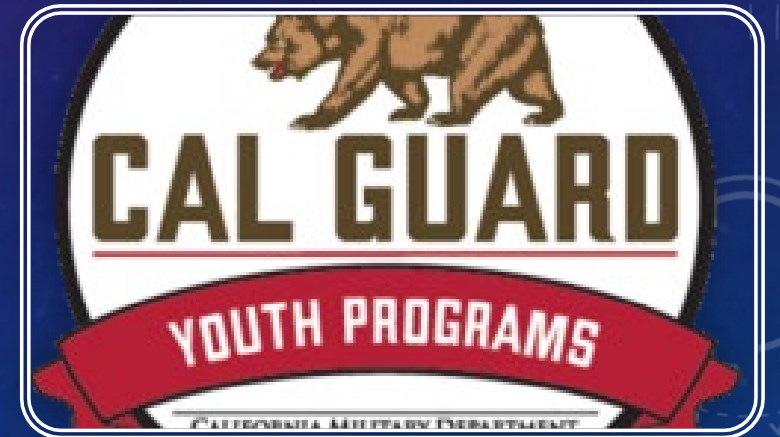


HOW TO CONDUCT AN AFTER ACTION REVIEW / REPORT (AAR)

L5B1-3

*90% of Unit Cadets will be able to
plan and conduct an After Action
Review, and prepare a written
AAR for continuity files.*





AFTER ACTION REVIEW / REPORT

- An AAR is either an After Action Review or an After Action Report.
- The *review* is the process of analyzing the training or event; the *report* is the written record of the review.

After Action Review:

AAR is not a opportunity
to criticize or put down
other Cadets

Shame is not a
Motivational Tool



**"PRAISE IN
PUBLIC,
CORRECT IN
PRIVATE."
MAJOR BRAVO**



Partner Share: Talk about a time when you felt motivated by praise or encouragement someone gave you.



AARs are professional discussions of training events

- What happened during the training and why?
- Solicit ideas on how the training could have been performed better
- AARs are not critiques because they do not determine success or failure
- Tell a story about what was planned, what happened during the training, why it happened, and what could have been done differently to improve performance.



AFTER ACTION REVIEW

- Reinforce and increase the learning that took place as a result of the training exercise.
- **Identify and analyze both strengths and weaknesses.**
- Involve all participants.
- **Guide toward achieving objectives.**
- Link lessons learned to subsequent training.
- **Leaders avoid lecturing participants on what went wrong.**





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An AAR is centered on four questions:

- What was expected to happen?
- What actually occurred?
- What went well and why?
- What can be improved and how?

An AAR
features:

An open and honest professional
discussion

Participation by everyone on the
team

A focus on results of an event or
project

Identification of ways to sustain
what was done well

Development of recommendations
on ways to overcome obstacles



- AAR is conducted by a facilitator who was not involved in the execution of the event.
- A qualified facilitator can keep neutral when there are disagreements.
- Help a commander and the staff focus on the lessons learned, not on running the AAR.



Identify critical actions and events that must be covered in the AAR.

- The planning process
- Dissemination of information
- Preparation for the event
- Conduct of the event or training
- The conclusion of the event



- The facilitator reviews the event's mission and goals before the AAR.
- The mission's objectives form the after action review's focus and the basis for observations.



Stand Up!

Stand up and find a partner from another group.

Discussion - you are in a debate with someone.

Position A - Great leaders never make mistakes.

Position B - Great leaders learn from mistakes.

