

ITEP: What Is It?

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The Army's old SQT (Skill Qualification Test) program has undergone some changes, but an SQT is still a part of the Army's new Individual Training and Evaluation Program (ITEP).

The primary goal of all Army training is to turn out combat-ready units whose soldiers can perform their assigned tasks to the prescribed standards. The ITEP uses three methods of evaluating this proficiency and integrates individual training and evaluation with unit training in a way that is simpler, more flexible, and more responsive to the needs of unit commanders.

These three methods are hands-on common task tests (CTTs), commanders' evaluations, and written SQTs.

In short, the ITEP is a formal system through which the Army evaluates the effectiveness of its soldiers' individual training by measuring their performance against Soldier's Manual and ARTEP (Army Training and Evaluation Program) standards.

These training evaluations, conducted following training at all levels, are a critical part of the Army's training process because they help identify an individual soldier's weaknesses and strengths. They also provide valuable diagnostic information that is essential to the effective management of training programs and to the development of effective training methods and literature.

The ITEP is designed to improve a unit's combat readiness by:

- Evaluating each individual soldier's proficiency.

- Standardizing individual training.

- Improving unit cohesiveness through the evaluation of the individual tasks that support a unit's mission.

- Providing information to commanders and MOS proponents on the effectiveness of individual training programs.

- Providing objective indicators on the MOS task proficiency of soldiers for use in making career management decisions.

The program does all this by focusing on common tasks, on MOS-specific tasks that are considered critical to a unit's collective mission, and on tasks for which soldiers in a particular MOS are responsible but which are not necessarily critical to a specific unit mission.

CTT

The program's common task test is used to determine a soldier's ability to perform the basic combat survival tasks that soldiers in all MOSs have to perform. All Active Army soldiers in Skill Levels 1 through 4 (private through sergeant first class) must take the CTT every fiscal year. Reserve Component soldiers in those same skill levels must take the test only once every two years but may be required to take it more often if their unit commanders choose to give it.

The test can be administered by unit commanders at any time during a fiscal year. A hands-on CTT is preferred, but commanders have the option of using a written CTT if they

first get the approval of a commander in the rank of lieutenant colonel or above.

For the hands-on CTT, the training objectives and the information needed to conduct the test can be found in the Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks (SMCT). The procedures and test questions for the written CTT are in a written test booklet that is controlled and distributed by the local Training Standards Officer (TSO).

The CTT may be integrated with other types of training, such as stations in a military stakes competition, drill or training exercise evaluations, ARTEPs, or other collective training activities. This kind of integrated training usually means a unit is making the best possible use of its training resources and, at the same time, is achieving multiple training objectives.

A CTT notice that lists the tasks to be tested is published and distributed each year by the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). Although it is not mandatory that soldiers receive a written CTT notice before they are tested, it should be in the hands of soldiers who are to be tested at least 60 days before the CTT is to be given.

After the results have been processed through the Army Training Support Center at Fort Eustis, the unit commanders are given summary reports. Individual soldier's reports (ISRs) for the CTT are not provided, because the test is scored locally and the results made immediately available to those tested.

Unit commanders in the Active Army are encouraged to use the test

results in preparing enlisted evaluation reports, in making recommendations to local promotion boards, and in other similar career management decisions at the local level. CTT results are not used by the enlisted personnel management system (EPMS) for making career management decisions.

In the Reserve Component units, CTT results can be used to stimulate training and to help commanders at all levels evaluate the overall effectiveness of their unit training. The Reserve Components do not formally use the results for making either personnel management or individual career decisions.

COMMANDER'S EVALUATIONS

The commander's evaluation portion of the ITEP is designed to enable the commander to determine the proficiency of his soldiers on the MOS-specific and common tasks that are critical to the unit's mission. There are various techniques a commander can and should use as part of these evaluations within his unit:

- Conduct evaluations concurrently with individual skill training.
- Integrate an internal evaluation with team, crew, and other collective training.
- Use supervisors to evaluate the individual skills of their subordinates on the job.
- Use a battlefield scenario (FTX, CPX) to evaluate individual skills.
- Employ a series of test stations (as in the EIB test) to evaluate individual skills.

During these evaluations, commanders and supervisors should record their soldiers' proficiency in job books. These books supplement the MOS-specific soldier's manuals for Skill Levels 1 and 2, and list by task number and title the common, shared, and MOS-specific tasks in which a Skill Level 1 and 2 soldier should be proficient. They should be used as a means of transferring training information from unit to unit. Since a commander's evaluation is in-

formal, he can develop and refine a system, and a method of recording results, that is tailored to his unit.

SQT

The third ITEP evaluation method, the written SQT, is the most complex and formal. The SQT is used to determine a soldier's proficiency on tasks that are critical to his MOS. The SQT promotes unit readiness by giving the commander a way of evaluating and comparing soldiers in the same MOS and at the same skill level Army-wide; a proficiency indicator for use in EPMS decisions in the Active Army; an overall Army indicator of soldier proficiency; and a source of objective information on the strengths and weaknesses of his soldiers.

