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Preface

I knew absolutely nothing about the military when I entered basic training. I had no military family history and no prior desire to ever join the military. It was on the tragic morning of September 11, 2001 that I realized what I was taking for granted all these years. Freedom, as wonderful as it is, is an uphill struggle, and comes with an enormous responsibility. It wasn’t so much a decision, but a calling, that I joined the military - the Army Reserves.

I departed for basic training without an ounce of military knowledge one month after September 11, 2001. However, I used this lack of knowledge to my advantage. I took notes on everything, with the ambition that no recruit would have to go through basic training like I did, with no knowledge of what was in store for me. I listened to hundreds of Service members share their advice, tips, and tricks on surviving basic training. When I was deployed shortly after basic training to serve in Operation Enduring/Iraqi Freedom, I had the time to organize the notes, add to them, and assemble the most practical basic training guide ever written.

The following guide is a collection of some of the more important sections of my book The Ultimate Basic Training Guidebook: Tips, Tricks and Tactics for Surviving Boot Camp. This guide is a great place to get started on your road to basic training.

Michael Volkin
Prepare Yourself Early

“The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you.”


To give yourself a major advantage before you depart for basic training, it is imperative that you start thinking and acting like a Service member. This guide will help you begin that journey.

First, start exercising early in the morning. During basic training, your organized physical training sessions will be conducted in the morning before breakfast. Therefore, a couple weeks before you start basic training, make it a habit to get up at 4:30 a.m. Don’t just get up and watch television! Get up and follow the workouts described in Chapter 2 of this book. I want to emphasize what a tremendous advantage this will give you.

Stop munching on chips and cookies. During basic training, there is no snacking. By training your body early to stop snacking, you will help reduce your hunger urges during basic training.

If you smoke or use chewing tobacco, I highly recommend you begin a program to quit immediately. There will be no tobacco products allowed at basic training. It is better to develop a plan to quit on your own terms, rather than the military’s terms. Too many recruits come to basic training and experience a variety of withdrawal symptoms. This only makes the already tough nine weeks of vigorous basic training unnecessarily tougher for you.

Put down and step away from those boil-and-eat noodles you are picking up at the market, ten packs for a buck. Throw away the bologna. Instead, cook yourself lean beef, chicken, fish, and pasta dishes. Your body will appreciate the consumption of healthier foods, and this nourishment will compliment your workout.
During basic training you will rarely get eight hours of sleep—five to seven hours is normal. Train your body to go to bed about 9:00 p.m. This way, when you get to basic training you won’t be lying in bed awake when everyone else is sleeping. Here is another tip: consider the time zone where your basic training will be conducted. If you are on the West coast and you will be training on the East coast, there is a three-hour time difference. Training yourself to go to bed at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time means going to bed at 6:00 p.m. on the West coast. Likewise, waking up at 4:30 a.m. Eastern Time means waking up at 1:30 a.m. Pacific Standard Time.

Everyone is different, but it generally takes four to seven days to adjust to a new sleep schedule. Will this change be uncomfortable and even frustrating? Yes. But you know that already, and you will adjust and survive—and basic training will be that much easier.

**Physical Fitness Preparation Hot Tip:**

**Maximize Your Physical Fitness Test (PFT) Score**

- During a PFT, lowering your body and raising it to the starting position is considered one full repetition. Save energy during a fitness test by using gravity to let your body fall. However, during practice you will want to lower your body in a controlled manner to build muscle.

- When taking a PFT, you may have to wait in a long line before it is time to perform your push-ups or sit-ups. About five minutes before it’s your turn, perform just a few push-ups or sit-ups (depending on which portion of the test you’re waiting to take). Doing this will increase your blood flow and prepare your muscles for the task at hand.

- Avoid muscle failure during a PFT when doing the push-ups and sit-ups. When your muscles approach failure, rest for a little while, and then start back up again. Be sure to rest in an authorized position, which will be explained to you before the PFT begins.