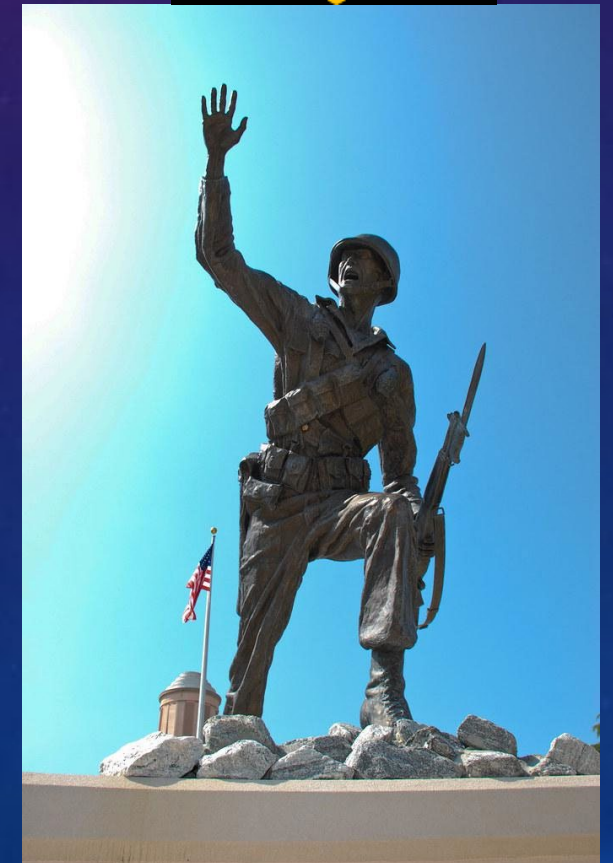
The question is what makes a great leader? Make a case for your position that leadership is learned by leading even if that includes mistakes or that great leaders never make mistakes. Each Cadet should take a side.

How do leaders grow from mistakes? Practice good listening skills.



The AAR may be organized as follows:

- Introduction.
- Presentation of commander's plan (Answers *What was supposed to happen?*)
- Summary of key events (Answers *What actually occurred?*)
- Discussion of key issues (includes *What went well* and *What can be improved*)
- Discussion of training to sustain or improve (answers *How to improve*)
- Conclusion.



Facilitator tips

- Give participants a couple of minutes to think about and perhaps write down their ideas before anyone speaks.
- To get maximum participation from the group, try going around the room to give everyone a chance to speak or asking quieter members for their ideas first (by name).
- Ask participants to be specific in their statements and avoid generalizations.
- Summarize or repeat back to the group often
- Focus on the facts. Feelings need to be acknowledged, but future recommendations have to be based on



Sample ground rules for an AAR

- Active participation: it is important for everyone to participate
- Everyone's views have equal value
- No blame
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Be open to new ideas



BE CREATIVE IN
PROPOSING
SOLUTIONS TO
BARRIERS
“YES....AND” RATHER
THAN “EITHER/OR”
THINKING
CONSENSUS WHERE
POSSIBLE,
CLARIFICATION
WHERE NOT





AAR Important Points to Remember:

Commitment to identifying opportunities for improvement and recommending possible improvement approaches

No record of the discussion will be distributed without the agreement of all participants

Quotes will not be attributed to individuals without permission



An after action review is a dynamic, candid, professional discussion that focuses on unit performance.



Everyone with an insight, observation, or question participates.



Total participation is necessary to maintain unit strengths and to identify and correct deficiencies.

Facilitators
enter the
discussion only
when
necessary.

Reinforce the
idea that it is
permissible to
disagree.

Use open-
ended and
leading
questions to
guide the
discussion.

Focus on
learning and
encourage
cadets to give
honest
opinions.



Group Discussion:

How do you disagree with someone and stay positive, calm, and not get upset?

What are some keys to good disagreements?

Why is disagreement important to improving as a leader?





After the introduction, the facilitator reviews the AAR's objectives. This review includes the following:



A restatement of the events, themes, or issues being reviewed.



The mission and commander's intent (what was supposed to happen).



WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN?

- What was the purpose and objectives?
- Who was the audience?
- What was the initial timeline?
- Who was involved?
- What outcomes and outputs were intended?
- What products were to be produced?
- What problems were expected, and did you overcome them?



*“Success is not final; failure is not fatal.
It is the courage to continue that counts.”
--Winston Churchill*



Moment
of
Motivation



- Trainers try not to unduly damage self-esteem or cohesion. To do so would be contrary to the AAR's goal of improving performance.
- By the end of the AAR, cadets must clearly understand what was good, bad, and average about their performance.
- The art of the after action review process is to get cadets to accurately grade their own performance.
- Self-assessment will be more meaningful than a judgment issued by the trainer or AAR leader.





Many times the discussion must focus on leader mistakes. This discussion should be frank, but without embarrassing leaders involved.

The positive must be emphasized so that lessons can be learned without destroying confidence or respect.