The SQT, each developed by the appropriate MOS proponent, is designed to evaluate a representative sample of critical tasks for every MOS and skill level not exempted by the Department of the Army. The test evaluates tasks found in the MOS soldier's manuals through multiple choice questions. An SQT is designed to be equitable, simple to administer, performance oriented, and representative of soldiers' critical task domain; it is also designed to focus on MOS and skill level tasks and to provide rapid feedback.

The SQT is scheduled on a fiscal year cycle, which is announced in a DA circular. The Active Army test is administered during a three-month test window, ideally at the same time each year, while Army National Guard and Reserve units are tested during a six-month period.

As with the CTT, all Active Army soldiers in Skill Levels 1 through 4 are tested in their primary MOS annually; ARNG and USAR soldiers in the same skill levels are tested every two years using an SQT that corresponds to their duty MOSs, with commanders, again, having the option of administering the test annually if they want to.

(Several exceptions and deferments from SQT testing are covered in

detail in AR 350-37, Army Individual Training Evaluation Program. This regulation and the SQT TSO should be consulted in specific and unique cases for answers regarding the testing.)

After the DA circular announcing the test period is distributed, TRADOC publishes an SQT notice containing a list of soldier's manual tasks that may be tested on the upcoming SQT. This notice is distributed through the TSO about 60 days before the test period. (One notice is published and distributed for every three soldiers.)

Even though it is not mandatory that a soldier receive a written SQT notice before being tested, commanders and supervisors should see that their soldiers are notified as soon as possible and that they have access to the training materials they need well in advance of the actual test. All the questions and tasks used in the SQT are based on the soldier's manual for the appropriate MOS and skill level. (Soldiers who miss a test date because of administrative error must be rescheduled for testing as soon as possible.)

Answers to the SQT are recorded on special mark-sense forms, which the TSO is responsible for checking and forwarding to be scored. (The goal is to have these forms in the mail within five days after the test.) All SQTs are scored centrally at the Army Training Support Center, but the Skill Level 1 SQT can also be scored manually at the local level to provide immediate feedback to the soldier, the trainer, and the training manager.

An Individual Soldier's Report (ISR) is provided to the soldiers in Skill Levels 1 through 4 about 30 days after they have taken the SQT. The ISR, which is distributed through the TSO to the soldier's commander, contains the soldier's interim SQT score for training purposes — it identifies all the tasks on which the soldier has shown a training weakness. Within 90 days after the close of the Active Army SQT period, a USAEREC Form 10A showing the

soldier's official SQT score is forwarded to him through the chain of command. This form, the official record of the Active Army soldier's performance, is used for EPMS purposes.

In addition to the ISR, a summary report giving the consolidated results of the SQT task performances within a unit is distributed to unit commanders at division level and below. This report can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a unit's training program and as a basis for improve-

ment in those areas that are identified as being weak.

Attaining and sustaining the proficiency of soldiers in their individual and collective tasks is vital to the combat readiness of a unit. And an effective program through which to evaluate that proficiency is essential to a commander in determining the effectiveness of his unit's training methods and techniques.

ITEP provides the Army and unit commanders with a valuable system of evaluation and feedback that they

can use in effectively managing their training. To use the program properly, commanders, supervisors, and trainers at all levels must fully understand it and promote its use.



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Winning at the NTC: Deliberate Attack

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The Valley of Death at the National Training Center is about 17 kilometers long, running from west to east. (See accompanying map.) The western end of the valley, about two kilometers wide, terminates in an escarpment known as "The Shelf." At its eastern end, the valley opens into a bowl-like depression about 10 kilometers wide. The western two-thirds of the valley is narrow, with Tiefert Mountain in the north and a lower range of hills in the south. Tiefert Mountain is impassable to vehicle traffic, and the southern hills are trafficable only with difficulty through narrow, tortuous passes.

The key terrain features in the western part of the valley are The Shelf, Hill 692, and the passes in the southern hills. In the east the flat, open nature of the ground lends some tactical importance to five seemingly insignificant hills — The Whale, Casey, Tony, Hill 466, and Bone.

Gullies and dry stream beds offer excellent cover, while the width of the

bowl allows attacking forces to bypass the key terrain features without coming within range of the defender's weapons. The prevailing wind is from the northwest.

PLAN

The U.S. task force that took part in this particular operation was ordered to conduct a deliberate attack from an assembly area in the vicinity of The Shelf to seize Tony. (Tony is actually a series of low hills about 10 to 20 meters high that lie astride the main road running through the valley.) The order specified that the task force's units could not move forward of Phase Line Apple (about 1,000 meters west of The Whale) before the specified time. The task force commander did request and receive permission to send patrols east of The Whale. The TF had both helicopter and fixed wing aircraft available for the operation.

The TF commander's scheme of maneuver called for Team Alpha to attack on the right (south) and for Team Bravo to attack on the left (north). These two teams would sweep to the north of the objective where they would make a 90-degree turn to the south to hit the north end of the objective. Team Charlie, with the AT platoon attached, was to follow the task force, seize The Whale, then push on to Casey. A north-south boundary line was drawn through the task force objective to designate the team objectives.

Helicopters were ordered to reconnoiter the dry stream beds and other likely danger areas before the task force moved out.

A deliberate attack is supposed to be made by a unit that has detailed knowledge of the opposing force and enough time for detailed planning. This task force had time for planning and had been told about the terrain and the weather, but it knew nothing of the OPFOR's strengths and dispo-