- Sometimes a PFT grader will not count a repetition for various reasons (i.e., didn’t come up high enough on a sit-up, or down far enough on a push-up). When this happens, make a deliberate and obvious attempt to correct your form. Doing this will let the grader know that you heard his remark and the problem is being rectified. Always focus on form. Try not to waste energy on bad repetitions.

- Pace your breathing and speed on the running portion of the test. Many recruits get anxious during the run and take off running full speed (or nearly full speed) when the whistle blows. There are many reasons why you should avoid doing this. By starting slow on the run, you will be passing others one-half mile down the road, which is
motivational.
Drill Instructors: The Mental Game

“Keep your fears to yourself, but share your courage with others.”
—Robert Lewis Stevenson

Surviving basic training is much more a mental challenge than a physical one. This chapter will teach you how Drill Instructors view recruits and what you can do to win their respect and the respect of your fellow recruits.

What to Expect

Drill Instructors are among the finest Service members in the military. Anyone who has been through basic training and served out their commitment to the United States military will tell you this. They receive extensive training to learn how to best to test your physical and mental toughness. Drill Instructors can be both physically and mentally intimidating. It is good to know this going in, so you know what to expect and how to act (and interact) with them.

Drill Instructors can be easily identified by their campaign hats. The hat to the left (Figure 1) is for male instructors; the hat below (Figure 2) is for female instructors.

For the first time in your life you will need to ask permission to go to the bathroom, to talk, to eat, etc. Your personality, as you know it, will be lost and you will be expected to think and act like everyone else. The logical question everyone asks is why does the military do this? This is not done to scare you. Rather, it is intended to prepare you. I cannot stress enough the importance of mental toughness. So swallow your pride and ego and pay close attention to the orders you receive.

Drill Instructors have extensive experience dealing with recruits, and are trained to make your life as hellish as possible. Never (and I repeat) never say “Sorry, sir!” or
“Thank you, sir!” to a Drill Instructor. Ninety percent of what you should (and will) say is “Drill Instructor, yes Drill Instructor!” and “Drill Instructor, no Drill Instructor!”

Harsh criticism (i.e., calling you names, screaming, and so forth) is common for Drill Instructors. They want to see if you can take a shot to your ego. The worst thing you can do mentally is to take criticism from a Drill Instructor personally. Remember, it is never personal. Know all the while that they cannot physically harm you in any way.

The mission of a Drill Instructor is to convert you from a civilian to a Service member. It is their job to break you down and build you up. You have joined the best military in the world. Your transition from civilian to Service member will be taught in a disciplined and rigorous manner. Superior training equals superior Service members.

**How to Gain Respect from Other Recruits and your Drill Instructors**

At the beginning of basic training, you will notice there are two types of recruits: the bosses and the workers.

The bosses are the “go get ‘em,” “gung-ho,” “listen to what I say,” recruits. The bosses love to shout orders at other recruits. They think they know what to do all the time—maybe because of their family has a proud military history, or because they had a friend who just finished basic training. Regardless of their reason for trying to act like a leader, most of them get themselves into trouble. The other recruits don’t listen to them because they don’t respect the bosses. Leaders are followed because they are respected (or in some cases feared). Drill Instructors love to degrade and embarrass hotshot recruits.

The other type of recruit, the worker, is more passive than the boss. These recruits follow what anyone says. They appear to be intimidated by Drill Instructors and they are easily persuaded. The workers will be the quiet type, waiting for someone, anyone, to tell them what to do and where to be. These recruits often get into trouble because Drill Instructors can smell fear. And guess what? Fear isn’t allowed in the military—the U.S. military, anyway. So a Drill Instructor thinks he must pay special attention to any recruit who displays even a whiff of fear.

I know what you are thinking. If a Drill Instructor goes after bosses and workers, how can a recruit be successful at basic training without being a favorite target for Drill Instructors?

First of all, you will get singled out in basic training. Like death and taxes, it’s going
to happen. However, there are many ways you can minimize special attention from Drill Instructors. The answer to minimizing special attention from Drill Instructors is to find the middle ground between a boss and a worker.

