

# A FAMILY'S GUIDE TO RECRUIT TRAINING



## **Congratulations! Your loved one has chosen to become a Sailor in the world's finest navy!**

So now what?

You're probably fairly anxious about what's going to happen and a thousand questions are going through your mind: What will your recruit do in Boot Camp? How can you keep in touch and encourage them? What about graduation? You aren't alone. Thousands of parents and families go through this each year. Hopefully, this guide will help alleviate some of those concerns as well as give you practical advice as not only your recruit, but YOU, become a valuable member of the Navy family.



### **RECRUIT TRAINING**

Recruit training is all about transforming civilians into Sailors; teaching the Navy Core Values of Honor, Courage and Commitment; and preparing recruits to join the Fleet. It's not easy — training is both physically and mentally challenging — but when you next see your recruit, they will be a United States Sailor and will have earned the right to wear the uniform known around the world as defender of freedom. It's natural to be curious about what your recruit will experience while onboard Recruit Training Command, so we invite to check out the Recruit section of our website for a glimpse into their training, ships and classroom education.

### **NAVY LINGO**

Joining the Navy also requires learning a new language, both for your recruit and for you. Terms and acronyms you've never heard before will quickly start to show themselves in your recruit's letters and conversations. So, before we go any further, let's start with a Beginner's Guide to Navy Lingo. The first part of this new language is "Recruit" and "Sailor." Though your recruit is in the United States Navy, they are not considered a Sailor until they pass Battle Stations-21, their final test as a recruit that is the culmination of all they have learned. The morning that a recruit passes Battle Stations-21, they attend a capping ceremony where they remove their "Recruit" ballcap and replace it with a "Navy" ballcap, which signals to the world that they are a Sailor!

**RTC:** Recruit Training Command, part of Naval Station (NAVSTA) Great Lakes.

**A School:** Apprentice School. This is where Sailors begin learning their job before joining the Fleet.

**DIV:** Division. When recruits arrive, they are divided into divisions of up to 88 recruits each. This is the group they will live and train with for the next eight weeks.

**Brother Divisions:** These are two or more divisions which share the same ship, and training and graduation schedule.

**RDC:** Recruit Division Commander. These are Petty Officers and Chief Petty Officers with at least six years experience in the Fleet who lead divisions.

**CO:** Commanding Officer, also referred at as "Skipper."

**XO:** Executive Officer.

**CMC:** Command Master Chief.

**PO:** Petty Officer

**RPOC:** Recruit Chief Petty Officer. This recruit is in charge of the division when the RDC is absent.

**SR:** Seaman Recruit, the rate of all recruits onboard RTC.

**Rate:** All recruits begin as SRs, the low man on the totem pole. Their rate will increase as they are promoted. Rate ranges from Seaman Recruit to Master Chief Petty Officer.

**Rating:** This is the job a Sailor does and it is signified by the insignia on their uniforms.



**Pay Grade:** Enlisted Sailors are rated between E-1 and E-9, where an E-1 is a recruit and an E-9 is a Master Chief Petty Officer. Though the rates may change across the services, the pay grades are the same.

**Ship:** Barracks onboard RTC are referred to as “ships” and are named after ships from the Fleet.

**Rack:** Bed.

**Head:** Restroom. The phrase “hit the head” is said to be traced back to ancient Sailors, and the tradition continues.

**Muster:** Roll call.

**P-Days:** Processing Days. These occur when your recruit first arrives onboard RTC. They will begin filling in their paperwork; given further medical evaluation and receive their inoculations; send home their box of civilian belongings and receive an initial set of PT gear; and be assigned to a division.

**PT:** Physical training.

**PFA:** Physical Fitness Assessment. Recruits will take two PFAs while onboard RTC which consist of a mile and a half timed run, sit-ups and push-ups. After the first PFA, your recruit might write that it was difficult, but just keep encouraging them to push forward. They can do this! The final PFA will be during their sixth week of training.

