

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

A GUIDE TO THRIVING IN YOUR FIRST 100 DAYS AS AN NCO



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The Center for Army Lessons Learned leads the Army Lessons Learned Program and delivers timely and relevant information to resolve gaps, enhance readiness, and inform modernization.



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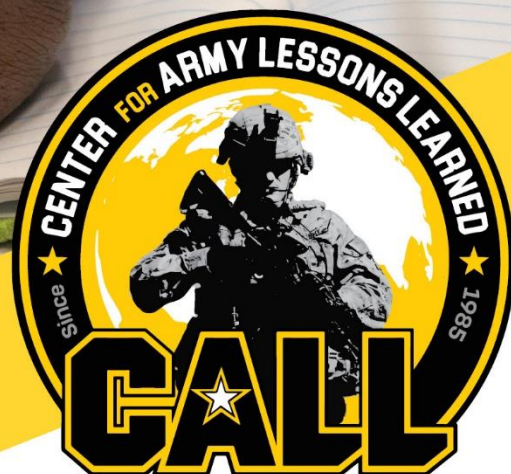
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Introduction

Welcome to the Frontlines of Leadership

As you join the ranks of the noncommissioned officers (NCOs), you are about to embark on a challenging and rewarding journey. You are not just stepping into a new role; you are stepping into a legacy that stretches back to the very foundations of the U.S. Army. This isn't just a promotion, it is a call to lead, inspire, and make a difference.

Your First 100 Days: Laying the Foundation for Greatness

The first 100 days of being a leader are crucial. This is your time to build a solid foundation for your leadership experience. This handbook is your guide, packed with essential information and insights into the leadership requirements model and the six core NCO competencies and all the other basics you need to know as a junior leader.

How this Handbook is Organized

This handbook will take you through an overview of what other Soldiers and superiors expect from you as you move from being a follower to a leader in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 discusses the six NCO core competencies (DO) and attributes (BE and KNOW) you must possess taken from both from the Army leadership requirements model and the Six NCO Common Core Competencies. Chapter 3 and 4 will cover the leader attributes (BE and KNOW), while Chapter 5 discusses the leader and NCO competencies (DO). Chapter 6 provides a roadmap to success in your first 100 days. Lastly, this handbook provides a Leader's Book outline, a checklist for your first 100 days, and a reference list for further study on the various topics covered in this publication.

The phrase "NCOs are the backbone of the Army" was reinforced by General George C. Marshall, who served as the U.S. Army Chief of Staff during World War II. General Marshall recognized the critical role that Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) played in maintaining the discipline, training, and readiness of the Army. His emphasis on the importance of NCOs has been echoed by many military leaders since then, solidifying the concept that NCOs are indeed the backbone of the Army.¹

Four Takeaways from this Handbook

You probably have plenty of expectations, and maybe a little bit of anxiousness now that you are assuming a leadership position. You are not alone in having expectations; you will soon find that everyone else expects more from you as well. Here are four key expectations from your subordinates and your superiors that you should understand:

- Your Soldiers and superiors expect you to lead by example in all things. This is not simply telling Soldiers what to do, it is about showing them. Your actions speak louder than any order. When a Soldier is unsure of what they should be doing, they should need only to look to you to guide them. If they do what you are doing, they should be right. That means that you must be doing what is right, always.

¹ Papers of George Catlett Marshall. Volume 1: *The Soldierly Spirit*. The George C. Marshall Foundation. <https://library.marshallfoundation.org>. Access 19 DEC 2024.

- You are not “one of the crew” anymore. You are no longer evaluated solely on your individual performance. As a leader, your leaders now hold accountable for the performance, discipline, and welfare of your Soldiers. This means taking ownership of the performance, both good and bad, and accepting responsibility for the outcomes.
- Learn from your mistakes. Mistakes are inevitable, especially as you navigate the complexities of leadership. However, it is not the mistake itself that defines you, but your response to it. Your leaders expect you to view errors as learning opportunities. After any setback, take the time to honestly assess what went wrong to identify root causes. Then fix the problem so you do not repeat the mistake again.
- Continuously Develop. The Army is constantly evolving and so must its leaders. Your leaders expect you to be a lifelong learner, dedicated to honing your skills and expanding your knowledge. This means honing your skills and knowledge on doctrine and tactics for yourself and developing your Soldiers.

Understanding and meeting these four expectations will not guarantee your success as a leader. However, failing to meet just one of them will most certainly ensure you will not be a great leader.

“It’s about time! Those were the words that I kept hearing from my battle buddies and NCOs, whom I looked up to, as they shook my hand after my promotion ceremony. “The easiest part is over,” I told myself. Going to the board, making points, finally getting pinned was just the beginning of a new and exciting journey.

One of the best pieces of advice I was given as a new NCO was to stay grounded, “don’t let your rank change who you are as a person.” People look at you different with that sergeant rank on your chest, they follow your orders. It’s a different type of respect. Don’t let this get to your head. At the end of the day, we are all human beings and deserve to be treated with respect, regardless of rank. Lead with humility. If you let the rank inflate your ego, you will slowly begin to lose the respect and trust of everyone around you.”

SGT Jessica Pham²

NCOs: The Army's Powerhouse

From the earliest days of American military history, NCOs have been the backbone of the Army.³ NCOs are the disciplinarians, the standard-bearers, the small unit leaders, master trainers, developers, and educators. Foreign militaries look to the U.S. Army's NCO Corps with envy, recognizing the power of empowering junior leaders to make critical decisions in the heat of the moment.

Get Ready to Lead

So, buckle up, because your journey as a leader is about to begin. You are part of a proud tradition. The future of the Army is in your hands!

² SGT Pham, Jessica. 3rd BN 321st Field Artillery Regiment. 18 NOV 2024.

³ Perkioniemi, Jarod. 20th Public Affairs Detachment. *Army NCO History (part1): American Revolution*. https://www.army.mil/article/18042/army_nco_history_part_1_american_revolution#:~:text=The%20history%20of%20the%20U.S.,create%20its%20own%20unique%20institution. Accessed 19 DEC 2024.

CREED OF THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

No one is more professional than I. I am a noncommissioned officer, a leader of Soldiers. As a noncommissioned officer, I realize that I am a member of a time honored corps, which is known as "The Backbone of the Army". I am proud of the Corps of noncommissioned officers and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps, the military service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit, or personal safety.

Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind—accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers. I will strive to remain technically and tactically proficient. I am aware of my role as a noncommissioned officer. I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my Soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my Soldiers and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment.

Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my Soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve; seniors, peers, and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, noncommissioned officers, leaders!

Figure 2. Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer⁴

⁴ TC 7-22.7. *The Noncommissioned Guide*. 1 JAN 2020. page vii.

What Does the NCO Creed Mean? A 1SG message to our Newly Promoted NCOs

“Today, we celebrate your well-deserved promotion! NCOs are the embodiment of 'Be, Know, Do' - we make things happen, regardless of the circumstances. Let us break down this powerful creed:

BE:

- A Professional Soldier! Stand tall and proud, act with integrity in every action.
- The embodiment of the Army values- live them every day.
- Have empathy for all Soldiers, not just those you lead.
- Live the Warrior and Service Ethos.
- Possess and instill discipline: In both you and your Soldiers.
- Have humility: Be confident, but humble and modest at the same time.

KNOW:

- Your mission: understand the unit's goals and the commander's intent, ensuring every action aligns with the greater purpose.
- Your Soldiers: know their strengths, their weaknesses, and the families they come from. Knowing your team deeply allows you to lead them effectively.
- Your job: master your duties inside and out. Only when you are fully proficient can you train others to the highest standards.
- How to exercise sound judgment: enforce Army policies. Be able to execute your commander's intent even when the situation changes on the ground.
- How to talk: to people and motivate their behaviors to accomplish the mission.

DO:

- Lead: Provide outstanding leadership. Being a leader means setting the bar high and guiding others to reach it.
- Be an example: Be the role model others aspire to become, setting the standard for excellence.
- Learn: Never stop seeking knowledge. Your learning and development go beyond professional military education (PME) – it is a lifelong pursuit.
- Develop yourself: stay technically and tactically sharp, always ready to adapt and excel.
- Enforce standards: know the rules, enforce them, and ensure your Soldiers adhere to Army policies and regulations.
- Earn trust and respect: develop your team and earn the trust of your Soldiers and leaders through your actions and dedication. Respect goes hand-in-hand with trust.
- Train: never cut corners. Train to the highest standards, not to time. Training builds confidence and competence.
- No complaints! NCOs do not complain about superiors, peers, subordinates, or Army policies. We make things happen, turning challenges into opportunities!

We expect you to become exceptional leaders, training your squads for success. Remember, NCOs are 'Be, Know, Do' individuals who lead from the front, setting the pace and inspiring those who follow.”

Former 1SG⁵

⁵ Former 1SG. Addressing the Formation. AUG 2002.

Chapter 1

The NCO Journey Begins: Stepping Up to Leadership

NCOs are leaders who enforce standards and embody the NCO and Soldier's Creed. You will set the example that your Soldiers will follow.

“The rank of Sergeant holds a special place in my heart. As a Battery Commander, few experiences are as profoundly rewarding as when I have the honor to pin those stripes on a deserving Soldier, welcoming them into the esteemed Non-Commissioned Officer Corps. As their commander, you’ve seen this Soldier grow and develop from their early days in the unit, and you’ve witnessed firsthand their dedication, hard work, and commitment to their fellow Soldiers and the mission. More than just a recognition of time served, or skills acquired; it is an acknowledgment of the Soldier's potential to inspire, to mentor, and to drive our unit, and our Army, forward. A testament to their budding leadership and ability to inspire and guide others. This rank is particularly significant because it signifies a monumental shift—not just in title, but in responsibility and mindset. The Soldier who once was a follower now becomes a leader—a decision-maker—a transformation that is as awe-inspiring as it is crucial to our organization... It is a celebration of the Army's enduring commitment to developing leaders who will guide and inspire the next generation of Soldiers. This is the essence of what makes the rank of Sergeant my favorite—it is the embodiment of transformation, growth, and the promise of a brighter future for our Army.”

CPT Jim Robins⁶

As a junior NCO, you become a direct leader of Soldiers. It may be a team but soon may become a squad or section. You will be the first NCO that Soldiers turn to for help, whether in garrison (even during off-duty hours), field training, or combat. You are now responsible for the training, welfare, safety, fitness, and health of your Soldiers – a significant responsibility that requires careful attention and dedication.

Your First 100 Days: Make Them Count!

Your initial actions as a newly promoted NCO can significantly impact your entire leadership experience. Making a strong impression will earn the confidence of your Soldiers and your leaders. You will likely serve with them time and again throughout your career. They will remember you, for better or worse.

You were once a junior Soldier looking up to your NCOs, now, it is your turn to be the leader they aspire to be. Stay true to who you are and the values that brought you to this pivotal moment. NCOs must embody the warrior spirit with moral, intellectual, and interpersonal qualities that drive both unit and individual success.

Here is your path forward:

- Be grounded in the Army profession and ethics: Let these principles guide your every move.
- Demonstrate Army Values and Warrior Ethos: Embody these values in all actions.

⁶ CPT Robins, James (Jim). Former Company Commander. 18 NOV 2024.

- Be physically fit, resilient, and a technical and tactical expert: Strive for excellence in every aspect of your role.
- Expand your knowledge and skills: Observe your squad leader performing essential NCO duties like on-the-spot corrections, monthly counseling, and conducting training. Learn from their example and build your own expertise. Embrace this opportunity to lead with distinction and inspire those around you.

Knowledge is power! Knowledge of doctrine, regulations, and technical manuals (TMs). Dad, who retired as a COL but was an SSG before attending OCS, instilled this in me.

Ret. 1SG K.P. Morris⁷

Embrace the Challenge

Your promotion ceremony is a milestone, not a finish line. This is not the culmination of your hard work, but the beginning of a new chapter in your life. The real work starts now, and it is brimming with opportunities for growth and impact. Embrace the challenges that come with your new role. Lead with courage, integrity, and humility.

As a Sergeant, you will often lead squads, guiding and developing young Soldiers who are just beginning their own military careers. This can be stressful, but remember, every expert was once a beginner. Remember your peers, mentors, and chain-of-command are there to support and guide you.

You will face challenges, but each one is an opportunity for growth in the following areas:

- **Confidence:** Believe in your abilities. Trust that you have the tools and knowledge to succeed. With each step, your confidence will grow, and you will inspire those around you.
- **Communication:** Express your thoughts clearly and effectively. Your words have the power to motivate, inform, and to unite. Use them wisely and watch as your team rallies behind your vision.
- **Motivation:** Foster an environment where every Soldier feels valued, empowered, and driven to excel. Your passion will ignite theirs, creating an unstoppable force.
- **Leadership Skills:** Understand and apply sound leadership principles. Never stop learning. Each day is a new opportunity to refine your skills and make a difference in your Soldiers lives.

Expectations

Interviews revealed that junior NCOs often feel overwhelmed by the weight of expectations they perceive, or they place on themselves. But remember, perfection is not about making zero mistakes; it is about learning from mistakes. You will undoubtedly make some wrong decisions during your tenure as a leader, especially in the beginning. Do not make the same ones repeatedly. Through performing your duties, learning from others, and studying Army doctrine, you will gain the confidence and knowledge you need to make the right choices.

⁷ Retired 1SG. Morris, Karlen P. AUG. 2004.

“Making good decisions comes from experience, experience comes from making bad decisions.”

Mark Twain⁸

Setting the Bar: Expectations from your Soldiers and Superiors

Soldiers expect you will:

- Care: Be their advocate and source of support.
- Train, coach, mentor, and inspire: Help them grow and achieve. Soldiers want to be proud of their leaders and their unit.
- Exhibit outstanding character: Demonstrate integrity, courage, respect, and resilience.

