military has more rules and laws to obey. There are many protocols (like saluting) and regulations you do not have in the civilian world.

3. In general, the military has more discipline. You are required to do activities such as exercise with your unit, report to morning formations, and keep inspection ready.

4. Promotions and pay raises are automatic up to the rank of E-4. Of course, you must have a clean record and serve for a specified time at each grade level to be promoted.

5. The military has its own court system and set of laws. Everyone in uniform must obey civilian laws as well as the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The military has its own lawyers which are assigned to you free of charge for legal counsel.

6. Some of your civil rights are restricted in the military. For example, you are not permitted to speak out against government policies, or the president while in uniform. You are also restricted from giving out certain sensitive information.

7. The rank structure is strictly enforced. Refusing to obey an order from a superior can result in severe punishment.

8. You are given free housing, meals, and training in the military. You are also given free medical care, generous educational benefits, and other allowances which civilian employers do not normally supply.

9. Uniforms must be worn at all times while on duty. A neat military appearance is mandatory. Haircuts are short and other dress standards are enforced.

10. The military pays for all reallocations and travel expenses associated with a change of duty. Reallocations are ordered periodically and personnel must comply.

11. After your initial contract expires, you can re-enlist for a bonus. The military can transfer you into a job which is hard to fill or vacant.

12. Unlike a civilian, all military personnel are usually required to qualify with a weapon. Weapons are either a M-16 or a pistol. Professional weapons training is consistently provided throughout a person's military career.

### **Day to Day Life in the Active Forces**

Basic and advanced skills training is strict and demanding. However, once a recruit finishes all training, regular military life will seem relaxing and easy-- at least initially. The military usually grants several days off for people recently finishing training. After training is finished, most recruits find themselves reacting to the rigors of Basic by sleeping late, eating as much food as they want, and enjoying their free time.

After visiting with family and friends, military graduates fly to their new duty station. With written orders in hand, a new recruit officially reports to the new unit and unit commander. The sergeant in charge will introduce new members to relevant staff, assign new barracks and duties.

A new enlistee usually rooms with one or two other people in dorm like facilities. You will make friends quickly and within days know all the important locations of the new base. Even though the

base is new to you, the last several months of stressful training makes adjusting seem easy.

If you are not in a combat job, you will normally work an eight to nine hour day. Some weekend work is customary. Combat personnel regularly work more hours because of field exercises. However, with recent cut-backs in the military, many more military personnel are putting in much more hours than in the past. Still, you will have plenty of personal time. Also, you can request up to thirty days vacation time. You can not take it all at once - normally, only two to four days of vacation will be approved at any one time.

Once you are settled in your new military job, your duties will become routine. You will have a direct supervisor, your sergeant. You will also have a platoon officer, such as a junior lieutenant (rank O-1). Most of the time, the people you work with on a daily basis are friendly and willing to help. Like all jobs, if you do work with a positive attitude, other personnel will be more receptive, and you will be promoted easier.

On a regular work day, you will awake around 6:00 a.m. and attend morning formation for roll call. As a group you will do morning physical training. Afterwards, around 7:00 a.m., you can go to the chow hall to eat a free breakfast. From 7:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. , you will perform your duties with ten minute breaks and meals. If you are in a combat related job, your hours are varied tremendously because combat personnel spend most of their time on training exercises. Warfare exercises can last several days and nights without a break.

After work and once you are properly relieved, you can leave base, go to the recreational areas, work out in the gym, or enjoy any other military facility. Most bases provide plenty of free facilities to utilize. Obviously, you can eat or do other activities off base, but you have to pay for them. You may even choose to live off base by yourself, but it will also cost you.

Once in awhile, your regular work day will be interrupted by military ceremonies, or special training. For example, you might have to take off work to travel to a firing range for weapons qualification. Most of the time, these tasks are a welcome break. However, you might have to work weekends, or pull extra duty occasionally.

After one or two full years of service, expect to be shipped to a different duty station. Many people like moving, but some do not like moving their family, or leaving friends. All relocation expenses are paid by the military and new duty stations may pay for extra allowances.

You can expect to move up in rank after one year. If you went to Basic as an E-1, you will automatically be promoted to E-2 (if you have a clean performance record). Most people make E-4 in less than three years. E-5 (sergeant level) is competitive and you must attend special schools before being promoted. Extra rank entitles you to extra pay and benefits. However, you also have more responsibilities and supervision of lower ranking personnel.

Most recruits who sign up for a standard four year enlistment are amazed how fast their time in the military disappears. New recruits are kept busy and many are excited by their new duty stations. At the end of a person's contract, they will be approached

by a special recruiter to re-enlist. If a soldier re-enlists, a new contract is written and a monetary bonus generally follows. Some people decide to leave the service, this is called ETS. If the person decides to leave the service, they will be shipped back to their home state with their military gear. They must keep all military issued gear until their service with the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) is complete. The gear is yours to keep and does not have to be returned after the commitment is complete.

