

Preparing for Subject One part 2



PREPARING

FOR

SUBJECT

Part 2: continuing from an article published in Smart Soldier 43

Soldiers going on a Subject 1 Course have a unique professional development opportunity to demonstrate that they are ready for promotion. It is not just a 'tick and flick' course, but a time to gain new skills, improve themselves as professional soldiers, develop their leadership skills, and learn from and with their peer group.

The article was sourced from interviews with Warrant Officer and Non-Commissioned Officer Academy (WONCO-A) staff and instructors from all Subject 1-level courses. They have a vast range of experience and knowledge in helping soldiers progress through the All Corps Soldier Training Continuum (ACSTC). Soldiers can gain much from the 52 tips contained in the two articles that will help them not just pass the course but gain maximum benefit from it.

“What do soldiers need to know before they come on course? How can they

best prepare? What do they really need to know about coming on SUBJ 1 Courses?”

Re-tests

Tip 32. A soldier who fails a test needs to accept responsibility, taking it as a learning experience and moving on.

Instructors aim to have all soldiers pass the Subject 1 course, but they also have a responsibility to maintain standards. If a you are not up to standard then you are going to be failed. It is then important to accept responsibility for this, to start preparing for more work and to maintain a positive attitude (mental resilience) so that you can pass the next time. Instructors will support trainees and put in a lot of effort to help them achieve a successful outcome.

Tip 33. Look after yourself, and know when you are productive or fatigued.

You need to know the times when you work best. Drafting orders at 0400 h while gaining energy from a Red Bull is not how a SGT should be working. It is not suitable on an op, so soldiers should plan and execute better on course. Ultimately, you need to plan so that you know when you can rest and/or go to the gym for some down time.



Tip 34. Support is available on course.

In the first case, soldiers with issues can chat to fellow soldiers on the course, which demonstrates good teamwork. After that talk to your instructor who is there to mentor and see you succeed. Finally, you can go to the RAP or the Padre. It is the same support as what soldiers have available in their unit.

Tip 35. Know and understand your learning style.

This enables you to work out what learning tactics suit you best. Many soldiers just do what others are doing, such as writing down notes and re-reading them in their room, but this may not be the optimum way that they can learn and subsequently pass assessments. Conduct research to determine what your personal learning

style is by searching 'VARK' on Google and then complete a VARK questionnaire.

Tip 36. Learn to cope with stress.

Some trainees really struggle with it and 'drop their bundle'. You need to learn to deal with stress so you can relax. Stress can be mitigated by understanding what is causing it. For the Subject 1, it is typically poor time management or a lack of knowledge. You can overcome this by accepting that you don't know everything but have the attitude and desire to find out. Listen to the instructors and ask questions. You need to back yourself.



“There is no way to completely avoid stress, but soldiers should do PT when they can as it is a good way to ‘defrag’ their brain. It also helps to maintain a good sense of humour. Soldiers should also take opportunities, when available, to leave the course behind for a few hours. Going out for a meal or going to the shops or beach is a good way to unwind.”

Subj 1 WO Instructor

Subject 1 WO

Tip 37. Subject 1 WO is not a continuation of the other Subject 1 courses.

It is your first opportunity to take into account the ‘big picture’, with your decisions at the Company level effecting the Battalion (or equivalent unit sizes). You will also have more exposure to

policy and skills such as mentoring. It is as if the ‘world opens up to them’.

Tip 38. Units may not support a SNCO preparing for a course.

Should this be the case then it was recommended that you seek a mentor to help provide planning and guidance for weaknesses. Whether unit support is provided or not, you must complete the pre-course in personal time or during a balance of work and personal time. Either way, it is important that the pre-course is completed so that you can enjoy the benefits that such a preparation provides.

Tip 39. When preparing for the ‘day in the life of ...’, think ahead and consider what an OC may ask them.

Then research and prepare for this activity which will help your confidence

and which leads to providing a better verbal brief. If you think that you will be bad or will fail then it is likely to come true.

Tip 40. Reserve WOs on an ARA course need to be well prepared.

It is not the responsibility of the training establishment to refresh you on your current rank's all-corps information during the course. That is the purpose of pre-course revision. You should continue to do your own professional development, maintaining the knowledge and skills from promotion courses. Doing so will not only ensure that you are capable of doing your job, but you are more likely to stand out from your peers and increase the likelihood of promotion in the long term.

Tip 41. Ops and procedure drill components can be challenging.

Properly prepare for the procedure drill and approach it with the seriousness with which it is intended, to honour the fallen soldier they are being trained to bring home.