Your superiors expect you to:

- Be a professional Soldier: Master the basics and set the standard in all you do.
- Know your job, your Soldiers, and their families: Understand their strengths, weaknesses, and goals.
- Keep them apprised: of potential issues they may need to solve early before it is too late to affect the outcome or force them into only one course of action. Buy them decision space so they have time to make an informed decision.

“The number one thing to remember as a leader is that your Soldiers did not select you to be their leader. Their parents and spouses didn’t pick you and there was no draft. You were assigned to them; you are now responsible to them and responsible for them. Your Soldiers are your Soldiers. You may be asked to lead them into harm’s way to accomplish a mission. And with this perspective in mind there is no burden of leadership, it is the ultimate privilege and honor. This is why trust is so important in our profession. We trust you with the lives of Soldiers.”

LTC Dave Forsha⁹

Transitioning from Follower to Leader

Transitioning from a follower to a leader is exciting and filled with professional, personal, and social challenges. You must:

- Establish your leadership presence: Step into your new role with confidence, leaving behind the ranks of the junior enlisted.
- Maintain professional boundaries: Foster respectful relationships and distance yourself appropriately from junior enlisted friends (see AR 600-32 for examples).¹⁰

⁸ Twain, Mark. Quote fancy. web page. <https://quotefancy.com/quote/861917/Mark-Twain-Good-decisions-come-from-experience-Experience-comes-from-making-bad-decisions>. accessed 11 NOV 2024.

⁹ LTC Forsha, David (Dave). DEC 2024.

¹⁰ Army Publishing Directorate. Record detail for AR 600-20. *Army Command Policy*. 24 JUL 2020. https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details.aspx?PUB_ID=1020451.

NOTE: Avoiding fraternization is so critical that the Army recently updated AR 600-32, *Conduct Between Soldiers of Different Grades*, on 16 October 2024 which superseded AR 600-20 Army Command Policy paragraphs 4-14 thru 4-16.¹¹

Summary

In this chapter, we have explored the foundations of leadership and the importance of setting a positive example. As you begin your leadership journey, remember that your actions and decisions will have a lasting impact on your Soldiers and your unit. In the next chapter, we will explore the importance of the six NCO common core competencies and the Army Leadership Requirements Model (ALRM) in the NCO development as a leader.

¹¹ Ibid.

Chapter 2

The Six NCO Common Core Competencies

The Army has established a set of essential skills and knowledge, known as the six NCO common core competencies. These are crucial for NCOs to possess to be effective leaders. These competencies are designed to complement the Army Leadership Requirements Model (ALRM) and provide a framework for developing and evaluating the leadership capabilities of NCOs. By mastering these competencies, NCOs can excel in their roles, motivate, support their teams, and drive success in their units.

Attributes are enduring personal characteristics, which are molded through experience over time. Competencies on the other hand are skills that can be trained and developed.

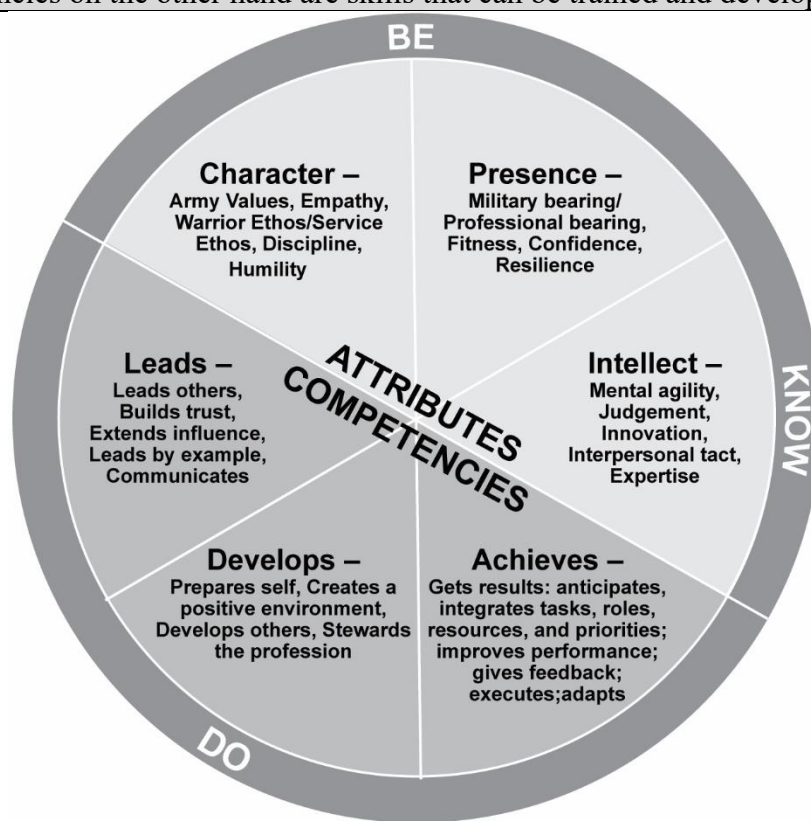


Figure 1 The Army Leadership Requirements Model ADP 6-22 ¹²

The ALRM and the six NCO common core competencies are the two frameworks used by the Army to develop and evaluate the leadership capabilities of its Soldiers, particularly NCOs. The competencies are interconnected and overlapping and are designed to work together. By embracing these competencies and continuously developing their skills and knowledge, NCOs can become exceptional leaders and make a lasting impact on their units and the Army as a whole. While they serve distinct purposes, there is a significant overlap between the two models.

¹² ADP 6-22. *Army Leadership and the Profession*. 25 NOV 2019. page ix.

Below is a matrix of how the Six NCO common core competencies (NCOC3) align with the attributes and competencies (BE, KNOW, DO) of the ALRM.

The NCO common core competencies are:¹³

NCOC3	Be		Know	Do		
	Character	Presence	Intellect	Leads	Develops	Achieves
Leadership	X	X	X	X	X	X
Training Management			X		X	X
Communications		X	X	X	X	X
Readiness			X		X	X
Operations			X	X	X	X
Program Management	X		X		X	

Table 2-1. Comparison of Army leadership requirements model and the Six NCO common core competencies.¹⁴

Leadership

Junior NCOs who embrace the leadership transition do not just desire to be leaders; they identify themselves as leaders. Forming an identity as a leader is key to motivating and supporting leadership development.

Your leadership development started in basic training. You could have held different leadership positions in your basic training platoon. As you traverse challenging experiences and gather experience in leadership positions and military education, your leadership and style will continue to evolve.

Vignette Leader vs Manager

One thing I learned as a young NCO from my CSM was that Junior NCOs are the direct leaders “The tip of the spear.” directly engaged with troops and focused on their well-being and mission readiness. In contrast, a manager oversees broader operations and strategic planning, often with more administrative responsibilities and a wider scope of duties (Senior NCOs). As a junior NCO, your impact is immediate and personal. You shape the lives and careers of your Soldiers, fostering a culture of excellence and readiness. Your leadership makes a tangible difference in the success of your unit and the Army as a whole.

Former SGM¹⁵

Direct Leadership:¹⁶ As an NCO, you are the heart of a unit, leading and mentoring your Soldiers daily. You ensure they are trained, disciplined, and mission ready. Your hands-on approach keeps your team cohesive and prepared. Your primary responsibility is the well-being and performance of your troops. You prioritize their welfare and the successful accomplishment of missions. Your actions directly impact unit morale and readiness.

¹³ TC 7-22.7. *The Noncommissioned Guide*. 1 JAN 2020. page 2-2.

¹⁴ Pruyt, Ronald Jr. Table 2-1. DEC 2024.

¹⁵ Former SGM. AUG 2024.

¹⁶ TC 3-21.5. *Drill and Ceremonies*. 03 MAY 2021. page 7-5.

Consistently demonstrate of courage and moral strength. By exemplifying the Army's Values and Ethics, you inspire and commit not only yourself but also your Soldiers to these principles. This commitment extends to the development of your Soldiers' skills and behavior, where you can instill these values, ethics, and moral compass through consistent demonstration.

Train your Soldiers to be holistically fit across the five Holistic Health & Fitness (H2F) domains (physical, mental, spiritual, nutritional, and sleep) and develop their resiliency.¹⁷ Ensure they account for and maintain their equipment. Also remember their financial readiness. Awareness of your Soldiers' financial readiness is not just about personal finances; it is a critical aspect of leadership, unit cohesion, and overall mission success.

Know your authority and the source to wield it properly and enforce discipline. Enforce discipline professionally, as required by regulations and policies. Accountability and discipline of your Soldiers are two things that fall under the welfare of your Soldiers' umbrella and that you must enforce.

Here are some references that will help with leadership, self-development, and understanding of being a professional Soldier:

- Army Techniques Publications (ATP) 6-22.1 *Providing Feedback: Counseling–Coaching–Mentoring*
- ATP 6-22.6 *Army Team Building*
- Field Manual (FM) 6-22 *Developing Leaders*
- Army Doctrine Publications (ADP) 6-22 *Army Leadership and the Profession*
- ADP 3-0 *Operations*
- ADP 6-0 *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*
- Army Regulations (AR) 670-1 *Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia*
- AR 600-20 *Army Command Policy* see Chapter 4 military discipline and conduct.
- Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) articles 7 and 91.
- Training Circulars (TC) 7 – 22.7 *The Noncommissioned Officer Guide* contains specific information concerning the NCO responsibilities, command functions, and scope of NCO duties.

Training Management

As a direct-level leader, your role is pivotal in shaping the skills and expertise of your Soldiers. Training is not just a responsibility, but an opportunity to excel. Your leadership success hinges on your ability to train and develop your team.

To achieve this, it is essential to grasp the fundamental principles of Army training. Become an expert in the 8-step training model,¹⁸ learn to assess and mitigate risks, and prioritize safety. These principles will guide you in planning, preparing, executing, and assessing effective training sessions.

¹⁷ ATP 7-22.02. *Holistic Health and Fitness Drills and Exercises*. 01 OCT 2020. page 1-1.

¹⁸ FM 7-0. *Training*. 14 JUN 21. page 3-8 and 3-9.

You set the tone for their Soldiers development. Make a commitment to always be fully prepared for training events. Rehearse your material until you are confident. You should focus on training to standards, rather than time.

References and tools to assist you in training management:

- FM 7-0, *Training*: This field manual provides guidance on training management, including planning, executing, and assessing training.
- Soldier Training Publications (STP) 21-1 *Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks* (SMCT), Warrior Skills: Provides support for Army Warrior Training plan for warrior skills level (SL) 1 and task summaries for SL 1 critical common tasks.
- STP 21-24 SMCT Warrior Leader Skill Level 2, 3, and 4: This manual contains an Army Warrior Training plan for warrior leader skills level (SL) 2 through SL 4 and task summaries for SL 2 critical common tasks that support unit wartime missions.
- ATP 7-22.02 Holistic Health and Fitness Drills and Exercises: Provides fundamental physical training drills.
- TC 3-21.5 Drill and Ceremonies: Provides detailed information of command voice, posture, and presence as a leader.

Online Tools:

- Army Training Network (ATN): The ATN is a CAC enabled web-based platform that provides access to training resources including training plans, lesson plans, and training management tools.
- Digital Training Management System (DTMS): DTMS is a web-based system that allows units to managing, scheduling, tracking, and evaluating training.
- Army Career Tracker (ACT): ACT is a web-based tool that helps soldiers and leaders track career progression, including training and education.
- Small Unit Leader Tool (SULT): SULT is a web-based tool that provides small unit leaders with training management resources including training plans and assessment tools.
- Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL): CALL provides NCOs with access to a vast repository of lessons learned from various Army operations, including combat, peacekeeping, and humanitarian missions. These lessons learned can help NCOs identify best practices, common pitfalls, and innovative solutions to common problems.
- Center for Army Leadership (CAL): CAL provides training and resources on leadership development including training management.

Communications

Effective communication is the backbone of leadership. As a leader, your ability to convey purpose, direction, and motivation makes all the difference in achieving your mission. But communication is a two-way street – it is not just about speaking and writing clearly, but also about listening with intention and empathy.

When you truly listen to your Soldiers and leaders, you build trust, foster open dialogue, and create a culture of collaboration. Your words have the power to inspire, motivate, and influence your team, but only if you can communicate with clarity, confidence, and authenticity.

Remember, as an NCO, your role is not just to give orders, but to empower your Soldiers. By mastering the art of communication, you will be able to:

- Inspire provide purpose and direction.
- Motivate your team to excel.
- Build trust and credibility.
- Drive success and achieve your mission.

Leverage the Army Continuing Education System (ACES) to develop your communication and writing skills.

Former 1SG¹⁹

Great communication can inspire, motivate, and bring people together towards a common goal. But your goal is to move one step further than good communication – you want to connect, convince, and inspire. To assist you in developing your communications skills you need to read professional journals such as the Army University Press NCO Journal, and leverage the Army Continuing Education System (ACES) to enroll on communication enhancement courses such as:

- Public Speaking Course: This course provides training on public speaking, including communication techniques and strategies.
- Writing courses: Do not just take any writing course – take the RIGHT one! Your ACES counselors are there to help you navigate the world of writing courses and find the perfect fit for your goals. Target courses that equip you with powerful communication techniques and strategies, transforming you into a confident and impactful writer and communicator.

Operations

As a young NCO, you are the driving force behind your unit is daily operations. Your commander relies on you to turn their vision into action. Your Soldiers will look to you for guidance and direction to make that vision a reality. To excel in this role, you must have a deep understanding of your military occupational specialty (MOS) and the policies, regulations, and procedures that govern your unit.

Effective operations require more than just following the rules – they demand an understanding of the mission and intent, the ability to plan and coordinate complex activities, and the confidence to make tough decisions in the absence of orders. As a competent NCO, you must be able to:

- Plan and execute training, exercises, patrols, and other missions and critical activities.
- Provide guidance and direction to your team, even in uncertain situations.
- Make informed decisions that accomplish the mission and protect your Soldiers.

