

Lesson 2

Taking Charge—Knowing Your Responsibilities as a Leader



Key Terms

implement
observe
plan

What You Will Learn to Do

- Perform the duties of a team leader, squad leader, platoon sergeant, or platoon leader

Linked Core Abilities

- Take responsibility for your actions and choices

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Describe the duties and responsibilities of the different leadership positions within a platoon
- Explain the four steps leaders should use when assuming a new leadership position
- Demonstrate the responsibilities of a team leader or other higher position in drill
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

This lesson helps you develop a style of leadership by describing the basic responsibilities of a team leader, squad leader, platoon sergeant, and platoon leader. By applying the traits, principles, factors, and values of leadership to your responsibilities as a role model, coach, and counselor, you will be able to obtain the best possible results from your team.

Learning How to Lead

Soon you will be taking charge of a unit and facing the difficult task of leading people. There are certain techniques and steps that will help you to adjust to your new assignment. Because first impressions are usually lasting ones, these steps will help you to make a better first impression. Regardless of the level of development of your followers, especially in drill, your actions and behavior must be consistent with appropriate leader behavior.

After all, your actions and behavior are the main factors that will determine the morale of your team members and the degree they are willing to work as a team to accomplish your goals. Taking charge of a group and turning them into a synchronized drill unit is no easy task. To guide you in assuming a new leadership position and in building a cohesive team, follow the four proven steps that leaders use to ensure a smooth and successful beginning:

- **Observe/assess**
- **Plan**
- **Implement**
- **Follow-up/evaluate**

Knowing Your Responsibilities as a Leader

An effective organization is essential for mission accomplishment. A prerequisite for a unit to function with maximum efficiency is that individuals within the unit function together effectively. The solution is to develop and maintain teamwork. To achieve this, it is partially a product of one's duties, responsibility, and authority. The other element is one's relationships with peers, supervisors, and followers.

To achieve the goal of every team member working side by side effectively and efficiently, leaders must have a complete understanding of their duties and responsibilities.

The following sections outline the responsibilities for team leaders, squad leaders, the platoon sergeant, and the platoon leader. At some point during your JROTC experience, your instructors will assign you to one or more of these positions. Specific duties in your cadet battalion (as outlined in the Cadet Handbook) may be different from these; however, they present you with guidelines illustrating what you can expect from your immediate chain of command.

Key Note Term

observe – the act of recognizing and noting a fact or occurrence

Key Note Term

plan – to formulate an action for the accomplishment or attainment of an explicit purpose

Taking Control

In the middle of the school year, George moved out of town. The senior Army instructor gave his platoon leader's position to Michelle, the platoon sergeant. Michelle felt confident that she could handle the position because she had done very well as platoon sergeant. Although she knew what was required of a platoon leader, she was nervous about taking George's place because everyone in the platoon liked him very much.

As platoon sergeant, Michelle had closely **observed** how George led the platoon. One of the reasons for his popularity was that he would personally correct a squad or an individual if a drill movement was not performed well. The platoon members considered George to be a very good coach because he made them feel special to receive his attention.

However, Michelle knew that George's relationship with the platoon often caused resentment with the squad leaders, who interpreted George's actions as indications that they were not doing, nor could not do their jobs. Therefore, the squad leaders did not like his interference. They knew what they were responsible for and how to do it when given the chance.

Michelle often had to smooth things out between George and the squad leaders. She would explain to the squad leaders that his actions were not meant as criticism while suggesting to George that he should let the squad leaders do their jobs and stop stepping on their toes.

From her observations, Michelle decided to make a **plan** to change the situation when she became platoon leader. After all, every leader has an individual style and she wanted more harmony within the platoon.

She would use her chain of command more than George had and would let the squad leaders correct any problems she saw in platoon drill. But, she also wanted the cadets to work as hard for her as they did for George. After some thinking, she came up with a great idea. Her father managed one of the local movie theaters and she worked for him on the weekends. What if she exchanged a few hours of work for discounted tickets and food?

After discussing her plan with the squad leaders, who enthusiastically approved it, Michelle told the platoon her idea on her first day of drill. "I realize that it's hard switching leaders in the middle of the year and that we're all going to miss George, but I'm going to do my best to take over where he left off. One area where I believe we can still improve is squad drill. So, I've decided to hold a contest to reward the squad that consistently performs the best each month. Each member of that squad will receive one discounted movie pass and reduced prices on food at the Park Six Cinema. Our SAI, the platoon sergeant, and I will be the judges. Now let's get down to practice."

After just one month, Michelle was pleased to see that her transition to platoon leader had been successful. She did not have as many problems with the squad leaders as George had, and the new platoon sergeant confirmed that they were happier with her style of not interfering. The JROTC instructors even thought the squads performed a little better as a result of the contest and her leadership.

Responsibilities of Team Leaders

Team leaders are the first in the chain of command. There are generally two team leaders to a squad, referred to as Team Leader A and Team Leader B. Both team leaders are responsible for the formation, appearance, and training of their team members. Team Leader A must also be ready to assume control of the squad in the absence of the squad leader. They assist their squad leaders as directed and must



Figure 5.2.1: To be a good leader, you must always set a good example. This includes good grooming, straight posture, and a can-do attitude.

