
How To Train Your Squad

**A Training Guide for Infantry Squad
Leaders**

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This booklet was prepared in accordance with the following publications:

- MCRP 3-0A ***Unit Training Management Guide***
Washington, D.C., HQ USMC, November 1996
- MCRP 3-0B ***How to Conduct Training***
Washington, D.C., HQ USMC, November 1996
- FM 25-101 ***Battle Focused Training***
Washington, D.C., Department of the Army, September 1990

Section 1

What are My Training Responsibilities?

What are My Training Responsibilities?

Train Your Marines. As a Squad Leader, you must train the Marines you lead. Everything you do should prepare your squad for combat.

Train Individual Skills. Train your Marines to perform Individual Skills.

You are the primary trainer for the Individual Skills of your Marines.
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Train Collective Tasks. Along with the other commanders in your chain of command, you train your squad to execute Collective Tasks.

Train Your Fireteam Leaders. In combat, all leaders must be prepared to command units one level above their own. Train your fireteam leaders to command the squad in your absence.

Train Yourself. The Squad Leader is the Primary Warfighter in the Marine Corps. You must be a Tactician, a Decisionmaker, and a Leader. You need to be well-educated and well-trained. In addition to formal schooling, you must take the initiative to train yourself. You must be a self-learner and a self-starter.

Who Supports Me?

As a Squad Leader, you execute the training plan. Ideally, you can expect the following support:

At the Platoon Level. The Platoon Commander is responsible for all platoon training. He assigns squad tasks and establishes platoon Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs). The Platoon Commander will lead live-fire, field training, and supporting arms exercises. The Platoon Commander is the primary evaluator for the combat readiness of your squad.

Your Platoon Sergeant will assist you in conducting and evaluating your training. He will also help you determine what resources you need for training. As a former Squad Leader, your Platoon Sergeant has experienced the same challenges you now face. Seek his advice and ask him questions. His experiences have taught him what works and what does not.

At the Company Level. The Company Commander is responsible for all company training. He selects missions and creates the company training plan. The Company Commander is the primary evaluator for the combat readiness of his platoons.

The Company First Sergeant assists the Company Commander in evaluating his Marines. His experience and advice can be a valuable asset to your training.

The Company Gunnery Sergeant handles all the logistical needs of the company. All training requests are addressed to him. As a former Squad Leader, the Company Gunnery Sergeant can advise you in training your squad.

Guidelines for Training

You are responsible for ensuring that your training meets the following guidelines.

Train as you Fight! Ensure realism. The combat environment is harsh, unforgiving and unpredictable. Simulate casualties, the loss of leaders, and bad communications. Train in difficult conditions.

Train for Combat! Make training real and make it relevant. Your training must support your unit's missions.

Train as a Combined Arms Team. Train as a unit. Maintain relationships with frequent attachments. Work and train as units both in the field and in garrison.

Train with the Marines you have. In combat, you will never have all your Marines available every day. Train with those you have.

Use Performance-Based Training. Ensure your Marines can *perform* their tasks to standard. Train for *mastery* of the fundamentals. Train to standard, not to time. Marines learn best when they are trained by practical application.

Train to Maintain Skills. Once proficiency is achieved, it must be maintained. Skills must be continually practiced.

Train on All Levels at the Same Time. Training should be progressive. Advanced training requires the execution of basic tasks. Collective training requires Marines to perform Individual Skills.

Section 2

What Tools Support My Training?

What Training Needs to be Done?

At the Company Level. The Company Commander selects a company-level mission and creates a training plan to prepare for this mission. He assigns each Platoon Commander multiple platoon missions to support the company mission.

At the Platoon Level. The Platoon Commander trains his platoon to execute his assigned missions. He assigns each Squad Leader the Collective Tasks and Individual Skills which the Marines must know to support the platoon mission. A single company mission may require four or five platoon-level tasks, twelve to twenty squad-level tasks, and possibly 75 to 100 individual tasks.

