Below is an overview and introduction of the U.S. Army Basic Combat Training (BCT) experience. It lists what to bring and not bring, and what to generally expect going through the 10-week program. BCT is held at Ft. Benning, Columbus, GA; Ft. Jackson, Columbia, SC; Ft. Leonard Wood, Waynesville, MO; Ft. Knox, Louisville, KY; and Ft. Sill, OK.

http://www.goarmy.com/soldier-life/becoming-a-soldier/basic-combat-training.html

**Basic Combat Training: The Ten-Week Journey from Civilian to Soldier**

Basic Combat Training (BCT) is a training course that transforms civilians into Soldiers. Over the course of ten weeks these recruits learn about the Seven Core Army Values, how to work together as a team and what it takes to succeed as a Soldier in the U.S. Army.

**Introduction: Overview**

Listen to the diverse stories of U.S. Army recruits. Hear what they did in the civilian world, what they're striving for in Basic Combat Training, and what they've gained.

Preparation Checklist: The following information will make your transition from civilian to Army life easier. Listed below are required items along with items that will not be permitted. Ask your Recruiter for a more detailed list.

- **What to Bring**
  - **Clothing**
    - One-day supply of casual, comfortable clothing (no halter-tops or ragged shorts)
    - Three sets of underwear (white)
    - One pair of white, calf-length athletic socks (no color bands, designs or logos) Additional socks will be purchased at the post exchange (PX)
    - A pair of comfortable shoes
    - Eyeglasses (no faddish/stylish eyewear)
    - Luggage should be limited to one small suitcase or gym bag
  - **Lock**
    - One lock (combination or padlock with two keys) Additional lock will be purchased at PX
  - **Toiletries**
    - Disposable/safety razor with blades
    - Shaving cream (optional for women)
    - Toothbrush with case
    - Hairbrush or 6" black comb
    - One washcloth and towel (Additional items will be purchased at the PX)
    - Anti-perspirant
- Shower shoes
- Toothpaste
- Dental floss
- Shampoo
- Soap and soap case

- Money
  - $10, but no more than $50 in cash
  - Traveler’s Checks or Money Orders (Personal checks are not recommended because of limited check-cashing facilities.)

- Documents You May Need
  - Social Security card
  - Valid driver’s license or current state identification card
  - A direct deposit form from your checking account signed by a bank official, or the name, address, account number and routing number of your financial institution (if applicable)
  - Original or certified copies of your marriage certificate, divorce decree or separation order (if applicable)
  - Original or certified copies of birth certificates of children under 18; affidavit of support from parents; court documents and direct deposit forms if ordered to pay spousal and/or child support (if applicable)
  - Proof of citizenship (if you were not born in the United States)
  - If you are married to a service member in the military, you need to have the name, Social Security number and military address of your spouse
  - Copies of your lease agreement or rental contract for any dependents residing outside of government quarters (if applicable)
  - Original or certified ROTC documentation (if applicable)
  - Original college transcripts; GED or high school diploma

- Your Orders
  - Be sure to have all copies of orders and documents issued by your unit Recruiter and/or MEPS. These orders must be delivered by you and by hand. Travel and meal tickets will be provided.

- What Not to Bring
  - Family
  - Pets
  - Privately owned vehicles
  - Expensive personal items — cameras, radios, tape players, jewelry and costly watches are hard to safeguard during training.
  - Nonprescription drugs or drug paraphernalia
  - Steel hair picks
  - Razor blades
• Weapons of any type, including pocket knives
• Obscene or pornographic material
• Alcoholic beverages
• Playing cards/dice/dominoes
• Cigarettes/tobacco products
• Batteries (except size "D")
• For Women Only
  • Additional Items Women Might Need or Desire to Bring to BCT
    ▪ Undergarments: Panties (cotton recommended), bras, and one full slip (all neutral shade), flesh-tone nylons or pantyhose.
  • Appropriate Hairstyles
    ▪ Hairstyles not considered appropriate when in uniform: Ponytail, extreme bouffant styles, exotic upsweeps and the corkscrew or "corn row" styles.
  • Clothing and Jewelry
    ▪ Do not mix items of civilian clothing with your uniform and vice versa.
    ▪ You may wear quarter-inch or less pearl, gold, silver or diamond spherical earrings with Army uniforms, except for the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) and Physical Fitness Uniform.

Phase 1 – Red: Overview
The Army makes sure every recruit is physically and mentally prepared to start Basic Training. Upon determining this, recruits are given a haircut, issued Army uniforms and are ready to start training.

