

**United States  
Air Force  
Academy  
Basic Cadet  
Training**



**BCT Survival  
Tips  
From  
Current Cadets**

Congratulations Appointees! Get psyched!  
The biggest adventure of your life is about to begin.  
“BEAST”...your first trial by fire.

These tips are in the words of the cadets themselves...they have not been scrubbed clean of verbiage or emotion that they felt important in communicating their thoughts. A few are sent via their parents.  
*Disclaimer:* Cadets are like snowflakes...no two are alike. Neither is their advice, so what worked for one may not work for another. The full range of opinions is represented here so you can hit on what may work for YOU. Everything here is personal opinion from the inside and not necessarily endorsed by USAFA administration.

**Go get 'em! We're all pulling for you!**

**Before In-Processing**

- For the love of all that is good in this world get in at least a little shape. Nothing is more disappointing or angering to basic Cadre than a basic who is out of shape and has known they were coming to the Academy for longer than two weeks
- They should be pushing themselves physically as hard as they can, since they will be pushed even harder when they get to USAFA! I think my son may have regretted 'coasting' that last month or so before he left.
- Do flutter kicks and pushups like crazy - 50 pushups without breaking. Also, run 3 miles (at sea level) so that the 1 1/2 mile run on the third day of basic won't kill you!
- My advice:
  1. If you're an idiot, don't come.
  2. If you don't know what you're getting into, don't come.
  3. If you haven't prepared by running, see #1.
- Practice your flutter kicks WITH BOOTS ON.
- Get in shape now - remember the altitude difference - it'll get to you.
- Check out a web site called [crossfit.com](http://crossfit.com) which provides a physical training routine with 20 minutes of cardio. While he ran track and cross country and wrestled he felt that the cardio work out was the most important physical preparation for BCT.
- Electric razors are a plus; they save time and prevent the hassle of shaving cream and new razors. They really come in handy if your hair is slightly out of regulations right before a pop inspection.

- Practice taking a shower in 90 seconds...you'll be glad you did.
- Get a good base coat of polish on your boots going in...maybe 20 -30 coats- this will save time at night because you will only need to put one coat on instead of 2 or 3
- Letters are a lifeline; get as many people on board as you can!! Have family, friends, and girlfriend send as many letters as possible.
- Our cadet said he wishes he would have received mail from us earlier. His brother was smart and mailed a letter two days before he left for BCT, so I'm sure it was the first one he received. He said letters were his lifeline.
- Learn to have a BM at night before you go to BCT. The urge usually hits most people around the same time every day. If you can learn to get that urge at night, you will be much better off.
- Bring a calculator for placement tests.
- They'll hit you with this on the bus...memorizing the "7 Basic Responses" AND "Reporting In"
  1. Yes Sir/Ma'am
  2. No Sir/Ma'am
  3. No excuse, Sir/Ma'am
  4. Sir/Ma'am, may I ask a question?
  5. Sir/Ma'am, may I make statement?
  6. Sir/Ma'am, I do not understand
  7. Sir/Ma'am, I do not know

Reporting in: "Sir/Ma'am, Basic Cadet (your name) reports as ordered."

### ***Advice for girls:***

- They should start working on pushups and pull ups immediately if they haven't already because that is a lot of how their classmates will judge them.
- For the girl with long hair I'm afraid to say that yes, I have heard many girls complain of getting mildew in it because it is too long. Most girls end up cutting their hair half way through BCT if they don't do it before they come in. The optimal length is long enough for a small bun or ponytail but that's all (maybe about shoulder length or an inch or 2 longer).
- Hygiene and skin care shouldn't be an issue for the first 3 weeks but out in the field it gets pretty tough. You just accept and you do what you can.

### **In-Processing Day**

- Day one in basic is always the worst. Tell yourself that 50 times right now.
- He would definitely have gotten to the academy earlier on in-processing day. We got there late morning I believe and he had minimal time to set up his room after all the in-processing stuff while his roommates had gotten there first thing that morning and had their stuff set up - he said he was rushing which caused some problems.
- They can carry the boots around their necks by tying the shoestrings together.
- Don't pack very much, 'cause they don't let you wear your backpack. You have to carry it in your left hand all day. (that goes for the whole freshman year too)

- When you get on the bus, get ready for the yelling. This freaks some people out...just get used to it and pay attention.
- Don't wear a shirt that makes you stand out in the crowd, such as one that says 'Superman' or 'Born to be Wild'. If you wanted that much attention, they will make sure you get it.
- A polo-type shirt with a collar works well for in-processing day. While they're carrying those boots around their necks all day, the strings won't rub their necks raw
- Don't wear a white shirt in case you have to string your polished boots around your neck, the polish will come off on it.
- If they don't have the right size running shoe for you...always get the bigger size – the small ones will give you ingrown toenails
- Do not focus on memorizing where everything is. Just focus on what people are yelling at you. Follow the signs. You will not get lost; just follow the sweaty and shaking kid in front of you. REMAIN POSITIVE. You won't have any cool stories to write home about if you wuss out now.

