

PROPERLY PREPARING FOR THE RIGORS OF RANGER SCHOOL

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The challenges that current leaders face on the contemporary battlefield are more demanding than those of our forefathers. Ranger-qualified Soldiers are physically and mentally tough, technically and tactically proficient in small unit tactics, and able to think, act, and react effectively in stressful environments. Producing Ranger-qualified leaders remains a top priority for the U.S. Army Maneuver Center of Excellence and the Infantry School located on Fort Benning, Ga.

Over the past three years, a consistent trend is that Ranger students struggle to successfully complete the Ranger Physical Assessment (RPA), the 12-mile foot march, and the land navigation test during the Ranger Assessment Phase (RAP). In fact, a Ranger Class will lose almost 50 percent of its students during RAP week — the first 96 hours of Ranger School. The following blueprint provides Soldiers and units assistance in shaping training plans to increase their success at Ranger School.

RANGER STANDARD

“Earn the right to be a Ranger. Show up in the best shape of your life, with an indomitable will, and perhaps you may join the ranks of this nation’s elite.”

— LTC Shawn Underwood

Commander, 4th Ranger Training Battalion

Ranger Physical Assessment

The RPA is the number one cause for Ranger students to be dropped from the course. Over the course of Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, 862 students (35 percent) of those who arrived at Camp Rogers failed one of the four events of the RPA, which consists of 49 push-ups in two minutes, 59 sit-ups in two minutes, a 5-mile run in 40 minutes, and six chin-ups. To be successful, Soldiers and units should focus their training to ensure all Ranger students can exceed the RPA standards.

The RPA starts at 0400 at the combatives pit next to Malvesti Field near Camp Rogers. All students — regardless of rank, gender, or unit — will be placed in one formation. Students will then randomly move to one of 25 Ranger Instructors (RIs) for push-up grading. On the command of “Go,” students will begin executing correct push-ups. A correct push-up is described in Appendix A of Field Manual 7-22, *Army Physical Readiness Training* (see Figure 1). RIs will count aloud and provide feedback to students on their push-ups. If a student fails to complete the first 10 push-ups correctly, the RI will stop the student and explain why he/she is not performing correct push-ups and send the student to the re-test area where he/she is tested again by a different RI after 10 minutes. If the first



10 push-ups are completed correctly, the RI will not stop the student until the two minutes have expired. If the student fails to complete 49 push-ups in two minutes, he/she is sent to the retest area and has 10 minutes of rest before re-testing with a different RI. Once the student successfully completes 49 push-ups, the RI will tell him/her to stop, regardless of the amount of time remaining, and the student will proceed to a separate formation to prepare for sit-up testing.

The sit-up assessment and retest will proceed in the same fashion as the push-up event. Once the last student has completed 59 sit-ups in two minutes, students will be given 10 minutes before the 5-mile run begins.

The 5-mile run is an individual run to assess the cardiovascular endurance of Ranger students. Students are allowed to wear a watch to pace themselves. Students can fail the 5-mile run test for three reasons:

- * Failure to reach the 2.5-mile turnaround within 20 minutes,
- * Failure to return to the finish line with the popsicle stick given at the halfway turnaround, and
- * Failure to finish the entire 5-mile course within 40 minutes.

There is no retest for the 5-mile run.

Ten minutes after the 40 minutes expire for the 5-mile run, students are tested on performing six chin-ups. When instructed by the RI, students will mount the chin-up bar with palms facing in and arms fully extended. Students are not allowed to wear gloves, cross their legs, swing, rock, and must not touch the RI positioned approximately 12-18 inches in front of the student. When given the command "Up," students will pull themselves up until their chin is completely over the bar. Once his/her chin is over the bar, the RI will give the command "Down," and the student will lower himself/herself back to the start position with elbows locked and feet remaining off the ground. There is no time limit for the chin-up event. If a student fails to meet the standard, he/she will be given a re-test 10 minutes after the failed attempt. If a student is unsuccessful for a second time, he/she will be dropped from the course.

The events of the RPA and standards are not a secret. The Army push-up, as defined in FM 7-22, is the standard and the only standard RIs use to evaluate the push-up. The best way for units to increase success rates and properly prepare students is to hold every Soldier to the Army standard. The ARTB wants Ranger students and units to know what is expected of them so that they are successful.

Another tool to assist a Ranger student's physical preparation is a physical training program located on the ARTB website at <http://www.benning.army.mil/infantry/RTB/>.

