

Battle Drill Training Ladder

LIEUTENANT JOHN D. McDONALD

Leaders at every level of command struggle with ways to plan, execute, and evaluate training within the allocated time and resources. We all want to give our soldiers the meaningful, realistic training that will prepare them for combat. But we often try to execute too many tasks instead of focusing on the few that will enable our soldiers to survive the rigorous demands of battle.

With these considerations in mind, I developed a six-step training ladder that gives leaders an opportunity to train, evaluate, and retrain soldiers on any of the battle drills described in ARTEP 7-8 Drill, *Battle Drills for the Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, and Field Manual (FM) 7-8, *Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*. In creating the ladder, I used the basic concepts in the drill manual while adding a few steps that give leaders the evaluation checkpoints they need to determine task proficiency.

The six steps on the ladder, as shown in Figure 1, are the following:

Leader Training. Leader training is the basis for ensuring that soldiers get training that conforms to the standards U.S. Army doctrine demands. During the training management process, senior leaders at company level identify the tasks to be trained during the training cycle. Platoon leaders then identify instructors for these tasks. Normally, this is managed at squad level, with squad leaders being tasked to train their squads on the specific tasks. Typically, a squad leader should be informed about eight weeks before the time he is expected to train his squad. This will give him time to obtain the resources and prepare a training lesson plan for the tasks to be taught.

Approximately two weeks before the training date, the platoon leader and platoon sergeant examine and validate the

squad leader's lesson plans. This establishes his ability to teach his squad the basics of the battle drill and move into the *crawl* phase. At the platoon level, platoon leaders must have their training plans validated by the company commanders, and on up through the chain of command.

Leaders must also ensure that the following criteria are met before training:

- Training should be linked to the unit's critical wartime missions.
- The battle drills selected should apply to specific tasks on the mission essential task list (METL) and follow the commander's training guidance.
- Battle drills should be ranked according to the unit's current proficiency on them—trained, practiced, unpracticed (TPU)—and the degree of difficulty.
- Leader and individual tasks that support the battle drills have been identified.
- Leader and individual training have been conducted.
- Conditions for training have been resourced, planned, and set up.

Crawl Phase. No matter which task is to be trained, leaders must begin their training at the *crawl* phase, which essentially emphasizes teaching the basics of the task to be trained. It is the most important step in the battle drill training ladder

because it outlines the basic standards of performance and gives each soldier the baseline knowledge he needs to execute his own individual tasks. This step can be performed in rear areas before movement to a training area, or as soon as the unit arrives at the field training area.

The trainer begins by talking the soldiers through the drill step-by-step, describing what each individual or team must do. The following are key training points that need to be emphasized:

- General description of the drill, its purpose, and its importance.
- Description of the initiating cue, command, or combat context in which the training occurs. (The cue can be as simple as a verbal command or a grenade simulator.)
- Description of the standards of performance.
- Detailed description of the performance measures for each step of the drill.
- A step-by-step demonstration of the drill subtasks.
- Roles of the supporting individual tasks within the drill.
- Answers to any questions pertaining to the drill.

By following these ARTEP 7-8 drill, crawl phase, steps, the leader lays the

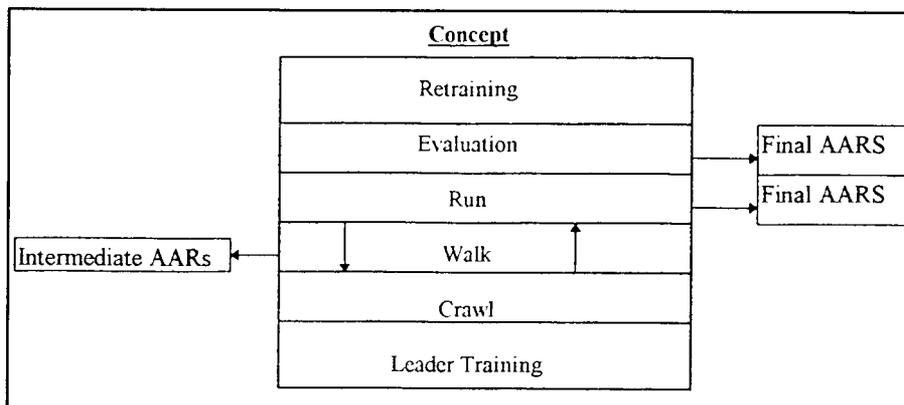


Figure 1. The Battle Drill Training Ladder

TRAINING NOTES

foundation for the battle drill and moves up to the next step of the ladder.