At the Squad Level. The company training schedule indicates what training you will have to perform. Study the Collective Tasks and Individual Skills you have been assigned, and then decide what *additional* Individual Skills and Collective Skills will be required for your mission.

Your squad may be tasked to act as guides for a night attack, conduct a daylight security patrol, and act as the point element of a movement to contact. These missions require training in many Individual Skills and squad Collective Tasks. For each Individual Skill, determine who needs the training. Some skills are required by all hands, while some skills are billet-specific.

Concentrate on common skills. Many Individual Skills are common to all of your missions. These skills have priority. Once they have been mastered, you can begin to train for the skills that apply to a single mission.

Eliminate Weak Links. After determining which skills will be required for upcoming missions, test your squad's proficiency at performing the tasks required by those missions. Concentrate training on tasks at which your squad is weakest.

Recommend Training. If the company training schedule does not support your training needs, or there is no time for squad training on the schedule, tell your Platoon Commander. The company training schedule *needs* your input.

Ask for time! Ask your Platoon Commander for time to train your squad. He knows that your training must succeed in order for his objectives to be met. You are providing the backbone of training for your Marines. Any time designated as NCO time can be used for training. Conduct training on your own time, outside the schedule, or after being released by the platoon.

Keep your Marines Informed. Tell your Marines when and where training will occur, and what will be expected of them, so they can prepare themselves. On the battlefield, knowledge is as powerful as firepower. The fighting spirit of your Marines *requires* information.

What are Individual Skills?

Individual Skills are those tasks performed by a single Marine. These basic skills must be mastered before more complex Collective Tasks can be attempted. Individual skills cover combat techniques as well as equipment and weapons.

What are Individual Training Standards? Individual Training Standards (ITS) define performance standards for individual skills. Individual Skills for infantrymen are outlined in MCO 1510.35C, ***INDIVIDUAL TRAINING STANDARDS FOR THE INFANTRY (ENLISTED) OCCUPATIONAL FIELD (OCCFLD) 03***. The ITS for a particular skill allow you to give proper instruction and then evaluate your Marines' performance. ITSs describe the tasks to be performed, the conditions under which the task is to be performed, and the standard to be met. The performance steps for the task are listed, as well as any administrative instructions necessary. Finally, a reference to a training manual is given. Example ITSs are:

TASK 0300.3.2 ASSEMBLE THE AN/PRC-119 SINCGARS RADIO
TASK 0300.8.4 TIE KNOTS
TASK 0311.2.1 ZERO THE M249 SAW

Commanders can adjust published standards to meet training requirements. For example, TASK 0300.8.4, TIE KNOTS, requires mastery of thirteen knots. You may determine to train your Marines on only four of these knots.

Commanders can also adjust the conditions under which a task is to be performed. Marines familiar with a task should be expected to perform it under tougher conditions — in the dark, in the rain, with less time. Marines just learning a task will perform it under easier conditions. Remember, when learning a task, *the standard always remains the same*. The conditions get tougher.

ITSs for *all* Marines are outlined in MCO 1510.89 Ch1, ***INDIVIDUAL TRAINING STANDARDS (ITS) SYSTEM FOR MARINE BATTLE SKILLS TRAINING (MBST) VOLUME 1 - ENTRY LEVEL***. Individual skills for all NCO's and SNCO's are outlined in MCO 1510.90, ***INDIVIDUAL TRAINING STANDARDS (ITS) SYSTEM FOR MARINE BATTLE SKILLS TRAINING (MBST) VOLUME 2 - CORPORAL THROUGH GUNNERY SERGEANT***.

These two training orders apply to the entire Marine Corps and all MOS's. These orders are only *secondary* sources for infantry training.

The new MCO 3501 **Marine Corps Training and Readiness Manual for Infantry Units** (T&R) will define individual Training Standards for infantrymen. This manual will soon completely replace the 1510.35C.

What are Collective Tasks?

Collective Tasks are team tasks. Collective Tasks require Marines to perform multiple individual tasks simultaneously for a single purpose.