Subject 1 SGT

Tip 42. Start thinking like a SGT, not a CPL.

This course provides an increase in responsibilities such as a need to plan and bring it all together. You need to manage your own time with all of these responsibilities. This transition should start when doing the pre-course work. However, it normally takes soldiers until about mid-course to realise this, but it

is felt that with the right attitude it will happen earlier and they will gain more benefit from it.

Tip 43. Practise cane drill before the course.

One instructor said that it was hard for a SGT to help a CPL prepare for this component of the task because none of them have to carry about a cane. It is hard to maintain skills real time if they are never used.

Tip 44. CPLs should be given exposure to considerations for planning a training activity.

This will help you to draft a training program and an administration instruction. You will have an early understanding of the need to cover off on transport requirements, calculation of ammunition, documents required to request support and more.

“Trainees need to have the moral courage to speak up when things are wrong. One strong but negative person in an organisation can fester and bring the rest of the course down whereas a strong positive person can bring the course up. If you encounter a strong negative person, have the moral courage to speak up so the issue can be dealt with and everyone can get on with it.”

Subj 1 SGT Instructor



Subject 1 CPL

Tip 45. Be competent with the Austeyr F88 and Minimi.

Aspects of operations that soldiers Soldiers are generally effective with the Austeyr, but typically not with the Minimi. The Minimi has been covered at Kapooka but there are many trades that will not touch it again until their next promotion course. It was suggested that units should have professional development training or infantry minor tactics exercises where soldiers are exposed to this weapon.

Tip 46. Foster teamwork by ensuring that differences are put aside.

Whether that difference is personal or if it is a professional difference of opinion (“in my Regt, we always...” on a daily basis), you need to be professional enough to still work together and get the job done until the course is over. You do not have to be friends out of hours or after the course, but you should overcome that on course and not have to ask instructors to not be placed in a pit with someone else.

Tip 47. While on the course, be a CPL when tasked to be in charge and wield that authority.

You are encouraged to have that mentality and to step-up. As one instructor said, they “don’t want digger excuses, they want CPL solutions”

Tip 48. Be competent in all-corps soldier skills.

PTEs attending the Subject 1 CPL should as a minimum be at the exit standard

of recruit training. This means that you need to have an understanding of: basic drill movements, weapon handling drills, how to pack a pack and how to navigate (plot grids and bearings, set a bearing on a compass, basic pacing, relate map to ground, etc.). You also need to be ready for: the all-corps PES-A, public speaking, and the use of basic Service writing skills including basic English skills and a knowledge of formatting.

Tip 49. Prepare for the physical requirements of course as there is a lot of field-based activity.

WONCO-A note that trainees who are used to working in an office often struggle with the physical requirements of the field exercises during which they need to be able to carry a pack around for a long time. It is a member's personal responsibility to ensure they are physically ready for the course, and they may have to prepare in their own time due to unit tempo.

“Soldiers should always rehearse with another person not by themselves otherwise they won’t pick up mistakes, and they need to understand that rehearsals have to be in their own time. There is no “your time and my time” on course. When course knock off time comes, there is still work to be done.”

Subj 1 CPL Instructor

Instructor related

Tip 50. Be proactive and scan for changes to policy and doctrine in your area of expertise.

It is considered part of your professional development as the system is not letting you know that, for example, the doctrine for MAP has changed.

Tip 51. Computer tablets are being used to conduct assessments.

While it is still early in its development, some instructors have converted an assessment form and placed it on the computer tablet. This is an early version and further changes are needed before it is ideal. It is also necessary that instructors need to be able to transfer the digital forms onto the DRN. Benefits of using an iPad are that there is no



paperwork for the instructor during an assessment and they can also use the video recording capability as a learning tool.

Post-course

Tip 52. Keep your notes as you complete each Subject 1 course.

Ideally, course notes should be digitised so that they can be stored on a CD, DVD, hard disk or memory stick (not forgetting a backup in case of damage). That way when you are preparing for your next course it will be easy to access those notes so that the you can get up to speed, remembering that the entry standard of the next Subject 1 course is the exit standard from the last. Then when the next Subject 1 course is completed you can digitise that information and store it all together so that there is a useful library of reference material.

Conclusion

You can avoid significant stress by ensuring that you are well prepared before the course and during the course. This means completing the pre-course, working on weak areas and studying each night. It also means ensuring that the you plan so that you get sufficient sleep, eat well and can take a bit of time out when needed. It does not mean working very late until just before dawn.

This article is the second of two parts. The first instalment of this article was published in Smart Soldier 43, Nov 15. It provided tips related to pre-course and general course considerations.