The IRR is a current list of all people leaving the active military. In times of need (war), the military calls the IRR and the active Reserve forces for backup. IRR personnel have no commitment to attend training or other military duties. Essentially, you just keep your address and phone number current with the government so they can contact you if necessary.

### **Life in the Reserves (National Guard)**

Many people enlist in the Reserves once they leave the active military. The Reserves offer individuals an excellent way to be a part of the military and receive some benefits without the daily commitments of the active military. People leaving active duty to enlist in the Reserves keep their rank, can be promoted, and can retire with a pension.

The Reserves are actually a component of the active duty forces. A Reserve member is called to active duty for official training. After training, the person returns home and attends "drill" one week end per month and two weeks in the summer for advance training.

Untrained Reservists, usually students, attend Basic Training one summer (eight weeks) and then attend advance training the next summer (nine weeks). This type of training is called split option training because it does not interfere with school or employment.

The biggest benefit many Reserve members receive is money to attend college. There are also excellent skills and military training in the Reserves. Again, the Reserves are an good way to experience the military life without all the commitments.

However, there are some considerations to the Reserve forces. First, potential enlistees must fully understand that they can be called upon anytime to serve. Many students and workers have to frequently leave school and work to support active duty troops overseas. Also, several people during the Gulf War found themselves studying college geography one day, and flying to a war zone the next day.

Another caution is the length of a Reservist's contract. A standard enlistment is six years, not four. However, you only attend one weekend per month so it is not too disruptive (most people look forward to drill weekends). If six years is not to your liking, you can sign up for a shorter period of time, with less benefits. Recruiters do not always disclose the shorter enlistment option. It is to your advantage to ask about the shortest enlistment option possible--usually three years.

The last concern regards the limited jobs available to you. National Guard and Reserve stations are generally self contained units. For example, the Guard unit down the road might be an artillery unit. In this example, most jobs will be in the artillery area.

Support MOS's like supply clerk are available in most states. You may have to make a couple of phone calls to various units to find the position you want.

Having noted the cautions to the Reserve component, it is still a good way to experience the military. Besides the accompanying benefits, many Reserve units also support community activities.

## **Chapter Summary**

Generally, military life is not like civilian life. Even though there are sharp differences, there are also some similarities. For example, most non-combat MOS's entail similar work hours and duties as seen in the civilian world. Most differences concern strict standards of conduct and military protocols.

Several combat related jobs have much longer hours and field work. The jobs in this field are usually more exciting, but also much more physically demanding.

One of the best advantages working for the military is that all food is paid for and there are numerous recreational facilities on base. The drawback is that some of your freedoms are restricted because you must obey numerous military rules.

The Reserves have many, but not all the active duty benefits. The Reserves are an excellent way to gain military experience. Be cautious about the time length of the contract and obligations if you are considering a Reserve component. Check with a special Reserve recruiter for the details regarding restrictions of the Reserves.

In summary, if you are dutiful and have a clean performance record, your time in the military will pass very quickly. The draw-



backs to military life are the strict discipline and personal sacrifices soldiers incur. However, you will most likely leave the military with a higher rank and with many benefits. Such benefits include money for college, self-confidence, military training, and many unique memories.

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## Chapter 8

### Putting It All Together

For many, the military provides a superb means to achieve their goals. Thousands of people have served in the military and have become solid leaders and professionals. No doubt, several former military personnel use their military experience to their advantage. Most ex-military people have very fond memories of their days in uniform.

New Recruits should develop a balanced perspective regarding military life. There are many positives and negatives to the armed services. Some benefits include developing strong friendships, job security, a way out of hard living conditions, money for higher education, and an opportunity to learn job skills. If you like adventure and travel, these opportunities are usually available at some point during your military career.

The drawbacks center around personal issues and sacrifices. Once you sign your contract, it is an enforceable obligation and you can not easily resign, or quit. Strict military standards are upheld and the rules are more numerous than in the civilian world. You can not just quit, or be fired, from the military. People who leave the military without authorization generally find themselves serving time in jail and being financially punished

As I mentioned before, deciding to enlist will be one of the most difficult decisions of your life. Commitment and accepting obligations are the first real steps in becoming a responsible, respected adult. Several new recruits have never committed to any-

thing but school. Also, they have never made crucial life changing decisions. When you join the military, your life will dramatically change.

If you have read this book from cover to cover and can live with all the advantages and disadvantages about military life, make a firm decision. Once you decide whether to enlist or not to enlist, do not look back. Accept your decision and move forward.

If you sign up, keep very focused on your goals in the military. Do not be swayed. If you signed up for adventure, then find it. If you signed up for a stable job, then be the best at your job and get promoted. Whatever good reason you enlisted for, write it down and keep it with you. Your goals will see you through the hard times. This is very powerful advice, so do not underestimate it.