Finding the Middle Ground

**Small Talk.** The first thing I recommend after you get assigned to a platoon (platoon, company, or flight depending on service) is to engage in small talk with everyone. Have a conversation with each individual in your platoon. How do you do that? Simply approach them, so they know you made the effort to initiate a conversation. Remember, these other recruits don’t know you. So leave at home any shyness or reservation you had in the past about meeting new people. You will be with recruits from all around the country who are in the same situation you are. You can talk to them about where they are from, how many siblings they have, what sports they play, and anything else that comes to mind. During that conversation, be sure to include at least one compliment about them or their hometown. This small talk will make them feel good about themselves, and most of them will like and begin to respect you.

However, a word of warning is in order! If you are a male complimenting a part of a female’s body (or vice versa), they could take the compliment in a manner you did not intend. You do not know how sensitive or politically correct the person next to you is going to be, so be aware of the words you use.

**Understanding your Drill Instructor:** Now that most of your platoon members respect your personality and friendliness, the next step is to get positive attention from your Drill Instructors. The best thing you can do is understand the job of a Drill Instructor. Why would your Drill Instructor become a Drill Instructor? Think about this question for a moment.

Put this guide down for fifteen seconds and ask yourself that question: *Why would your Drill Instructor become a Drill Instructor?*

Why would this individual undergo an intensive training school comprised of ridicule and tough physical fitness standards just to teach a bunch of new recruits? The answer is simple: pride. Pride for one’s country and personal pride.

They have been selected to train new recruits to be a part of the toughest, most revered military in the history of the world. You can benefit from this pride. When a Drill Instructor introduces himself (or herself) to the group, they will likely ask every member of the group why he/she joined the military. You will be amazed at how many improper responses you will hear.

“Why did you join the military?” shouts the Drill Instructor.

“I joined for the college money!” someone will answer.

“I needed a job, Drill Instructor!” is another common response you will hear.

Never, ever, respond that way—even if it is true! There are far better answers that will position you in a better light with your Drill Instructor. I am not telling you to
provide a false answer, or to lie, but how to simply answer the question better.

“Why did you join the military?” Asked the Drill Instructor.

This is your answer: “I joined because I love my country, sir!” or “I want to be a a Service member in the U.S. Military, Drill Instructor!”

These responses demonstrate pride—the same pride a Drill Instructor has burning inside his soul. When you give your response, your Drill Instructor will immediately have a connection with you. She or he will never let you see that connection, but it will be there.

**Gain Respect**

To gain respect from your Drill Instructor, you must do the following three things:

(1) You must be attentive. Pay attention to your body posture and listen to every word of the instructions;

(2) Keep your head up and back straight in class;

(3) Be confident with your answers and respond loudly and correctly to a Drill Instructor. Speaking softly does not emphasize a person’s strength, confidence, or pride.
Interview with a Drill Instructor

“Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

—General Dwight D. Eisenhower

Drill Instructors.

Just the name sends shivers down a new recruit’s spine (and for good reason, as you will soon find out firsthand). What is a Drill Instructor if not a relentless, harsh, persistent machine that will do anything within his power to diminish a recruit’s self-esteem and self-respect. Right?

Well . . . No. None of this is really true.

Drill Instructors are thought of this way for a reason: because they act this way. As a recruit, you must remember Drill Instructors are humans, too. When Drill Instructors are acting relentless and pushing you to try harder, they are simply doing their job—and doing you a favor.

Picture this scenario: You arrive at basic training where Drill Instructors greet you with a smile. They carry your luggage upstairs and introduce you to your maid who will make your bed and shine your boots. You are then introduced to your Richard Simmons look-a-like “exercise motivator,” who will help you shed those unwanted pounds while listening to music of your choice in a comfortable environment. What kind of military would we be if this scenario was anywhere near reality?

Because there are many misconceptions about Drill Instructors, I decided to include this interview to demonstrate that Drill Instructors are indeed human, and that there is a method to their madness. Believe it or not, they are trying to bring out the best in you.