**PI:** Personnel Inspections, where the recruit’s military appearance is inspected.

**DMI:** Department Material Inspection, an inspection of the division’s racks and gear.

**IT:** Intensive Training. Recruits or divisions with infractions may be assigned IT.

**Watch:** When a recruit is assigned to stand watch, they are guarding their ship.

**Chit:** Permission slip. All Sailors need to request a chit for special permission to do things, including taking leave.

**RCU:** Recruit Convalescent Unit. Recruits who are seriously ill or injured will be assigned to this unit until they are well enough to return to duty.

**SIQ:** Sick in Quarters. Recruits who are ill or injured, but not bad enough to warrant the RCU, are confined to their racks until they are well enough to return to duty.

**LLD:** Light Limited Duty. Recruits who are ill or injured may be assigned LLD.

**BST:** Battle Stations-21 or USS TRAYER. This is the culminating test at RTC taken overnight in the final week of training. When a recruit passes, they are given a Navy ballcap and officially called ‘Sailors.’

**Marlinespike:** USS MARLINESPIKE is a three-day event where recruits learn basic seamanship, line-handling, shipboard watch and teamwork.

**ASMO:** Assignment Memorandum. Recruits who are ASMO’d are sent back in training, typically for failing a training requirement (academic, swimming or PFA), medical or disciplinary reasons.

**THU:** Temporary Hold Unit. This unit is for Sailors who have graduated recruit training and are awaiting their follow-on orders to A school.

**SEPS:** Separations unit. This unit houses recruits who are awaiting separation from service.

**NEX:** Navy Exchange. Typically, this is a department store where Sailors and their families can purchase many goods tax free. The NEX onboard RTC, however, is much smaller, meant only for purchasing necessities needed during training.

**Captain’s Cup:** This is a friendly competition between graduating divisions usually held the Saturday before PIR.

**PIR:** Pass-in-Review, or graduation.







## CONTACTING YOUR RECRUIT

Because of the structured nature of recruit training, your recruit will not be able to contact you regularly. We understand how difficult that will be at first, so here are a few things that might help ease the anxiety of being out of contact:

### Mail:

- Recruits will mail home a letter with their address in the first week of training. Unfortunately, neither RTC nor your local recruiter can give you their address any sooner because of the Privacy Act; only your recruit can give you their address. But once you have it, start sending those letters!
- Once a recruit arrives onboard their ship (barracks), they will begin receiving their mail, usually around week 2-3. Please don't be alarmed if your recruit writes home asking why they haven't received any mail when you've been mailing them consistently since you received their address. Because the recruits move around in their first couple of weeks at Boot Camp, it takes a couple of weeks for the mail to catch up to them. Don't be alarmed; they will get their mail!
- While you can write to your recruit every day, they can only write to you a few evenings each week and while they are on "holiday routine," meaning Sundays and holidays. We know it's hard, but please don't sit near your mailbox waiting for the mail each day. Just keep writing to your recruit, and they will write back when they are able.
- And now that you have that address, why not include family photos; a funny snapshot of their pet; or newspaper clippings of their favorite sports team or comics? Recruits can receive anything that can fit into a standard-sized envelope, and pictures and news from home might help ease some of their homesickness as well.
- Resist the urge to send a care package or write on the outside of the envelope. We know you want to send your recruit their favorite homemade chocolate chip cookies, but recruits cannot receive these (they'll be thrown away). Also, remember that the envelope will be seen by their RDC, so putting stickers or writing all over their envelopes might make them uncomfortable.

