

Appendix F

After-Action Review

The evaluator first discusses an AAR with the unit leader alone. The unit leader, assisted by the evaluator, conducts an AAR with the entire unit. The procedures for both reviews are the same.

SAMPLE PLATOON AAR PROCEDURE

Step 1

Each platoon evaluator develops a discussion outline. The discussion outline guides the AAR.

Step 2

The evaluator first reviews the training standards with the platoon leader. Next, the evaluator leads a discussion of the training events (from the training schedule) in the sequence in which they occurred. Graphics and maps help in describing these events. To conduct an effective pre-AAR, the evaluator—

- Guides the discussion by asking leading questions.
- Discusses not only what took place, but why it happened.
- Guides the discussion so that important tactical lessons surface.
- Relates tactical and mission events to the MCCRES and subsequent results.
- Ensures that alternative and more effective courses of action are explored.

- Avoids detailed examination of events not directly related to major training standards (keeps the discussion centered on the topic at hand).
- Avoids discussing excuses for poor actions. Turns excuses into teaching points and keeps the review positive in nature.

The evaluator covers all events associated with the unit's training session and evaluation. He/she summarizes what took place with respect to the training goals. The evaluator never criticizes the leader. Based on the facts presented, the leader will have to critique himself/herself mentally.

Step 3

The platoon leader reviews the training event with the entire platoon. The review is moderated by the evaluator. The same procedures are used as in the platoon leader's AAR, except that the leader, not the evaluator, conducts the discussion with his/her Marines. The evaluator maintains a secondary role and serves only to keep the meeting on track regarding training standards and to prevent arguments. This procedure strengthens the chain of command and puts the focus of the review on the unit leader as the primary trainer of the unit. The review focuses on the unit's collective task performance. The evaluator must be careful not to embarrass the unit leader in front of his/her troops.

The AAR is interactive. Troops learn best when they learn from each other and their leaders. Leaders and evaluators are there to guide that learning. Formal or informal reviews should be conducted for all training. These reviews involve Marines and junior leaders in their own professional development and enables them to learn more.

Step 4

Upon completion of the AAR, the leader or evaluator prepares an after-action report. It contains the evaluation results and any additional details obtained during the review in a format directed by the unit SOP. The same basic principles used for developing the discussion outline for the review apply to the

after-action report. It must be as detailed as possible. It identifies the causes of both substandard and proper performance. The after-action report is forwarded to the next higher commander per unit SOP. Information in the after-action report is used to plan future training.

POINTERS

For effective AARs—

- Discussions must not embarrass leaders or Marines, but emphasize the positive.
- Commanders guide the discussion, not by critique or lecture, but by asking leading questions. They enter the discussion only to sustain the AAR, to get the discussion back on track, or to bring out new points.
- Participants describe what happened in their own words.
- Thought-provoking questions are prepared to stimulate discussion.
- Discussions identify alternate, and possibly more effective, courses of action.
- Discussions avoid minor events that do not directly relate to the major training objective.
- Participants must not excuse inappropriate actions. They examine why actions were taken and what alternatives were available.
- Every unit or element that participated in the exercise must be represented at the AAR.
- Actions required to correct training deficiencies brought out during the AAR are incorporated into the unit training schedule as soon as possible after the exercise.