I sat down recently with Sergeant First Class (SFC) Jason Seno to discuss common concerns recruits have about basic training. SFC Seno was not only a Drill Instructor, but also a Senior Drill Instructor. He is highly revered for his phenomenal physical fitness capabilities, and is the very definition of a model Service member. He has seen thousands of recruits move through basic training, and is about to share with you some of his knowledge.

The Interview

Q: What personality traits are more likely to make a recruit successful in basic training?

A: The personality trait of a successful recruit would be one who abides by all of the Military core values (loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage), and being motivated. All of the Armed Forces core values you will learn from
your Drill Instructors. They will integrate these values into your training and teach you what they mean and how to live by them. As far as motivation is concerned, the Drill Instructors are masters at motivating even the most unwilling souls into doing there their biding.

**Q: What personality traits are more likely to make a recruit unsuccessful in basic training?**

A: Quitting! Giving up is the one thing Drill Instructors will not tolerate. If a recruit quits, and loses their intestinal fortitude, they are not only giving up on themselves, but are failing their fellow recruit! That is the quickest way to get you and your battle buddy killed in a combat situation.

**Q: What major differences, if any, do you see between male and female recruits?**

A: Most female recruits don’t have the bad habits that most male recruits have before they enter the military. Female recruits are easier to train in Basic Rifle Marksmanship (BRM) because most of them have not fired a weapon before. Also, female recruits generally listen better to instructions. On the other hand, most male recruits have an easier time with the physical portion of basic training.

**Q: Name a few important things a recruit can do to avoid negative attention from a Drill Instructor.**

A: Not doing what your told, and not doing something when and how you are suppose to do it. Also, a lack of motivation or showing false motivation will get any recruit negative attention. That is the quickest way for a recruit to get the whole Drill Instructor hoard down on them. If a Service member is not living by the Armed Forces core values and / or not in accordance with (IAW) Uniform Code Of Military Justice (UCMJ), that, too, will be dealt with on a legal level. It will not only affect your military and civilian career, but your pocket book as well.

**Q: Prior to arriving at basic training, what are three things a recruit can focus on that would greatly increase his or her chance of success (e.g. fitness, learn rank structure, etc)?**

A: The three most important things a Service member needs to focus on are: physical fitness and proper training of physical fitness, chain of command/rank structure, and mental preparation to undergo the life changing event that will transform you from civilian to Service member.

**Q: What exercise or activity during basic training has the highest failure rate for recruits, and how would you recommend a recruit approach this task?**

A: Males and female recruits have different physiological make-ups. They are not equal in the different physical tasks that the military requires them to accomplish. Overall, preparation has the highest failure rate. You will not find the day-to-day tasks that the military requires you to accomplish in any workout video or gym. My recommendation is to physically and mentally train yourself, with a friend for motivation,
by following a structured training program that is designed around the military physical training program. That way you will not only physically prepare yourself for basic training; you will also mentally prepare yourself for the Drill Instructor.

The Drill Instructor will be everywhere you go, and everywhere you turn.
Day 1

“Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.”

— Winston Churchill

Ask anyone in the military, or anyone with prior military service, to describe his first day of basic training. A smile will appear on his face and he will tell you a story full of remarkable detail. I guarantee you that person was not smiling when he was experiencing these events.

The first day of basic training is not fun, and it is not meant to be. But it is an experience most people look back upon and smile about. Every recruit’s first day is a bit different, but generally speaking the same experiences will occur. You will board a bus from the Reception Center. The Drill Instructors will be yelling at you and banging on windows. Don’t worry, they are not allowed to hit you. As you get off the bus (tip: don’t be the last one off the bus!) you will be given an impossible task that you will fail several times. Even if your company accomplishes the task perfectly, your Drill Instructors will still say you have failed. By failing, you will be forced to do physical training, and on your first day, you can be sure you will get plenty of it. The following stories describe what six different Service members experienced on their first day at basic training.

“Every recruit’s first day is a bit different, but generally speaking, the same sort of experiences occur.”

Specialist James Burke, Ft. McClellan, July 1996:

“As soon as we got on the bus at the Reception Center, the Drill Instructors were yelling and screaming at anyone who looked at them or even opened their mouth to talk.

