

Chapter 2

Leadership Skills

Lesson 1

Steps from the Past



Key Terms

discipline
drill
maneuver
precision
unison

What You Will Learn to Do

- Explain the importance of drill in military discipline

Linked Core Abilities

- Communicate using verbal, nonverbal, visual, and written techniques

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Describe the origin of drill dating back to the Continental Army of the United States
- Identify five purposes of drill in times of war and peace
- Explain civilian control over the military
- Compare the qualities of discipline instilled in the Continental Army to what military drill develops today
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Chapter 2

Key Note Terms

drill – the execution of certain movements by which individuals or units are moved in a uniform manner from one formation to another, or from one place to another; movements are executed in unison and with precision

precision – Being precise, accurate, or exact

discipline – orderly, obedient, or restrained conduct

Introduction

This lesson introduces you to the importance of **drill** and ceremonies, their history and purpose. The **precision** and timing of drill promotes skill, teamwork, and **discipline**. In later lessons, you will understand the roles of leaders and followers in drill, and practice individual drill movements.

The History of Drills

In 1775, when this country was striving for independence and existence, the nation's leaders were confronted with the problem of not only establishing a government but also organizing an army that was already engaged in war. From the “shot heard around the world” on April 19, 1775, until Valley Forge in 1778, revolutionary forces were little more than a group of civilians fighting Indian-style against well-trained, highly disciplined British forces (see Figure 2.1.1).

For three years General Washington's troops endured many hardships, including lacking funds, rations, proper clothing, and equipment. Additionally, they suffered loss after loss to the superior British troops. These hardships and losses mostly stemmed from the lack of a military atmosphere in this country.

Recognizing the crisis, General Washington (through Benjamin Franklin, the American Ambassador to France) enlisted the aid of a Prussian officer, Baron Friedrich von Steuben. Upon his arrival at Valley Forge on February 23, 1778, Baron von Steuben, a former staff officer with Frederick the Great, met an army of several thousand half-starved, wretched men in rags. His first comment was, “No European army could be kept together in such a state.” To correct these conditions, he set to work immediately, writing drill movements and regulations at night and teaching a model company of 120 men during the day.

Figure 2.1.1: The unskilled Americans were at a disadvantage against the organized and trained British.

Courtesy of Time Life Pictures/Getty Images.



Discipline became a part of military life for these selected individuals, and they learned to respond to commands without hesitation (see Figure 2.1.2). This new discipline instilled in these soldiers a sense of alertness, urgency, and attention to detail. Confidence in themselves and in their weapons grew as each man perfected the movements. As they mastered the art of drill, they began to work as a team, and they developed a sense of pride in their unit.

Observers were amazed to see how quickly and orderly von Steuben could form and **maneuver** the troops into different battle formations. Officers observed that organization, chain of command, and control were improved as each man had a specific place and task within the formation.

Later, General Washington dispersed the members of the model company throughout the Army to teach drill. From this drill instruction, they improved the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the Army.

To ensure this uniformity and overall effectiveness continued, von Steuben wrote the first field manual for the U.S. Army in 1779, “The Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States” (commonly referred to as the “Blue Book”). The Army did not change the drill procedures initiated at Valley Forge for 85 years, until the American Civil War. In fact, many of those original drill terms and procedures still remain in effect today.

Purposes and Objectives of Drill

Throughout history armies have practiced drill. In times of war, leaders used drill to move troops and equipment quickly from one location to another in an orderly manner. Drills also show how many can move as one in a flawlessly timed effort. These **unison** movements are still important on the battlefield where mistakes can



Key Note Term

maneuver – to perform a movement in military tactics (or in drill) normally to secure an advantage

Figure 2.1.2: Discipline and drills gave soldiers a sense of alertness and attention to detail.

Courtesy of Ted Spiegel/Corbis Images.

Key Note Term

unison – in complete or perfect agreement; at the same time

cost lives. In peacetime, drill provides a means of enhancing morale, developing a spirit of cohesion, and presenting traditional and well-executed ceremonies.

When individuals react to commands rather than thought, the result is more than just a good-looking ceremony or parade—it's discipline. Drill has been and will continue to be the backbone of military discipline. In addition to discipline, military drill teaches and develops

- **Self-confidence**
- **Personal pride**
- **Esprit de corps**
- **Teamwork**
- **Attention to detail**
- **Unit pride**

Conclusion

Through hard work and discipline, you can learn and develop the leadership skills and abilities necessary to become an effective leader in drill as well as in many other situations. An individual with pride and discipline will respond on command to produce the finest drill maneuvers in all of JROTC. Make your first step a good one and follow it through with others of which you can be equally proud of yourself and of your achievements.

In the next lesson you will learn about the roles of leaders and followers when performing drills. Both leaders and followers have important places in these exercises.

Lesson Review

1. What was the name of the first field manual?
2. List three advantages to learning and participating in drills.
3. What are the purposes of drills?
4. Define the term *unison*.