¹⁹ Former 1SG. AUG 2024.

- Supervise and account for your Soldiers, ensuring their safety and well-being.

You will become the cornerstone of your unit. You will be able to drive results, build trust, and inspire your Soldiers.

Program Management

Now that you are an NCO, you play a critical role in learning about the Army programs that support your Soldier's well-being, development, and success. While you are a junior NCO, the competency of program management refers to your ability to effectively manage and oversee various programs and initiatives that support the well-being, development, and success of Soldiers and their families. This competency is critical in ensuring that Soldiers have access to the resources and support they need to perform their duties effectively and maintain their overall quality of life. Program management is more than just knowing there are systems and processes – it is about understanding and recommending the diverse range of Army programs designed to empower Soldiers and their families.

From training and development to health and wellness, you must be familiar with the Army programs and where to go on your post to access some of these programs (where applicable). This includes but are not all inclusive:

- Lessons Learned: capturing and sharing knowledge to improve performance and readiness across the Army (AR 11-33).
- Army Safety Program: Safety is paramount in training and is everyone responsibility to stop unsafe acts (AR 385-10).
- The Army Body Composition Program: Promoting healthy lifestyles and fitness to perform under all conditions Soldiers can face. (AR 600-9).
- SHARP: Preventing and responding to sexual harassment and assault.
- EEO and EO: Fostering a culture of equality and respect.
- Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) (AR 608-75): Works with military and civilian agencies to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to enrich services for a disabled family member.
- Financial Readiness: Empowering Soldiers to manage their finances and achieve stability (DoD Instruction 1322.34).
- Better Opportunity for Single Soldiers (BOSS): Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation initiative aimed at improving the quality of life for single Soldiers.
- Soldier & Family Readiness Group (SFRG): command-sponsored programs; helping to build strong Families and bridge the gap between Families and units.
- ACES: promote lifelong learning opportunities, tuition assistance, certifications assistance, and leader skill enhancement courses.

Readiness

Remember, your role is not just about leading and mentoring your Soldiers, but also about taking care of them and ensuring their readiness for their duties.

Additional Army programs are listed in TC 7-22.7 The Noncommissioned Guide and TC 7-21.13 Soldier's Guide. As a junior NCO, it is not expected that you will be an expert in all of these programs, but rather that you will have a basic understanding of what is available and where it can be found on your post when your Soldiers need support.

Summary

The six NCOC3 are essential for effective NCO leadership in the Army. By mastering these competencies, NCOs can build trust, achieve unit goals, and support their teams. These competencies provide a foundation for exceptional leadership and serve as a roadmap for NCO development.

Chapter 3

NCO What You Should Be

This chapter emphasizes that being an NCO is not just about having a certain rank or title but about embodying the values and principles that define the profession.

Your leadership, expertise, and character set the standard for your fellow Soldiers. To be an effective NCO, you must embody the attributes that define our profession.

As mentioned previously, what you must BE as a leader is part of the entire leadership package. These are the attributes that you should possess to be a great leader.

What Does It Take to Be an NCO?

- Be Ethical and Trustworthy. Always do the right thing.
- Be Disciplined. Uphold high standards.
- Be Holistically Fit. Balance body and mind.
- Be Confident. Not only in yourself but your abilities.

These skills will be honed through institutional schooling, realistic training, professional experience, and continuous self-development. Let us explore each of the attributes listed above, what they mean in practice, and how they contribute to the overall effectiveness of an NCO.

Be Ethical and Trustworthy. Being ethical and trustworthy is not just a suggestion or a personal choice – it is a responsibility that comes with the role. It is about consistently making decisions and taking actions that are morally and legally sound, even when it is difficult or unpopular.

The Importance of Ethics. Ethics is about doing what is right, not what is easy or convenient. You have a duty to uphold the Army’s values and principles, including respect, integrity, and selfless service. This includes holding yourself accountable for all your actions and decisions.

The Power of Trust. Trust is the foundation for successful relationships, including those between leaders and subordinates. When your leaders trust you, they will delegate authority to you. This gives you the autonomy to make decisions and act. This trust is built on a foundation of your consistent behavior, integrity, and a history of doing what is right.

When subordinates feel confident in sharing their concerns, ideas, and feedback, there becomes an environment that fosters open and honest communication. Trust also empowers subordinates to take initiative, make decisions, and work collaboratively towards a common goal. Loyalty and retention increase, morale and well-being improve, and feedback and accountability become more prevalent. Ultimately, trust leads to better decision-making, adaptability, and resilience, benefiting both the Soldier and the organization as a whole.

“I think a great way to develop a professional relationship and build trust with your Soldiers is to eat breakfast and or lunch with them at the DFAC. Break bread and communicate.”

LTC Dave Forsha²⁰

²⁰ LTC Forsha, David. Former BN CDR. DEC 2024.

Earning the Trust of your Soldiers. Train them, develop their skills, and show a genuine interest in them by occasionally visiting your Soldiers' barracks on the weekends. You will gain a better understanding of their interests and hobbies. This builds trust, which grows as you consistently demonstrate your commitment to their success and well-being.

Be the Granite Rock. To be a trusted leader, you need to be like a granite rock-solid, dependable, and unwavering. Your Soldiers need to know that they can rely on you, no matter what challenges or difficulties they face. This means being consistent, fair, and transparent in all your interactions with them. Be an active listener, body language and empathy go a long way. Treat everyone with respect, even when they make a mistake. Do your best to pay undivided attention and maintain eye contact during engagements. Use verbal cues ("I understand") and summarize their points to demonstrate you heard them. Do your best to address concerns as quickly as possible and not dismiss them. Always follow through on commitments. Do not make promises you cannot keep. Never, ever gossip or share confidential information about a subordinate or their family. Do your best to provide informal feedback daily or during events. Highlight the good things but also constructive criticism on what and how to improve. You must be open to respectful feedback from your subordinates. Use your own mistakes at a teaching moment. They must know you are human.

Be present and available for your Soldiers. If Soldiers believe you will not be there for them, they will not trust you. They will only be compelled to follow you because of your rank or position versus committing to follow you.

Consequences of Betraying Trust. If you betray the trust of your leaders or Soldiers, the consequences can be severe. Trust takes time to build but can be lost instantly. Once lost, it can be difficult or even impossible to regain. Here are examples of actions that would constitute a betrayal of trust:

- Authority:
 - Favoritism/Discrimination: Showing preferential treatment to certain Soldiers based on personal relationships or biases, undermining fairness and creating a toxic environment.
 - Hazing/Bullying: Engaging in or condoning harassment, humiliation, or abuse of power, creating a climate of fear and disrespect.
 - Misuse of Position: Using rank or position for personal gain.
 - Yelling, using derogatory language, or making personal attacks: These are not professional effective communication. Disrespect creates a hostile environment and damages morale and respect for leadership.
- Integrity:
 - Lying or Falsifying Information: Covering up mistakes, inflating accomplishments, or providing false information to superiors or subordinates.
 - Stealing or Misappropriating Resources: Taking advantage of access to equipment, or property for personal use, demonstrating a lack of integrity and respect for shared resources.

- Breaking Confidentiality: Sharing sensitive information entrusted to you, betraying the confidence of your peers, leaders, or subordinates.
- Duty:
 - Dereliction of Duty: Neglecting assigned tasks, failing to fulfill responsibilities, or putting in minimal effort, jeopardizing mission success and setting a poor example.
 - Compromising Standards: Overlooking safety violations, tolerating substandard performance, or failing to enforce regulations.
 - Endangering Others: Engaging in reckless behavior, disregarding safety protocols, or making decisions that put the lives of fellow Soldiers at risk.

Never belittle, demean, or publicly humiliate a Soldier. Resist the urge to dismiss their ideas or contributions. Do not micromanage once you have given a task to do. Provide guidance and instruction if needed then let them go execute. Saying one thing and doing another is a unit culture killer. Failing to follow through on commitments. Applying standards differently to different Soldiers will destroy a unit. Eroding trust makes Soldiers hesitant to believe you and question leadership. Betraying trust will undermine your ability to lead. This loss of trust can follow you for the rest of your career.

In summary, being ethical and trustworthy is not just a suggestion – it is a fundamental responsibility of every NCO. Building trust takes time and consistent effort. It is crucial to create a safe space where Soldiers feel comfortable approaching you with concerns and feedback. By actively listening, communicating openly, being consistent, and treating everyone with respect, you can foster a climate of trust within your team.

The Importance of Self-Reflection

Effective leaders build from a foundation of strong character and ethics. They develop and maintain these traits through consistent self-reflection. By reflecting on your own character and ethics, you can:

- Identify areas for improvement.
- Develop a stronger sense of self-awareness.
- Make informed decisions that align with the Army's values and principles.

To assist you in developing and examining your personal values and improve your character and the ethical leadership you provide to your Soldiers visit the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence resources leader tools character and ethical leadership self-reflection.²¹

As depicted in the Army Leadership Requirements Model,²² leaders must be able to reflect on their own character and ethics and make decisions that are consistent with the Army's values and principles.

²¹ <https://www.ncoworldwide.army.mil/Resources/Leader-Tools/Character-Ethical-Leadership-Self-Reflection-Guide/>

²² ADP 6-22 *Army Leadership and the Profession*. 25 NOV 2019. page 1-15.

Be an Effective Leader

As a leader, you shape the culture and discipline of your unit. You set the tone for excellence and accountability. However, effective leadership goes beyond mere enforcement – it requires empathy, understanding, and a genuine investment in the well-being of your Soldiers. To excel in this role, focus on the critical elements of command:

- Authority: Lead with confidence and clarity.
- Decision-Making: Make informed, timely decisions that support the mission.
- Responsibility: Take ownership of your actions and their impact on your team.
- Leadership: Inspire and motivate your Soldiers to be their best.

Take ownership of your actions and their impact on your team. Acknowledge that your decisions effect the lives of those you lead. Striking a balance between discipline with sympathy and empathy, you will not only maintain unit cohesion but also empower your Soldiers to grow. Remember, leadership is not just about giving orders – it is about influencing, guiding, and uplifting those around you to achieve a common goal.

Empathy vs Sympathy

Empathy and sympathy have distinct meanings. Empathy is about actively sharing and understanding someone's emotions, which means you are not just acknowledging their feelings, but also experiencing them alongside them. On the other hand, sympathy is feeling sorry or concerned for someone's misfortune, but without fully immersing yourself in their emotional state.

Sympathy and empathy both refer to a caring response to the emotional state of another person, but a distinction between them is typically made: while sympathy is a feeling of sincere concern for someone who is experiencing something difficult or painful, empathy involves actively sharing in the emotional experience of the other person.

Merriam-Webster²³

Be Holistically Fit

As a leader, it is not enough to simply meet the minimum standards of physical fitness – you must strive for holistic fitness,²⁴ encompassing both physical and mental well-being. Your physical and mental wellness set the tone for your Soldier. It is essential that you demonstrate unwavering dedication to both.

Physical readiness is the foundation for all other aspects of unit readiness. It is the base that enables your Soldiers to perform their duties with confidence, sustain activities in the most challenging environments, and overcome the stresses of the battlefield. It is the responsibility of a noncommissioned officer to both portray an example of and instill physical fitness standards. Mental fitness, however, is just as crucial, enabling you to stay focused, composed, and decisive.

²³ Merriam-Webster. JAN 2025. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empathy>.

²⁴ FM 7-22 *Holistic Health and Fitness*. 8 OCT 2020. page 1-1.

in the face of adversity. By cultivating mental toughness, you will develop the resilience to navigate complex challenges and inspire your Soldiers to do the same.

By prioritizing holistic fitness, you will set a new standard for leadership, one that emphasizes the importance of overall well-being and peak performance. Your example of embracing holistic fitness, will inspire your Soldiers to be holistically fit and set your unit up for success.

Spiritually Grounded

Being spiritually grounded is the state of being connected to oneself, the present, and the world around, fostering inner strength and resilience to navigate life's challenges, especially those faced in the military, by providing purpose and meaning.²⁵ In the context of holistic health and fitness, your spiritual grounding is essential for overall well-being. Here is what it entails:

Key Aspects of Spiritual Grounding:

- Connection to oneself: Be aware of your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. Accept them without judgment.
- Presence: Be fully engaged in the present moment. Let go of worries about the past or future.
- Inner peace: Experience a sense of calm, serenity, and tranquility, even in the midst of challenges.
- Sense of purpose: Have a clear understanding of your values, passions, and life's meaning.

Incorporating spiritual grounding practices into a holistic health and fitness routine builds resilience, fosters inner peace, and deepens well-being, such as:

- Self-Care: Maintain physical and emotional well-being with exercise, healthy diet, and quality sleep.
- Resilience Training: Participate in resilience training programs, such as the Army's Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2) program. Develop coping skills and strategies.
- Leisure Activities: Engage in leisure activities, such as hobbies or creative pursuits. Cultivate a sense of joy, peace, and fulfillment.

Be Confident

Junior NCOs often experience stress as they lack experience in Army leadership and could be uncertain in their ability to communicate with leaders and subordinates. Study, learn, and understand Army standards, regulations, and authority, including ethical behavior.

Transitioning from the follower to the leader is daunting as you face professional, personal, and social challenges. Remember that by performing your required duties, learning from other unit NCOs, and reading and understanding Army doctrine and regulations, you will overcome those stressors.

²⁵ 23-06 H2F Holistic Health and Fitness. Center for Army Lessons Learned. JUN 2023. page 1.

You are not alone, embrace the NCO Support Channel a lifeline of support, guidance, and shared experiences.²⁶ Just like it empowers the command sergeant major (CSM), as the senior enlisted NCO in the unit, to advise, communicate, and advocate for the enlisted Soldiers to the commander, it also empowers you to do the same for your Soldiers. Your role is crucial to ensure that you train, mentor, counsel, and develop your Soldiers to successfully accomplish the unit mission.