12-Mile Foot March

The 12-mile foot march is the second highest cause of student attrition from the Ranger Course. In FY 2015, 415 or 16.8 percent of all Ranger Students failed to meet the standard of the 12-mile foot march. The 12-mile foot march

"THE PUSH-UP EVENT MEASURES THE ENDURANCE OF THE CHEST, SHOULDER, AND TRICEPS MUSCLES. ON THE COMMAND, 'GET SET', ASSUME THE FRONT-LEANING REST POSITION BY PLACING YOUR HANDS WHERE THEY ARE COMFORTABLE FOR YOU. YOUR FEET MAY BE TOGETHER OR UP TO 12 INCHES APART (MEASURED BETWEEN THE FEET). WHEN VIEWED FROM THE SIDE, YOUR BODY SHOULD FORM A GENERALLY STRAIGHT LINE FROM YOUR SHOULDERS TO YOUR ANKLES. ON THE COMMAND 'GO', BEGIN THE PUSH-UP BY BENDING YOUR ELBOWS AND LOWERING YOUR ENTIRE BODY AS A SINGLE UNIT UNTIL YOUR UPPER ARMS ARE AT LEAST PARALLEL TO THE GROUND. THEN, RETURN TO THE STARTING POSITION BY RAISING YOUR ENTIRE BODY UNTIL YOUR ARMS ARE FULLY EXTENDED. YOUR BODY MUST REMAIN RIGID IN A GENERALLY STRAIGHT LINE AND MOVE AS A UNIT WHILE PERFORMING EACH REPETITION. AT THE END OF EACH REPETITION, THE SCORER WILL STATE THE NUMBER OF REPETITIONS YOU HAVE COMPLETED CORRECTLY. IF YOU FAIL TO KEEP YOUR BODY GENERALLY STRAIGHT, TO LOWER YOUR WHOLE BODY UNTIL YOUR UPPER ARMS ARE AT LEAST PARALLEL TO THE GROUND, OR TO EXTEND YOUR ARMS COMPLETELY, THAT REPETITION WILL NOT COUNT, AND THE SCORER WILL REPEAT THE NUMBER OF THE LAST CORRECTLY PERFORMED REPETITION."

Figure 1 — The Push-up Event, Appendix A, FM 7-22

is an individual event that assesses a Ranger student's ability to move rapidly along 12 miles of uneven terrain within three hours. For safety reasons, students must reach the 6-mile mark by 100 minutes and the 8-mile mark by 128 minutes or they are dropped from the course.

The 12-mile foot march course is six miles out and six miles back over hardball and trail roads. The students wear/carry ACUs/OCPs, boots, fighting load carrier (FLC), patrol cap, head lamp, an M4 rifle, and a Modular Lightweight Load-carrying Equipment (MOLLE) rucksack. The designated packing list is a 35-pound rucksack with an additional 12 pounds of water totaling 47 pounds.

Based on Ranger student feedback, there are two main causes for foot march failure. The first, and most prevalent, is a lack of preparation. Students are not completing the weekly scheduled 6, 8, 10, or 12-mile foot march with a 47-pound rucksack for at least eight weeks prior to their arrival at Fort Benning. Students must have time under the ruck to strengthen their back, legs, and shoulders and toughen their feet. Recommended foot march training is part of the physical training plan which is available on the ARTB website.

The second reason is that unit training plans fail to replicate the cumulative effect of RAP week. The foot march is the last event after the RPA, the Combat Water Survival Assessment, the Malvesti Confidence Course, and land navigation — four days with little sleep. Soldiers who are not physically prepared struggle at completing the foot march. Units' pre-Ranger programs should try to mimic the cumulative nature of RAP week by replicating the back-to-back events to truly assess a Soldier's physical and mental endurance.

Land Navigation

In FY 2015, 382 or 15.5 percent of Ranger students did not pass the land navigation test and were dropped from the Ranger Course. The land navigation test assesses a Ranger student's ability to successfully locate four out of five points in five hours starting at night and transitioning to daylight. Students have two-and-a-half hours during limited visibility and two-and-a-half hours during daylight to complete the test utilizing only a pencil, map, compass, protractor, and red lens flashlight. It is a self-correcting course, and distances traveled between points are typically 1,000 to 1,500 meters. The total distance of the course averages 5 to 8 kilometers depending on the Soldier's navigation proficiency.

The first navigation test is on the morning of the second day of RAP week. Students who fail to meet the standard during this testing period will retest on the morning of the third day. The retest is on the same course, but students are given a different set of points. If the students fail this second evaluation, they will be dropped from the course. It is important to note that those students who meet the standard on the second land navigation test will have walked an extra 5-8 kilometers, which may impact their potential success during the 12-mile foot march the next day.

At Ranger School, students struggle to meet the standard for a variety of reasons. The first, and most prominent, is the Army's shift away from traditional land navigation skills and reliance on GPS technology. A second reason is students' lack of ability to terrain associate and develop attack points. Potential students should focus on training the basics of land navigation as outlined in TC 3-25.26, *Map Reading and Land Navigation*, and successfully complete at least three tests on land navigation courses prior to attending Ranger School.

If resources at the Soldier's home station are scarce, virtual training on land navigation using VBS2 is available on the ARTB website.

Additional Factors to Consider

During FY 2015, 175 Students or 7.8 percent of attendees failed patrols. Before attending the course, Ranger students should read and have a solid understanding of Chapter 2: Operations and Chapter 7: Patrols of the *Ranger Handbook*. Students can obtain the latest version of the *Ranger Handbook* on the ARTB website. If students can physically succeed at meeting the standards of RAP week, their chances at eventually graduating Ranger School substantially increase.