After the short ride, the bus stopped and more Drill Instructors packed on the bus. They filled the aisle and one of them yelled, “You have exactly thirty seconds to get off the bus.” As everyone made a mad dash to the door, recruits were running into Drill Instructors, which made them even angrier. Of course, you can’t file about 150 recruits off a bus that holds 100 people in 30 seconds, so we knew we were in trouble before we even began to file off the bus!

When we were all off the bus, we had to carry our duffle bags with us. The Drill Instructors would tell us to walk to meaningless points on this field and when we got there, we would have to do exercises because we didn’t get there fast enough. The Drill Instructors would throw our bags on the ground and tell us to pick them up and roll on the

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muddy ground.”

Specialist John Bowman, Ft. Leonard Wood, January 2001:

“At the Reception Center, we were packed on a cattle truck tighter than a can of sardines. The Drill Instructors were yelling at us for absolutely everything they could: the sun was shining too brightly, or one of them didn’t like the smell of the cattle truck.

When the cattle truck stopped, we were filed out, lined-up, and ordered to hold our luggage over our heads. When someone dropped his luggage, we all had to do more exercises, exercises I have never heard of before, like the mountain climbers and donkey kicks. Of course, we couldn’t do the exercises correctly because we had never heard of them, so that led to yet more exercising. I bet I did one thousand push-ups that day with duffle bags on my back.”

Staff Sergeant Misty Mokros, Ft. McClellan, July 1995

“On the bus, we weren’t allowed to make a sound. I have never tried so hard in my life to hold in a sneeze. The Drill Instructors were peering at us, waiting for someone to make a noise.

When the bus stopped, a Drill Instructor told us to ranger walk off the bus carrying all our gear, and go to the middle of this field where he was pointing. No one knew what a ranger walk was, so everyone just plowed over each other. Needless to say, we all did plenty of flutterkicks and push-ups for the next hour. After our exercises, we had to line-up our bags in a straight line. If your bag looked slightly out of line, you won a chance to do more exercises.”

Sergeant Kerry Ladd, Ft. Jackson, August 2000

“After we loaded on a bus, about ten Drill Instructors crammed into the isles. They introduced themselves on the way to the barracks. The Drill Instructors didn’t start yelling at us until we got off the bus.

Once they started yelling, we were told to carry our bags up two flights of stairs. We made our way to this large open room where we dropped our bags and had to move these gigantic wall lockers around and arrange them in different configurations per the Drill Instructor’s instructions.”

Specialist Dawn Hendrix, Ft. Jackson, August 1997

“We were escorted on a very comfortable bus with only two Drill Instructors. Everyone was silent the whole ride. Funny thing was, so were the Drill Instructors. They didn’t say a word. When the bus stopped we figured this was when all hell would break loose.

Quite the opposite happened. We were told to carefully exit the bus. When everyone was off the bus there was a large table in front of us with juice and cookies. They sat us down and showed us basic marching skills [see Chapter 12] as we ate junk food right in front of the Drill Instructors. At this point, I was thinking what a great nine weeks this
was going to be!

Once the marching exhibition ended, they asked us nicely to get in formation. I guess everyone was acting a little lax from the sweets because we didn’t move fast enough, and all hell broke loose. Drill Instructors were yelling at us for every little thing and the exercises seemed to last all night.”

Specialist Troy Graham, Ft. Benning, July 1993

“We were packed in cattle trucks so tightly we could barely move our arms. A short ride later, the truck stopped. The gate to the cattle truck opened, and when we got off the Drill Instructors went off. They were yelling at everything and made us file in alphabetical order in under three minutes, while carrying all our bags. Obviously 150 strangers are not going to be able to file in alphabetical order in three minutes (which in Drill Instructor time is approximately 45 seconds). Therefore, we spent the remainder of the day doing push-ups with duffle bags on our backs.”