This reassurance should make you become more confident in being the NCO your unit needs and Soldiers deserve. As a newly promoted NCO, you are not just part of the squad anymore—you are the leader of it. This shift means separating from your old peers, defining your leadership role, and embracing decision-making autonomy. Are you ready to take charge?

Summary

In this chapter, we have explored the essential attributes you need to possess to have an NCO identity, including being ethical and trustworthy, disciplined, holistically fit, and confident. By developing these attributes, you will be well on your way to building trust and credibility with your Soldiers.

²⁶ TC 7-22.7 *The Noncommissioned Officers Guide*. 01 JAN 2020. page 2-18.

Chapter 4

What an NCO Must Know: Essential Skills and Knowledge

This chapter details the essential skills and knowledge—including mental agility, sound judgment, and interpersonal tact—necessary for NCO effectiveness. Mastering these competencies will empower NCOs to lead confidently, adapt to any situation, and drive success for their teams, the mission, and the Army as a whole. As mentioned earlier, the components of be and know are attributes. These are enduring personal characteristics, which are shaped by experiences over time. You are not likely to be the master of your craft as a junior leader on day one. However, you will continue to grow and learn, and you can gain expertise over time.

Here are the attributes that are associated with intellect, which falls under what a leader must KNOW.

Mental resources or tendencies that influence a leader's conceptual abilities and effectiveness.	
Mental agility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility of mind; the ability to break habitual thought patterns. • Anticipating or adapting to uncertain or changing situations; thinking through outcomes when current decisions or actions are not producing desired effects. • Ability to apply multiple perspectives and approaches.
Sound judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to assess situations and draw sound, ethical conclusions. • Tendency to form sound opinions, make sensible decisions, and reliable guesses. • Ability to assess strengths and weaknesses of subordinates, peers, and enemies to create appropriate solutions and actions.
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to introduce new ideas based on opportunities or challenging circumstances. • Creativity in producing ideas and objects that are both novel and appropriate.
Interpersonal tact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being aware of others' perceptions and capacity to understand interactions with others. • Aware of the character, motives, and reactions of self and others and their effect on interpersonal interactions. • Recognizing diversity and displaying self-control, balance, and stability.
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possessing a high level of domain knowledge and competence in an area, and the ability to draw and apply accurate, logical conclusions.

Table 4-1. Attributes associated with Intellect [KNOW]²⁷

Mental Agility

Think of it like this: you are on a mission, and suddenly, the terrain changes, or the enemy position is not where you thought it was. You need to be able to rapidly reassess the situation, adjust your plan, and respond effectively. That is mental agility in action.

²⁷ ADP 6-22 *Army Leadership and the Profession*. 25 NOV 2019. Table 4-1. page 4-5.

Here are some key aspects of mental agility:

- **Flexibility:** Being able to pivot and adjust your thinking, plans, and actions in response to new information or changing circumstances.
- **Adaptability:** Adjusting to new situations, environments, or challenges, and learning from experience.
- **Resilience:** Bouncing back from setbacks, failures, or stress, and maintaining a positive, focused mindset.
- **Situational awareness:** The ability to read the situation, understand the context, and anticipate potential challenges or opportunities.
- **Decision-making:** Making sound, timely decisions, even in the face of uncertainty or incomplete information.

To develop your mental agility, focus on the following strategies:

- **Stay alert and focused:** Maintain a high level of situational awareness and be prepared to respond to changing circumstances.
- **Practice adaptability:** Be open to new ideas, experiences, and challenges, and be willing to adjust your approach as needed.
- **Develop a growth mindset:** View challenges as opportunities for growth and learning, rather than threats to your ego or comfort zone.
- **Learn from experience:** Reflect on your experiences and the experiences of others. Identify the lessons learned and apply those insights to future challenges. Share those lessons with others.

Mental agility is a skill that you can develop and improve with practice, training, and experience. As you progress in your military career, you will face many challenges that will test your mental agility. By cultivating this skill, you will become a more effective, adaptable, and resilient leader who is capable of thriving in a rapidly changing and unpredictable environment.

Journaling²⁸: One effective method of learning from your experiences is to keep a journal of your decisions and their outcomes. Track your decisions in a daily journal, review the outcomes, and analyze them as an After-Action Review (AAR). Ask yourself:

- What was the situation, mission, or task?
- What happen? What went well? What did not?
- How did I react?
- How did my Soldiers, leaders, and peers react? Why?
- What could I have delegated?
- How did I empower my Soldiers?
- What have I learned from my actions and the actions of my Soldiers?
- How am I to apply what I learned?
- What will I do differently?

²⁸ FM 6-22 *Developing Leaders*. 1 NOV 2022. page 3-20.

Over time, you will recognize patterns and biases in your decision-making. Chapter four of FM 6-22 *Developing Leaders* has several developmental activities to assist you in developing your attributes and competencies.

Sound Judgement

As a leader, you will have to make a lot of decisions over a variety of topics, ranging from tactical operations to personnel management, and everything in between. Your sound judgment is critical to ensure the success of your team, the safety of your Soldiers, and accomplishing your mission.

Here are some key components of sound judgment:

- **Critical thinking:** The ability to analyze situations, identify key factors, and evaluate evidence to make informed decisions.
- **Contextual understanding:** Considering the broader context, including the operational environment, the mission, and the potential consequences of your decisions.
- **Risk assessment:** Weighing the potential risks and benefits of different courses of action and selecting the option that minimizes risk while achieving the desired outcome.
- **Ethical considerations:** Ensuring that your decisions align with the Army's values and ethics, and that you are acting in the best interest of your team, the mission, and the Army.
- **Experience and intuition:** Drawing on your experience, training, and intuition to inform your decision-making, while also being open to new information and perspectives.

You can develop sound judgment by using the following strategies:

- **Seek feedback:** Ask for feedback from your superiors, peers, and even subordinates to identify areas for improvement.
- **Reflect on your experiences:** Take time to reflect on your decisions and consider what you would do differently in the future. Conduct an after-action review after every mission.
- **Stay informed:** Stay up to date on the latest doctrine, tactics, and techniques.
- **Lead by example:** Demonstrate sound judgment in your own decision making and encourage your team to do the same.

Innovation

Being innovative means being able to generate, develop, and implement new ideas, solutions, and approaches that improve the way things are done. It is about thinking outside of the box, challenging assumptions, and finding creative ways to overcome obstacles to achieve goals. In the Army, innovation is essential for staying ahead of adversaries, adapting to changing situations, and solving complex problems.

To be innovative, challenge your assumptions and encourage experimentation. Stay informed of the latest trends, technologies, and best practices. Do not be afraid to take a calculated risk,

especially in training. You will have many opportunities to be innovative, such as developing new tactics, techniques, and procedures or improving training methods.

A calculated risk is a deliberate decision to take a risk after weighing the potential benefits against the potential costs and consequences. It involves carefully considering the available information, assessing the likelihood of success, and mitigating potential downsides to minimize harm or loss.²⁹

To develop your innovative thinking, focus on reading lessons learned, reflecting on your experiences, and collaborating with others. By embracing innovation, you will be able to think creatively, develop new solutions, and improve the way things are done, making a real difference and leaving a lasting impact on your team, the mission, and the Army.

Interpersonal Tact

Interpersonal tact refers to the ability to interact with others in a way that is sensitive to their feelings, needs, and perspectives, while also achieving your goals and objectives. It involves being able to communicate effectively, build trust, and navigate complex situations with diplomacy and finesse. As a leader, having interpersonal tact means being able to give feedback, address conflicts, and make tough decisions in a way that is respectful, empathetic, and constructive, ultimately building a stronger team.

Expertise

Remembering the NCO Creed, competence is not just a word. It is the key to building trust with your leaders and subordinates. Whether you are serving in a combat role, like infantry (11B), or a non-combat role, such as a culinary specialist (92G), a medical laboratory specialist (68K), or a human resources specialist (42A). The Army's diverse range of Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) requires NCOs to develop specialized skills and knowledge, from tactical operations to technical expertise, to excel in their duties. Your skills and knowledge are the foundation of your leadership, and it is essential to continuously hone your expertise.

Job expertise comes in many forms and comes from experience, training, and education.³⁰ The two forms that we will focus on are tactical and technical expertise.

Tactical expertise

Tactical expertise is critical for NCOs, as you are responsible for leading Soldiers in military operations. You must know how to deploy your team properly to accomplish their missions whether in the field or garrison. NCOs with tactical expertise can analyze complex situations, identify key factors, and develop effective solutions.

Imagine tactical expertise in the Army like coaching a sports team. Just as a football coach and a basketball coach need to understand the game plan, rules, and regulations to win, an NCO must

²⁹ ATP 5-19 *Risk Management*. 09 NOV 2021. page 1-14.

³⁰ ADP 6-22. *Army Leadership and the Profession*. 25 NOV 2019. page 4-3.

comprehend their MOS, military doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs), and best practices to succeed in combat.

While both coaches share a common goal, to win, their approaches differ significantly due to the unique rules, regulations, and strategies of each game. Similarly, NCOs in various MOSs must adapt their tactical expertise to their specific role.

In essence, tactical expertise in the Army is not a one-size-fits-all concept. It requires NCOs to be versatile, adaptable, and knowledgeable about their MOS, military doctrine, and best practices to effectively execute their duties and achieve success in combat.

To help you succeed, attend courses for your MOS to expand your knowledge and become an expert in your field. Read professional journals, after action reports, combat training center trends, field manuals, Army doctrinal publications, and Center for Army Lessons Learned handbooks. All can help you become a subject matter expert in your job.

Technical Expertise

To be a technical expert, you need to know:

- Capabilities: What your equipment can do? What it cannot do?
- How it works: What does the mechanisms of your equipment do?
- Maintenance: How to keep your equipment in good working order?
- Employment: How to use your equipment?
- Troubleshooting: How to identify problems? How can problems be fixed?
- Repair: How to repair or replace faulty equipment components at your level? Or how to identify for higher level maintenance?

By mastering these key components, you will be able to perform your job with confidence and precision and provide expert support to your team. Remember, technical expertise is a continuous process of learning and improvement, so stay up to date with the latest developments and best practices. Resources for you to tap into: CALL³¹ and your respective Center of Excellence.

Understanding Your Equipment

Think of your equipment like a toolbox. Just as a carpenter needs to know which tool to use in building furniture, you need to know how to use your equipment. This includes:

- Vehicles: understand how to operate, maintain, and repair them.
- Medical equipment: know how to use X-ray machines, defibrillators, and other medical devices to do your job.
- Electrical testing equipment: understand how to use multimeters, oscilloscopes, and other tools to troubleshoot electrical issues.
- Power tools or hand tools: know how to safely operate and maintain power tools like drills, saws, and sanders.

³¹<https://www.army.mil/CALL>

- Weapons: understand how to handle, maintain, and employ your assigned weapons.
- Electronic systems: know how to use and troubleshoot electronic systems like communication devices, computers, and navigation equipment.

Competency is your Superpower

The section below lists other areas that you should know to help you become the subject matter expert that your team deserves. In your first 30 days as a professional Soldier, it is essential to familiarize yourself with the following key aspects of your unit:

1. NCO Support Channel: Understand your role in this vital channel, as outlined in AR 600-20 Army Command Policy.³²
2. Unit Policies and Procedures: Familiarize yourself with Commander's Critical Information Report (CCIR), Serious Incident Report (SIR), unit policy letters, training calendars and other essential documents (Leader's book). You are now responsible for your Soldiers' behavior and welfare. This includes both on and off post. Incidents involving your Soldiers, or their families require immediate attention. Knowing how to submit a CCIR or SIR is crucial. Ensure your Soldiers, especially those newly assigned, know to avoid violations that could lead to Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) actions. No leader wants to be unprepared by a crisis.

As an NCO, it's essential to have a thorough understanding of the unit training calendar. This calendar serves as a roadmap, guiding you on what to train and how it supports the overall unit training plan.

Former 1SG³³

3. Training Management: Effective training management is the foundation of a high-performing unit. You are responsible for driving training success. It is essential you understand your unit's Battle Tasks, Mission Essential Task List (METL), and training calendars. Relevant training guidance and policies are also important. By doing this, you will be able to provide expert input and advice to your commander (who relies on you to train individuals), crews, and small teams. Unit Training is crucial to your commander. NCOs handle delivering top-notch training that prepares their Soldiers for mission success. It is your expertise and leadership that will ultimately determine the effectiveness of your unit's training program. Develop a comprehensive training calendar for your squad. This should include individual and collective training events. Use the Army Training Network (ATN) to assist you.

NCOs are the key members for training Soldiers. NCOs run training and train to standard. Never show up unprepared to a training event. Use the 8-Step Training Model because it provides a structured approach to planning and executing training events.

4. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): Knowing your unit's SOPs, such as Tactical Operating Procedures (TACSOP) or Maintenance SOPs, is vital for understanding your

³² AR 600-20 *Army Command Policy*. (Par. 2-19).

³³ Former 1SG. AUG 2024.

unit's mission and conducting battle drills effectively. Examples of subjects you may find in these documents below:

- Actions on a tactical assembly area (TAA)
- Individual packing lists for field training exercises (FTX)
- Recovery maintenance procedures post-FTX
- PCC/PCI responsibilities and timelines

Pre-combat checks (PCCs) and pre-combat inspections (PCIs) are both critical procedures that help ensure units and equipment are ready for training and combat operations. While they are related, there are distinct differences between the two:

Pre-Combat Checks (PCCs)

PCCs are a series of checks performed by individuals, teams, or units to ensure that their equipment, vehicles, and personnel are ready for combat (and just as important for Soldier Readiness Processing or other admin things). These checks are typically performed by the operators or users of the equipment. These checks are designed to identify any issues or deficiencies that need to be addressed before performing the mission.