## **1st BCT/Cadet Area (The Hill)**

- NEVER POOP DURING THE DAY! (they only give you like 60 seconds) ALWAYS REMEMBER.....CRAPS AFTER TAPS!
- Go to bed at TAPS no matter what; staying up late to do cleaning/uniforms/etc., is pointless.
- Help out your fellow basics whenever possible, team work is what it's all about. Cadres are looking for basics that show teamwork traits, they want them to work together. It is not about who is fastest, quickest, smartest, best, etc, etc; it is about working together as a team to get the task done.
- My son's tip was use a big city close to your hometown rather than little towns that no one has heard of and will have a hard time remembering when you are asked where you are from. They have to remember lots of stuff including the hometowns of everyone in squadron. Upperclassmen will make their info hard to remember, so he felt, it helped out his fellow basics when he said he was from Atlanta GA, easier to remember than Thomaston GA. Everyone knows big cities in their states, hard to remember small towns and they have to know where all the 30+ basics plus all the upperclassmen are from. They are quizzed on this stuff while they are doing push-ups and if they get the info wrong they do more push-ups.
- Try hard on the placement tests, a little pain then could save you a semester of work
- Figure out who are the prep school kids, they already know how to wear the uniform and make beds. They will be your best friend before some of the early inspections.
- Don't be surprised or embarrassed when the cadres yell in your face. It happens to everyone at some point. BCT is just a loud place to be.
- Try to memorize your staff lists and some of the quotes. Cadres want to feel popular so make sure you know all their names.
- Don't take anything they (cadre) say personally. They are simply doing a job. They don't like it either. Just learn the 10-mile stare and don't take it personally.

- Find humor in small things and for heaven's sake don't let it show, just go to your bunk and write it down for later. You'll enjoy reading about it later and sharing when the stress is over.
- Don't participate in any group "secret plans" that take place in the middle of the night. Just let those things go - you will get caught and punished! It isn't worth it for everyone else that didn't go along.
- Look for someone you think you can trust, and try to develop friendships anywhere you can. You can help each other through the tough stuff. They will become your lifelong best friend...you will have done one of the most difficult things in your life together and it forms bonds to never be broken.
- If you're shy around other people in the locker room...get over it. You're about to feel like a shaved cow in slaughter house. Put some soap on and get ready to get very personal with your new best friends.
- Everyone messes up the ma'ams and sirs. I called my basic flight commander mom instead of ma'am twice. Once in front of my entire basic squadron. Again, go with the flow be able to laugh at yourself.
- When you are on The Hill – you can hear the generators for the lights come on, a signal before the cadre wake you up in the morning

#### *Advice for girls:*

- The biggest thing I would tell them is to not say or act like they are different, at least not in basic training. I found it best to just be "one of the guys" during basic and if I ever had the opportunity to help one of the guys with pushups or flutter kicks, I jumped on it.

## **2nd BCT/ Jack 's Valley**

- This is where Basic gets fun. Everyone gets to know each other a lot better. You eat, sleep, and get your faces pushed in the mud together. It's quite the bonding experience.
- Even though it might be tough, tougher than anything you've ever experienced...can't even describe how hard it will be, you will survive if you keep trying. You may not ever succeed at some obstacles, but never, never, never quit trying as hard as you can. The cadres are people too, and they appreciate a solid effort every time. It might take 9 months, but you will be rewarded accordingly.
- Eat all you can during meals. The food will give you energy and keep you awake.
- When you are in Jack's – The trains will wake you up before the cadres do.
- Lots of people get pink eye. Don't wait till it gets bad...if it feels funny, ask to have it looked at.
- Stay away from coffee. The last thing you need is caffeine in your body while doing up-downs at the assault course.
- DO NOT sleep in your boots and socks. Your feet will sweat, get cold, and you'll notice your feet will change different colors. Not good.
- Have fun. What you learn in Jack's will stay with you the rest of your life.

