WARRIORS IN THE WORKFORCE
A RESOURCE FOR VETERANS AND TRANSITIONING SERVICE MEMBERS

Essential Skills Service Members Gain
DURING PROFESSIONAL MILITARY TRAINING

During your military career, you and other veterans and service members gained something many civilians lack—extensive, full-time training in not only technical specialties but also essential nontechnical skills, such as leadership, decisionmaking, persistence, and communication, that employers value and seek out. But communicating these skills to potential employers can be challenging because the terminology used in military and civilian workplaces can be so different. This guide identifies many essential skills that enlisted members from the Army and Marine Corps combat arms occupations[1] are trained in. This knowledge will help you review job postings, enhance your résumé, and put your best foot forward in interviews.

The table below maps your training courses to 14 key skills that employers want and need. But it isn't enough to claim that you have these skills; you have to explain how you earned them. In this guide, you will find examples of how to convey your experience to employers, an overview of each course, answers to commonly asked questions, and web addresses for in-depth materials, including skills descriptions.

COURSES TAUGHT TO COMBAT ARMS SERVICE MEMBERS, AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR YOU

● = a key skill taught in the course
○ = a key skill taught in a previous course

COMPARABLE CIVILIAN EXPERIENCE LEVEL	Entry-Level	Midlevel	Mid- to Senior-Level	Senior-Level	Entry-Level	Midlevel	Mid- to Senior-Level	Senior-Level	Senior-Level
	ARMY COURSES				MARINE CORPS COURSES				
	Basic Combat Training	Basic Leader Course	Advanced Leader Course	Senior Leader Course	Recruit Training	Corporals Course**	Sergeants Course**	Career Course**	Advanced Course**
MILITARY RANK	E-1 to E-2	E-4 to E-5	E-5 to E-6	E-6 to E-7	E-1 to E-2	E-4	E-5	E-6	E-7
Handling work stress	●	○	○	○	*	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)
Being dependable and reliable	●	○	○	○	*	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)
Persistence	●	○	○	○	*	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)
Conscientiousness and attention to detail	●	○	○	○	*	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)
Interpersonal skills	●	●	○	○	*	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)	*(prev)
Teamwork and team-building	●	●	●	●	*	●	○	○	○
Leading, motivating, and inspiring others		●	○	○		●	●	●	○
Oral communication		●	●	●			●	●	○
Decisionmaking/decisiveness		●	○	●			●	●	●
Training others		●	○	●			●	○	●
Managing and supervising the work of others		●	●	●					
Critical thinking				●		●	●	●	○
Written communication							●	●	○
Project planning				●					

NOTES: Some skill differences between the Army and the Marine Corps may be more apparent than real. For example, Army instructors tended to describe courses as addressing management and supervision, whereas Marine Corps instructors tended to describe them as addressing leadership and mentoring. All are important elements of what many consider simply "leadership." Basic Leader Course is formerly known as Warrior Leader Course and also Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC); Advanced Leader Course is formerly known as Basic Noncommissioned Officers Course (BNCOC); Senior Leader Course is formerly known as Advanced Noncommissioned Officers Course (ANCOC).

[1] This resource was developed first for the Army and Marine Corps combat arms occupations, but the concepts can be applied to other careers and services. Future similar resources could be produced for other military occupations, including occupations in the Air Force and Navy.

* Marine Corps Recruit Training course materials were not available for analysis. However, students in that course likely learn skills similar to those taught in Army Basic Combat Training.

** Taken by a subset of personnel. Not completed by all Marines.

How to communicate your skills to potential employers

Below are a few examples of ways you might convey what you learned in your training courses. They show you how to use detailed descriptions of specific training activities to add clarity when talking about the skills that you earned and, more importantly, how you earned them. We use two of the training courses as examples, although you should substitute your own words and training experiences when talking to employers.

For further examples of skill activities in these and the other Army and Marine Corps training courses, download our report at www.rand.org/t/TL160z1.

MARINE CORPS CAREER COURSE

Overview The Corps Career Course is for staff sergeants who will help lead groups of up to 40–60 people, and it builds on all of my previous training. Over the course of seven weeks, I participated in lectures, guided discussions, practical applications, and coaching sessions that greatly improved on my decisionmaking, leadership, and communications skills.

Decisionmaking and decisiveness Training in decisionmaking took several forms. I participated in group discussions about how I would respond to various ethical dilemmas, in tabletop decisionmaking games that required quick decisions based on incomplete information, and in guided discussions of case studies of actual decisions. For example, in one exercise, I dissected the root causes of bad decisionmaking that led to the death of a Marine left behind by his unit during training exercises in the desert.