Red Phase Schedule
  • Recruits arrive for general orientation and are given haircuts and issued Army uniforms.
  • Basic Tactical training begins followed by Nuclear Biological and Chemical Defense, Landmine Defense and rappelling at the confidence tower.
  • Recruits learn about Army heritage and the Seven Army Core Values
  • Recruits undergo the Army Physical Fitness Test to help determine their physical aptitude. This test is routinely administered to Soldiers throughout their enlistment periods to ensure their top physical condition.

Phase 2 – White: Overview
Recruits go through Marksmanship and combat training and learn to rappel at the Warrior Tower. This training teaches vital Soldier skills and instills them with more confidence.

White Phase Schedule
  • Tactical Foot March, Basic Rifle Marksmanship
  • Engagement Skills and Situational Training Exercises
Field Training Exercises, Confidence Obstacle Course and the Tactical Foot March

Phase 3 – Blue: Overview
After becoming familiar with the use of automatic weapons and hand grenades in U.S. Weapons training, recruits put their training to the test as they negotiate the Night Infiltration Course. After passing all their tests and challenges, they congregate for Rites of Passage.

Blue Phase Schedule
- U.S. Weapons Training
  - .50 Caliber M2
  - Hand Grenades
  - M136 AT-4
  - M240B Machine Gun
  - M249 Machine Gun
- Field Training Exercise 3
- Tactical Foot March 10KM and 15KM

Graduation
Basic Combat Training has pushed the recruits' minds and bodies to new limits, giving them a deeper respect for themselves and those around them. And now, the time has come to celebrate their efforts and the strength they've gained. This is the day that their families and friends gather to watch them transition from citizens to Soldiers.
Specialist (Spc.) Benjamin Fitz entered the military October 21, 2009 at the age of 18. He has served with the 10th Mountain Division and his military occupational specialty (MOS) is Nodal Networking Operator Maintainer. He served in Kandahar, Afghanistan from September 2010-October 2011.

Transcript:
Collins: When did you enlist?

Fitz: I enlisted October 21, 2009.

Collins: And why did you go into the military?

Fitz: I just—I wasn't ready for college, and I figured I would get some great experience out of it.

Collins: How did your family react to you enlisting?

Fitz: At first, they were not happy at all, but my older brother had gone before me, so they were somewhat—ready for it. And then my twin brother went just a little bit—we actually—my twin brother and I enlisted at the same time. We were set to go to basic training together, but I postponed.

Collins: Is that a decision you made together, to join, or just you happened to—

Fitz: Well, we talked about it and went to the recruiter together; we did a lot of things together before we joined the Army.

Collins: Did you hope to be stationed together? Did you guys have the same—

Fitz: Well, until I—actually, we chose different jobs, so it was kind of already established that we probably weren't gonna get stationed together. But, had we chosen the same job, I think that we would have hoped for it.

Collins: What was your experience at basic training?

Fitz: When I—when I postponed my enlistment, I came in during the winter months, and it—it started out fairly warm—I went to basic training at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and it started out fairly warm. But, it started to get real cold; it never snowed, but it did freeze over, everything froze. I guess like most basic trainings,
it was stressful. I met a lot of decent people there; it was a good experience, I think.

Collins: Do you feel like anything in your life leading up to basic helped you to be ready for the stress and everything you went through there?

Fitz: I think that I had a fair amount of stressful events through high school. I think it helped me during basic training, but it definitely didn’t compare to the things that I had to do in basic training.

Collins: Do you remember your first day actually in basic training, once you had been through all of the shots—getting off that bus and meeting your drill sergeants for the first time?

Fitz: Oh, yes. The adrenaline was flowing. I just remembered, I got off the bus and there was this big brick building, looked kinda like a castle. And there was a—kind of—it was a split in the center, and you had to run in through there. And the NCOs [non-commissioned officers] were yelling at you, you know, the drill sergeants—“Get here, get there, pick up your bags.” I just remember thinking, “Just put your bag where it would be least to get yelled at.” I managed to do pretty well. I got yelled at a few times, but in comparison to everyone else, I think I got away scott clean.

Collins: What was your most base—most vivid memory from your basic training?

Fitz: Oh boy—that's tough. I think—well, the one that comes most to mind is being on fire guard at night. Just everyone else is sleeping, and a couple of my friends were up cleaning some of the machine guns, and we were sitting there. For some reason, the power went out on all the post, and we just kinda sat there in the dark and talked about it, and kept cleaning our machine guns.

Collins: You weren't sure what to do—if anything?

Fitz: Well, I was on guard, so everything—aside from the power being out—everything was still in good order, so we just kept goin'.

Collins: How old were you in basic training?

Fitz: I was, let’s see, I believe I was eighteen.

Collins: Do you feel that basic changed you dramatically?