### Phone calls:

- **The most important piece of advice here is to make sure that your recruit has a phone card!** Many cell phone companies no longer allow collect calls, so if you want to hear from your recruit, make sure they have one with sufficient credit.
- Recruits are given a very short phone call (approximately 15-30 seconds) when they arrive to let you know they're safe. This will help alleviate some of the anxiety as you'll hear from them immediately and know they are safe and sound.
- Recruits are given phone calls from time to time throughout training as a reward for outstanding performance. There is no set schedule and no way to know when or if these calls will come. The best thing to do is go about your normal daily routine and keep writing to your recruit.
- Recruits are also given a phone call when they fail a training requirement, or become injured or ill, which could delay their graduation. Unless you receive this phone call (not in a letter, but in a phone call), you can assume that everything is fine and going as planned.
- The final call you'll receive from your recruit is the call letting you know they are no longer a recruit, but a Sailor in the World's Finest Navy! This call comes their final week of training the morning after they pass Battle Stations-21. This is an emotional call for the Sailors and their families. If you'd like a heads-up on when the call may come (so you can make sure not to miss the moment), please ask your recruit when they will run Battle Stations-21. Unfortunately, again, neither RTC nor your local recruiter will be able to give you this information, only your recruit.

Sometimes, there are emergency situations when you need to contact your recruit. If an emergency should arise, you will need to **contact the American Red Cross on 877-272-7337 or Chaplain Care at 877-418-6824**. They will be able to assist you in getting an official message to your recruit.



## PIR / RECRUIT GRADUATIONS

As you remember from your Navy Lingo, recruit graduation is known as Pass-in-Review (PIR). It is a formal military ceremony which honors your Sailor's hard work and dedication to a new way of life. It also ties together the future of the Navy with our long-held Naval traditions and customs.

During your recruit's first week at RTC, the Commanding Officer will send home an informational letter that contains very important information regarding graduation, including your recruit's graduation date, the names of their intended guests and password for the gate pass. The gate passes are good through the Sunday of that weekend.

While a division's graduation date will not change, an individual recruit's graduation date may change based on performance, which is why we suggest families purchase refundable tickets when possible.

Please keep in mind that recruits mail this information themselves, so RTC does not know where the information was sent, nor can we send additional information

Recruits are permitted to place up to four names on the access list. If the names in the form letter are different than the guests attending, please write to your recruit immediately to let them know so they are sure which names to include on the list. They will put this list together before the final week of training and it cannot be changed once it is submitted to security, so please coordinate with your recruit as only recruits may place names on the list. RTC can neither change these names nor release the names of those on the list.

**PLEASE DO NOT CALL FOR ADDITIONAL SEATS.**

We know you'll want to record this special day, so you are invited to take pictures while inside the drill hall for graduation; however, any photography outside of the drill hall is strictly prohibited, including camcorders and mobile phones. **Security will take your camera!**

## GRADUATION DAY SCHEDULE

0630: RTC Main Gate opens to visitors.  
 0700: The drill hall is open.  
 0845: Guests must be seated.  
 0900: Graduation commences.  
 0920: Divisions arrive at drill hall.  
 1030: Ceremony concludes with Liberty Call.

When you take your recruit out on liberty, we know you'll want to spend as much time with them as possible. Here are a couple of things to keep in mind (but we bet your recruit will remind you as well):

- Please drop your recruit at the base at least 30 minutes prior to liberty expiration so they have time to walk to their ship without being late (this could inhibit them from seeing you the next day!).
- Recruits may not travel more than 50 miles from base during liberty, meaning no further than downtown Chicago.
- Recruits also may not use alcohol or tobacco products, or drive a vehicle.
- Recruits must remain in uniform at all times in public.
- Recruits may not bring civilian (clothes, mobile phone, MP3 player, etc.) or food items back to base.

## FRIDAY & SATURDAY DEPARTURES

Some divisions may depart for A School either a few hours after graduation if they will be staying in Great Lakes. Please keep in touch with your recruit as only they can be authorized to tell you their training and travel schedules.

If your recruit is attending A School at Great Lakes, they will need to check into their new command before taking liberty, which may take up to five hours. Please make sure your recruit has your phone number so they can call you when they are ready to be picked up following check-in.

While you wait for your Sailor, USS YORKTOWN and eateries at RTC are available.

If your recruit is attending A School away from Great Lakes, they will depart RTC on the day following graduation unless there is a flight availability issue that might delay them a day or two. You may not escort them to their next command. If your recruit is flying out, you may not escort them to the airport (typically either O'Hare or Midway in Chicago) but you may meet them at the airport.