The most remarkable piece of advice I received before my decision to enlist came from my younger brother. He told me the military is different for everybody. Some people hate it, others love it. Only you can make the decision to sign the contract and see what is waiting on the other side of the door. Last, he said the military is only what you make of it. So make the best of your situation.

Even if the military is not what you expected once you enlist, you can find something positive in it. I am convinced that any situation has some benefit, regardless how bad the situation appears. Also, if you dislike your position in the military, remember nothing lasts forever.

If you have enlisted, start preparing yourself physically and mentally. Condition both your mind and body before you ship out.

If you prepare properly, then you will have a great advantage and Basic will be much easier.

### **If You Decide NOT to Enlist**

Many young people feel ashamed or inadequate when they end up telling the recruiter "no". The Marine's advertisement teases young people, "Do you have what it takes to be one of us?" True, not everyone is destined to be a Marine. However, plenty of Marines are not cut out to do certain civilian jobs either. Everyone is different.

You must realize advertisements are mostly hype and are designed to evoke emotions. Remember, "it takes all types of people to make the world go around." Every human being on earth has strengths and weaknesses. You are not inadequate if you are not the military type. It simply makes you different.

People can find adventure, earn money, learn a skill, and develop confidence with, or without the military. I would consult high school or college career counselor for more advice. Today's counselors are well trained to get you on the right job track.

However, once you have a specific career goal, you must act upon your goal. Follow your goals and do not stray from them. One of the biggest benefits of the military is that recruits learn to follow their goals. The only difference in the civilian world is that you must make yourself focus on your goals.

## **A Summary of this Book's Objectives**

Chapter One gave eight points which outlined how this book could help a potential recruit. Below is a recap of those points and how each point was answered.

This book provides:

1. A way for you to balance what the recruiters and military advertisements tell you. Main point: Recruiters are highly professional and trained individuals. They are selected on their intelligence, polished image and ability to "sell" the military. Do not be easily swayed by flashy commercials, or various monetary incentives. Have your personal goals written down and ask the recruiters how the military can meet those goals. Remember, the military will help you achieve many goals, but it will come at a price.

2. How to avoid making mistakes before you enlist. Main point: Know exactly what you want out of the military before you enlist. Make certain all promises are written down in your contract before you enlist. Keep clear copies of all your records. Enlist for a minimal amount of time, or enlist in the Reserves if you want to just try out the military.

3. What to expect during Basic Training. Main point: Review Chapter Five. In short, do not expect anything pleasant until the very end of training. Training is not too difficult, but it is tough. Do not expect any positive motivations, do not believe rumors, and do not think you are tougher than a drill sergeant. What you can expect is long physical work outs, being fatigued most of

the time, and being nervous. On the positive side, you will be in the best physical shape of your life, meet life long friends, do activities the civilian world does not offer.

4. Ways to make your life easier during Basic Training. Main point: Again, review Chapter Five and Six "Commandments" section. The single best piece of advice which will make your life easier during Basic is thoroughly read your Basic Training handbook before shipping out. Your recruiter can give you a copy weeks beforehand, so put your time to good use and memorize it. Other important tips are to be in top physical shape before training, blend in with the crowd, never volunteer, and have a positive mental attitude. Millions of others made it through and so can you.

5. What to study and know before shipping off to training. Main point: Study your Basic Training Handbook, or if you do not have one, study the Appendix of this book and the "Commandments" section.

6. The benefits of training and the military life. Main point: The military offers several legitimate benefits. Such benefits include, a steady paycheck, sound job training, housing, medical, money for education, free square meals, and travel.

7. The limitations of military life. Main point: Many benefits of military life are balanced out by some disadvantages. There are long hours of duty, strict discipline, following undesirable or-

ders for activities, frequent moves, separation from family, years of service obligation, and some dangerous job related tasks.

8. General information. Main point: The entire book has useful hints and advice. Pay attention to all the chapter summaries and the Appendix.

### **The Final Word**

Remember, define what you want from the military and how you are going to obtain your objectives from the military before you enlist. If you are not going to retire in the military, enlist for as brief a commitment as possible. If you are going to remain in the military for ten or more years, enjoy all the military has to offer - the benefits, the excitement and the responsibility. Do whatever it takes to be promoted and participate in as many training programs as possible. The Armed Forces has some of the best benefits available anywhere, so take advantage of them. Last, be at peace and be happy with whatever decision you make. Good Luck!

## APPENDIX

### **Important Items to Know Before Basic Training**

The following pages contain critical information which you should know thoroughly before shipping to your Initial Entry Training (IET). It is not everything you need to know, but most of the following pages are what I think is the most important. Most items are similar to what is in the IET handbook, which is available from your recruiter. You should secure a copy of the IET handbook as soon as you sign your enlistment contract. The handbook contains *everything* you need to learn. The handbook tells you how to march, shoot your weapon, put on your gas mask, orders you need to memorize, and much more.

