

## The 17-day WLC

**S**oldiers selected to attend the Warrior Leader Course have been identified as ready – with the proper education – to assume the responsibilities of leading Soldiers. Yet, that education will be difficult to obtain and comprehend without adequate preparation before attending WLC, course developers and instructors say.

Small group leaders at the Fort Bliss, Texas, NCO Academy, where the new 17-day course was originally piloted, offer these tips for Soldiers about to attend the new course, which will be implemented throughout the active component beginning Oct. 1:

**BRING THE RIGHT STUFF:** While WLC is no longer a resident course, students are still expected to maintain a room for inspection. This means students should double-check that they have all the items on their packing list before departing their home units.

**KNOW HOW TO USE A COMPUTER:** Students are issued laptops to use during class and exams. A godsend to many, they can simplify a complicated search through reams of material to just a few keystrokes. However, instructors are finding that some students don't possess the computer skills needed to make good use of their electronic tools.

"We may live in a computer age, but some are computer illiterate," said Sgt. 1st Class Shandrel Stewart, formerly a senior small group leader at the Fort Bliss NCOA. "You may need to take a computer class," she advised.

**PRACTICE PUBLIC SPEAKING:** Classroom discussions and oral presentations are now integrated throughout the course. Students not comfortable speaking in public should seek assistance from their leaders.



Students at the Fort Bliss, Texas, NCO Academy practice drill and ceremony skills by marching in formation to lunch at the dining facility during the first pilot class of the new 17-day WLC program of instruction in September 2009.

"Before you come here, you should practice," Staff Sgt. Clifford Dewitt, a small group leader, said. "You should go to your first-line supervisor or another NCO who you know is squared away. If you need help, get a mentor and prepare [with him or her] to get in front of somebody and be able to talk for five to seven minutes on a certain topic."

Those who don't prepare will have a hard time once they arrive, Dewitt said, especially those afraid of speaking in front of a group. "You have some who can get up there and just talk away – that's just how they are. Then you have

some whom you just have to put a rope around and pull. You just have to build that confidence that you can do it."

**GET READY FOR NEW SUBJECTS:**

The new course incorporates additional classes in administrative skills. These were added to help students get ready to take on the responsibilities of leadership.

"[Some] are signing a hand receipt and taking responsibility for multi-million dollar equipment without understanding the process. If something is lost, who pays for that?" Stewart said. "That's something NCOs need to know. The last block [on the form] is responsibility and accountability."

**DO YOUR HOMEWORK:** Soldiers don't have to wait until they are WLC students to become familiar with course material. In fact, all training support packages are available on Army Knowledge Online for prospective students' review: <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/514945>.

**HAVE AN OPEN MIND:** The changes to the Warrior Leader Course were made to give soon-to-be leaders better tools to lead effectively in today's Army. However, some arrive at WLC with a fixed mindset that prefers the status quo. An open mind, on the other hand, will help you far beyond the course, said Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Ostheimer, chief instructor at the Fort Bliss academy.

"There's a certain resistance to change – there always was and always will be. But those who can embrace the change, adapt to it and demonstrate resiliency; those are the leaders of the Army."

*Editor's note: This is an updated version of a story that originally appeared in the November 2009 issue.*



## New school: A sampling of the classes now part of WLC

### EFFECTS OF CULTURE

Reviews the concept of culture and shows how it affects the contemporary operational environment. Students review what comprises a culture, what culture shock is and how culture affects military operations.

### MILITARY JUSTICE & DISCIPLINE

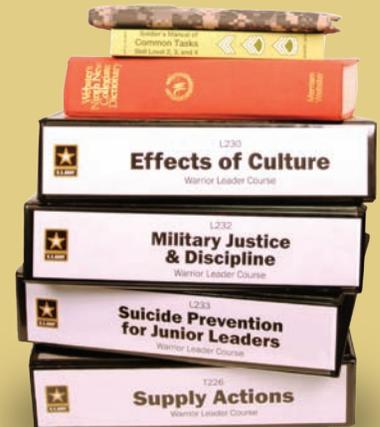
Focuses on the principles that underlie military discipline – authority, duties, relationships and nonjudicial/nonpunitive measures. Students also practice “What would you do?” scenarios.

### SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR JUNIOR LEADERS

Provides instruction in the unique tools first-line supervisors need to identify, support and assist Soldiers who may have suicide- or mental health-related issues.

### SUPPLY ACTIONS

Focuses on regulatory guidance in the areas of accountability and serviceability at the squad level. A practical exercise has students perform an inventory and complete the corresponding paperwork.



## THE NEW WLC: WHAT'S IN & WHAT'S OUT

*Based on input from NCOs in the field and from previous graduates, course designers made numerous changes to the Warrior Leader Course to make it more relevant for today's junior leaders. Here are a few of the more significant changes to the course's curriculum and the reasons course designers and instructors say they were made:*

### What's out:

- ✘ **Land navigation and map-reading skills:** Those skills are more appropriately taught at the unit level and are redundant at an NCO academy, which focuses on leadership and administration skills.
- ✘ **Physical training tests:** PT evaluations also should be done at the unit level before students attend WLC. Marginal students who are sent to the course risk having a negative report follow them throughout their careers.
- ✘ **After-hours lock down:** Students are given more downtime after classes are done for the day and are able to leave the student barracks. This added accountability tests students' self-discipline and time-management skills and matches what is expected of NCOs when back in their units.
- ✘ **Separate curricula for different components:** Reservists and National Guard members formerly attended a modified WLC. Now, they will attend a course identical in content to the active component, but condensed to fit into 15 days.

### What's in:

- ✓ **Written tests:** In addition to performance evaluations, which have always been part of WLC, the new program of instruction contains three written exams. Students are allowed to reference notes, texts and documents on laptops during the test, just as they would in real-world situations.
- ✓ **Oral presentations:** Students practice their public speaking skills by delivering to their classmates a briefing concerning the history of the Army and the contributions of NCOs.
- ✓ **Drill and ceremony:** This tests students' precision, comprehension and ability to deliver commands to their squad. Students practice repeatedly when marching to and from the academy, their barracks or the dining facility.
- ✓ **More administration skills:** To prepare students for the supervisory paperwork that is a natural part of an NCO's position, practical training in writing NCO Evaluation Reports, memorandums, sworn statements and award recommendations has been added.
- ✓ **Army Physical Readiness Training:** Students are taught the concepts and principles underlying the Army's newly released PT regimen and how to lead their Soldiers in it. The lesson also delves into other health and fitness topics such as nutrition, diet, preventive medicine, mental health and spiritual well-being.