Fitz: Yes. Yes, I think it made me a lot more mature.

Collins: What—can you maybe describe just a general day in basic training?
Fitz: Well, if you had guard duty the night before, you'd wake up and take care of that, then you'd get a little rest before you had to wake up again, usually dog-tired. And you would pull on—if you hadn't already had all of your PT [physical training] clothes on, ready for, you know, to get up in the morning—you'd pull on your PT clothes, and rush downstairs as fast as possible and get in formation. And, from there, they would march you out and do physical training in the, I guess, on the PT track. Depending on the temperature, which was usually cold, it was [laughs] pretty grueling. And then, after that, you would come back, change over as fast as you could, take a shower, and go out and get some food. And from that point, depending on the training that day, you'd go out and do your military training, whatever it may be: a ruck march, a field exercise, or a—medical training.

Collins: What would constitute a field exercise?

Fitz: Well, if you weren't bussed there, you would pack your ruck sack with all the required items, and you would march out to the area of operation and set up and conduct training. Might be live-fire movements—like I said, medical training or land navigation.

Collins: What is land navigation?

Fitz: Basically, a person or a small group of people is given grid coordinates, a map, and a compass, and you're sent out to find these locations in the real world and report back in a certain period of time.

Collins: And how are you graded on all of those tasks?

Fitz: Well, at basic training it was, you know, how many did you find and who was back at what time. The goal was to be first, but after that you just try to make it as soon as possible with as many grid coordinates as you could find, if not all of them.

Collins: Did those activities help your soldiers come together—your fellow soldiers come together as one cohesive unit?

Fitz: Oh, yes, it did. I—as I remember at basic training, the group that I was with, we would switch off who was—'cause you'd have to count paces, you know, how far out you are, so you know how far you are from your start point and your theoretical end point—and we would switch off between—this person would count off to this person, and someone would hold the map and keep that in mind. And we would all just kind of collaborate together and use everyone's strengths and weaknesses for our benefit.

Collins: Did that happen a lot in basic training, learning how to work with the other soldiers?
Fitz: Oh yeah. That was the goal of basic training is to get you to work together, and I think it did a very good job.

Collins: Do you remember your drill sergeants?

Fitz: I remember their faces, and I remember the names of two of ‘em. My master drill sergeant was Drill Sergeant Wynn, and his secondary was Drill Sergeant Kirkpatrick.

Collins: How did they interact with the soldiers?

Fitz: They were pretty strict, but they also did their best to take care of us. I remember one night we were in dinner chow, and another company came through and they kicked us out. I mean, something had triggered anger towards our company, and they come through and kicked us out before we even had time to sit down and eat. And we talked to Drill Sergeant Wynn about it, and he got genuinely angry about it and took care of it. And, while we didn’t get to go back and have dinner in the DFAC [dining facility], he got MREs [meals, ready to eat] for us and we did eat that night.

Collins: So, there was a feeling that the drill sergeants would take care of you?

Fitz: Yes, they definitely cared about us.

Collins: Were you ever afraid of them?

Fitz: [chuckles] Many times.

Collins: [laughs] Did they do that on purpose?

Fitz: Yes. They—I mean, to keep respect for them, they have to, you know. I—I think that they had to keep a certain power or aura around them that you couldn’t touch them, or you—you were distant from them in certain ways.

Collins: Do you appreciate that now that you are active duty? Do you feel that their leadership helped you?

Fitz: Oh, yes. I—they had a tough job and they did it very well, and I think without that, I would have been a lot different.

Collins: What is your MOS?

Fitz: I am a 25 November, which is a Nodal Networking Operator/Maintainer. I provide internet and telephone communications.
Collins: And can you tell me what MOS stands for?

Fitz: Military Occupational Skill [or Specialty]. Basically, it’s our job in the Army.

Collins: Can you give me specifics on what that job entails?

Fitz: Basically, I convert satellite data into data which is used on a telephone or a laptop, or basically any internet-using device on the battlefield.
Specialist (Spc.) Tucker Powers entered the military November 17, 2009 at the age of 21. He has served in the 515th Sapper Company with the military occupational specialty (MOS) of combat engineer. Spc. Powers served in eastern Afghanistan from March 2011-March 2012.

Transcript:
Runyan: And when did you join the military?

Powers: Um, November 17, 2009, was when I started basic training.

Runyan: And could you tell me about your first day at basic training?

Powers: Yeah, um, I was nervous. I, uh, flew from Minnesota into Saint Louis; got on a bus from St. Louis and rode down to Fort Leonard Wood; and, we pulled up on Fort Leonard Wood and the drill sergeant came up on the bus. And that was maybe the most nervous I have ever been. I had no idea what to expect, what I was getting myself into. I had one of the moments, I was like, Well here we go. [laughs] So, it was uh—it was good. It was good.