There are several good reasons to start learning the IET information early. The main reason is that it is far easier to learn new information outside of the stressful Basic Training environment. Even if you read over your handbook once in the comfort of your home, you will be ahead of your peers who wait until they arrive at their duty station. However, I would not just read over the IET handbook, but memorize it early. Understanding and memorizing information you need to know before being shipped off is the best piece of advice this book offers.

Note, this section does not contain all you need to know, but does have important things which will help in case you can not secure an IET handbook. If all you do is study this section, you will have an edge over your fellow recruits.



## **Special Note: Differences & Similarities of all Basic Trainings**

As mentioned earlier, all Basics have common core components. Therefore, some of the information in this guide is useful, regardless which branch of the armed services you select. However, not all of the contents can be used outside the Army and Marine Corps.

The majority of Basic Trainings focus on learning military discipline, following orders, marching, and various military protocols. The "General Orders" are similar in all branches, but not precisely the same. Memorize your service's General Orders.

Tasks which are not the same for the Air Force and Navy center on weapons training with the M-16, field exercises, ship training and equipment training. Obviously, a person in the Air Force or Army is not going to have training on sea survival.

However, most real hands on training take place during advance training and not during Basic. Use common sense to understand which hints transfer across services. Also, use common sense when to apply the suggestions given in this guide. It is critical that you ask your recruiter for assistance in securing a copy of your branch's Basic Training book for new recruits. Study this book before you ship off for actual training.

In the end, it is always wise to do your assigned task, do it well, and remain positive.

## **Glossary of Military Terms**

Familiarize yourself with the following terms. Memorization is not necessary, but helpful. These are not all the terms you will need to know, but they are some of the most frequently used.

1. AIT--Advance Individual Training. Comes after Basic Training and prepares you for your specific military job (MOS)
2. AWOL-Absent Without Leave. A serious, punishable offense when a soldier goes someplace without permission. Usually a recruit/soldier who runs away from base is AWOL.
3. CLP-Cleaner Lubricant Preservative. This is weapon oil, you will use it often to clean your rifle.
4. CW-Chief Warrant Officer. Usually a number comes after the CW, like CW2 or CW4. Treat these special officers with respect (salute them), even though they are generally technicians.
5. FM--Field Manual. There are several hundred different field manuals for all weapons, machinery and protocols. FM's are instruction booklets.
6. FTX--Field Training Exercise. This is like a bivouac. It is when you camp in the field for several days and participate in war games/training.
7. I.E.T.--Initial Entry Training or Basic Training
8. I.G. Inspector General. This officer or department investigates fraud or abuses within the military. Soldiers can anonymously write this office if they feel their individual rights have been violated.
9. JAG--Judge Advocate General. This is the legal branch of the service. A soldier can find free legal counsel in this department.

10. LAW--Light Anti-tank Weapon. Sometimes called the AT-4 (Anti-tank -4). This is a lightweight shoulder fired rocket; like a short tube.

11. MOPP--Mission Oriented Protective Posture--This is the full rubber/fabric chemical suit. You will be issued a MOPP chemical suit at Basic.

12. MOS--Military Occupational Specialty. This is your military job, like infantry, supply clerk, pilot, or other military position.

13. NCO or Noncom--Non Commissioned Officer. These are sergeants and they usually have 3 or more stripes( not bars) showing on their uniforms.

14. PMCS--Preventative Maintenance Checks and Services. Anytime you clean or maintain equipment from tanks to rifles you are doing PMCS.

15. PT--Physical Training. This is the daily exercise program.

16. SALUTE--Size, Activity, Location, Unit, Time, Equipment. Use this acronym to report information (usually on the radio) about the enemy.

17. SOP--Standard Operating Procedure. The standard military way tasks are done. SOP's are specific steps to any military activity.

18. SPORTS--Slap, Pull, Observe, Release, Tap, Shoot. This is done when your M-16 jams or misfires. You will need to memorize what SPORTS stands for and perform each function. This is generally easy in practice.

19. UCMJ--Uniform Code of Military Justice. This is the unique laws governing only military personnel.

## **Military Alphabet**

\*Memorize the following. You will need to thoroughly know the military alphabet for various things, especially radio communication.

A (Alpha) B(Bravo) C(Charlie) D(Delta) E(Echo) F(Fox-trot)

G(Golf) H(Hotel) I(India) J(Juliet) K(Kilo) L(Lima)

M(Mike) N(November) O(Oscar) P(Papa) Q(Quebec)

R(Romeo) S(Sierra) T(Tango) U(Uniform) V(Victor)

W(Whiskey) X(X-ray) Y(Yankee) Z(Zulu).

Example. If you were told to read the following in a radio: Shoot at grid AHOY 124. You would say in the microphone, "Shoot at grid Alpha Hotel Oscar Yankee 1-2-4".