* * *

Did you notice the similarities in each of these stories? In each one, the recruit was given a task he or she was not able to accomplish. Be prepared to fail your first task, and don’t let that failure break your spirit!
Tips for Success

“Live for something rather than die for nothing.”
— General George S. Patton

The following list contains numerous tips you will should know before beginning basic training. Remember, you can log into www.ultimatebasictraining.com for more tips.

• *Designate cleaning chores for each member of the group.*

  It’s best to designate two chores to two recruits at a time. That way, if one person slacks off, the other recruit is responsible for getting both chores done.

• *Learn how to use a floor buffer.*

  Pay attention to detail. You will hear your Drill Instructors mention “attention to detail” constantly.

• *Keep your locker organized at all times.*

Whenever you touch something inside your locker, put it back where it belongs.

• *Prepare to Clean it:*

  At the completion of basic training, you will have to thoroughly clean your equipment. AAFES Dandruff Shampoo is fantastic at getting dirt and sweat stains out of your equipment.

• *Learn Military Time:*

  Learning military time can be made much easier if you get a watch with an alarm that displays military time.

• *Initial It!*

  Write your name or initials on absolutely everything you bring to basic training.

• *Lock It!*

  Always, always, always secure (lock) your wall locker, even if you leave the room for only 30 seconds.

• *Socks and Underwear:*

  You cannot have too many pairs of both. So bring plenty of socks and underwear (at least one week’s worth). Finding time to do laundry in basic training is difficult.
• **Tuck Them:**
  Keep your shoelaces tucked inside your boots.

• **Be Considerate:**

Make a conscious effort to be considerate of others, especially in times of high stress.

• **Prepare Your E-mail List in Advance:**

  Gather all of your friends and families’ e-mail addresses and add them to an address book on your e-mail provider. Then, if you get to a computer during one of your passes at basic training, you can write one e-mail and send it to all your friends and family at once.

• **Phone Cards (Don’t Leave Home Without Them):**

  Buy lots of phone cards before you leave for basic training. It is much easier to have one handy when a phone opens up and you get time to place a call.

• **Be the Early Bird:**

  Wake up a few minutes earlier than the other recruits. Doing this will allow you to not be quite so rushed, and will reduce some of your stress.

• **Think “Mature”:**

  Try to be the mature recruit in the platoon. The other recruits will respect you more than the others and will be more willing to help you when you are in need.

• **Carry a Razor:**

  Males should carry a razor with you in their uniform pocket. A Drill Instructor may notice you missed a spot shaving, and will require you to correct the problem on the spot.

• **Hair Length:**

  For females, hair extending past the bottom edge of the collar is prohibited. Get it cut by a professional before you leave for basic training.

• **Be Quiet!**

  Never speak out unless you are asked to talk. If no one has requested you speak—don’t!

• **Never Lean:**

  Do not lean on walls or other objects. If you have acquired this habit as a civilian, start breaking yourself of it—now.

• **Smiling is Forbidden:**


Do not ever smile when a Drill Instructor is talking to you! Even if he compliments you or pretends to be making small talk, never let your guard down and smile. *Ever.*

- **Expect the Unexpected:**
  
  Do not be upset when you have to wake up in the middle of the night to do exercises. This is a common tactic Drill Instructors use to increase your stress level. Expect the unexpected and you will never be disappointed.

- **Your Luggage:**
  
  Take only plain luggage to basic training. Why? Drill Instructors love to pick on recruits who show up with luggage decorated with flowers, designs, or bright colors. You are asking to stand out—and you will.

- **Carry your Rifle—Everywhere:** Whenever your Drill Instructors have you carry your rifle,

  always keep it with you at all times. If a Drill Instructor finds it unattended (and they will be looking for those recruits who leave them lying around, as many will), you will get smoked.

- **Expect the Worse:**
  
  Always expect the worse. If a Drill Instructor says you will receive an overnight off-post pass one weekend, do not expect it until you actually get it. Often, your pass will be taken from you for something someone else did wrong.

- **March With your Left Foot First—Always:**
  
  Every time you start a marching movement (i.e., forward march), your first step will always be with your left foot. Practice it, and get used to it.