Runyan: I’ve heard, uh, Fort Leonard Wood called Fort Lost in the Woods. Could you elaborate?

Powers: Um, [laughs] yeah, it’s pretty common among the military to call it Lost in the Woods. We, uh, we’re not really next to anything big. We’re surrounded by small towns, by the woods; we’re in the middle of Mark Twain National Forest. So, for me being a small-town kid growing up, I love it. But not everybody has the same view.

Runyan: And what was, uh, like, a daily routine, that you experienced during basic?

Powers: Um, during training—wake up zero five hundred in the morning, do an hour’s worth of PT [physical training], whether it be running, pushups and sit up drills, something along those lines—um, get back from PT, change, go to breakfast chow in the morning, start your morning training, whether it was classes, rifle ranges, um, demo classes, anything along those lines. And then we’d have lunch chow, go back to training for the rest of the afternoon—dinner chow. Then usually after dinner chow is kind of, uh—if we still have more training to do, we’d finish it then. Otherwise, it was more of, uh, drill sergeants’ time to get down with their platoons. It’s more one-on-one level, hands-on training.
Runyan: What did you guys do for entertainment?

Powers: Not a whole lot. Not a whole lot. Uh—our entertainment was our training really, you know. It was all new to us. It was for myself at least. It was really a good learning experience. I came away with a wealth of knowledge and the job that I do now, which was definitely needed. Um, but as far as entertainment—aside from that, it was, you know, just talking to, getting to know other kids from around the United States, even around the world, that were there in basic training. Not a lot of conversations were had during training, um, classes, stuff like that. It’s kinda frowned upon. But, you know, at the end of the night, before you’re goin to bed, you get a chance to sit down and talk a little bit with the other guys. And it was cool, it was cool to meet people from all over the country, all over the world—different for me.

Runyan: So, did you get close to anyone there?

Powers: Yeah, I got real close with a few guys. There was a few of us that, you know. And all of the guys I went there with I’ll never forget. You know, it’s one of those life experiences that is really irreplaceable. It’s a good and a bad experience: it’s tough, but you come outta there. Like I said, you learn a lot. And yeah, the relationships you build even during the four months I was in basic training were—were pretty remarkable—a lot of the guys I still keep in touch with and stay pretty close with.

Runyan: And how did you feel about your leaders—your leaders and drill sergeant?

Powers: Um, really good. I’ve actually go to know a couple of them since basic training a little bit, which is nice to see a little bit different side, other than the drill sergeant side. But um, I felt between the three drill sergeants that were—worked right with my platoon—um, I feel like I learned a lot from all three of them. They were all three very good trainers, great leaders. I feel like any soldier would be lucky to have them as leaders.

Runyan: What would you say made them good leaders? What characteristics?

Powers: Um, they—they—you could tell that all three of them, from day one, knew what they were talkin’ about. They knew what was goin’ on; they weren’t tryin’ to just, you know, be tough, in your face all the time. I mean, they were, but at the same time you were learnin’ from them every day. It was—I have respect for those guys—that is tough to find anywhere. The way that they carry themselves, they’re very professional. Like I said, they were tough, in your face, made sure you knew what you were doin’. They’re not gonna—they’re not gonna let you slack, especially when you’re in basic training. But, at the same time, I mean, I learned a lot from them.
Runyan: And how long was basic training until you chose your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty]?

Powers: Uh, my MOS was chosen before I went to basic.

Runyan: Okay.

Powers: Um, and I wanted to—As a combat engineer you’d do OSUT, One Station Unit Training. Where your AI—basic training rolls right into your AIT [Advanced Individual Training]. So, I was there for sixteen weeks—sixteen weeks, four months. Um, with the same drill sergeants I had for basic training were the same guys I had for AIT. They just kinda rolled right into each other.

Runyan: What does AIT stand for?

Powers: Uh, Advance Individual Training.

Runyan: And, uh, what was your MOS?

Powers: Twelve Bravo Combat Engineer.
Analysis Guide

1. What connotations or stereotypes come to mind when you think of boot camp or basic training? Why?

2. Does the overview or introduction the Army put on their website reinforce or dismiss any of those stereotypes? How?

3. What was Spc. Fitz’s experience at basic training?

4. What was Spc. Powers’s experience at basic training?

5. How are their experiences at basic training similar? Examples?

6. How are their experiences at basic training different? Examples?

7. Did Spc. Fitz and Powers’s experiences at basic training reinforce stereotypes about basic training? Why or why not?