\*Note: When saying numbers, the only real numbers that are spoken differently is 9, 5, and 3. 9 is pronounced, "Niner", 5 is "Fife", and 3 is "Tree"

## **Structure, Rank, and Chain of Command**

For Basic Training, you must learn the group structure of the military. Be familiar with the following units which are listed from largest to smallest.

Brigade

(Consists of 2 or more Battalions)

Battalion

(Consists of 2 or more Companies)

Company

(Consists of 4 Platoons)

Platoon

(About 40-50 soldiers)

Squad

(About Ten soldiers)

A Brigade is commanded, or headed by a full colonel

A Battalion is headed by a lieutenant colonel

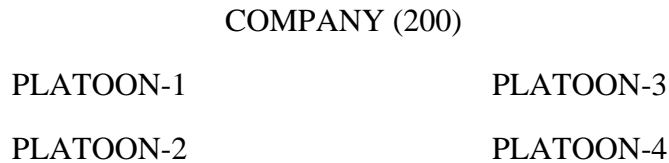
A Company is headed by a captain

A platoon is headed by a lieutenant

A squad is headed by the highest noncommissioned rank, like a sergeant.

In Basic, you will be assigned to a platoon (40-50 people). Your platoon will be assigned to a company (200 people). Usually there are 4 platoons to a company.

The following diagram will help you understand how your Basic Training group will be organized.



## **Rank**

You must learn the rank structure of the military and who is in charge. The higher the rank, the more in charge an individual is over all those below him/her. Your IET book will have pictures of what specific ranks look like. You must memorize the rank insignia and their order. Most people have the most difficult time memorizing the different sergeant ranks, so spend more time on them.

The following are the officer ranks. Officers are always higher than enlisted ranks. The lowest ranking officer is still higher than the highest ranking enlisted non-commissioned officer, which is a sergeant.

Remember two things. Officers do NOT have stripes of any kind to show their rank. If the rank shines, salute it. Never, salute a person's stripes.

The Generals:                   **General of the Army**  
  (Five Silver Stars)

**General**  
  (4 Silver Stars)

**Lieutenant General**  
  (3 Silver Stars)

**Major General**  
  (2 Silver Stars)

**Brigadier General**  
  (One Star)

Generals are very high ranking officers. They usually command thousands of people and are in charge of strategy, not day to day tasks. You will rarely see Generals.

The next set of officers are usually in charge of administrative tasks. They also oversee large groups of people

**Colonel**  
  (Silver Eagle)

**Lieutenant Colonel**  
  (Silver Leaf)

**Major**  
(Gold Leaf)

**Captain**  
(Two Silver Bars)

**First Lieutenant**  
(One Silver Bar)

**Second Lieutenant**  
(One Gold Bar)

In between commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers (sergeants), there exist Warrant Officers. Warrant Officers are highly specialized technicians, such as a pilot. They do not have the same administrative duties as regular officers, but you must salute them and treat them with the same respect. They can give orders to anyone listed below them, including all enlisted ranks. (Sergeants are enlisted).

The Warrant officer structure is simple. Warrant officer 1, Chief Warrant officer 2, 3, 4 and Chief Warrant officer 5.

During Basic, you will be surrounded by enlisted ranks, only seeing a few officers. The sergeant ranks are the hardest to learn because many look alike. Memorize the following enlisted ranks from highest to lowest. Again, consult your IET handbook for pictures.



**Sergeant Major of the Army**  
**Command Sergeant Major**  
**Sergeant Major**  
**1st Sergeant**  
**Master Sergeant (E-8)**  
**Sergeant First Class (E-7)**  
**Staff Sergeant (E-6)**  
**Sergeant (E-5)**  
**Corporal (E-4)**  
**Specialist (E-4)**  
**Private First Class (E-3)**  
**Private (E-2)**  
**Private (E-1)**

**\*Note:** The above ranks are primarily for the Army, but they generally follow other branches. If you are in the Air Force, Navy, or Marines, there will be some differences. When in doubt to who outranks who, look at the (E) or (O) classification. A higher rank in any branch can still give orders to someone of a lower rank from a different branch of the military. For example, a Staff Sergeant (E-6) in the Army can give orders to a Corporal (E-4) in the Marines. A Captain (O-3) in the Army can give orders to a Petty Officer (E-4) in the Navy. (Remember, all officers (O) outrank enlisted (E) personnel.)

**Important:** You must memorize the names of who is in charge at your base; from the battalion commander all the way to

your platoon sergeant. You will receive these names when you arrive at your station.

You will also be required to know the names of the civilian chain of command. Most often, the civilian executive branch gives orders to the military branch. For example the top commander in chief is the President of the United States. Next in command is the Secretary of Defense, etc.

### **Military Time**

Understanding military time is not difficult if you understand this trick. After 12:00 o'clock noon, add one. For example, 1:00 o'clock PM is 1300 (pronounced thirteen hundred, NOT one thousand three hundred.)

