

Homework Lesson #5

Top Ten Reasons Drill Gets Messed Up

1) Soldiers looking at their feet.

If you look at your feet, you become oblivious to anything else around you. Folks who have never been in a marching band or the military need to break this habit. As soon as you look down, you are out of place.

2) Talking in ranks.

Nothing makes me more frustrated when people talk when we are at attention. The only person that should be talking is the one who called everyone to attention. If you are BS-ing when instruction is being given, you miss something. Then the whole battalion has to wait for you to get caught up. It happens too often for my taste.

3) Ignorance of the Drill.

How can you succeed if you do not know how to do something? Please study up. More time is wasted correcting sergeants than any other rank. Sergeants need to know their jobs/positions. If you do not wish to learn and do, take off the stripes.

4) Not paying attention.

This can fall under talking and looking at ones feet. However, it just simply means, "don't be a space cadet." You all know how to stand at attention- do it. Think "soldier." "I want to be seen as the real deal." Play the game and get your head out of the clouds.

5) Los of elbow contact in the ranks.

The elbow of your partner is like a security blanket. If you can walk down the street and rub elbows with another, you can keep up with him, and therefore can maintain a straight line. We tend to use too many senses when we drill. If you maintain elbow contact you will always be in line.

6) Rear rank men not covering front rank men.

It is of utmost importance for the front rank men to maintain elbow contact. The rear rank men have a much easier job. While they still are expected to maintain touch with the elbows, all they have to do is to square themselves with their file partners. It is a "follow the leader" kind

of thing. In a wheel, all one has to do is to follow the man in front of him, keep the distance closed to thirteen inches, and shoulders squared to the front.

7) Guides drifting.

Guides are supposed to pick a spot and march straight towards it. Sometimes general guides are guilty of #1-4. I find it useful to align two things in my front and march towards them. It is of utmost importance for the guides to keep square while marching. Otherwise, the drifting will cause everyone else to be either pushed or pulled all over the drill field.

8) Pushing to the side of the guide instead of touching.

Nothing makes an enlisted man angrier than to be pushed around from one side of the line or the other. Brushing elbows is your security blanket. Pushing to make your line give left or right does nothing but aggravate everyone. During wheels, the old "lean left, look out" is definitely the WRONG statement you want to use. There is no leaning, pressing, or pushing. A slight touch keeps everyone in line and tempers in check.

One of the reasons for bunching up is the inability to "fight terrain." While a battalion maneuvers through a saddle between hills, or on uneven terrain the men want to naturally march down hill. The men must learn to fight the urge to march downhill and keep straight forward, even over the toughest ground.

9) Dressing in the wrong direction.

When in line of battle, the dress is mostly center unless otherwise designated. In a column of companies, right in front, the dress is left, unless otherwise designated. If a column is left in front, the dress is right, unless otherwise designated. With this cleared up, the only time this is unclear is if one is guilty of #1-8.

10) The step is not regulated.

This is the most difficult to overcome. The regulations call for Infantry soldiers to habitually march at the quick time, unless the commander/instructor prefixes "march" with "common time." Quick time is 110 steps per minute, done at a 28" step from heel to heel. Common time is 90 steps per minute, with a 28" gait. Even common time is faster and of greater gait than is common in our ranks.

The step is one of the very first things instructed in the school of the soldier. It is time consuming to teach to a large group of men. This is likely the reason we tend to skip this crucial part and move on to the rest of the manual. However, the step is one of the building blocks of

the drill. It is one of the things that officers try to overcome by themselves regulating the step and forcing the men to conform. This is something that was already ingrained in the original soldiers that we have not taken the time to master.

Sometime for drill, mark out 28" intervals and try to march this pace at 90 per minute. It will open your eyes! Then try it at 110 steps per minute. You will see why Civil War infantry could cover such long distances in a relatively short time. The armies march much faster than us, and their steps were regulated to overcome discrepancies in heights.