

The NCOER

Of the many responsibilities an NCO has, few have more direct an impact on a Soldier's career prospects than correctly completing the NCO Evaluation Report. This official personnel record identifies the strengths and weaknesses of a Soldier as well as his or her capacity to be an effective and productive member of the Army team. As a Soldier's potential for promotion is gleaned from the information the rater presents in the NCOER, it is vital to learn both the proper process of evaluating a Soldier and how to succinctly, yet honestly, express accolades and criticism.

"It's your evaluation as to how well a Soldier is doing his or her job; you should take ownership in what you're saying about that person," said Command Sgt. Maj. John Longcor, commandant of the NCO Academy at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. "But, you'd be surprised at how many people don't know what an NCOER is. Some are learning about it in Structured Self-Development and think to themselves, 'Wow, I guess it's going to apply to me someday.' Then, they come into the Warrior Leader Course and they find out it's part of the Army's bread and butter for young leaders."

The new WLC program of instruction devotes four hours to learning and practicing the NCOER. Simplified, the report consists of accurate administrative data, descriptions of the work performed by the Soldier and ratings in various categories with supporting comments that justify the rating given.

According to regulations, the final report, DA Form 2166-8, should be prepared following adequate counseling between the rater and the Soldier being reviewed. DA Form 2166-8-1 is used during counseling to organize the official evaluation.

Because it is so fundamental to Army personnel decisions and Soldier professional development, an NCOER must be precisely tailored to identify the unique characteristics and specialties a Soldier brings to the job. Without an honest and justifiable appraisal of performance and potential, the Army cannot identify those who would best fit the limited slots available for advancement and Soldiers cannot identify the areas where growth is needed. Thus, a generic or impersonal NCOER — one that doesn't include well-written comments that support a given rating — does a disservice to both the Army and the Soldier being rated.

Ultimately, a single NCOER should not derail a Soldier's career. Instead, the NCOER should be seen as one tool in an entire evaluation process designed to foster open communication between subordinates and their superiors, encouraging continuous professional growth over immediate, uncompromising perfection.

NCOER COMMON MISTAKES

The most frequently seen errors, according to the U.S. Army Human Resources Command:

- ✘ **Wrong dates:** The form cannot be sent to Headquarters, Department of the Army, before the "thru" date. Likewise, the "from" date cannot overlap the "thru" date from the previous report.
- ✘ **Incomplete APFT data:** You must include the Soldier's Army Physical Fitness Test score if rated "needs improvement" in the physical fitness section. Ad-

ditionally, profile status must be explained.

- ✘ **Inconsistent ratings:** In the final section, the ratings given for performance and potential for promotion must be similar.
- ✘ **Lackluster comments:** Bullet comments are the only way for a rater to justify the rating given, especially when "excellence" or "needs improvement" is marked. Comments should indicate how much the Soldier exceeded or failed to meet standards and give

examples of why or why not.

- ✘ **Generalities:** Comments that are too brief, vague or trite neither convey the information needed to make personnel decisions nor aid the Soldier's professional development. Be specific.
- ✘ **Repetition or embellishment:** A particular example can only be used once as a bullet comment. Also, handwritten comments or type designed to stand out — underlined, bold or italic — should not be used.





DA Form 2166-8: Filling out an NCOER

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Use the proper rank abbreviations and ensure that the Social Security number is correct.

PERIOD COVERED

Annual NCOERs must cover no more than 12 months. After a change of rater, the period must be at least 90 days.

RATING CHAIN

While Department of the Army civilians are authorized to be raters and reviewers, at least one in the rating chain must be a member of the military.

SIGNATURES

If using PureEdge form-completion software, these blocks can be digitally signed, but not more than 14 days before the form's "thru" date.

RATING

"Excellence" must be justified by specific examples and measurable results. "Success" is meeting the standard. "Needs improvement" must also be explained.

ANATOMY OF A GOOD COMMENT

Bullet comments should be preceded with a small letter "o," start with a verb, and are limited to one to two lines. Be short, concise and to the point. Use past tense.

BULLET COMMENTS

Quantitative and substantive comments are required to explain areas where the NCO is particularly strong or needs improvement.

DON'T GENERALIZE

Comments should be listed in the order of strength and quantify the NCO's success — use numbers to justify the rating given.

The background image shows a DA Form 2166-8 NCO Evaluation Report. The form is divided into several sections: PART I - ADMINISTRATIVE DATA, PART II - RATER AND SENIOR RATER INFORMATION, PART III - RATING CHAIN, PART IV - ARMY VALUES/ATTRIBUTES/SKILLS/ACTIONS, and PART V - OVERALL PERFORMANCE AND POTENTIAL. The form includes fields for name, unit, station, SSN, rank, and dates. It also has a section for bullet comments and a rating scale from 1 (Superior) to 5 (Poor). The callouts are pointing to specific areas of the form, such as the administrative data, the rating chain, the bullet comments, and the overall performance section.