If the time is before noon, or in the morning, it is much like regular time, but with a zero in front of the time. For example, 3:00 in the morning is 0300 and pronounced, "Zero three hundred hours".

Familiarize yourself with the following chart:

Civilian Time	Military Time
12:01 am =	0001
1:00 am	0100 (zero, one hundred hours)
2:00 am	0200 (zero, two hundred hours)
3:00 am	0300 (zero, three hundred hours)
/	
to 12:00 noon =	1200 (twelve hundred hours)
1:00 PM	1300 (thirteen hundred hours)
2:00pm	1400 (fourteen hundred hours)

3:00pm	1500 (fifteen hundred hours)
4:00pm	1600 (1600 hundred hours)
/	
12:00 Midnight	2400 (twenty-four hundred hours)

## **Salutes and Honors**

The sergeants will teach you how to salute during Basic. Always salute a superior officer, but never salute a enlisted person, especially a sergeant. The rule of thumb is, if it shines, salute it. Never salute stripes.

Also, anytime you hear the National Anthem, or the raising/lowering the flag during Basic, stop what you are doing and salute at attention. If you do not stop and salute, you will be punished.

Other important items to remember: Never salute indoors and never call a sergeant "sir". Only call an officer "sir" or "ma'am".

## **Drill and Ceremony (D and C)**

Your IET handbook outlines what you need to know about D and C.

D and C is Basically fancy marching, protocols and weapons inspection. It is difficult to describe verbally the functions of D and C., so check with your recruiter for pointers. Try to find someone to physically demonstrate how to perform various D and C activities. Do not spend much time memorizing all the D and C terms, but do memorize the most common commands.

The most common commands are:

About Face	Attention	At Ease	Rest
Stand-At-Ease	Counter Column	Halt	Post
Parade Rest	Quick	Time	
Double Time			
Present Arms	Port Arms	Inspection Arms	
At Close Intervals	Dress Right Dress		

Some actions will be done with your weapon. At first, most commands may seem difficult, but with just a little practice you will see that it is easy.

The biggest hint about D and C is to listen for the *preparatory* command before the actual *execution* of the command. For example, when the sergeant yells, "Forward. . . March", the preparatory command is "Forward", you do not do anything but prepare yourself mentally for the next command which is "March". If the sergeant said "About. . .Face", after the word "About" and the slight pause, on the word "Face", you turn around. Only act (do something) after the pause and on the second word (execution command). Most commands are given in these two parts; preparatory and execution.

D and C is probably one of the areas which is the hardest to learn. I can not emphasize enough how important it is to learn the drills before you enter Basic.

Inspection Arms is a common D and C drill. This procedure involves your M-16 and can be done for either common, or ceremonial reasons. Your IET handbook outlines the six steps of "Inspection Arms". The main purpose of this drill is to make sure you present an unloaded and clean weapon to a superior.

The tricky part to "Inspection Arms" is pulling the charging handle back and locking it back to expose the empty chamber. You must do this without looking, and in a quick manner. Unless you have permission and access to a National Guard Armory to practice with a weapon, you must wait until you are assigned your rifle at Basic Training. This is a difficult drill, so do not waste time to learn it. While your peers might be playing around, practice this drill often. Look over the steps in your handbook to familiarize yourself beforehand.

## **Guard Duty**

Guard duty serves an important function. During Basic, it serves to teach you discipline, responsibility and stamina. You will be very tired when you are on guard duty. Never fall asleep on duty. You and your entire platoon will be punished if you fall asleep.

Usually you will have to do guard duty in one hour shifts with a buddy. Your job is to be quiet, make sure everyone is in their bed and nobody leaves the barracks. Always report to the night sergeant anything unusual or any problems you had during your watch.

## **General Orders (for the Army)**

Memorize the following orders before you leave for training.

General Order number 1: I will guard everything within the limits of my post and quit my post only when properly relieved.

General Order number 2: I will obey my special orders and perform all my duties in a military manner.

General Order number 3: I will report violations of my special orders, emergencies, and anything not covered in my instructions to the commander of the relief.

Note: The above orders are primarily for the Army. However, other branches have very similar orders. Your recruiter can help.

### **Map Reading**

During Basic, you will have to identify features on a map. The features are straightforward and easy to find once you familiarize yourself with them. I would suggest buying a cheap topographical map in a sporting goods store or find a map in the library. Study the following map features:

1. Hill
2. Ridge
3. Valley
4. Saddle
5. Depression
6. Draw
7. Spur
8. Cliff

Most recruits have trouble with features # 4-8.

You will also have to know how to find map grid coordinates. Since this is somewhat of a complicated task, the field sergeants hold a special, all day class on the subject of map reading. If you are in another branch of the service, navigation classes will be similar. Because special classes are given, there is no need to go into detail here about map reading. However, as soon as you receive your IET (well in advance of being shipped off), be familiar with map and grid terminology.