PCCs may include checks on:

- Equipment functionality
- Vehicle maintenance
- Communication systems
- Ammunition and supplies
- Personal gear and protective equipment

Pre-Combat Inspections (PCIs)

PCIs are formal and detailed inspections that commanders (or delegated leader) conduct to verify that units and equipment are ready for combat. These inspections are designed to ensure that operators and users conducted their PCCs, and that the unit is fully prepared for the mission.

PCIs may include inspections of:

- Equipment and vehicle readiness
- Unit formations and personnel readiness
- Communication systems and protocols
- Knowledge of tactical plans and operations orders
- Safety procedures and emergency protocols

Key Differences

- PCCs are performed by individuals or teams, while leaders or inspectors conduct PCIs
- PCCs focus on equipment and personnel readiness while PCIs focus on overall unit readiness
- PCCs are typically performed before PCIs.

Equipment Maintenance and Accountability

Maintaining and inspecting Army and individual equipment ensures serviceability and readiness. As a direct leader, ensure your Soldiers perform proper preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) using the appropriate technical manuals and DA Form 2404/5988-E.

Types of Maintenance:

- Preventive Maintenance (PM): Regular, scheduled maintenance to prevent equipment failures.
- Corrective Maintenance: Repairs to correct equipment failures or malfunctions.
- Emergency Maintenance: Immediate repairs to restore equipment to operational status.

During Command Maintenance, NCOs are in the motor pool leading and supervising their Soldiers!

Using the PMCS App:

The Army Software Factory (SWF) and Army Materiel Command (AMC) developed an app to assist you with PMCS. Access the app at PMCS Army Software Factory (CAC enable site or MobileConnect) to view your equipment's operational status and faults.

Equipment Accountability: Your Responsibility, Your Career! Know about property accountability, hand receipts, equipment accountability, and field losses. Inventory and inspect your equipment to establish a baseline for property accountability, serviceability, and to identify any missing items. Ensure you understand the equipment's components and how to operate it. Use the correct technical manuals to guide your equipment management responsibilities.

Signing for your equipment best practice

- Have your supply SGT present while conducting the initial inventory before you sign for the equipment.
- Use the right technical manual (TM) and tables for the inventory layout.
- Only sign for the equipment you see and touch.
- Verify any item that has a serial number.
- In today's digital age, take pictures of your assigned equipment, especially those seldomly used.
- Make sure your equipment is marked (stencil, permanent paint markers)
- Use a shadow board* to quickly identify equipment or tools.
- Maintain your hand receipt (copy in your Leader's book).
- Create sub-hand receipts for team equipment that you don't personally control

*A shadow board is a visual board which describes names/outlines the right place for each of the tool or items you are accountable for.

Following every exercise, inventory all team and individual equipment and create damage and loss statements.

Drill and Ceremony

Grab your copy of TC 3-21.5 *Drill and Ceremony* and start practicing. Learn the commands, master the voice inflections, and set yourself apart as a leader.

D&C is not just about you moving your unit from point A to point B. It is also about developing the discipline to check and account for your Soldiers daily.

Reporting the status of your Soldiers is not only a drill. It is your responsibility!

Be clear and concise in reporting to your PSG.³⁴

- “All present” if everyone's present.
- “All accounted for” name and reason if someone's missing (sick call, school, etc.).
- If you do not know, report it as FTR³⁵ or AWOL³⁶, as needed.

Implied task of reporting: A leader checks on their Soldiers and knows their status before formation. Account for your Soldiers. Properly report their status. Remember you are responsible for their welfare.³⁷

Practice Makes Perfect

D&C is more than moving your unit; it is about presentation. The ability to have discipline and confidence in yourself and your Soldiers. Learn the cadences, practice your commands, and watch your team flourish under your leadership.

³⁴ TC 3-21.5 *Drill and Ceremonies*. 03 MAY 2021. page 7-5.

³⁵ Failure to report (FTR) usually less than 24 hours (absented or failed to go to their required place of duty or remained absent from the unit or place of duty)

³⁶ Absent without leave (AWOL) after 24 of being absent from their duties without authorization.

³⁷ ADP 6-22 *Army Leadership and the Profession*. 25 NOV 2019. page 1-5.

Chapter 5

What an NCO Must Do

This chapter provides an overview of the essential competencies of leads, develops, and achieves, which are critical to an NCO's success. By understanding and applying the principles and concepts outlined in this chapter, you will develop the skills and knowledge necessary to lead, train, and manage Soldiers and units effectively.

Basic Leader Course

You will learn, or at least be exposed to, your expectations at your first professional military education (PME) course, the Basic Leader Course. Experience, and self-development will help you master these competencies.

- The Basic Leader Course (BLC) is a comprehensive three-week course that equips SGTs, CPLs, and promotable specialists with the essential knowledge and skills to lead teams effectively.³⁸ The course prepares Soldiers transitioning from junior ranks into direct-level leadership roles within their unit. This ensures they are well-prepared and confident in their new responsibilities.
- During BLC, the cadre will introduce you to several Army regulations, training, and doctrinal publications. You will get plenty of practice on your D&C skills at different leadership positions while marching and leading Soldiers.

The Army Leadership Requirements Model

- The Army Leadership Requirements Model has three categories of competencies: leads, develops, and achieves. These also happen to coincide with your evaluated areas on your NCO evaluation report (NCOER³⁹).
- The model outlines:
 - Leads
 - Leads others
 - Builds trust
 - Extends Influence
 - Leads by example
 - Communicates
 - Develops
 - Prepares self
 - Creates a positive environment
 - Develops others
 - Stewards the profession
 - Achieves

³⁸ NCO Worldwide the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence site Basic Leader Course. <https://www.ncoworldwide.army.mil/Academics/Basic-Leader-Course/>. accessed 19 DEC 2024.

³⁹ DA Form 2166-9-1. *NCO Evaluation Report (SGT)*. NOV 2015.

- Gets results, anticipates, integrates tasks, roles, resources, and priorities; improves performance; gives feedback; executes; adapts

Build relationships with your peers while attending BLC. Everyone has a different set of experiences and expertise in their MOS. On your leadership journey, you will see these Soldiers again. When you have questions and need assistance, you will be able to reach out and get help or advice on how to assist your Soldiers and your unit.

Former SGM⁴⁰

Leads

First: Leaders must communicate effectively. The Mission Command Center of Excellence (MCCoE) offers instructional videos under the "Talk Like a Leader" tab⁴¹ to help junior NCOs discuss various topics with their Soldiers and develop their leadership communication skills.

Empower Through Compassion and Vision: Your greatest asset is the trust and loyalty of your team. To earn it, lead with both heart and mind, fostering a culture of authenticity, transparency, and empathy. Your leadership philosophy should be rooted in fairness, open communication, and a genuine commitment to the well-being and growth of every Soldier.

Your Leadership Style: A Reflection of You Your leadership style is your approach and manner of guiding your Soldiers. It should reflect your values, personality, and experience.

The Army will not direct you to lead in a specific leadership style. You may need to adjust your style depending on the situation or the Soldier. TC 7-22.7 The Noncommissioned Officers Guide provides the following leadership styles:⁴²

- **Authoritative** Mobilizes people towards a vision "Come with me."
- **Affiliative** Creates harmony and builds emotional bonds. "People come first."
- **Democratic** Forges consensus through participation. "What do you think?"
- **Coaching** Develops people for the future. "Try this."
- ***Pacesetting** Sets high standards for performance. "Do as I do, now."
- ***Coercive** Demands immediate compliance. "Do what I tell you."

*The coercive and pacesetting styles are effective at gaining short-term follower compliance but generally have negative long-term consequences but maybe required for high-risk situations to avoid injury or loss of life.

In a pivotal moment during a field training exercise with C/1/75 (RGR), my squad leader, SSG Bunnell, seized an opportunity to mentor me at 0200 in the morning. As we approached our ambush site, he halted the patrol and handed me the reins, saying, "Ranger Pruyt (I was a PFC), you are now in charge. Take 5 minutes and develop a plan." With this sudden shift, SSG Bunnell seamless adapted his leadership style, switching from authoritative to a more coaching and democratic approach. By doing so, he empowered me to develop my skills and prepared

⁴⁰ Former SGM. SEP 2024.

⁴¹ <https://usacac.army.mil/Organizations/Centers-of-Excellence-CoE/MCCoE/Center-For-Army-Leadership-CAL/Talk-Like-a-Leader>

⁴² TC 7-22.7. *The Noncommissioned Officers Guide*. 1 JAN 2020. page 3-7.

me for the challenges of Ranger School. This act of leadership not only helped me grow as a Soldier, but taught me about the true spirit of mentorship, leadership, and how to be an NCO.
Former SGM⁴³

You will encounter a diverse range of situations, each requiring a unique approach to leadership. You must be able to adapt your leadership style to meet the needs of your Soldiers, the mission, and the environment. This means being able to switch between different styles depending on the circumstances.

Understand Your Duties. Understand your duties as the direct leader is crucial to achieving success in any mission or task. There are three primary types of duties that you must be aware of, as outlined in TC 7-22. 7, Specified, Directed, and Implied duties.⁴⁴

Specified Duties. These duties are related to your MOS and position. These duties are clearly defined and assigned to you. Examples of specified duties include:

- Counseling your Soldiers as outlined in AR 600-20, Army Command Policy. This includes initial counseling, performance counseling, and separation counseling.
- Maintaining accurate and up-to-date records of your team's training and performance.
- Conducting inspections of your team's equipment, uniforms, and living quarters, as outlined in AR 750-1, Army Materiel Maintenance Policy.

Directed Duties. These are the tasks given by your superiors, either verbally or in writing. Some examples of directed duties include:

- Your platoon sergeant (PSG) directing you to be the guard detail NCO in charge (NCOIC).
- Your company commander assigning you to serve as a safety officer on a range.
- Your PSG directing you to conduct training on a specific task with your team.

Implied Duties. They are not explicitly written or directed but come from the task or mission instructions. Some examples may include:

- Taking initiative to resolve problems or improve processes.
- Ensuring the well-being and safety of your team members.

Now that we have discussed the various types of duties of an NCO, it is essential to remember that your actions and decisions are not just guided by regulations and procedures, but also by your ethics and trustworthiness.

Defining Your Leadership Style

The ranks of CPL and SGT experience new leader challenges in the Army. However, these challenges also present an opportunity to learn and grow.

⁴³ Former SGM. SEP 2024.

⁴⁴ TC 7-22.7. *The Noncommissioned Officers Guide*. 1 JAN 2020. page 3-9.

Becoming a leader is a big step and comes with some challenges. These challenges are not roadblocks though, they are opportunities to learn and grow as a leader. You will put in hard work, face demanding missions, and be tested in ways you have not been tested before. Now is the time to define your leadership style. How will you motivate your Soldiers? What kind of team will you create? Your job is all about leading, training, and ensuring your Soldiers are ready, that includes taking responsibility for their well-being and upholding Army standards. Defining how you approach these responsibilities - your approach to discipline, mentorship, and communication - is what will shape you into the NCO you are meant to be.

Ignite Your Leadership Journey

As you transition to your leadership role, remember that your NEW role in the unit is to:

- Conduct the daily business of your unit.
- Train to standard and not time: Conduct standards-based, performance-oriented, battle-focused training.
- Maintain discipline and enforce standards.
- Be mentor, advisor, and communicator.
- Take care of your Soldiers, ensuring their readiness (financially, medically, family, etc.)
- Ensure accountability and serviceability of individual and Army equipment.
- Ensure that you and your Soldiers (crews and teams) are fit. Train on your MOS, Warrior's tasks, and battle drills to support your unit's mission.

Junior NCOs often lack a deep knowledge and understanding of Army standards or what "right" looks like, mainly because they do not have extensive military experience or have yet to attend their professional military education (PME) course or other functional (MOS) courses.

However, this is not a limitation, but a starting point for your growth and development. Focus on your roles listed on the previously, master those and you are on your way to becoming a great NCO. You have got this!

The Importance of Leadership in Achieving Unit Goals

Leadership is critical to achieving unit goals. Good leadership:

- **Inspires Motivation:** Effective leadership inspires motivation and engagement in team members. When team members are motivated, they are more productive and committed to achieving unit goals.
- **Builds Trust:** Leadership builds trust between team members and their leaders. When team members trust their leaders, they are more likely to follow their guidance and direction. As the first level leader, you build the trust by from your Soldiers by being present. Eat meals with them regularly. Walk through the barracks on the weekends and after duty hours to see how they are living and what they are doing.
- **Fosters Collaboration:** Leadership fosters collaboration and teamwork. When the leader knows their team members and shared understanding and common goals between leaders and team members it breeds success.

- **Drives Innovation:** Leadership drives innovation and creativity. When team members are empowered to think outside the box and produce new ideas, they are more likely to find solutions to complex problems.
- **Enhances Accountability:** Leadership holds accountability. When team members are held accountable for their actions, they are more likely to take ownership of their work and strive for excellence.

Key Responsibilities

You will be responsible for:

- **Leading, inspecting, and training your Soldiers:** You will be expected to lead by example, inspecting and training your Soldiers to the highest standards.
- **Maintaining accountability and serviceability of equipment:** You are responsible for ensuring that your unit's equipment is in good working order and that your Soldiers are accountable for their actions.
- **Ensuring fitness and readiness:** Ensure that you and your Soldiers are physically fit and ready for their duties.
- **Providing guidance and support:** You are responsible for providing guidance and support to your Soldiers, helping them to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

Key Army Doctrine and Regulations

It is essential that you are familiar with the following Army doctrine and regulations:

- ADP 6-22 *Army Leadership and the Profession*
- AR 670-1: *Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia*
- AR 600-20: *Army Command Policy* (Chapter 4, Military Discipline and Conduct)
- FM 6-22 *Developing Leaders*
- *The Uniform Code of Military Justice* (UCMJ)
- DA Pam 600-25 *U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide*
- TC 7-22.7 *Noncommissioned Officer Guide*

Best Practices

- **Develop a leadership philosophy:** Develop a personal leadership philosophy that outlines your values, principles, and approach to leadership.
- **Stay organized and focused:** Use tools such as a planner or app to stay organized and focused, and to ensure that you are meeting your responsibilities and deadlines.
- **Seek feedback and coaching:** Seek feedback and coaching from your superiors and peers to improve your leadership skills.

