

Life of a Marine Recruit at Parris Island

Posted by [Theresa Hus](#) On 06/30/2020

With a loud, buzzing *fzzzzt* sound, the blinding fluorescent lights above your bunk flicker to life. Shaking your head and rubbing your eyes, you hastily try to rid yourself of the fog of slumber and prepare for roll call. From the end of the long barracks hall you and your fellow recruits call home, a hoarse voice rises above the din of sleep-deprived soldiers waking from their sleep: "On your feet, recruits!"

For Marine recruits in basic training at Parris Island Marine Corps Recruit Depot, this is how every day begins. From the time they wake to the moment they go to sleep, these recruits will spend every second training to become a part of one of the most highly trained and widely feared fighting forces in the world. But what exactly do the recruits at Parris Island go through while training? Let's find out!

Day one at Parris Island

After they have enlisted at a Marine Recruitment center, aspiring Marines are sent to Parris Island via bus. As soon as the bus stops, a drill instructor climbs aboard. "Recruits! Exit the bus and line up on the yellow footprints!" he roars. Filing off the bus, the new recruits hastily fall in on the yellow foot-shaped markers painted on the pavement next to the bus stop as they wait for their next command. Dressed in their everyday clothes and sporting civilian hairstyles, these recruits will look very different from the hardened soldiers that will emerge after 12 weeks of intense Marine training.

After initial indoctrination, a chance to call home and a change of clothing and hairstyle, the recruits are already looking noticeably different. Dressed in their signature brown, green and black camouflage fatigues and sporting a tightly cropped military haircut they've already undergone a significant change. In the weeks to follow, these recruits will find out what it means to be a Marine.

Training to become a Marine

During the training process, recruits will learn all the skills that will turn them into a formidable warrior, able to adapt to adverse conditions and remain effective regardless of their surroundings. This will include instruction in numerous areas, from small arms training to hand-to-hand combat training to general physical fitness. Let's take a closer look at some of the skills Marine recruits learn in Basic Training.

Rifleman training

Marines are, first and foremost, riflemen. Whether they are selected to be an infantryman on the frontlines or a specialist behind the front, every Marine must be a competent and formidable warrior. As this is the number-one priority during basic training, the most essential part of Basic Training is rifleman training. During this part of training, marines will learn firearm safety, marksmanship skills, firearm maintenance and many other skills necessary to be an effective rifleman.

After weeks of time spent on the range and undergoing rigorous firearms training, the recruits will have gone from inexperienced greenhorns with little or no firearms knowledge to skilled riflemen. After finishing firearms training, a Marine recruit will be able to quickly and efficiently disassemble his or her rifle, clean it, and reassemble it. They will be able to zero in their rifle's sights, take aim and end an enemy soldier's life. They will be among one of the finest marksmen in the world.

Physical Fitness Training

Every day during basic training is spent at least in part developing the bodies and minds of Marine recruits into those of intrepid Marine Corps warriors. On a normal day, recruits will spend several hours doing pushups, situps, pullups and a variety of other physical exercises to prepare them for the rigors of combat. On specifically designated days, recruits will also run a gauntlet of physical challenges that include climbing, crawling and swimming.

This physical training includes more than simply building muscle and enhancing their agility. These exercises enhance teamwork and help recruits overcome their fears and limitations, especially for recruits with a fear of heights. Recruits will rappel down a 48 foot tower, climb rope nets, and scale the two-story tall "stairway to heaven". After this, even the most height-shy recruit will scale any height with ease.

After they've completed basic training, these recruits will have lost weight, gained muscle and become the definitive version of themselves. They will be able to overcome any obstacle that confronts them, overcome it, and move on to the next task. This exceptional physical fitness is one of the many things that sets U.S. Marines apart as one of the most elite fighting forces on the planet.

Combat training

Physical fitness and rifleman's skills are not the only things the recruits will learn during basic training, however. To be an effective soldier, a Marine needs a functional knowledge of combat basics, a complete and total faith in their fellow Marines and vastly enhanced situational awareness.