Outsourcing the Solution

Fortune 500 companies outsource to maximize efficacy of an organization when organic resources are inadequate. The same can be done for preparation for Ranger School. The Ranger Training Assessment Course (RTAC) is taught at the Army National Guard (ARNG) Warrior Training Center (WTC) located on Fort Benning. The course trains on similar terrain as Ranger School and affords students the opportunity to acclimatize to the Fort Benning weather. This provides an obvious advantage over other division-level pre-Ranger courses. Additionally, the close relationship maintained by the WTC and the ARTB historically affords their graduates with a 15 percent higher success rate at

FY14-15 Ranger Course Statistics

Rangers Lead The Way!

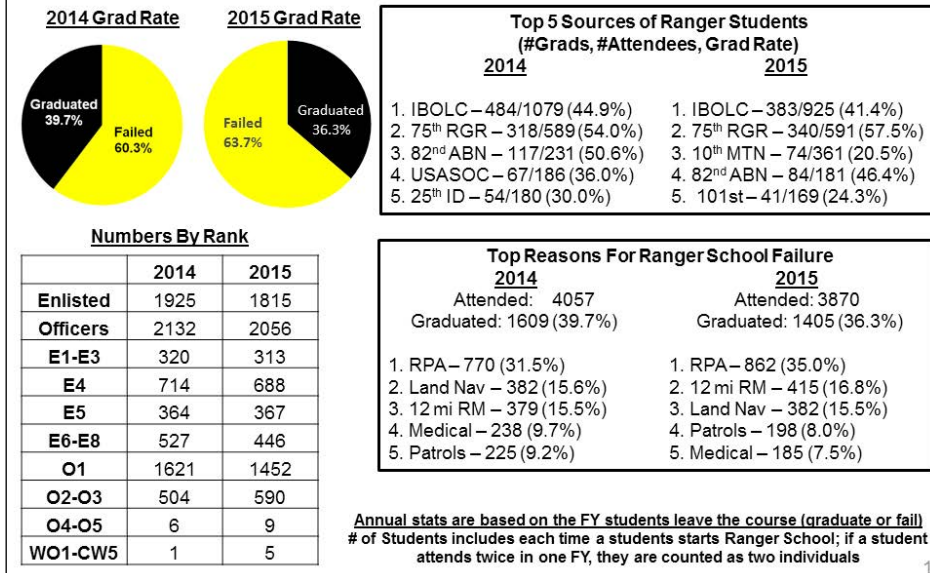


Figure 2 — FY 14-15 Ranger Course Statistics

Ranger School over other division pre-Ranger programs. RTAC is a free resource for active-duty Soldiers and can be provided at minimal cost to National Guard units.

RTAC is a two-week course that concentrates on the high-attrition events of RAP week. Students complete an RPA, five days of land navigation, multiple obstacle courses, combat water survival test, and a three-day field training exercise (FTX) with patrolling classes. During the course, the RTAC cadre focus on push-ups, the foot march, and preparation and execution of land navigation, events that historically and currently cause the most failures during Ranger School. In addition, the WTC’s medical staff will review and correct as many deficiencies as possible in a student’s medical records during this time. Upon successful completion of RTAC, students take a three-day pass prior to inprocessing into Ranger School. Additional information on RTAC can be found at <http://www.benning.army.mil/tenant/wtc/pr.htm>.

Improving Pre-Ranger Courses

Installation pre-Ranger courses can take advantage of several resources at the ARTB. Division-level pre-Ranger courses can visit ARTB, observe RAP week events, visit the Ranger Instructor Training and Education Program (RITEP) to get the latest classes taught at Ranger School, and maximize time with RIs to understand lessons learned. Division-level pre-Ranger courses can also request a visit from ARTB cadre to enhance and standardize their existing course structure. In this instance, if training and manning requirements allow, ARTB will send a cohort of senior RIs to visit a division’s pre-Ranger program and provide feedback on current course standards to ensure students are well prepared to succeed. To coordinate a visit, contact the ARTB S3 at (706) 544-6602 or usarmy.benning.tradoc.mbx.artb-s3-operations@mail.mil.

FINISH STRONG!

“The Infantry School is dedicated to serving the needs of the force with highly trained leaders. We embrace this responsibility and we want units to use the course to make their leaders smart, fast, lethal and precise.”

— **BG Peter Jones**
Commandant, U.S. Army Infantry School

Units and Soldiers can increase their success at Ranger School by focusing pre-training on being successful during RAP week. This includes strictly executing push-ups during the RPA, sustaining the mental and physical toughness to meet the three-hour standard on the 12-mile foot march, and honing the basic navigation skills required to pass the land navigation test on the first attempt. A proven method to increase success at Ranger School is to take advantage of the WTC’s RTAC. Units can improve their home-station pre-Ranger course by reaching out to the ARTB and either visiting Fort Benning or requesting a visit. By utilizing these assets and focusing pre-training on the top three events students fail, Soldiers and units will increase their success at Ranger School.

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The 12-mile foot march is the second highest cause of student attrition from Ranger School. Students must have time under ruck to strengthen their back, legs, and shoulders, and toughen their feet prior to attending the course. (U.S. Army photo)