Building Trust

Building trust is a crucial aspect of every one of the competencies. It is difficult to lead without trust. Every other competency is nearly impossible to achieve without the trust of your Soldiers, peers, and superiors.

Trust is the foundation that you will build a cohesive team that can accomplish even the most difficult missions. Here are some ways to build trust and your team:

- **Be transparent and honest:** Communicate openly and honestly with your team, sharing information and providing feedback in a timely and constructive manner. Be approachable and willing to listen to concerns and ideas, you will be surprised at what you can learn.
- **Follow through on commitments:** Do what you say you will do and follow through on your promises. This demonstrates reliability and accountability, which are essential for building trust.
- **Be consistent and fair:** Treat all team members equally and consistently, avoiding favoritism or bias. Be fair in your decision-making and ensure that your actions align with your words.
- **Show empathy and compassion:** demonstrate that you care about your team members' well-being and are invested in their success. Support and guide them when needed.
- **Set the example:** Model the behavior you expect from your team, demonstrating a strong work ethic, integrity, and a commitment to excellence.
- **Foster open communication:** Encourage open and honest communication within your team, creating a safe and supportive environment where team members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas.
- **Be able to admit mistakes:** Show that you are human and willing to learn from mistakes. Admit when you are wrong and be willing to apologize and make amends when necessary.
- **Demonstrate expertise and competence:** show that you are knowledgeable and skilled in your area of expertise, and you are committed to continuous learning and improvement. You are not going to be an expert on all things but show the commitment to continuously improve.
- **Respect confidentiality:** Avoid gossip or sharing personal information without permission.
- **Follow up and follow through:** After making a promise or commitment, follow up to ensure that it has been fulfilled and follow through on any actions or decisions you have made.

Building trust takes time and effort, but it is essential for creating a positive and productive environment. By following these tips, you can establish a strong foundation of trust with your team and set yourself up for success as a leader. When you have trust, you can build the cohesive team of which your Soldiers are proud to belong.

Communication

Effective communication is your foundation to exceptional leadership. As a leader, your ability to convey purpose, direction, and motivation can make all the difference in achieving your mission. But communication is a two-way street – it is not just about speaking and writing clearly, but also about listening with intention and empathy.

In this guide, we will explore the importance of effective communication, common pitfalls to avoid, and provide best practices to help you become a more effective communicator and leader:

- **Clear Understanding:** Effective communication ensures that Soldiers understand their tasks, responsibilities, and expectations. Clear communication helps prevent misunderstandings, reduces errors, increases productivity and efficiency of training.
- **Providing Guidance:** NCOs must provide guidance and direction to their Soldiers. Communication enables them to convey their vision, goals, and expectations, ensuring that Soldiers are working towards a common objective.
- **Feedback and Evaluation:** Feedback is a two-way process. Junior NCOs must be able to receive feedback from their Soldiers and provide constructive mentorship to help them improve. Feedback can be both verbal and written, both are appropriate. Try to give negative feedback in private and positive feedback in public to recognize your Soldiers. There are three types of feedback coaching, appreciation, and evaluation: NCOs must understand why and how to provide all three. You flanked left instead of right, right would have provided the tactical high ground and maintained communications with the platoon. Great job leading PT today the entire platoon is exhausted and inspired by your creativity! I rank you #2 of 4 Soldiers in the team because...
- **Motivating and Inspiring:** Effective communication can motivate and inspire Soldiers to perform at their best. Junior NCOs who can communicate effectively can boost morale, increase job satisfaction, and encourage Soldiers to strive for excellence.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Communication is critical in resolving conflicts and addressing issues within the team. Junior NCOs must be able to resolve disputes, address concerns, and find solutions.
- **Accountability:** Communication helps junior NCOs hold themselves and their Soldiers accountable for their actions. By setting clear expectations and communicating them effectively, junior NCOs can ensure that Soldiers understand their responsibilities and are held accountable for their performance.

Key Army Doctrine and Regulations

The Army emphasizes the importance of communication in leadership through various publications, including:

- Field Manual (FM) 6-22: Leader Development, which highlights the importance of communication in leadership, stating that "effective communication is critical to the success of any organization."
- Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 600-25: U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide, which emphasizes the importance of communication in NCO leadership, NCOs must be able to communicate effectively to lead, train, and mentor their Soldiers.

Common Communication Pitfalls:

- Assuming knowledge: Assuming that Soldiers already know something can lead to confusion and misunderstandings.
- Using jargon: Using technical terms or jargon can confuse Soldiers and make them feel left out. Take the time to spell out acronyms and explain doctrinal terms to Soldiers, especially when working with separate formations. Example: “MA” can stand for mission analysis, or mission assignment, military assistant, or mission assurance.
- Not listening: Not listening effectively to Soldiers can lead to misunderstandings and missed opportunities.
- failing to provide feedback: Not providing feedback can lead to confusion and frustration.
- being unapproachable: Not being approachable can lead to Soldiers feeling uncomfortable or intimidated.

Effective Communication Techniques:

- Use the task, conditions, standard format: Clearly state the task, the conditions, and the standards for completion.
- Use the "Who-What-When-Where-Why-How" (5 Ws and How) method: Clearly state who is involved, what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, where it needs to be done, and why it needs to be done and how it is going to be done. The “How” is your guidance/orders to your Soldiers.
- Seek feedback: Ask for feedback from peers, superiors, and subordinates on your communication style.
- Practice active listening: Pay attention, make a conscious effort to actively listen to your Soldiers and to what others are saying and respond thoughtfully.
- Read books and articles: Read books and articles on effective communication to stay up to date on the latest techniques and strategies.
- Use visual aids: Use diagrams, charts, and pictures to help convey your message.
- Use storytelling: Use stories to illustrate a point or convey a message.
- Use positive language: Use positive language to encourage and motivate your Soldiers.

So, take the time to develop your communication skills, both written and verbal. Listen actively, speak clearly, and write with precision. Your ability to communicate effectively is the key to unlocking your team’s full potential and achieving greatness together.

Develops

Developing competency is more than developing your team. This includes your ability to develop yourself, both personally and professionally. It involves seeking out opportunities for growth, learning, and self-improvement. Preparing yourself for the challenges and responsibilities of leadership. It involves being proactive, anticipating potential problems, and taking steps to mitigate risks.

To me, the phrase “Steward the Profession means that it’s our responsibility as leaders to protect, preserve, and advance our profession and ensure its integrity, reputation, and
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relevance. To do that we must adhere to our Army Values and Warrior Ethos, our principles, and maintain the Army standards in order to maintain the Army's trustworthiness and credibility.

Retired SGM⁴⁵

A leader who prepares themselves is able to think critically, make sound decisions, and respond effectively to unexpected situations.

Developing your cohesive team is crucial in creating a positive environment that fosters growth, collaboration, and collective success. You create opportunities for them to build new skills take on new challenges and take new challenges outside their comfort zone. When team members work together towards common goals, they develop trust, respect, and camaraderie, creating a supportive environment that enhances well-being, job satisfaction and unit pride. By investing in the growth and development of your team members, you can drive innovation, excellence, and a culture of continuous learning, ultimately having a profound impact on the profession. As a junior NCO, you can help steward the profession by taking an active role in developing and mentoring junior Soldiers. Here are some active methods:

- **Mentorship:** Take a personal interest in the development of junior Soldiers, providing guidance, advice, and feedback to help them grow and improve. Giving them a copy of the Soldiers Guide to read as part of their initial counseling.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Share your expertise and experience with others, whether through formal training, informal discussions, or written guidance.
- **Leadership Development:** Develop junior Soldiers (future leaders) by providing opportunities for them to practice their leadership skills by allowing them to take on additional responsibilities, lead teams, and make decisions under your guidance.
- **Training and Education:** Support and encourage junior Soldiers to pursue formal education and trainings, such as Army courses, certifications, and degree programs.
- **Feedback and evaluation:** Provide regular helpful feedback identifying areas for improvement. Develop a plan to address them.
- **Be a Role Model:** Demonstrate the values and behaviors you expect from others.
- **Coaching:** Help junior Soldiers set goals, develop plans to achieve them, and provide guidance and support along the way.
- **Encouraging Self-Development:** Encourage junior Soldiers to take ownership of their development, provide resources and support to help them achieve their goals.
- **Fostering a Culture of Learning:** Create an environment that values learning, innovation, and experimentation, where junior Soldiers feel comfortable taking risks and trying new things.

By taking these steps, you can help ensure that the next generation of leaders is equipped with the skills, knowledge, and values needed to succeed and lead the Army into the future.

Additionally, you can also help steward the profession by:

- Sharing best practices and lessons learned with other units and organizations.

⁴⁵ Retired SGM. JUN 2024.

- Collaborating with other leaders to develop and implement initiatives that support the growth and development of junior Soldiers (I.E. Soldier of the month mock boards).
- Encouraging and recognizing excellence and achievement among junior Soldiers.

Counseling

As a new NCO, one of the most critical skills you will develop is the ability to counsel your Soldiers effectively. Counseling is not just a one-on-one conversation, but a collaborative effort between you and your team members to identify strengths, weaknesses, crises, and goals.

Together, you will develop a personalized plan to address these areas, fostering growth, trust and cohesiveness within your team. Good counseling is the foundation of a strong, resilient team, and it is essential that you master this skill to inspire and motivate your Soldiers to reach their full potential. By using the tools below, you will be equipped to provide constructive feedback. Good counseling develops trust and cohesiveness in your team.

Best Practice: Effective Counseling for Junior NCOs

As a junior NCO, counseling can be a challenging task, especially when faced with limited time, absent Soldiers, or difficulty recalling important events. To overcome these obstacles, consider the following best practice.

Divide Counseling Periods Throughout the Month

Instead of counseling all Soldiers at once, divide the counseling period throughout the month. For example, if you have 7 Soldiers and 1 NCO in your squad, counsel 2 Soldiers (including the NCO) per week. This approach allows for more meaningful and focused counseling sessions, rather than trying to counsel all Soldiers in one day every month.

Additional Best Practices:

- **Leverage Technology:** Use digital tools to record important events and notes about your Soldiers, making it easier to address them during counseling.
- **Maintain a Running Log:** Keep a daily journal or log of events that impact your Soldiers, ensuring you stay informed and prepared for counseling sessions.
- **Designate a Counseling Site:** Choose a private and quiet location for counseling, free from distractions and interruptions.
- **Communicate with your Soldiers:** Ensure the Soldier is aware of the counseling time, location, duration, and type of counseling.
- **Prepare Ahead of Time:** Write your Soldier's counseling ahead of schedule and review it before the session. Read it aloud to ensure it makes sense and covers all important points, including shortcomings, upcoming training, achievements and their goals.
- **Be Prepared and On Time:** Arrive prepared and on time for the counseling session, respecting your Soldier's time and demonstrating your commitment to their growth and development.

Benefits of this Approach:

- More focused and meaningful counseling sessions
- Improved time management and reduced stress
- Enhanced preparation and organization
- Increased effectiveness in addressing Soldier shortcomings, achievements and goals
- For your NCO, a completed Non-Commissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCOER) quarterly counsel after three months of counseling your NCO

Tools to Use for Counseling:

- ATP 6-22.1 *Providing Feedback: Counseling–Coaching–Mentoring*
- Counseling Enhancement Tool (CET)

Achieves

Understanding the achieves competency is crucial to your success as a leader in the Army. "Achieves," as an NCO, means being a "boss." Not just barking orders, but making things happen. You make decisions, get your team moving, and hit those goals. It refers to the ability to get results, accomplish tasks, and achieve goals. It is about taking action, making decisions, and executing plans to drive performance and achieve the desired outcome. To do this you must be able to:

- Anticipate and prioritize tasks, roles, resources, and priorities to ensure that your team is working towards common goals
- Integrate tasks, roles, and resources to maximize efficiency and effectiveness
- Improve performance by identifying areas for improvement, providing feedback to subordinates and superiors, and coaching your team members
- Execute plans and make decisions that drive results
- Adapt to changing circumstances and adjust your approach as needed to accomplish the mission

When I first pinned on my stripes and assumed the role of an NCO, I was eager to prove myself. My first assignment was to help a Soldier who struggled with weight and fitness standards. He was overweight and had repeatedly failed the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) and Height and Weight requirements. My mission was clear: get him in shape and ensure he passed his next evaluations.

With the fervor of a newly minted leader, I took him to the track every night. My approach was relentless, pushing him to his limits in every session. I thought that the harder I pushed, the faster he would improve. My focus was solely on the physical results, and I was determined to make him pass the APFT and Height and Weight.

In the end, my method worked. He passed his next APFT and met the Height and Weight standards. On paper, it was a success. But what I failed to recognize at the time was the importance of emotional intelligence, care, and empathy.

As an NCO, my responsibility was not only to improve physical standards but also to support and guide my Soldiers holistically. Reflecting back, I realized that while I achieved the immediate goal, I had neglected the fundamental aspects of leadership that foster trust and

growth. Understanding and caring for the well-being of my Soldiers should have been at the forefront of my approach.

This experience taught me a valuable lesson: true leadership goes beyond achieving results. It involves caring for your Soldiers, understanding their struggles, and supporting them with empathy. As I grew in my role, I made it a point to incorporate these values into my leadership style, ensuring that I not only lead but also genuinely care for those under my command.

CSM Shawn Carns⁴⁶

It is about being a results-driven leader who can get things done, overcome obstacles, and achieve success. It is not just about planning and talking about what needs to be done, but about taking action, making things happen, and delivering results.