To build these skills in their recruits, Marine drill instructors utilize a number of techniques to improve team efficiency and inter-reliance within teams. For these soldiers to survive combat and achieve maximum effectiveness in their selective roles, they will need to put their full trust in the hands of their fellow soldiers.

With this end in mind, recruits undergo a barrage of classes and field exercises to give them a comprehensive and thorough understanding of field tactics, combat basics and all the other skills necessary to be an effective combat operative. As they train, recruits will gain the ability to navigate effectively, maneuver quickly and decisively, carry out reconnaissance operations and many, many other essential skills.

While the U.S. Marines are among the best equipped fighting forces in the world, their superior equipment is not their primary advantage when pitted against other fighting forces. What makes the Marines the unmatched fighting force they are today is their unwavering trust in one another. This, not merely equipment or training, is what makes the Marines *The Marines*.

The Crucible

In the eleventh week of basic training, the recruits are subjected to one of the most grueling and physically demanding tests of endurance, teamwork and leadership that has ever been devised. Over the course of 54 hours, recruits will undergo a barrage of physical and psychological trials that will determine whether they have the skill, strength and sheer willpower that it takes to be a United States Marine.

In the upcoming 54 hours, the capabilities of the recruits, both mental and physical, will be pushed to the limit. They will crawl through the mud while machine gun rounds whizz through the air over their heads. They will

run mile after mile, carrying on their backs recruits who can run no further. They will do gruelling, repetitive physical exercises, and demanding team operations. All this will be done on the bare minimum of rest, with recruits getting less than 5 hours of sleep per night.

This is *The Crucible*. It is the ultimate test of a warrior. It's an exercise to prepare the recruits for combat and simulate the conditions experienced during battle, and it meets and exceeds this requirement to nigh-excessive proportions. While recruits don't *technically* become Marines until they graduate basic training, *this* is their rite of passage. This is what separates the wheat from the chaff; this is what turns a recruit into a *Marine*.

Graduating from basic training

After 12 gruelling weeks, the recruits have finally reached the moment when they will cease being recruits and finally become Marines. This is the moment that all this has been leading to. Every gruelling mile run, every excruciating pushup, every degrading and painful experience these recruits have undergone in the past 12 weeks has led to this. The momentous import of this minute in time is not lost on the recruits.

For the first time in three months, recruits will see their families, who have travelled all the way from their hometowns to see their son or daughter graduate basic training. As soon as the proud parents see their progeny amongst the orderly columns of uniformed soldiers, they will instantly spot a marked difference in the bearing and demeanor of their soldier son or daughter. They stand up straighter. They carry themselves with a quiet but fierce sense of dignity. They're the best of the best, and they know it.

After the ceremonies have commenced, the recruits will be inspected, saluted and warmly welcomed into the ranks of the Marines. These new graduates are now members of the United States Marine Corps, the proudest and deadliest fighting force in the world. They breathe discipline and exude resilient courage and intrepidity. These new Marines are best summed up by their motto, Semper Fidelis: Always True. They will fight their country's battles on the land, on the sea, and in the air. They will die if need be, to protect our rights and freedoms. They are *Marines*.

Where do they go now?

After they have graduated as Marines, the former recruits have long and [exciting careers to look forward to](#). Some of these Marines will be sent to the frontlines of America's ongoing conflicts in countries like Afghanistan, Kuwait and Iraq. Some of them will be deployed to postings in allied countries such as Germany, Japan or South Korea, where they will spend their enlistment providing security for United States military bases.

Once they're on deployment, these Marines will be faced with many challenges large and small. From [deciding whether to rent or buy their house](#), to getting ambushed by enemy fighters and struggling to make it out alive, they will face their challenges down and come out on top. Alongside them will be their brothers and sisters in the Corps; the Marines take care of their own, and the [long list of benefits](#) that accompany the title of Marine is long and impressive.

Whatever may come, you can rest assured that there are Marines stationed all around the world protecting our freedoms and making sure that evil never sleeps easy. After all, they're Marines; that's their job.