- **The Beat is also on the Left Foot:**
  
  You will be required to sing cadences while marching. Remember: The beat is always on the left foot. Practice that, too.

  By studying this list and drilling these tips into your head, you will be well ahead of the game when you arrive at basic training because you will avoid many of the mistakes that so many recruits make.
Frequently Asked Questions

“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free . . . it expects what never was and never will be.”

— Thomas Jefferson

I have been fielding calls and emails from people all over the country since the appearance of the first edition of my book.

“Which branch of service is best for me?”

“What does it mean when you say …”

“Can I do so-and-so in the military?”

It did not take long before I started hearing and reading many of the same questions—over and over again. These are important questions, and they are obviously on the minds of many people about to enter basic training.

As a result, I decided to include some of the most common themes recruits have asked questions about regarding basic training or joining the military.

Q. Are Drill Sergeants allowed to hit you?

A. Drill Sergeants look and act intimidating. However, they are not allowed to physically harm you.

Q. What is the general difference between the branches of service?

A. For most people, deciding which branch of service to join isn’t difficult. Perhaps you come from a family with a long tradition of joining the Marines, or you would like to follow in father’s footsteps and join the Navy.

Military family tradition is certainly well acknowledged in American society. However, each person is different. Based on your particular interests and qualifications, you may be better suited for a particular branch of service no one else in your family has considered. Remember, joining the military isn’t like applying for a job: you can’t just quit if you don’t like it. You are signing a contract and taking an oath. Make your decision based on your interests and do what will make you happy. The military is not a good place to be miserable.

Here is a brief synopsis on the various military service branches:

Marines: For all intents and purposes, Marines are considered riflemen first. In basic training, they receive more marksmanship training than any other branch of service. Also,
Marine basic training is longer than the other branches. The Marines have an incredible ability to convert their dollar power into combat power, as they do not have a big budget like the Air Force. So, in summary, if you are joining the military to be in on the action, to be on the front lines, and to shoot your weapon, the Marines might be the best choice for you.

**Army**: The Army has the second most intense basic training regimen (after the Marines). Three of the nine weeks of basic training are devoted to marksmanship. Soldiers in the Army have the ability to lead or defend against an assault. In the Army, a soldier can pick from literally hundreds of MOS’s (Military Occupational Specialties). The training you receive from your MOS often transfers well into civilian jobs.

**Navy**: The Navy, although more lax than the Marines and Army regarding marksmanship, is deep rooted with traditions and customs. If you like to travel, the Navy might be your best option. If you are a family man, you might want to consider the time you’ll spend away from your family should you join the Navy. On the other hand, if you’re single, the Navy can be a terrific opportunity for you to explore other countries and cultures.

**Air Force**: The US Air Force is certainly an impressive compilation of machinery and technology. If you are good with computers and electronics, you might want to consider the Air Force. The Air Force has the best housing units of all the other branches. As far as educational requirements, the Air Force is the most difficult to get into. Without a high school diploma, you chances of getting into the Air Force are slim.

**Coast Guard**: The Coast Guard is a branch of service that sometimes goes unnoticed. The coast guard has about 25 enlisted jobs to choose from. Their responsibilities are vast, ranging from search and rescue missions, maritime law enforcement, and even environmental protection. To join the Coast Guard, you will need a high school diploma. Basic training in the Coast Guard takes eight weeks to complete.

**Q**: I have heard that many people get sick in basic training. Is this true?

**A**: Oddly enough, it is nearly inevitable that you will catch something during basic training. Just about everyone does— whether it’s a head cold or a sore throat. You will most likely not be at your physical best in boot camp. Just expect that.

Why? Basic training is too crowded and too fast paced for your body to get enough rest. Your body will be stressed for a long period of time, and this will break down your immune system. I had such a bad sore throat at boot camp, I was unable to swallow sometimes when I woke up. Further aggravating the sore throat was the Drill Sergeant’s relentless obsession with having us recruits yell everything at the top of our lungs. To reduce your chances of getting sick, drink a lot of water (I mean many glasses each day) and always wash your hands before you eat. Often you will be eating in the field, so always carry a wet napkin in your pocket.