As a Squad Leader, you are responsible for training your Marines to work as a team. Efficient teamwork stems from your squad's experience in working together. Each Marine must know his individual tasks, and how these tasks fit into unit collective tasks.

Squad Missions. The missions your squad receives are not standardized in any Marine Corps publication. The same mission is never executed the same way twice. As a leader, you must determine how best to execute a mission based on your estimate of the situation and your knowledge of your unit's capabilities. Training manuals provide only general guidance for collective tasks:

Conduct a Security Patrol
Establish a Roadblock

Battle Drills. Battle Drills are *standardized* methods for executing small unit collective tasks. Battle Drills are detailed responses to specific situations that must be conducted instinctively on a short, simple command or signal. Battle Drills must be practiced until their execution becomes instinctive.

Weapons Drills for crew served weapons are a type of Battle Drill. No Weapons Drills apply at the rifle squad or platoon level. Weapons Drills are standardized in training manuals:

M240G Gun Drill MCWP 3-15.1

Immediate Action Drills are standard responses to enemy action which are published in both training manuals as well as unit SOP's:

Immediate Assault MCWP 3-11.6

Other Battle Drills are based on unit SOPs. In many cases, no published standard exists for these tasks. You will then be responsible for creating your own Battle Drills:

Establish Squad Perimeter Unit SOP
Conduct Heart-shaped Recon Unit SOP

Standards for Collective Tasks. Besides Marine Corps standards, unit SOP's and published Battle Drills will aid you in evaluating your squad. In some cases, you may have to develop the standards on your own.

The MCCRES order, MCO 3501, currently sets standards for collective tasks. The new MCO 3501 **Marine Corps Training and Readiness Manual for Infantry Units** (T&R) will set standards for collective tasks for infantry units. This manual will soon completely replace the 1510.35C. Section 10-C sets Fire Team collective standards, Section 10-D sets squad collective standards, and Section 10-E sets platoon collective standards.

The U.S. Army collective standards are defined in ARTEP 7-8-**MTP Mission Training Plan for the Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad**. These standards are well-written and can provide ideas for Marine Corps units.

How Do I Use References?

Squad Leader References. All squad leaders in the Marine Corps should own:

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|-------------|---|
| MCWP 3-11.5 | <i>Marine Infantry Squad</i>
Formerly FMFM 6-5 <i>Marine Rifle Squad</i> |
| MCWP 3-11.6 | <i>Scouting and Patrolling</i>
Formerly FMFM 6-7 <i>Scouting and Patrolling for Infantry Units</i> |

All squad leaders in the Marine Corps should be familiar with, and have access to:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Bn Orders | <i>Platoon, Company and Battalion SOPs.</i> |
| MCO 1510.35C | <i>INDIVIDUAL TRAINING STANDARDS (ITS) SYSTEM FOR THE INFANTRY (ENLISTED) OCCUPATIONAL FIELD (OCCFLD) 03</i> |
| MCO 3501 | Marine Corps Training and Readiness Manual for Infantry Units (T&R) |

Other Training Publications. Many other training publications explain Individual Skills and Collective Tasks. They describe the use and care of weapons and equipment. They can be used to create notes for training.

Your Platoon Commander or Platoon Sergeant should have frequently used training manuals and all unit SOPs. If not, check with the Battalion S-3 Training NCO or Training Officer. Marine Corps, base, and unit training orders are maintained by the battalion.

Training orders are most easily accessed on the internet. Marine Corps training publications can be found on the TECOM web site. Army publications can be found on their TRADOC web site.

“Its not in any pub!” You may be tasked with creating SOPs and Battle Drills for your own squad. The Marine Corps has few standards for conducting Battle Drills, but guidance for various tasks are contained in many references. When you cannot find a reference to help you develop a standard, ask your peers for ideas. Your Platoon Sergeant and Platoon Commander may be able to gather written procedures from other units to aid you.

Section 3

How Do I Conduct Training?

How Do I Train Individual Skills?