#### *Advice for Girls:*

- Showers in jacks valley are communal and very crowded typically with cadre shouting to hurry up

## **General/Miscellaneous**

- One minute at a time, one hour at a time, one day at a time. DON'T WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW, WHAT THEY WILL DO TO YOU TOMORROW, ETC. It is never as bad as you can anticipate it could be. AND part of the game is the intimidation to try to make you think the next thing will be so much worse than what you have done so far - it never is.
- A Lt Col told our daughter before she left for BCT, "Play the game." It took her a long time to figure out what that meant, but it is a game. Some people decide to play; others decide they aren't that interested and leave.
- Don't join any "MySpace", "facebook", "yahoo", etc. groups for USAFA 2011 or anything else related to going to the Academy. The cadre looks for this over the summer and WILL use it against you, particularly if anything negative is said by anyone on the site.
- Drink enough water, drink more than enough water...don't worry about how often you will need to go to the bathroom, drink the water. Better extra "training" than dehydration and a trip to the hospital overnight for IV fluids...another not so rare occurrence during BCT.
- Friendships are what keep you alive in basic. Get to know everyone in your flight. Individuals do not graduate BCT, flights do
- I would suggest that they take it serious, but not too serious. Failure is inevitable. Even if you are perfect, the cadre will make ridiculous rules like changing uniforms in one minute. They want you to pull together as a team.
- It's not much, but this is what my son had to say. He has said repeatedly, this is a time to stay under the radar screen!
- A motto you should chant constantly is, "Don't be the first, don't be the last." The idea in Basic is to not be noticed.
- If a cadre member tells you to leave someone behind, DON'T. Never never never leave someone behind. The cadres are seeing if you are a team player.
- My Daughter sent the following: she wishes that other kids hadn't taken the 'beatings' so seriously. She felt that these were kids just one year older than you, telling you what to do and making your life miserable, but they did it to teach you to follow orders)
- My advice goes something like this: Don't take things too seriously. It's all just a game. I would have messed around more because all they can do is beat you and make you do push-ups which are good for you anyway. Laugh a little and joke about the stupid things you have to do otherwise you are going to hate it.
- Someone is always going to mess up, so if that person isn't you help them out!!
- Realize that you are not the scum that the cadres insist you are.
- Don't be the last and don't be the first. If you are a good runner, help the slow people. If you are good at pushups, go next to a weaker person and encourage them. Cadres hate showoffs and people who finish at the expense of the team.
- Always keep in mind why you came in the first place.

- Go to the church services because they don't care if you sleep
- The Biggest thing is that you have to take it as a joke no matter how serious they try to make it. You can get motivated by it, but if you take it seriously you will only get depressed.
- Don't believe anything the cadre say – Their goal is to make you think you suck
- Don't pay any attention to the stupid forms they give you when you do something wrong. (Form 341) They don't mean anything and you will never see them again. You cannot fail BCT unless you get a medical turn back or maybe if you just don't try.
- Your religious beliefs should be held close. Religion can help you keep your sanity and getting Sundays to think of something else is a great release from all the knowledge stuff that jumbles your brain.
- Don't let anyone scare you.....you have to always remember that you are a badass.
- Don't take anything too serious. In a couple of months you'll all be laughing about this.
- Most of all.....NOTHING IS PERSONAL! Don't take it that way, just as the basics are being "shaped" into cadets, the cadre is being "shaped" into officers and leaders. They have meetings before they wake the basics and after they put them to bed. You think you're tired, they are getting even less sleep and doing the same physical exertion you are. You think you get yelled at, they get yelled at too (just not in front of you). A cadre does something wrong or outside the guidelines; there are serious repercussions for them as they are expected to know better. You just get yelled at, if the offense is serious enough, they could get kicked out.
- Don't let the system get to you, keep your chin up, head down, make friends, and remember to always stay positive. You're going to make it.
- USAFA is a great adventure. Every single person that receives an appointment can make it through.

## Air Force Creed

**I do not choose to be a common man.**  
 It is my right to be uncommon.  
**I seek whatever talents God gave me -- not security.**  
**I do not wish to be a kept citizen,**  
 Humbled and dulled by having the state look after me.  
**I want to take the calculated risk; to dream and build,**  
 To fail and to succeed.  
**I refuse to barter incentive for the dole.**  
**I prefer the challenge of life to the guaranteed existence;**  
 The thrill of fulfillment to the stale calm of utopia.  
**I will not trade freedom for beneficence nor my dignity for a handout.**  
**I will never cower before any earthly master nor bend to any threat.**  
**It is my heritage to stand erect, proud and unafraid;**  
 To think and act for myself,  
 Enjoy the benefits of my creations and to face the world boldly and say,  
**"This, with God's help, I have done."**  
**All this is what it means to be an American.**

Dean Alfonge  
 American Statesman, December 7, 1899  
 United States Air Force Academy Contrails