



Basic Training: What to Expect

Basic Training — often called boot camp — prepares recently enlisted recruits for the physical, mental and emotional aspects of serving in the Military. No matter which Service branch you choose, Basic Training is an intense experience. Nevertheless, completing this required step is far from unachievable.

The information provided in this resource will help you understand what to expect from basic training, and how you can best prepare for it.



How to Prepare for Basic Training



Incorporate cardio workouts, weight training, situps and pushups into daily routines. Jogging, bike riding and exercise classes can also help improve cardiovascular fitness.



Get personal matters in order prior to leaving, including who will handle day-to-day issues such as paying bills, minding mail and dealing with bank accounts.



Increase discipline and get accustomed to a regular schedule. Every aspect of initial training is regimented, and there is no activity that does not have a specific amount of time allocated — from getting up in the morning to going to bed at night.



Take some time to learn about military culture. Military life is different from civilian life. For example, in the Services, people use a lot of acronyms, salute higher-ranking members and get promoted via a rank structure. Read books and websites about the Military or talk to someone who is serving or has recently served.

Packing for Basic Training

There are strict rules covering what enlisted recruits can and cannot bring to Basic Training. Requirements vary from Service to Service, but this list is a good starting point. A recruiter will be able to help make sure recruits have any additional items they may need. Any contraband (items not allowed) will be taken when you arrive on base.

DO BRING:

- Toiletries (toothpaste, shaving supplies, shampoo, soap and soap case, shower shoes, etc.)
- Eyeglasses, if needed (contact lenses are not permitted by most Services)
- Underwear and athletic socks
- Casual, comfortable clothes for leisure time
- Pair of comfortable shoes
- Luggage (small suitcase or gym bag)
- Important paperwork pertaining to prescriptions
- At least \$25, but no more than \$50, in cash
- ATM or debit card
- Family mailing information to keep in touch using the U.S. Postal Service

DO NOT BRING:

- Family
- Pets
- Expensive personal items — cameras, personal electronic devices, laptops, jewelry, etc.
- Nonprescription drugs or drug paraphernalia
- Weapons of any type, including pocket knives
- Obscene or pornographic material
- Alcoholic beverages
- Playing cards/dice/dominos
- Cigarettes/tobacco products

Arriving at Basic Training

The first few days at Basic Training are known as Orientation (also referred to as Processing Week, Reception or 00 Week). During this time, recruits get acquainted with each other, adjust to their new life and learn the dos and don'ts of their chosen Service branch.

During this phase, recruits may also:

- Turn in enlistment packages (paperwork from the MEPS)
- Receive dental and medical exams
- Get immunizations
- Receive uniforms and training gear (shorts/sweats, T-shirts, etc.)
- Receive required haircuts (women may keep their hair long, provided it can be pulled back neatly)
- Create direct deposit accounts for military paychecks

GOOD TO KNOW: Keeping in Touch

Basic Training can be an emotional part of the enlistment process for recruits, as they have limited contact with family and friends while away. However, there are a few ways that recruits can keep in communication with the world:

- **Phone**
Upon arrival at Basic Training, each recruit is allowed a brief phone call home to let family know they've arrived safely.

After this initial call, phone usage varies by Service. For example, some Services allow recruits to use their cell phones on a reward basis. Other Services may permit calls weekly or limited basis, while some may not allow phone use at all.

It is important to note that due to COVID-19, some recruits have been allowed to make more frequent calls while quarantining upon arrival.
- **U.S. Postal System**
Recruits may use the U.S. postal system to send and receive mail throughout their training to keep in touch.
- **Email**
Email usage varies by Service branch. For instance, some Services allow recruits to access email in the final week before graduation, while other Services do not.

After completing Basic Training, recruits are once again allowed to use most forms of communication, such as phones, email and instant messaging.

Basic Training Overview

	ARMY	MARINE CORPS	NAVY	AIR FORCE	SPACE FORCE	COAST GUARD
LOCATION(S)	Fort Benning Columbus, Georgia Fort Jackson Columbia, South Carolina Fort Leonard Wood Waynesville, Missouri Fort Sill Lawton, Oklahoma	Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island Parris Island, South Carolina Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego San Diego, California	Great Lakes Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, Illinois	Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) Lackland San Antonio, Texas	Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) Lackland San Antonio, Texas	Cape May Coast Guard Training Center Cape May, New Jersey
LENGTH	10 weeks	13 weeks	9 weeks	7.5 weeks	7.5 weeks	8 weeks
Subsequent Training Opportunities	Advanced Individual Training (AIT)	Infantry or Combat Training Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Training*	"A" School	Technical Training School	Technical Training School	Class A School*

*This type of training is only available for those in specific career fields.

What Happens After Basic Training

Once a recruit completes Basic Training, they officially become an enlisted member of the Military. And while the timing and process varies by Service branch, eventually all service members will go on after graduation to receive additional training — such as Advanced Individual Training (AIT) — to develop the skills needed to do a specific job. Once finished, service members are transferred to their first duty station to put all that training to good use. To learn more about the differences in advanced training by Service branch, please [speak with a recruiter](#).



For more information about joining the Military, enlistment and Basic Training, visit [TodaysMilitary.com](https://www.TodaysMilitary.com).