Prepare Training. Once you have been assigned an Individual Skill to train or have selected one of your own, find an established standard for the Individual Skill. If no standard exists, write your own using a training manual. Ensure that *you* can meet the standard.

Plan a creative way to present the skill. Rehearse. Create training aids that will help your Marines understand the skill. Be sure that your Marines have the weapons and equipment needed for you to conduct training.

Present Training

State the task, conditions and standards. This is the most important step. *The Marines must know the standards which they are expected to meet.*

Demonstrate the task as you explain it.

Have each Marine perform the task. Marines learn best with practical application. Walk them through the skill. Observe performance and correct mistakes. Allow the Marines to practice the task on their own.

Evaluate Training. All individual training concludes with an evaluation. Ensure that each Marine meets the established standard.

How Do I Train Collective Tasks?

Battle Drills, which include Crew Served Weapons Drills, Immediate Action Drills and other SOP Drills, are best trained using the following building-block approach. However, any Collective Task can be trained with this procedure.

Prepare Training. Once you have been assigned a Collective Task to train or have selected one of your own, find a reference from a manual or a unit SOP.

Ensure that all Marines possess the necessary Individual Skills and equipment required by the task.

Present Training

Talk-Through. State the standard and method for evaluating the task. Explain to your squad what steps need to be performed and the sequence of the steps. Have your Marines execute the task as you explain it once again. The task should look as if it were being conducted in slow-motion. Ask each Marine what he is going to do before he does it. This will help you correct mistakes and reinforce success. It also lets other Marines know what each member of the squad is doing. Once the steps have been mastered, the task is performed as a whole.

Walk-Through. Also known as the dry-run. On command, have the Marines execute the task at a pace slow enough that you can spot and correct mistakes. Perform the Walk-Through on flat, open terrain.

Run-Through. By this time the Marines should be able to perform the task without hesitation. As your Marines become better at performing the task, make the conditions more difficult. Add smoke, darkness, battlefield noises, realistic terrain, and simulated casualties. Practice different variations. Correct any mistakes on the spot.

Platoon Training. Since you will be leading most squad-level tasks, your Platoon Sergeant and Platoon Commander are also responsible for training your squad in collective tasks.

Evaluate Training. Company-level Field Exercises test Collective Tasks under realistic conditions. This is an opportunity to observe how your unit performs as a whole. The Company Commander is the best evaluator of the performance of your squad. Entire missions, which require many Collective Tasks to be performed, are executed and evaluated.

How Do I Conduct Leadership Training?

You are the primary role model for your Marines. *Everything you do is Leadership Training.* Prepare your fireteam leaders to take on greater responsibilities. Take a step back and allow your fireteam leaders to run the squad. Imagine how the unit would operate if you became a casualty.

Have them help you conduct inspections, PT, and individual training. Use Tactical Decision Games (TDGs) to help develop their decisionmaking capabilities.

Continually challenge them with unusual problems to force them to react under stress.

Give your Marines role models to emulate. Familiarize them with the exploits of great Marine leaders. Include yourself in this category by leading by example.

How Do I Evaluate My Squad?

Training is wasted without effective evaluation. Evaluating your Marines' proficiency is the only way to meet published standards. Evaluations test not only your Marines, but also your abilities as a trainer.

Use Performance-Oriented Evaluations. Performing a task under realistic conditions is the *only* way it can be fully evaluated. Written and oral tests are *not* effective means to measure training. Performance-Oriented Evaluations usually follow this sequence:

Restate the Task, Conditions, and Standards. Make the standards clear to every Marine so that he knows exactly what is required of him. Have all necessary equipment on hand.

Conduct the Evaluation. Use a realistic combat scenario to drive the evaluation. Observe and evaluate. Compare the Marines' performance to the training standards. Marines either pass or fail. There is no middle ground.

Retrain. Retrain any Marines who do not meet the standard. Train to standard, not to time.

Report Results. Report the results of your evaluation to your Platoon Commander. Recommend any changes which could be made to improve training.