RTC does not have your recruit's liberty or travel schedule, so you will need to stay in touch with them. Only your recruit and their supervisor know their specific liberty schedule.

### ACCESSING BASE

Access to Naval Station Great Lakes has been greatly modified in response to our heightened security posture. Guests should be aware that camera bags, purses, etc. are subject to search by Security. Luggage is not permitted and will be held by RTC Security until after the graduation ceremony. Contraband, including but not limited to: alcohol, illegal drugs, knives or weapons of any kind will be confiscated and you may not be permitted entry. Further, smoking is not permitted onboard RTC.

Outside photography and videotaping is not permitted onboard RTC. Failure to follow this guideline may result in deletion of digital media and the seizure of film and cameras. The graduation ceremony is held indoors, so ample photo taking is permitted in the ceremony hall.

For security and privacy reasons, guests of recruits are not permitted past the Chapel for any reason.

RTC supports the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act of 2004. If you are a peace officer (policeman, etc.) and are required to carry a weapon at all times as a condition of your service; please contact Great Lakes Police Departments' Deputy Chief Knapp at [james.b.knapp@navy.mil](mailto:james.b.knapp@navy.mil) or 847-688-5555 well in advance of your visit to discuss procedures and requirements. Weapons possession on federal reservations is highly regulated and those that violate are subject to arrest and prosecution.

All guests, including children, must show valid identification (photo ID, Social Security card, or birth certificate). Children age 12 and younger do NOT need to be on the access list and will not count toward the maximum number of guests.

When driving on base, please have your driver's license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance ready as you will not be admitted without it (even with the gate pass).

For alternative transportation, the Metra train offers a stop at Great Lakes, located about a block from the RTC gate. For schedule information, visit [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com). RTC is located on the Union Pacific North line. Guests may also take local taxis or hotel shuttles to the gate..

If you walk through the gate instead of driving, be sure to check-in at the USS YORTKTOWN (RTC's Visitor's Center) to have your ID checked and your hand stamped. Without this, you will not be able to access the drill hall for graduation.

Make sure you leave enough time to get through Security on graduation day as the lines may an hour or more long. Please ensure that your car has appropriate tires for the weather as there is a slight hill proceeding into the gate.

### AIRPORTS, DIRECTIONS TO RTC and ACCOMMODATIONS

RTC is conveniently located near three major international airports, so you may want to check fares into all three to find the best rate.

- Chicago O'Hare International is located 30 miles from RTC, approximately an hour drive.
- Chicago Midway is located 45 miles from RTC, approximately a two-hour drive.
- Milwaukee's General Mitchell International is located 49 miles from RTC, approximately an hour drive.

RTC is located approximately 35 miles north of Chicago on Lake Michigan near the Wisconsin border. From the south (Chicago):

- Take the Kennedy Expressway/I-90/I-94 WEST toward Wisconsin.
- At the I-90/I-94 split, stay to the left and take the Edens Expressway/I-94 NORTH toward Wisconsin.
- Take Exit 29 (left) for US 41 NORTH for approximately 12 miles.
- Turn right on Buckley Road/IL 137 EAST. The entrance to RTC is 1.3 miles ahead on the right.

From the north (Wisconsin):

- Take I-94 SOUTH.
- Exit (left) for US 41 SOUTH just beyond the Wisconsin/Illinois border.
- Continue south on US 41 for approximately 15 miles.
- Turn left on Buckley Road/IL 137 EAST. The entrance to RTC is 1.3 miles ahead on the right.

### Need more information?

If you have a question that has not been answered here or on our website, please feel free to contact the RTC Public Affairs Office at 847-688-2405 or via e-mail at [rtc.pao@navy.mil](mailto:rtc.pao@navy.mil). Be sure to also visit our Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/NavyRecruitTrainingCommand](http://www.facebook.com/NavyRecruitTrainingCommand)

## WELCOME TO THE NAVY FAMILY!!!