## Maintaining Your M-16

You will have to take apart your M-16 in less than one minute. The hardest part of this test is getting the hand guards off. If you can practice at a National Guard Armory or Reserve station with an M-16 do so for as long as possible. Of course you will need permission and direct supervision. Ask an officer. Remember, any practice you can perform before Basic will help tremendously.

Once you have broken your rifle down according to the standards in your IET book, you will learn how to clean and lubricate your weapon. You will find your weapon is a very durable piece of metal, so clean vigorously. Although, for the first couple of inspections you will probably fail to pass, do not worry, your suppose to fail no matter how well you clean.

Of special note when cleaning your M-16. Spread out your cleaning towel and put all rifle pieces on it. Never put any piece of the M-16 on the bare ground. Be very careful with the bolt assembly. Especially be careful with small parts and the tiny retaining pin. Parts from the bolt assembly are easily lost and you will get into the worst type of trouble if you loose any piece of your weapon.

Again, details here are difficult to describe. But do not worry, you will have several classes on your weapon and how to care for it. The best advice is to read over and familiarize yourself with the M-16's terms.

The major terms to be familiar with are:

1. Pivot pin
2. Upper/Lower Receiver
3. Charging Handle
4. Bolt Carrier
5. Bolt
6. Firing Pin
7. Retaining Pin

8. Bolt Cam Pin 9. Buffer 10. Extractor

Additional notes about the M-16. Never call your M-16 a gun, it is a weapon. Memorize both your weapon's serial and weapon number as soon as you receive it. Never let your M-16 out of your sight. Buy extra pipe cleaners to maintain your weapon. Make sure you use plenty of cleaning oil. Last and most important, always make sure your weapon is on "SAFE", when you are not actually firing.

### **Function Check**

You are required to perform a "Function Check" on your M-16. This Basically demonstrates that your weapon is not loaded and it works properly. The procedure is simple, yet many recruits fail this test.

It is best to have someone demonstrate this test to you. With the selector switch on the M-16 turned to "Safe", you will pull the charging handle back and squeeze the trigger to see if the hammer falls (it should not fall). Then you repeat this procedure with the selector on "Semi", then on "Burst". The whole procedure takes less than one minute. Your IET handbook has pictures and steps for the whole process.

### **Clearing Your Weapon**

Even though the M-16A2 is a fine weapon, it still has a tendency to jam, especially the ones they give you at Basic. To clear a jammed weapon you must perform what is known as SPORTS. SPORTS stands for Slap the magazine up, Pull back the charging



handle, Observe the chamber, Release the handle to feed a new round, Tap the forward assist button, and Shoot.

You will have many classes on your M-16, especially about correcting malfunctions. Once you get the hang of it, you will do SPORTS in about ten seconds.

### **Special Notes about Weapons Training**

Once training starts in full swing, you will be spending a large amount of time learning about and firing your weapon. The M-16's used for training are not as accurate as the ones you will use for active duty. On average however, the M-16's are accurate to great distances.

For close targets, aim at the center of the target. For targets far away, aim just above or at the head. Remember, each rifle will be slightly different. Know how your weapon shoots. Does it shoot high, low, or straight? You will learn at the firing ranges how to change the aim of your weapon. This is call "sighting", or "zeroing".

Last, treat your weapon with the utmost respect. Mistakes with your weapon can be deadly. However, do not be afraid to shoot your M-16. It does not recoil (buck) much, and is easy to fire. Once you get over your anxiety and relax, you will notice how much better you will shoot. Everyone who shoots must meet the minimum standards. Usually to qualify, a recruit must hit 24 out of 40 rounds at various targets.

## **Protective Mask (Gas Mask)**

You will have to properly put on your gas mask within six seconds. This is not easy to do and will require practice. Once you are assigned your mask, practice with it any time you get a chance. The more you practice, the easier it will be to meet the six second limit. The biggest hint here is to have your mask correctly put in its case for easy and rapid removal.

Also, when the sergeant gives an indication of "gas", the person who sees the sign should give the proper gestures and yell "Gas!" before putting on his/her gear. More than once we had to do push-ups for not giving the sign of a gas attack once it was discovered. Never remove your gas mask unless specifically told to do so. Furthermore, never take off your mask before the "all clear" signal is given.

## **Basic First Aid**

Usually you will learn about first aid during Phase 1 of training, although first aid training varies. You will be given classes on basic first aid and treatment for chemical attacks. After long classes, you will be tested in small groups (like most other phase testing).

Your IET book describes exactly what you need to know. I would recommend you just familiarize yourself with the first aid terms. Then I would memorize the first aid steps and procedures in order.

Below is a list of the most common steps in first aid. Learn them in order:

1. When you approach a victim, the first thing you do is check for responsiveness.
2. Check for breathing.
3. Check for bleeding.
4. Shock
5. Fractures.

Under each step, there are specific, but basic things you must do. If you memorize the steps first, then the specifics, it will be easier for you to learn.