Critical thinking The course develops critical thinking skills by challenging trainees to devise creative solutions to difficult situations that are then debated in small groups. In one exercise, I had to decide whether to immediately report a missing weapon (a serious issue) to my unit commander or attempt to find it myself, while in another I scrutinized real-life challenges from the war in Iraq. The training helped me to fully develop my ideas and understand my own thought processes.

Oral and written communication My written and oral communications skills were tested and refined throughout the course. I wrote analytical essays that went through extensive critiques, and drafted award recommendations, position papers, and other official correspondence. I participated in mock news media interviews to get comfortable with speaking cogently while on camera. I also wrote a proposed mission plan using a scenario I was assigned and practiced how I would present it to a commander for approval.

Leading, motivating, and inspiring others As a staff sergeant, I was already familiar with leading subordinates, but this course emphasized motivating and inspiring peers in accomplishing tasks. Typically students were put in charge of training events on a rotating basis to practice peer leadership. Physical training that requires all students to work together equally was one opportunity for peer leadership, as such training occurred almost daily and our instructors constantly devised contests to stoke competition.

ARMY BASIC COMBAT TRAINING

Overview Army Basic Combat Training is immersive, intense, and physically and mentally taxing. I participated in fitness tests, obstacle courses, and individual and team events, and, to graduate, I had to meet standards that were set quite high. Training activities took up almost all of my waking hours, seven days a week, for ten weeks.

Teamwork and team building This course required me to work collaboratively, almost around the clock, for ten weeks. Students are taught to be supportive of team members and to fix problems rather than blame the culprit. For example, in taking care of living quarters, all team members are held accountable for infractions, regardless of who was responsible. In one exercise, my group moved together through a series of frightening obstacles that required teamwork to negotiate successfully.

Handling work stress Basic Combat Training is designed to continuously stress and pressure trainees so they can function in combat. For example, I participated in live-fire exercises that forced me to crawl forward while live bullets were fired over my head, and one wrong move could have resulted in death.

Interpersonal skills Given that my fellow trainees were a diverse group from different racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds, effective interpersonal skills were needed to succeed. For example, we took turns serving as team leaders, and the team had to create its own schedules for patrols, cleaning, and other tasks. I had to ensure that people assigned to midnight shifts or toilet duty felt they were treated fairly. In addition, I was trained in important institutional interpersonal skills such as responding to reported sexual assaults and promoting equal opportunity.

Persistence The proficiency standards for this course are extremely high so that no one can pass them the first time. For example, I learned to put on complicated chemical protective gear in under eight minutes, which took hours of practice. Meeting all the standards took discipline, time management, and persistence.

Conscientiousness and attention to detail Most technical and day-to-day tasks required great focus. For example, I was trained to watch the trail ahead closely and for long periods to detect signs of explosive devices. I had to align the sight on my rifle precisely so I could hit enough targets to pass the rifle exam, and my uniform, bed, and locker all had to match exacting standards.

THE EXPERIENCE I HAD IN THE SERVICE …

"I was put in charge of training events on a rotating basis to practice peer leadership."

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Are the skills shown on this card a comprehensive list of the skills combat arms veterans possess?

A. No, veterans are likely to have developed additional skills through other courses and on-the-job experience. Additionally, there are some skills that, though not the focus of a single course, permeate the entire military culture, such as continuous learning and operating safely.

Q. What about the skills service members acquire through on-the-job experience?

A. A companion reference card that summarizes on-the-job experience will be released in 2016. To check its availability, visit www.rand.org and search for "what veterans bring to civilian workplaces."

Q. Can the information in this toolkit be generalized to non–combat arms personnel?

A. Yes, in many cases. For more information, visit www.rand.org/t/TL160z1 and turn to page 8 of the full report.

Q. Where can veterans learn more about their technical skills, as opposed to nontechnical skills?

A. There are many resources designed to help veterans find civilian jobs that require technical skills similar to those obtained in certain military occupations. For example, see the technical skill translator resource that Military.com created in partnership with Monster.com at http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator/ or one from the Department of Labor at http://www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC/Information

Q. Where can veterans learn how to describe the credentials or licenses they earned in the military so that civilian employers understand them?

A. Go to your service's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) website.

Army	www.cool.army.mil
Marines	www.cool.navy.mil/usmc
Navy	www.cool.navy.mil/usn
Air Force	afvec.langley.af.mil/afvec/Public/COOL

Q. Where can veterans go to ask questions about the job search process or to explore more resources?

A. Nearly 2,500 American Job Centers (AJCs) nationwide serve over 1 million veterans every year. AJC staff will provide valuable employment, training, and education information specific to the local community. Find your local AJC at www.servicelocator.org.

... HAS PREPARED ME FOR

"Leading, motivating and inspiring others."