Walk Phase. In the *walk* phase, the soldiers are given an opportunity to practice the drill they have been taught at a speed that gives them a feel for the drill and allows them to ask questions. ARTEP 7-8 Drill describes the *walk* phase as one in which the unit executes the drill at a slow, step-by-step pace. Leaders focus on placing soldiers in their individual supporting roles and walking through the drill in exact detail.

Leaders perform the following during this phase:

- Produce the cue that will initiate the drill.
- Have the soldier perform, at a slow pace, each individual and unit task the drill requires.
- Coach the soldier through each repetition of the drill, and critique his performance throughout.
- Stop training at any point to make corrections, and then continue the training.
- Continue the training until the drill is performed to standard.

The most important thing for the squad leader to do throughout the training at this point is conduct an intermediate after-action review (AAR). Whenever a drill is not being performed to standard, the leader must stop the training and give a brief AAR on what is wrong with that step of the drill and what needs to be done to correct the problem. At this point, the soldiers will know what is wrong and can re-execute that portion of the drill. Once the drill has been performed to standard, the leader makes a decision whether to retrain or move on up the ladder.

Run Phase. The next step for the battle drill leader is to put it all together into the *run* phase. At this point, the leader has identified any prior problems and allows his unit to perform the drill at full speed as if in combat. This step is of paramount importance because it is here that the leader determines whether his unit is proficient at the drill or must back down the ladder to the *walk* phase.

To manage the *run* phase, the leader must perform the following tasks:

- Initiate the cue to begin the battle drill.
- Allow the drill to be executed completely without any interruptions.

Days 1-3	Day 4	Day 5
<u>Task 1 Crawl--Walk--Run</u>		
<u>Task 2 Crawl--Walk--Run</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>	<u>Retraining</u>
<u>Task ?? Crawl--Walk--Run</u>		

Figure 2. Five-Day Sample Training Plan

- Force the unit to repeat the drill if any subtasks are not performed to standard.
- Revert to the walk phase if tasks cannot be performed correctly.
- Vary the conditions under which the drill is performed to test the unit's ability to adapt to the changing nature of the battlefield and to bring the unit to higher levels of competency.
- Incorporate an opposing force (OPFOR) or MILES (multiple integrated laser engagement system) equipment to gain a more realistic indication of unit competence.
- Conduct a final AAR after each iteration to summarize the results of the training. This AAR should focus on training strengths and weaknesses, obtaining feedback, and emphasizing key training points.

Once this phase has been completed, the leader has three options: He can have the unit run through the baseline battle drill again until it is executed to standard and the unit is thoroughly trained. He can have the unit perform the battle drill again under different conditions. Or—if a multiechelon STX (situational training exercise) lane or a multiechelon live-fire is desired for the *evaluation* step—the leader can begin again at the *crawl* phase with a new battle drill and execute training until all the battle drills have been trained. Then the unit can move on to the evaluation phase.

Evaluation. Various options are open to the leader for this phase. The unit must determine whether an STX, a live fire, or a MILES force-on force is the desired method of evaluation. Regardless of the format, the evaluation step will give the unit leaders an honest assessment of the soldiers' comprehension and execution of the tasks trained in the four previous steps.

Normally, an STX, with a MILES force-on force scenario, will give the leaders the best opportunity to evaluate the unit. One

reason is that this type of evaluation allows the evaluator to judge how the unit reacts to the combat environment. This method will also test the unit leader's ability to make decisions under pressure. Finally, MILES gives the evaluator a chance to see how effectively the unit engages and destroys a live OPFOR. At the end of the training, the evaluator can also elicit comments from the OPFOR during the AAR that will improve the unit's ability to conduct the battle drill.

A live-fire evaluation allows the leader to take the training to a higher level in which the individual soldier can fire and maneuver while executing the assigned task. Benefits include practicing rifle marksmanship in a semi-realistic environment and seeing the destructive effects our weapons can have on the enemy. Finally, the live-fire exercise gives the soldiers confidence that the battle drill can be executed safely with devastating effects against an adversary.