**Review of Items You Need to Know from Your Handbook**  
Memorize the following before you ship out to Basic Training.

1. Military Alphabet
2. Rank--Be able to recognize and describe each officer and enlisted rank.
3. Chain of Command--Name each person in charge of your training station. Also, name the civilian chain of command, starting with the President. (This information will be given to you.)
4. Common Drill and Ceremony/Marching commands
5. All three general orders.
6. In order, learn the first aid steps.

Familiarize yourself with the following. This means being able to easily recognize these items, but you do not have to necessarily memorize them immediately.

1. Military terms
2. Military time
3. Map features
4. M-16 parts
5. Function Check
6. Correcting a malfunction (SPORTS)

### **General Enlistment Information**

Taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)

This test is required of all military personnel regardless of service branch and MOS. It is a three hour, multiple choice test. The major sections of the test measure mechanical aptitude, clerical, electronic, mathematical and other job areas. The test is design to find your strengths.

The best advice before you officially take this test is to take practice tests. The more practice ASVAB tests you take, the more you will increase your score. Many libraries and book stores have books which will guide you on taking the ASVAB.

Once you have taken three or four practice tests, get a good night sleep before the actual test (eight hours or more). Proper rest is very important, do not underestimate it. On the test day, make sure you eat a moderate size breakfast or dinner with plenty of juice or water. Do your best on the ASVAB because your score will de-

termine what jobs you can do in the military. The higher the score, the more options you have available to you.

### **Jobs in the Military (MOS)**

The military is the biggest employer in the United States. Most civilian jobs can also be found in the military. There are over 2000 enlisted job specialties which are organized with 12 large groups. You should take career tests at your high school or college career center to determine what your job interests are. Make sure you are absolutely positive which military job you want. Once you sign your contract, you can not change your mind.

Below are the major groups of occupations within the military. Each group has different jobs nested under it. For example, the Combat group has infantry, armor, and artillery jobs.

- |                           |                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Combat                 | 7. Service (Law, supply, support) |
| 2. Health Care            | 8. Mechanic                       |
| 3. Human Service          | 9. Electronic, Electrical Repair  |
| 4. Media/Public Relations | 10. Construction                  |
| 5. Engineering, Science   | 11. Machine operations            |
| 6. Administrative         | 12. Transportation                |

### **Pay**

Military personnel are on salary. This means you are paid the same amount regardless of the hours you work. Sometimes you may work less than 40 hours per week, and sometimes you could work 60 hours per week. Your recruiter and various books have pay charts. Most recruits will be paid the same amount for their entire training cycle.

A new recruit enters the military as an E-1. Some special bonuses and education credits will earn you higher rank. For example, if you have been in the Scouts or were an Eagle Scout, you can enlist at a higher rank. If you get a buddy to sign up, you will go in as an E-2. Finally, if you have college credit hours, you can enter at a higher rank. People with a college degree can enter in as a Specialist (E-4).

Below is the normal pay for people going through Basic Training and Advance Individual Training. Promotions to E-4 are usually rapid and take place within 2 years.

#### 1997-98 Pay Schedule: New Recruits in Training

E-1 (Private)	\$900.90 per month
E-2 (Private)	\$1010.10
E-3(PFC)	\$1049.70
E-4 (Specialist)	1113.60

\*Remember, you will have taxes taken out of the above amounts. This means your monthly paycheck will be smaller than what is shown. Also, if you are married or have children, you will be given extra money per month.

#### **General Enlistment Qualifications**

Age: Between 17 and 35 years

Citizenship: Must be a U.S. citizen or have documents stating that you are permanent resident of the U.S.

Physical: Height: Males must be between 5 feet and 6 feet 8 inches.

Females must be between 4 feet 10 inches and 6 feet 8 inches.

**Weight:** Each height has a minimum and maximum weight allowance.

\*In general, you must be in good physical shape and not suffering from any major illnesses like diabetes or severe allergies. You must have all limbs and correctable eyesight (with both eyes.) The military can discriminate against people with physical handicaps.

Education: Must have at least a high school diploma. GED's are sometimes not acceptable.

Personal History: You can not have any felony convictions. Also, you can not have several minor offenses. The military does not want any discipline problems and they are much more selective now than in the past. The military wants willing recruits who can easily meet the standards. You will be given a chance to explain any past problems.

Marriage Status: You can be married or single. However, the military may not let you enlist if you have several children and are not married.

Grants/Waivers: The military will examine each individual case and may waive certain requirements. If you need a waiver, talk with the person in charge, usually a Captain or First Sergeant.

If there is a problem in your past, take responsibility for it and do not make up excuses. Explain legitimate reasons for problems. For example, if you have a DWI offense on your record, tell the recruiter what you did was wrong, you learned from your mistakes, was appropriately punished, and grew from the experience. You

are now committed to changing your life and ready to be a positive part of the military. Good luck!