Train to Standard! All published standards represent the baseline skills required of Marine infantrymen. When conducting training, do not simply present the information and practice the skill. You must ensure that each Marine meets or exceeds the published standard. Your Platoon Commander and Company Commander will also evaluate your squad's capabilities.

What is Opportunity Training?

Opportunity training is a *vital* part of squad-level training. It is important that you can effectively train in the field, because it is often the only way training is conducted in combat. Opportunity Training is also known as “hip-pocket” training or concurrent training. During training exercises, unscheduled time is always available. Rather than waste this time, take advantage of these lulls with “hip-pocket” instruction to meet *your* training requirements.

Take the Initiative! Your squad is your responsibility. You must drive training. You know what skills need to be trained. Save training time later by using your time now. Take advantage of any opportunity that appears. After an exercise, rather than simply clean weapons and wait for the trucks, take that time to train.

Demand Independence. You need independence to conduct your own training. If your Platoon Sergeant wants you to police the training area when you had planned to train your Marines, inform him of your intentions.

Keep it Simple. Just because the opportunity to train was unexpected does not mean that you should be unprepared. The key to Opportunity Training is to select and prepare tasks *before* you go into the field. Opportunity Training should last only 15 to 30 minutes. Focus on a single task that can be taught with the equipment you have on hand. Focus on weapons, gear and fieldcraft.

“Not Another Class!” Opportunity Training does not have to take the form of a lecture. Use your imagination. Task one of your Marines with an Opportunity Training session. In the field, select a Marine to demonstrate a unique skill or piece of equipment.

Tips for Training

Grab your Marines' Attention. Motivate them. Make them want to learn by showing how the training is relevant to them.

Inform your Marines. State the purpose of the training and what standards they must meet. Tell them how they will be evaluated.

Use Examples and Analogies. Explain the subject simply. Use combat examples. Give your Marines something that will stick in their minds.

Use Training Aids. You do not need high-tech training aids. Use the equipment the Marines will be working on.

Involve your Marines. Ask questions throughout your instruction. Keep their minds working. Keep them involved.

Be Animated. Move around when you teach. Be confident and make eye contact.

Use Practical Application. Hands-on training is the best way to master a task. Squads do not listen to “lectures” or attend “classes.” They *train* on combat tasks.

Review the Material. Have your Marines backbrief the subject to you to ensure that your message got through.

Use Military History. Military history shows how humans act under the pressure of combat. Military history can sharpen tactical decisionmaking skills and demonstrate what a unit is capable of in combat. Books and films about men in combat can inspire your Marines.

Use TDGs. TDGs are an easy way to improve you and your Marines' tactical decisionmaking skills. Tactical decisionmaking is a skill which requires constant practice.

Think Better, Fight Better. Train your fireteam leaders to make tactical decisions following the same fundamentals you do. This will prepare them to fill your position. Challenge your Marines. Hit them with unexpected problems and see how they react under stress.

Train Yourself. Use TDGs to help sharpen your ability to employ the squad effectively in combat.

Use STXs. Put your squad in an actual scenario on a piece of terrain. How would you defend it? How would react if the enemy attacked from various directions? Picture yourself attacking the position. What are the best avenues of approach? How would I surprise the enemy? How would I use supporting arms?

Focus on success. During training it is important to learn from mistakes and failures. Mistakes and failures should be expected, but should always be corrected. If you are going to do something, do it until you get it right.

Don't Waste Their Time. Use training time effectively. Make all training realistic, relevant, and exciting.

Challenge your Marines! Marines learn better when they are motivated.

Hold Competitions. Healthy competition between individuals and units helps build proficiency and teamwork.

Give your Marines Challenges. Push your squad to exceed its limits. During evaluations, make the conditions harder while maintaining the standard. Units who successfully meet challenges show greater pride, self-confidence, and esprit de corps.

Conduct Cross-Training. Challenge your Marines to learn new skills. Cross-Training allows different units to work together and display their hard-won skills while learning about each others missions.

Reward your Marines. Good training and excellent performance deserve recognition. Do not forget to reward the hard work of your Marines.