These evaluations are important for soldiers and leaders because they provide both positive and negative feedback on how well the unit performs the drill under conditions as close to combat as allowed. Through the final AAR, comments are provided that establish the framework for the final step of the ladder.

Retraining. Once the AAR comments have been discussed, the leader can establish a retraining plan. Normally, the focus is on certain battle drill subtasks that were not performed correctly during the evaluation. A paper copy of the AAR should be kept for future reference. It is the leader's responsibility to make an honest assessment and then conduct any necessary retraining. Retraining ties all the training together and completes what should have been a strenuous and demanding training event. Retraining also provides a basis for the next training event

on the calendar and allows leaders to plan training that builds upon that just conducted.

This plan gives junior leaders an opportunity to train their soldiers and allows senior leaders to evaluate the tasks that are trained. Retraining is conducted at the end so that tasks not performed to standard can be reworked. The plan itself can

be modified to fit the time constraints, but a five-day training cycle generally works best (Figure 2).

The battle drill training ladder can be an effective method of executing the drills that make up the bread and butter of the infantry. It provides a common-sense approach to battle drill training and also gives our soldiers the performance-

oriented training they need to survive on the battlefields of the future.

Lieutenant John D. McDonald served as a rifle platoon and scout platoon leader in the 4th Battalion, 27th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, and is now assigned to the 3d Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. He is a 1993 graduate of the United States Military Academy.

The “B” Deployment Bag

MAJOR DOMINIC J. CARACCILO

Several U.S. military operations in recent years have had one thing in common: Their lead units were mustered for no-notice deployments that turned out to be much longer than expected. While most of these initial units were thoroughly prepared for the immediate mission, their preparedness for an extensive stay was somewhat questionable.

For instance, on 6 August 1990, the 325th Infantry, 82d Airborne Division, marshaled for a no-notice deployment as the lead element into Saudi Arabia for Operation DESERT SHIELD. In 14 hours, the first element of the task force was on its way and didn't return to Fort Bragg for eight months. Five of those months were spent waiting and preparing for combat, while the remaining months were spent on the war itself and the redeployment activities.

Units leaving for Saudi Arabia that were given notification and time to prepare for the deployment packed such items as training aids including MILES equipment, Dragon trainers, and M16 range-firing necessities; maintenance tents; and personal items such as physical training (PT) gear, additional toiletries, cots, small battery-powered radios, and reading material.

During a two-week mission cycle in

the 82d, it is SOP (standing operating procedure) for paratroopers in each unit to maintain ALICE packs and A-Bags containing the things they will need in case of a combat deployment. An ALICE pack contains the essentials—three days of rations, water, and ammunition. The A-Bags are packed, inspected, placed in a standard unit location, and deployed with the soldiers. A-Bags are packed with

The B-Bag would include items the commander considered essential to training and morale for an extended period.

items needed to sustain the soldier for a few weeks after the initial action; they are not intended to support the soldiers for an indefinite period.

A typical A-Bag contains additional battle dress uniforms, T-shirts, underwear, socks, wet-weather gear, sleeping bags, NBC (nuclear, biological, chemical) gear, shelter halves, tent pegs, additional MREs (meals, ready to eat) to round out the basic load, and other items deemed essential to the mission and the days to follow. By SOP, these bags are

loaded as ballast on trucks, HMMWVs (high-mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicles) and pallets and are deployed with the soldiers.

But soldiers who are deployed for an unexpected longer period also need physical training gear, sweat suits, running shoes, swimming suits, extra toiletries, entertainment equipment, and other personal items.

Once the 325th Infantry arrived in Saudi Arabia and the long wait for combat began, leaders had to take the necessary actions to sustain the soldiers. The following are among the steps taken to ensure that the soldiers could train and maintain morale:

- Each soldier was given advanced pay (\$23.00) to buy running shoes for PT, and an urgent request for running shorts was made for the entire task force.
- Equipment for training was collected at home base, loaded in express containers (CONEXs) and sent to theater by boat. This was an ongoing activity for the first five months.
- Many items were ordered for training, including E-type silhouettes, VS-17 panels, blank adapters, and a large assortment of batteries.
- The family group at Fort Bragg col-