The AAR leader should ask the leader why he chose a particular course of action or what influenced him; others can learn from a mistake and gain an appreciation for the difficulties involved in leading.

Unit members must be reminded that in time they too will become leaders, so they must learn to make decisions (and learn from mistakes.)

ASK, “WHAT WENT WELL AND WHY?”

Always start with the good points.

Ask, “What were the successful steps taken towards achieving your objective?” or “What went really well in the project?”

We should be seeking to build on best practice as much as we can, and identifying strategies to ensure that successful practices are built in to future work and repeated.





Failure is an event, never a person; an attitude,
not an outcome; a temporary inconvenience; a
stepping stone. Our response to it determines
just how helpful it can be.

Zig Ziglar

ASK, “WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED, AND HOW?”

- Identify the stumbling blocks and pitfalls, so they can be avoided in the future. The following prompts may be useful:
- Given the information and knowledge we had at the time, what could we have done better?
- Given the information and knowledge we have now, what are we going to do differently in similar situations in the future to ensure success?
- What would your advice be to future planners based on your experiences here?



MAKING AN AAR SUCCESSFUL.

- An AAR needs to be an open and honest professional discussion, with participation by everyone on the team.
- Its aim is to improve training or operations – not to place blame.
- If participants hold back, it may affect the success of the AAR.



MAKING AN AAR SUCCESSFUL.

- The facilitator's role is to get participants – ALL participants – to open up and share relevant thoughts.
- This can be difficult for junior cadets when senior cadets are there, but the facilitator ensures that everyone's opinion can be heard and counts.

Sometimes senior cadets or commandants have no idea what happened at the junior level, and they'll never know if they don't ask and listen to the cadets who were present for the training.



- During an AAR, the facilitator ensures there is a **focus on results** of an event or project.
- It's important not to get caught up in what could have happened.
- If numerical or specific information is available on the results of the training or event, they should be presented in the AAR, as they help focus on the results.

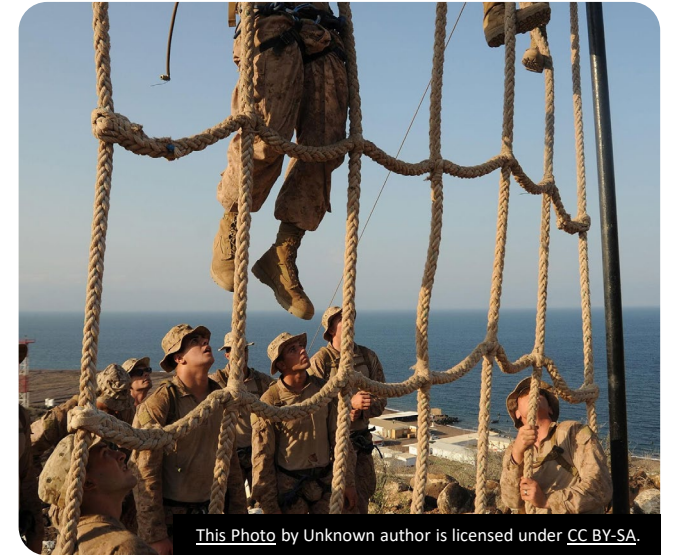


GROUP DISCUSSION

“LEADERS ARE MADE NOT BORN.”

How does an AAR demonstrate this principle that leadership development is a process rather than something that happens all at once. (It takes time to develop as a leader).

- Finally, the AAR discusses **ways to sustain what was done well**, and the development of recommendations on **ways to overcome obstacles**.
- It's important to capture these ideas and ensure they are included in the After Action Report, since it's likely people won't remember them in preparing for the next activity if they're not recorded.



- Often, it's key to jump on ideas that will improve an event but require a long lead time.
- For example, if you have ideas on how to improve the scoresheets at a drill competition, make the changes right after the drill comp and publish them.
- If you wait until you're planning next year's drill comp, you'll probably find that you are too late to make the changes, and they'll never be made.



Practical Practice:

Cadets will perform some training such as drill, marching, PT.

After the training. conduct an Informal AAR

1. What went well?
2. What was supposed to happen?
3. What did happen?
4. How can we improve future training?