To get results, you need to train your team on how to achieve those results. Let us talk about how to plan and conduct that training now.

Unit Training: is Crucial to Your Commander

Be a Trainer

Never show up unprepared to a training event. Your Soldiers rely on you to provide clear guidance and instruction. It is essential that you are prepared to deliver. Take the time to review materials, ask questions, and seek feedback from your peers and superiors. Remember, as a junior NCO, you are the face of leadership for your team. Your example sets the tone for their behavior.

Commander's Training Guidance: Covers unit operations, thoughts for upcoming training, observations on the unit's training status, and any changes to mission essential tasks.

Training Calendars: Unit training calendars are a time and task-managing tool. They identify upcoming training events and opportunities (hip pocket training), which you can use to prioritize and optimize the limited training time for your Soldiers, supporting platoon training and readiness goals.

Usually, unit training calendars will have major training events listed, such as a combat training center (CTC) rotation or an external evaluation (EXEVAL). Usually, the unit training calendars are posted in the company's common areas. As you look at the short-range and mid-range calendars, you will notice other training events that support the major events in the long-range calendar, such as:

- Physical training
- Leader trainer certification
- Individual weapon qualification
- Crew served weapon qualification.
- Collective live fire
- Gunnery
- Time management cycles (Green, Amber, Red)

⁴⁶ CSM Carns, Shawn F. Combined Arms Center CSM. NOV 24.

- Additional duty inspections
- Near-term and far-term calendars include deployments, CTC rotations, post support details, inspections, and daily/weekly/monthly battle rhythms.

Safety First

Keep safety in mind when planning training. Develop a risk assessment plan before any training addressing possible dangers. Risk management allows Soldiers to train to standards safely and efficiently. ATP 5-19 Risk Management outlines a disciplined approach to express a risk level in terms readily understood using DD Form 2977 Deliberate Risk Assessment Worksheet or unit designated form. This form should be a living document you use and modify during training.

Five Steps to Risk Management:

1. Identify the hazards.
2. Assess the hazards.
3. Develop controls to address those hazards and make risk decisions.
4. Implement controls to reduce the hazards.
5. Evaluate and supervise training and safety control measures.

Risk Management Resources:

The United States Army Combat Readiness Center website for a list of Risk Management and safety training resources.⁴⁷

Plan and Organize Training

Develop a comprehensive training calendar for your formation, including individual and collective training events. Use the Army Training Network (ATN).⁴⁸

The 8-step Training Model

The 8-step training model is your guide to planning, preparing, executing, and evaluating training or other events. This model empowers junior leaders (company and below) to think through and manage simple training events seamlessly. Imagine you are the leader that is planning a training event on basic rifle marksmanship for an upcoming unit range week.

As the leader, I will plan and organize a comprehensive training session on basic rifle marksmanship for our upcoming unit range week. Using the 8-step training model, I will ensure a safe and effective training event.

Things to consider as I plan:

- Identify the training goal

⁴⁷ The Risk Management Basic Course (2G-F97) _DL is a 2-hour distance learning course and is available online at the Army Learning Management System (ALMS) website (CAC enable site). However, you must first register for it in Army Training Requirements and Resources System (ATRRS).

⁴⁸ <https://atn.army.mil/>

- Identify and request the range needed to conduct the training.
- Remember to augment live environment training strategy with an effective and efficient use of available virtual systems to train and prepare Soldiers for subsequent progressive live-fire training events.
- When is the training scheduled? How much time do I have to train my Soldiers?
- Identify the safety risks: Live ammunition use, accidents, negligent discharge, weather, water for Soldiers, range fire, etc., and how to reduce these risks.
- Review the needed weapon technical manual, training manual, such as TC 3-20.0 Integrated Weapons Training Strategy (IWTS) chapter 3, FM 7-0 Training and online resources.
- Gather necessary equipment and identify coordination needs to support training such as:
 - Coordinate with Arms room for weapons draw and turn in
 - Coordinate with supply for weapon cleaning materials
 - Coordinate for virtual systems use to conduct Preliminary Live-Fire Simulations (known as PLFS)
 - Coordinate with Training Aid Support Center (TASC) for training aids, devices, simulators, and simulations
 - Coordinate for a unit classroom to conduct preliminary marksmanship instruction and evaluation (PMI&E)
- Use the Army Training Network (ATN) to assist you: to develop individual and squad level training.

In the example of planning a training session on basic rifle marksmanship for the upcoming unit range week and individual weapon qualification:

Step 1: Plan the Training Event

- End state training goal: Squad members will demonstrate proficiency in basic rifle marksmanship, Achieve a minimum qualification score of 23/40 on their individual weapon.
- Training date: 21 February 2026
- Alignment with PLT mission: This training supports our PLT's mission to maintain combat readiness and proficiency in individual skills.
- Risks: Live ammunition use, accidents, negligent discharge, weather, and range fire. Mitigation measures include:
 - Conducting a thorough risk assessment and briefing Soldiers on safety procedures.
 - Ensuring all Soldiers understand and follow range rules and regulations.
 - Providing adequate supervision and guidance during training.
- Resources: M4 carbine, virtual systems, classroom, ammunition, range facilities, and safety equipment.
- Evaluation: Soldiers will be evaluated on their marksmanship skills, and results will be recorded and tracked.

Step 2: Train and Certify the Trainers

- I will brief my team leader and trainers on the training event, and we will conduct a dry run to ensure proficiency.
- Trainers will be certified by PLT leadership after demonstrating their ability to conduct the training to standard.
- Soldiers will be briefed on the upcoming training and the importance of rifle marksmanship training for combat readiness and safety on the range.

Step 3: Recon is Crucial

Recon the training area to ensure there are no issues with the site and that it can support the training.

- I will recon the training area to ensure it is safe and suitable for the training.
- I will verify that there are no range use conflicts and identify potential issues.
- I will recon training site and map the routes to the site from:
 - Unit and emergency contact such as staff duty NCO
 - Hospital and emergency contact number
 - Range control and contact number

Step 4: Issue Order (the information to your Soldiers (Operation Order-OPORD))

Identify critical events in the OPORD, such as who is responsible for what, provide a timeline for the training, and identify the training tasks, objectives, and how to accomplish the training.

- OPORD will be issued to Soldiers, outlining the training schedule, objectives, and tasks.
- Critical events include:
 - Safety briefing and range rules.
 - Rifle handling and firing techniques.
 - Qualification standards and scoring.
- Soldiers will be provided with clear and concise directions and responsibilities.

Step 5: Rehearsing

Rehearsing the training plan ensures that you have covered all bases, allowing everyone to understand their role in training thus allowing everyone is prepared and on the same page.

- I will rehearse the training plan with my trainers and assistants.
- We will identify any friction points and adjust as necessary.

Step 6: Execute – Time to Train!

It is time to train. Use the Crawl-Walk-Run method of training. Always train to standard.

- Using the Crawl-Walk-Run method, start with basic rifle handling and progressing to live fire exercises.

- Allow Soldiers to practice loading, unloading, remedial procedures, and rifle firing under the NCO's guidance.

Step 7: Evaluate Training – Conduct an After-Action Review (AAR)

- Conduct an after-action review to identify best practices and areas for improvement.
- Soldiers will be evaluated on their marksmanship skills, and results will be recorded and tracked.
- Identify key tasks that need improvement and develop a plan to address those areas.
- Provide a copy of your AAR to your PLT leadership.

Step 8: Retrain

- If necessary, retraining will be conducted to address any deficiencies or areas for improvement identified during the AAR.
- Additional practice and training will be scheduled to ensure Soldiers meet the qualification standard.

Post Training: Record and Update Training

- Training records will be updated and recorded in the correct database to reflect the current unit training status.
- Soldiers who meet the qualification standard will be awarded the appropriate marksmanship badge.

Chapter 6

Your 1st 100 Days: A Roadmap to Success

Throughout the 1st 100 Days and your Career!

Lead by example, every day! As a NCO, you are not just a leader – you are a role model. Your actions, attitude, and behavior will inspire and motivate your team to excel. Remember, leadership is not just about giving orders; it is about setting the example and empowering your team to succeed.

Maintain a Positive Attitude:

- Stay Positive and Enthusiastic: Even when facing challenges, and they will come, keep your spirits high. Your Soldiers will follow your lead.
- Foster a Positive Team Environment: Create a supportive atmosphere where your team can thrive. The phrase “praise in public, criticize in private” is best practice for not intentionally creating a negative environment. Live by that mantra. Nothing creates a negative environment more than criticizing an individual in front of the team.

Never undermine and talk poorly about the chain-of-command to your Soldiers. Your chain-of-command will certainly make unpopular decisions. The time to talk about them to your chain-of-command is away from your Soldiers. Make your voice heard if you disagree solely to the command. Once the final decision is made, support it as your own idea.

Stay Organized:

- Keep Track of Tasks, Deadlines, and Priorities: Use tools and systems to stay organized and efficient. For example, job books and a binder or folder on your computer where you keep track of your Soldiers performance and can review/update as necessary on their accomplishments, counseling, award recommendations, etc.
- Manage Time Efficiently: Every minute counts, so use your time wisely. Treat every day like it is the day before we go to war.

Continuous Learning:

- Stay Updated: Keep tabs on the latest Army and unit changes impacting you and your Soldiers.
 - Soldiers. Join the [S1NET](#) (CAC enable site) to received S1NET messages to stay abreast of the latest HR knowledge impacting Army-wide & world-wide, across all components.
 - Visit the APD site for the latest doctrine publications
 - Visit and subscribe to your MOS proponent Center of Excellence lessons learned website for changes in TTPs and best practices.
- Seek Personal and Professional Growth: Encourage your Soldiers to do the same.

Balance Work and Personal Life (The Hardest Thing to Do):

Prioritize well-being, maintain your holistic health and fitness, balancing work and personal life. Recognize that an Army career is a marathon, not a sprint, and taking care of yourself is crucial to supporting your Soldiers and family. Lead by example, ensuring your Soldiers also prioritize their own well-being and that of their families, setting a positive tone for resilience and readiness.

Learn about the NCO evaluation report (NCOER) submission process: Familiarize yourself with the NCOER submission process, which is your report card. Ask your rater what the unit is process is.

Days 1-30: Orientation and Learning

- Read/download your posts “Blue Book”
- Develop your green “leader” book
- Learn your new battle rhythm
- Learn any admin battle drills
- Learn new requirements (staff duty NCO or CQ NCO)
- Lead PT
- Meet your peer leaders (start to develop a network)
- Sign for all equipment
- Inspect and assess your Soldiers Barracks
- Develop a training Plan
- ID Card Update

Meet with your rater face-to-face for your initial counseling. Schedule a meeting with your rater to discuss your leadership expectations, goals, and objectives. Do this as soon as possible and before you counsel your team members. This is an opportunity to ask questions, clarify any doubts, and understand what is expected of you. For example, you might ask:

- What are the unit is priorities and goals?
- What are my specific responsibilities and expectations?
- How will you evaluate my performance?
- What is your “wakeup” criteria?

Introduce yourself to your team Take the time to meet with your team members individually, learn about their backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses. This will help you build relationships, establish trust, and develop a plan to support their growth and development. Take note of the group dynamics. Who is an informal leader of the group? Who does not talk much? All of this will become important during your time as their leader. When meeting with your team, do the following:

- Ask open-ended questions to encourage discussion and sharing.
- Use active listening skills to understand their perspectives and concerns.
- Develop a plan to support their growth and development.

Counsel your Soldiers. This counseling must be written not verbal. You are not the Army's first team/section leader. Use best practices instead of trying to reinvent the wheel. Ask your peers for a few examples and take the best of each to craft a counseling form that fits you. Schedule individual counseling sessions with each of your Soldiers within the first 30 days after you have been counseled. This is an opportunity to:

- Provide clear expectations
- Introduce yourself and establish rapport.
- Discuss their goals, aspirations, and concerns.
- Develop a plan to support their growth and development. What are their thoughts on reenlistment? Promotion? Duty location?

Learn the unit's culture and procedures. Every unit has a culture and a climate. Learn about yours, you may already know it if you have been there for a while, but the climate differs from unit to unit within the same subordinate echelons.

- Familiarize Yourself with SOPs: Learn the unit's mission and standard operating procedures.
- Attend Orientation Programs: Seek out mentors who can provide guidance and support.

Days 31-60: Building Your Team and Trust

- Counsel your Soldiers (every 30 days or per your unit SOP)
- Attend a company level SFRG event
- Attend a BOSS event
- Develop a training plan for your Soldiers

Continue to build rapport with your team. Spend time with your team, showing genuine interest in their well-being and professional development. If you have not done so yet, consider scheduling a team-building event such as going to lunch together, challenge another team to a sporting event like basketball, football, etc. This will help you build relationships, establish trust, and create a positive team culture.

Days 61-100: Implementing and Refining

- Counsel your Soldiers (remember to follow up on previous counseling plan of action)
- Request quarterly counseling from your direct supervisor

Minimize changes and identify areas for improvement. Avoid making drastic changes during the first 100 days unless it is absolutely necessary. Instead, focus on identifying areas for improvement and developing a plan to address them. For example:

- Conduct a thorough analysis of your team's strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify areas for improvement and develop a plan to address them.
- Prioritize changes based on their impact and feasibility. Your chain-of-command can provide you with some advice from experience on this.

Monitor the impact of your changes and refine your approach as needed. Monitor the impact of your changes, did they fix the issue? Can you sustain the changes that you made forever? Asking yourself these questions will help you ensure your changes are effective and sustainable. Here are some additional tips:

- Use data and metrics to evaluate the impact of your changes.
- Solicit feedback from your team and others to identify areas for improvement.
- Refine your approach based on the feedback and data you receive.

Provide training and development opportunities for your team. Provide training and development opportunities for your team to support their growth and development. Remember, you are training the Soldier who will eventually take your place as you move up through the ranks.