COURSE OVERVIEWS

Army Basic Combat Training. This ten-week course completed by all enlisted Army soldiers at the start of their military careers aims to transform young, inexperienced civilians into confident, disciplined personnel instilled with such values as placing the mission first and never quitting. For example, students rotate through team-leader positions and experience continuous stress and pressure in live-fire exercises, where a mistake could result in death. Course activities require constant collaboration with others, and students are expected to take responsibility for and contribute to solving problems.

Army Basic Leader Course. This 22-day course helps students develop the skills necessary to be successful first-line supervisors for small groups. For example, lectures address supervision concepts and principles, and students practice developing subordinates' motivation. As rotating team leaders, students must plan and direct their team's efforts to successfully complete exercises, such as negotiating a simulated combat situation. Training principles and techniques taught through lectures are put into practice as students conduct classes, provide individual training sessions to fellow students, and analyze team performance.

Army Advanced Leader Course. This occupation-specific mid-to-senior–level course is designed to help students prepare to lead larger organizations. Some of the key skills addressed in the six-week Indirect Fire Infantryman course—such as teamwork and team building, supervising others, and oral communications—are common for all infantry and armor occupations. In the case of noncommissioned officers serving in leadership positions in mortar and section platoons, their specific course also requires students to exercise careful oversight of tasks that require precision (e.g., aiming mortar tubes), attention to detail, and clear communication with subordinates.

Army Senior Leader Course. This occupation-specific course is taken by noncommissioned officers as they progress in rank to more-senior levels. Activities in the seven-week course for armor and infantry jobs expose students to complex problems with no obvious or fully correct solutions, requiring the application of critical-thinking skills, decisionmaking under pressure, and managing and supervising others in dynamic situations. Students are evaluated based on the substance and clarity of their formal and informal presentations to their teams and must effectively promote communication to plan collaboratively. Students confront difficult leadership situations, such as dealing with a key subordinate's family emergency during the lead-up to deployment to a combat zone.

Marine Corps Corporals Course. This three-week course is taken by Marines who are transitioning from subordinates to junior leaders and preparing to assume positions in which they will typically manage three–four subordinates. The course challenges students to address the effects of their actions and decisions as junior leaders. For example, students consider disciplinary case studies, ethical dilemmas, and other ambiguous situations and must explain their decisions to peers and instructors. The course also uses stories and historical case studies to instill a desire in the students to lead and motivate subordinates.

Marine Corps Sergeants Course. This seven-week course is taken by sergeants who are preparing to lead teams of 13–15 subordinates. To improve communications skills, for example, students must give extemporaneous speeches and write and deliver presentations using visual aids. Students also play decision games that require developing a plan of action under time pressure and conditions of uncertainty. To develop critical thinking, students consider scenarios that feature complex problems and incomplete information.

Marine Corps Career Course. This seven-week course is taken by staff sergeants who are preparing to assist officers in leading organizations of up to 60 subordinates. Through a combination of lectures, practical application and coaching sessions, and guided discussions, students refine decisionmaking and critical thinking skills by, for example, considering a range of case studies involving real-life events and dilemmas encountered during training and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Oral and written communications skills are tested and honed as students conduct mock interviews with news media role-players on camera and as they develop and present a "confirmation brief"—a proposed plan for a mission that is presented to a commander for approval.

Marine Corps Advanced Course. This seven-week course is taken by gunnery sergeants who are preparing to serve as strategic-level advisers to leaders of organizations of more than 200 personnel. The course largely focuses on strengthening decisionmaking and decisiveness and managing training. For example, students develop skills for acquiring situational awareness, synthesizing ideas and information, and deliberately and methodically making effective high-level decisions. The course also teaches students how to design, implement, and assess the training program of an organization of more than 200 personnel.

OTHER RAND RESOURCES ON VETERAN EMPLOYMENT
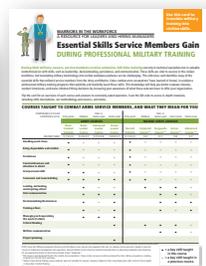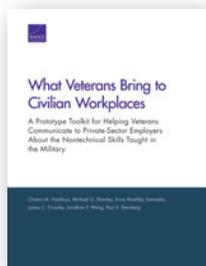
AVAILABLE FOR FREE DOWNLOAD

What Veterans Bring to Civilian Workplaces, tool for civilian employers: www.rand.org/t/TL160 and tool for veterans: www.rand.org/t/TL160z1

Translating Veterans' Training into Civilian Job Skills, infographic, www.rand.org/t/IG124

Essential Skills Service Members Gain During Professional Military Training (a guide for civilian employers), www.rand.org/t/TL160z2-2

Visit www.rand.org for more information.

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