

Lesson 3

Using Your Leadership Skills/Taking Charge



Key Terms

command of execution
command voice
preparation
procedure

What You Will Learn to Do

- Analyze personal strengths and weaknesses as a drill leader

Linked Core Abilities

- Take responsibility for your actions and choices

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Describe the preparation of a drill leader before a drill
- Describe the procedure a drill leader takes to teach a drill
- Identify five characteristics of a capable drill leader
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

This lesson introduces you to how leaders use their leadership skills to prepare themselves for taking charge during drills.

Learning to Lead

For leaders to command respect and obedience from their subordinates, they must be prepared to lead as well as be ready for any situation. Their attitude and appearance must set a good example for others to follow.

Taking charge is not as easy as it sounds. It is not just having a neat and correct appearance, knowing drill commands, or using proper **command voice**; it is being a good follower, a good leader, and knowing how and when to use proven leadership techniques (such as the traits and principles of leadership).

Read the following story and see if you can personally identify with any of the mistakes that Mark made after he took charge of a squad as its new drill leader.

Mark usually arrives late to his JROTC class. As he joins the formation, he always greets several of his buddies. He hardly ever has a straight gignline or a pressed uniform; his hair is usually uncombed; and his shoes look like he never polishes them. Day after day, he goes through the process of trying to call his squad to attention. They barely listen to him, continuing to talk and laugh.

He finally gets their attention and begins drill practice. During the drill, he consistently gives a few wrong commands and makes several timing errors, but his squad members usually execute the drills correctly anyway. Seeing them get ahead of him frustrates Mark, but by that time the class is over and he does nothing about it.

One day, Mark finally asks a senior cadet, “Why is my squad so hard to keep in line? I can’t get them to shape up. I don’t get angry, I ask them nicely, and I still can’t get any discipline or respect.”

The senior cadet replies, “If you really want an honest answer . . . I think they don’t see you as a leader. You give them the wrong commands; you don’t know correct timing or cadence; and your appearance . . . well, it needs a lot of work. Learn the drills and look like a leader. You can’t inspire respect if you don’t have any for yourself. By the way, when was the last time you polished those shoes?”

In the next few weeks, Mark’s leadership skills and appearance improved. Soon, the squad saw a difference—Mark was becoming a better leader. He knew the drills, looked the part of a leader, and did not tolerate any slackening off once the class period began.

The mistakes that Mark made as a drill leader include having a poor appearance, not knowing the drills or using the proper command voice, and not being able to discipline his friends. Instead of immediately taking the initiative of a leader or setting the proper examples, he waited until the squad got out of control. Then he had to make changes. Being a consistent leader may appear to be difficult, but it will make your job easier. How did **procedure** and **preparation** play a role in Mark’s situation?

Key Note Term

command voice – a properly given command should be understood by everyone in the unit

Key Note Terms

procedure – a series of steps followed in a regular, definite order

preparation – the act or process of making something ready for use or service; getting ready for an occasion, test, or duty

Drill leaders are also instructors; therefore, they must know how to teach drill movements to their subordinates and to provide remediation. If you become a drill leader, one of the most commonly accepted ways to teach and remediate drill is from a position centered in front of your team where you can provide **commands of execution**. From this position, you can

- **Explain and demonstrate each new drill movement before your team members practice it and then have them execute it. Remember to require snap in every movement. Ensure the movement is understood and done correctly by each subordinate before trying another movement. Drill periods are short, so make the most of available time.**
- **Observe team members carefully to ensure everyone executes the movement correctly.**
- **Remediate by making on-the-spot corrections as necessary. Be prepared to give individual instruction to those personnel who need it. This means knowing exactly what a subordinate did wrong and being able to demonstrate the correct way. Teach your unit the correct movements the first time and they will make fewer mistakes.**

Be prepared to use discipline as necessary. Junior leaders often find this difficult because the people they discipline are their peers and friends. Do not give discipline for any other reason than to improve the unit. Leaders do not have to feel wrong about enforcing discipline: it should not be personal; it must be purely professional. Never discipline someone in front of others; instead, take that person someplace private to discuss and correct the behavior.

Note

Praise in public; criticize in private. You will receive more instruction on how to properly conduct a counseling session in other leadership levels.

Conclusion

When leaders know their responsibilities and prepare for drill, they discover that being a drill leader is easier and more rewarding than they expected. Followers respect and obey leaders more if the leaders are competent and confident. Keep in mind the leadership traits and other fundamentals presented in this lesson. The following list summarizes the responsibilities that good drill leaders should understand and implement:

- **Be consistent.**
- **Be sincere; show respect and care about the well-being of your subordinates.**
- **Have energy, patience, and spirit.**
- **Have military neatness and bearing.**
- **Follow regulations precisely, as an example for others to follow.**
- **Be knowledgeable of drill procedures and commands.**
- **Provide feedback or on-the-spot corrections when mistakes are noted.**
- **Be fair and use judgment when applying discipline.**

Key Note Term

command of execution – a part of a drill command that tells when the movement is to be executed (carried out)

This list is not all inclusive. The *Leadership* instruction in subsequent years will expand on this list as your understanding of leadership and your leadership potential grows and develops. For now, however, remember that when leaders know and apply drill commands and leadership techniques properly, their confidence and motivation build confidence and motivation in their followers.

In the following lesson, you will learn about stationary movements. This is part of the drill that you will do as a squad.

Lesson Review

1. List three responsibilities that a good drill leader should understand.
2. Why is it important to have a good appearance and understand the drills?
3. What is a command voice?
4. Define the term *command of execution*.