Conduct performance reviews, evaluating performance and providing constructive feedback. Conduct performance reviews after every training event and each month. This will help you support the growth and development of your team members.

Summary

Your first 100 days as an NCO are a critical period that sets the tone for your leadership tenure. By following the roadmap outlined in this chapter, you can establish a strong foundation for your future success, build a cohesive and high-performing team, and make a positive impact on your Soldiers and your unit.

Appendix A

Leader's Book

A Leader's Book Content Sample

- Cover page
 - Unit name
 - Your name
 - Unit's phone number
 - Your contact information
- The NCO Creed
- Warriors Ethos
- Army Song
- Oath of enlistment
- Chapter 1. Unit and Leadership Information
 - Unit History, (Coat of Arms, Shoulder sleeve insignia, etc.)
 - Chain of command
 - NCO Support channel
 - Leaders' information
 - Leader's Biography
 - Platoon Sergeant's Duties
 - Squad Duties by position.
- Chapter 2. Personal Data
 - Soldier's Privacy Act Statement
 - Daily Personnel Status
 - Soldier's Personal Data Sheet
 - MTOE/ALPHA Roster Counseling
 - Strip Map to Home
 - Squad Leader Personal Data Sheets ERB's
- Chapter 3. Actions Tracker
- NCOERs
- Counseling
- IDP
- Awards
- Leave
- Schools
- Unresolved Soldier Issues
- Training data updated in system of records DTMS.
- Chapter 4. Battle focus
 - Mission Essential Task List (METL)
 - Sample 5 Paragraph Operation Order
 - Pre-Combat Checklist

- Packing List
 - Deployment Checklist
 - Deployment Sequence of Events
- Chapter 5. Equipment data
 - Squad Equipment Density
 - Sensitive items maintenance tracker
 - Equipment Service Schedule
- Chapter 6. Training Management
 - Major Training/Collective Training Objective
 - Training Requirement
 - Individual Training Status
 - Individual Weapon Training Status
 - Team/Squad/ Training Status
- o8-step Training Model
 - After Action Review
 - Team/Squad/Section Training
 - Verify Soldiers training status (DTMS).
 - Hip-pocket/opportunity training task.
- Chapter 7. Unit Schedule events
 - Unit daily activities
 - Unit Physical Fitness Calendar
 - Special Population Training Calendar
 - Short Range Calendars
 - Long Range Calendar
- Chapter 8. Phone contact information.
 - Alert Roster
 - Important Numbers such as:
 - PSG/PL/ CDR/1SG
 - BN HQ
 - Chaplain
 - Fire department
 - Medical/Ambulance
 - Police
 - Red cross
- Chapter 9. NCO References.
 - Source of information for NCOs
 - Army Publishing Directorate QR Code
 - Promotion criteria
 - Blank risk assessment worksheet
 - List of common acronyms use.

Your Leader's Book is a critical tool for you, as it helps you develop essential leadership skills, maintain accountability, and manage risk. By keeping accurate records, you can ensure your

unit's readiness and success. This tool will keep you organize and prepare, ensuring you have all the necessary information at your fingertips. Here are some reasons why you should have a leader's book:

- **Record Keeping:** A leader's book helps junior NCOs keep track of important information, such as:
 - Soldier data (e.g., contact info, emergency contacts, and medical information)
 - Training records (e.g., certifications, qualifications, and training dates)
 - Performance evaluations (e.g., counseling, evaluations, and awards)
 - Disciplinary actions (e.g., Article 15s, counseling, and corrective training)
 - Accountability: By maintaining a leader's book, junior NCOs demonstrate accountability for their Soldiers and their unit's readiness. It shows that they are proactive in managing their team's personnel and administrative tasks.
- **Leadership Development:** A leader's book helps junior NCOs develop essential leadership skills, such as:
- **Organization:** Keeping accurate and timely records requires organizational skills, which are essential for effective leadership.
- **Communication:** A leader's book facilitates communication with Soldiers, peers, and superiors, ensuring that everyone is on the same page.
- **Problem-Solving:** By tracking issues and concerns, junior NCOs can identify patterns and develop solutions to address them.
- **Risk Management:** A leader's book can help mitigate risks by:
 - Identifying potential issues or concerns before they become major problems.
 - Documenting incidents or accidents, which can help prevent similar incidents in the future.
 - Providing a paper trail for investigations or inquiries
- **Professional Development:** Maintaining a leader's book demonstrates a junior NCO's commitment to their profession and their unit. It shows that they are proactive in managing their responsibilities and willing to take ownership of their team's success and failures.
- **Inspections and Evaluations:** A well-maintained leader's book can help junior NCOs prepare for inspections and evaluations, ensuring that their unit is ready and compliant with regulations.⁴⁹

You need to know and be known to your Soldiers and families very well. Understanding their family dynamics can provide valuable insights into their personal lives and can help you support them better. As you talk to all of them, explain what you expect from them individually and as part of the team. You need to be an engaged leader. The most proficient way to get to your Soldiers and their families is through your daily interactions with them.

⁴⁹ NOTE: Your unit SOP may already have a sample of what a leader's book needs as a unit standard.

As an engaged leader, you may get them to talk and open up about the stressors or issues they are facing during your monthly counseling. If you find yourself unable to personally assist your Soldier, remember your NCO support channel and lean on them for guidance. This channel is there to support you, ensuring you are not alone in training and supporting your Soldiers. Remember, Soldiers' personal problems impact readiness, but you have a support system to help you navigate these challenges.

One of the best ways to get to know your Soldiers is to engage them on their off-hours by visiting their barracks/living quarters or dining with them at the dining facility. This not only shows your commitment but also helps you understand their personal lives and issues better. Soldiers tend to be more open and share more of their issues during these times, fostering a sense of connection and empathy.

Note: Some common and military life Soldiers and their family issues and stressors they may face, and you need to be aware of:

- Financial issues (Debt)
- Loss of transportation
- Drug-Alcohol issues
- Death of family member
- Redcross messages
- Vehicle accidents
- Injury
- Marital issues
- Extramarital affairs/Adultery
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment
- Criminal actions
- Bullying or harassment
- Major life changes (marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, citizenship naturalization, divorce, etc.)
- Disciplinary and Uniformed Code of Military Justice actions
- Unexpected home disasters
- Suicide of loved ones
- Suicidal thoughts
- Uncleanliness
- Chapter or bar from reenlistment
- Medical issues

If you are new to the PLT or unit, get up to speed about your new squad. Talk to your squad leader and PSG and get their perspective on your Soldiers (work ethics/habits). Talk to your Soldiers all together and get a sense of their perspective of the unit, themselves, and what each of them does (their comfort zone). Get their feedback as to how to improve the squad.

During your daily interactions and discussions, you can learn a lot about your Soldiers and form your perspective of them. Remember that they also do the same of you as you get to know them. As you talk to them, you can find some of their stressors about their family, background, home life, concerns about upcoming training or deployments, individual and collective training status (part of your leader's book), etc.

You will need to conduct initial counseling with your team members individually and set expectations for what you expect from them and what right looks like. Mentor them as well by making them realize how they fit in the unit readiness and providing guidance when needed. Remember that training occurs every day and provides the venue to engage the Soldiers in observations, feedback, and reflection on their experiences.

You also need to listen and be observant to your Soldiers as they talk or go about their daily routine. They sometimes talk to their battle buddy over issues they are facing and try to keep a close hold, or their behavior changes from their usual behavior.

Remember to incorporate team-building exercises to foster camaraderie and improve your squad cohesion, which will, in turn, build squad morale.

As mentioned before, you have a huge role in the morale of your Soldiers. Your action or inaction on Soldiers' issues that may be affecting them will either build trust in you as a leader or not. Once again, learn to listen and observe your Soldiers to get a sense of their morale.

Appendix B

1st 100 days as an NCO Checklist

Throughout 1st 100 days of NCO

- Set the example and enforce the standards.
- Apply work-life balance strategies (you and your squad).
- Learn to prioritize tasks.
- Optimize time (time management)
- Be respectful.
- Build a strong team.
- Be a leader.
 - Avoid fraternization.
 - When in charge take charge (NCOIC)
 - Take charge in the absence of leaders.
 - Be present.
 - In the “office”
 - In the barracks
 - Dining Facility
 - Off post
 - Follow up on orders
- Prepare for your daily duties.
- First Call – get Soldier accountability and status for the day.
- Report Soldiers status.
- Know the standards so you can train, set, and enforce the standards.
- Be a trainer.
- Be a counselor.
- Be a good follower.
- Support your chain of command.
 - Do not countermand orders.
 - Do not undermine the chain of command or Army leadership.
- Conduct Soldiers Inspections.
 - Inspect Soldiers in formations.
 - Physically Check on Soldiers.
 - Check on Soldiers in the barracks/off post and on post weekend/weekdays.
- Know D&C commands (Marching/PT).
 - Call cadence while running formation.
 - March formation
 - Lead and conduct physical training (PT).
- Conduct Unit maintenance correctly.

1st 30 days

- Know unit is mission, battle tasks and METL.
- Know your unit SOPs.
- Know about your unit maintenance procedures.
- Know your Soldiers and their families (Battle Book: Soldier roster/contact information)
- Know yourself- do you need more training?
- Get feedback to see yourself holistically.
- Property and property accountability: Hand receipts/equipment accountability & field losses (copy in Leader's book)
- Know CCIR, SIR, unit policy letters, off limits establishments (in Leader's Book)
- Know the 8-step training model.
- Training status of your people, individual and collective
- Training guidance (what are we going to accomplish throughout the 6 months/year?)
- Training calendars (short-term/long-term)
 - Major training event
 - Deployments
 - CTC Rotations
 - Post support detail.
 - Inspections
- Understand your additional duties.
- Daily/weekly/monthly battle rhythm
- Know and meet key players in your unit and higher.
- Meet your rater and Soldiers.
- Start building the team.
- Initial counseling (yours and your Soldiers)
- Prepare to write and counsel Soldiers (initial counseling).
- Prepare for long weekends- Safety briefs/POV inspections (copy in Leader's Book).
- Assess your Soldiers skills, training, and Readiness.

31-60 days

- Evaluate yourself and identify areas to sustain and improve - seek feedback from subordinates and superiors.
- Training
 - Plan and prepare for training.
 - Conduct training.
 - Conduct SGT Time.
 - Execute opportunity training.
 - Conduct an after-action review (AAR) after your training event.
 - Apply AAR recommendations (corrections) to improve training.
- Counseling
 - Follow up counseling post initial counseling (provide feedback to Soldiers performance).
 - Develop individual development plan (IDP) of action with subordinates.

- Soldiers' readiness status-what are they lacking?
- Understand and use digital systems/systems of record/analog:
 - SULT (Small Unit Leader Tool)
 - Digital Job Book
 - STP 21-1-SMCT Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks, Warrior Skills Level 1 found in APD.
 - Hip Pocket Training: topics & standards use ATN to get several quick tasks to add to your Leader's Book.
 - Enter training data to digital system of record.
- Provide feedback from conducted training to PLT leadership.
- Prepare for future training events.
- Start to get familiar with military programs that assist Soldiers.

61-100+

- Counsel and follow up on previous counseling and IDPs.
- Expand/develop/refine additional duties knowledge and understanding.
- Follow-up Soldier & Family checks/visits.
- NCOER counseling form follow with rater (every 90 days).
- Identify and prepare Soldiers for
 - Promotion
 - Soldier of the month board
 - Awards
 - Identify personnel gains/losses (near-term/far-term)
- Continue to get familiar with military programs that assist Soldiers.
- Know and find key installation support organizations.
- Continue to be a writer.
 - Counseling
 - Evaluations
 - Awards.

Reference	Title	Description
AR 600-20	Army Command Policy	Provides guidance on Army command policy, including leadership and professional development.
ADP 6-22	Army Leadership and the Profession	Provides guidance on Army leadership and professional development.
ATP 6-22.1	Providing- Feedback-Counseling-Coaching-Mentoring. See Table 1-11 for counseling, coaching and mentoring comparison	Provides guidance and best practices to counseling, coaching, and mentoring.
FM 6-22	Leader Development	Outlines the principles of leader development and professional growth.
FM 7-0	Training the Force	Provides guidance on training and developing leaders.
FM 7-22.7	Noncommissioned Officer Guide	Provides guidance on NCO leadership and professional development.
DA PAM 600-25	U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide	Provides guidance on NCO professional development and leadership.
DA PAM 600-67	Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program	Provides guidance on building a positive and inclusive leadership culture.
ALRM	The Army Leadership Requirements Model (ADP 6-22)	Provides a framework for understanding the requirements of Army leadership and professional development.
CAL	U.S. Army Center for Army Leadership	Research and guidance on leadership and professional development in the Army.
CALL	Center for Army Lessons Learned	Provides observations, insights and lessons for the Warfighter
USASMA	U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy	Provides training and guidance on leadership and professional development for senior NCOs. See resources and Leader tools section for additional leader development tools.
HRC	U.S. Army Human Resources Command	Provides guidance on personnel management and

		leadership development in the Army.
AR 670-1	Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia	Provides guidance on wear and appearance of Army uniforms and insignia.
UCMJ	The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ Articles are listed in the MCM)	Provides guidance on military justice and discipline. Enacted by Congress
MCM	Manual for Courts-Martial (MCM)	Is the executive order that contains the procedural rules and punishments for violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).
TC 7-0.1	After Action Reviews	Provides leaders the fundamental processes and procedures to plan and conduct after action reviews
TC 7-21.13	Soldier's Guide	Provides a reference for subjects in which all Soldiers must maintain proficiency regardless of rank, or MOS with focus on the rank of PVT thru SPC.
TC 7-22.7	Noncommissioned Officer Guide	Provides guidance on NCO leadership and professional development.

Note: The references listed above are not exhaustive, but rather a selection of the most relevant and commonly cited sources used in this handbook development.



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