**Q**: What is the meaning of HUA, or HOOAH?

**A**: This is one of the most widely used military acronyms of all times, and yet no one
can agree on its spelling, origin, or even on its meaning. Undoubtedly it will be the first acronym you will hear as you arrive at Basic Training. You will hear thousands of new soldiers utter the acronym, whisper it, shout it, and even sing it. But what exactly does it mean?

I have scoured the Internet, referenced books, and asked military scholars. Only one conclusion has come from my research: there is no known origin for the meaning of “hooah.” There are many opinions, but there is no single definitive answer.

Urbandictionary.com claims the term “hooah” was originally used by the British in the late 1800s in Afghanistan, and was more recently adopted by the United States Army to indicate an affirmative or a pleased response. Many books call “huah” an “all-purpose” expression. Perhaps the broadest definition I have come across in my research might very well be the best, and even most comical, definition. According to the Department of Military Science and Leadership, University of Tennessee, Hooah “refers to or means anything except no.”

So while military experts and personnel disagree on the term, spelling, origin, and meaning of HUA, huah, hooah, etc, it is widely used throughout the military. Regardless of its meaning, a common aspect encompasses each of the definitions for this term. The term is an expression of high morale, confidence, motivation, and spirit.

Q: What is the ASVAB

A: The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is a multi-aptitude test maintained by the Department of Defense that Frequently Asked tests four areas: Arithmetic Reasoning, Word Knowledge, Paragraph Comprehension, and Mathematics Knowledge. Your scores determine how you qualify for certain Military Occupational Specialties (MOS). For more information, and even free practice tests, go to www.military.com

Q: Can I choose my job specialty after basic training?

A: Your job specialty is called an MOS. If the MOS you desire is available, you can certainly enroll. However, if the job you desire isn’t available, you can enlist in the Delayed Enlistment Program. The Delayed Enlistment Program is an agreement to enter basic training at a specific time in the future, when the MOS you desire is available. You must qualify for the MOS you select, and you do so by scoring at a certain level on the ASVAB.

Q: What qualifications would I need to join the Military?

A: Every military branch requires the following:

1) U.S. citizenship or permanent residency (i.e., a green card if a non-citizen)

2) A high school diploma or equivalent (i.e., GED)

3) Good health
4) A minimum score on the ASVAB

5) No criminal record
Conclusion

Read the *The Ultimate Basic Training Guidebook: Tips, Tricks and Tactics for Surviving Boot Camp*, available at [www.ultimatebasictraining.com](http://www.ultimatebasictraining.com). Be sure to read this book carefully and prepare physically to make sure you are ready for basic training. You will be able to show your Drill Instructors and your fellow recruits you are a squared-away servicemember. The knowledge you obtain from this book, if you put it to proper use, will lead to awards, promotion points, higher rank, and increased pay.

Your Drill Instructors will notice someone who is prepared for basic training. They will show you no favoritism, however, so do not expect any. If the Drill Instructors are doing their job correctly, you will never be able to tell they like or dislike you. It may be tough to imagine at times, but Drill Instructors are humans, too.

Each of them went through basic training just like you. Do not show fear, do not show individuality, and do not show or demonstrate indecisiveness. Show them you can follow orders, handle stress, and be a leader.

Basic training can be a rewarding experience and challenge. You will leave your nine weeks of training with stories and friends that will stay with you forever. You will be proud of yourself and your country when you graduate from basic.

By joining the U.S. military, you have answered the highest call of citizenship. There will undoubtedly be times during basic training when you feel helpless, or times you might believe you cannot do anything right. During these times, you must keep telling yourself you are being mentally and physically molded into the most fit, disciplined, and technologically advanced Service member in modern history.

You are being transformed into a Service member.
THE ULTIMATE BASIC TRAINING GUIDEBOOK

Tips, Tricks, and Tactics for Surviving Boot Camp

Sgt. Michael Volkin

Foreword by Major General Robert J. Brandt