Courtesy of CACI.

- Set the example at all times (see Figure 5.2.1).
- Know the number, names, and personal information on all assigned personnel.
- Assist team members with matters related to JROTC activities (when possible) and refer them to the squad leader for assistance if they are unable to handle/resolve an issue.
- Be thoroughly familiar with individual and squad drill; inspect team members during formations and class assemblies to ensure they know what is required of them.

Responsibilities of Squad Leaders

Squad leaders are responsible to their platoon leader and platoon sergeant for the appearance, conduct, training, and discipline of their squad. They ensure that each squad member learns, does what is expected, and maintains high standards of behavior. Squad leaders must

- **Set the example at all times.**
- **Know the number, names, and personal information on all assigned personnel.**
- **Counsel/assist squad members with matters related to JROTC activities and help them to find solutions to other matters (when possible); refer them to the platoon sergeant or platoon leader for assistance if they are unable to handle/resolve an issue.**
- **Develop responsibility and leadership in team leaders and be the first person that they turn to for assistance and advice.**
- **Form the squad correctly. Make an accurate report by name of those persons present and absent during common hour activities, company platoon/formations, and other cadet battalion activities.**
- **Be thoroughly familiar with individual, squad, and platoon drill. When conducting drill, instruct/demonstrate the movement, allow time for individual performance and then supervise team leaders and squad members to ensure they perform properly.**
- **Inspect their team leaders and squad members at all times ensuring they know what is required of them (see Figure 5.2.2).**

Responsibilities of a Platoon Sergeant

The platoon sergeant functions as the platoon executive and administrator; therefore, the platoon sergeant must

- **Set the example at all times.**
- **Form the platoon when prescribed by the platoon leader; submit absentee reports to the company first sergeant.**
- **Assist the platoon leader in supervising the squad leaders while maintaining a close relationship with them.**
- **Develop a spirit of teamwork within the platoon.**
- **Learn the names of everyone in the platoon and use their names when addressing them.**

Figure 5.2.2: Let those under your command know what's expected of them, and perform regular inspections.

Courtesy of CACI.



- Provide assistance/counseling to personnel in the platoon, especially when requested by the platoon leader or a squad leader.
- Assist the platoon leader in training the platoon.
- Be completely informed of all platoon matters to assume control of the platoon in the absence of the platoon leader.

Responsibilities of a Platoon Leader

The platoon leader is a very desirable position in the cadet battalion. If you are a platoon leader, you have a platoon of cadets for whom you are directly responsible. Primarily, your job is one of leadership, training, and discipline. You also have the opportunity and privilege to be a role model, coach, and counselor. You must

- Keep the company commander apprised of the status of the platoon at all times.
- Establish and maintain command and control of the platoon at all times; organize and maintain an effective chain of command.
- Provide assistance/counseling to personnel in the platoon, especially when requested by a squad leader or the platoon sergeant, and/or when necessary for performance or disciplinary reasons.
- Conduct an inspection of the platoon at formations.
- Use the chain of command to accomplish tasks; work mainly with the platoon sergeant and the squad leaders.
- Know all cadet regulations and ensure that all members of the platoon also know and follow them.
- Enforce the orders from superiors whether you agree with them or not; however, if you think an order is morally or ethically wrong, discuss it with your chain of command and, if necessary, your instructor staff. Do not complain or gripe in the presence of subordinates. Develop a spirit of teamwork so as to instill respect, obedience, and cooperation in the platoon.
- Know all phases of drill and ceremonies; be able to supervise and conduct platoon drill and, if you are the senior officer present in a formation, be able to conduct company drill.
- Set high standards of personal appearance and conduct for yourself. Remember, the platoon leader sets the example for the platoon to follow.
- Make an effort to resolve all leadership, training, and disciplinary problems at your level; however, if you cannot solve a problem, seek the advice and/or assistance of the company commander, company executive officer, or first sergeant.

Key Note Term

implement – to give practical effect to and ensure actual fulfillment by concrete measures

Chapter 5

Lesson Review

Conclusion

For a platoon to function effectively and efficiently, team members, team leaders, squad leaders, the platoon sergeant, and the platoon leader must

- **Clearly understand their duties and responsibilities.**
- **Know exactly what is expected of them.**

Only when those actions occur to the extent that leaders and platoon members are comfortable can teamwork, productivity, and mission accomplishment take place. At that point, the energy of everyone in the platoon is now available for work.

Remember, however, that followers will always observe the actions and behavior of their leaders very closely; therefore, successful leaders must be able to put that energy to work to build cohesive teams, establish high levels of morale, and create a climate where followers are willing to accomplish missions. Plus, when taking charge of a unit, successful leaders must know how to make a lasting impression; they must observe, plan, **implement**, and follow up.

In the following lesson, you will learn about company formations and movements. You will learn about company drill formations and movements “without arms,” which indicates you will not be carrying weapons.

Lesson Review

1. **Why is it important to understand your responsibilities as a leader?**
2. **List three responsibilities of a platoon sergeant.**
3. **What creative way can you think of to entice your squad to be their best?**
4. **Where can you find a list of specific duties?**