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Jane R. Burstein

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with LTC Richard Dahoney, U.S. Army, Ret.



Officer
Candidate Tests
FOR
DUMMIES®

**by Jane R. Burstein and Carolyn C. Wheeler
with LTC Richard Dahoney, U.S. Army, Ret.**



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Introduction

You've set your sites on becoming an officer in the armed forces. Congratulations! Your fellow citizens extend a big thank you as well. Not everyone has the fortitude and confidence to step into a leadership position. To become an officer, however, you need to prove yourself, and one of the first hurdles you must clear is one of the Officer Candidate Tests (OCT) — any of several tests required for admission into Officer Candidate School or Officer Candidate Training.

To do well on the test, you need the knowledge and skills you acquired (or should have acquired) in high school. You must be able to make sense of what you read and pick out key details and ideas from reading passages; prove that you have a solid vocabulary and know how to use it, both in speaking and in writing; be a whiz at basic math, including geometry and algebra; have a firm grasp of general science, including the life sciences, chemistry, and earth sciences; and, depending on the test, have the ability to solve problems related to mechanics and electronics.

Don't worry. You probably knew a lot of what you need to know on the test at some point in your life. So a refresher course and some practice should be sufficient to tone your brain cells and hone your skills. We're here to help. This book provides you with everything you need to know along with test-taking strategies and tips for doing your very best when test day rolls around.

About This Book

Officer Candidate Tests For Dummies is for smart, highly motivated individuals like yourself who need to get up to speed in a hurry in a few key subject areas and need to sharpen your skills for test day. We carefully constructed this book to cover the fundamentals you're most likely to encounter on the test in easily digestible chapters and sections. You don't even need to read the book from cover to cover. Just flip, skip, and dip into the chapters and sections you need most. Throughout the book, we provide

- ✔ Lots of how-to guidance explaining how to read effectively, build vocabulary, solve mathematical problems (even word problems), and think logically.
- ✔ Sample questions that test you along the way so you can develop confidence through practice.
- ✔ Insight into what's covered on each OCT subtest.
- ✔ Strategies and tips for reading and understanding questions and choosing the correct answers most efficiently.
- ✔ Guidance on how to prepare for test day so you feel less anxious and more confident knowing what to expect.
- ✔ Several complete, timed practice tests so you gain experience taking tests when the clock's ticking.
- ✔ Answers and explanations to identify your weaknesses and learn from your mistakes.

Conventions Used in This Book

Although we don't like to think of our book as conventional, we follow several conventions throughout to make the information more accessible:

- ✓ We use *italics* both to stress important words and to highlight words we define. Spot an unfamiliar word in italics, and you're almost guaranteed to find its meaning in the next sentence or the one after that.
- ✓ We use **bold** text to highlight keywords in bulleted lists, the action parts of numbered steps, and the correct answers in our answer keys.
- ✓ We use monospace for Web addresses. Keep in mind that some Web addresses may extend to two lines of text. If you use one of these addresses, just type the address exactly as you see it, pretending that the line break isn't there.

What You're Not to Read

You may notice some text stuffed into gray boxes. These boxes, which are called sidebars, contain bonus information on topics we thought you might find educational or entertaining (hopefully both). While these sidebars are interesting, you don't have to read them to do well on the test. So, if you're short on time, feel free to skip them.

Foolish Assumptions

We assume you're using this book in preparation for taking one of the OCT: the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), the Air Force Officer Qualifying Test (AFOQT), or the Aviation Selection Test Battery Officer Aptitude Rating (ATSB OAR). If that's a false assumption, you're in the wrong class. We also assume that you're a highly motivated student. You want to learn, you want to do well on the test, and you're willing to invest the time and effort in gathering information and building the requisite skills. You may have just graduated from high school or college, or you may have been out of school for some time. That doesn't matter. What matters is that you want to learn and succeed.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into five parts to make the information more manageable. For example, if you typically do better in math and science than in English, you probably want to spend more time in Part II brushing up on vocabulary and practicing your reading skills. The following sections function as a road map, briefly describing the contents of each part so you have a clear idea of where you need to go first.

Part I: An Officer and a Test

Part I is basic training. Chapter 1 traces the various paths you may follow from point A to point B — from where you are right now to where you want to be as an officer in the military. Chapter 2 answers the all-important question: What's on the test? It describes the different OCT, the subtests that comprise the OCT, and the number of questions and amount

of time you have to complete each subtest. Finally, in Chapter 3, we reveal numerous test-taking strategies and tips to improve your performance on any standardized test.

Part II: Getting Schooled in English

The chapters in Part II provide guidance on how to strengthen your word skills and tips on how to assess the meaning of words from common roots, prefixes, and suffixes. We also show you how to identify the main idea in a reading passage, pick key facts and figures out of paragraphs, and infer the meaning of what you read from clues within paragraphs. These chapters provide plenty of practice questions so you know exactly what to expect on test day and how to approach the different English sections of the tests.

Part III: Back to School with Math and Science

Part III is what most people consider the geeky part of the book. Here you refresh your memory and sharpen your skills in basic mathematics, geometry, algebra, general sciences, mechanics, and electronics. Basic mathematics covers a lot of ground — everything from whole numbers, fractions, and decimals to roots, radicals, quadratic equations, and geometry. We even help you figure out how to solve those pesky word problems that nobody likes.

This part also covers the general sciences, including biology, chemistry, geology, astronomy, human anatomy, and more. We also bring you up to speed in a hurry on the mechanics and electronics portions of the OCT so you have a clear idea of what to expect on the test. We can't possibly cover everything you may encounter, but we can give you a solid foundation for fielding the most common questions and figuring out the answers to less common ones.

Part IV: Practice Tests

This part features four practice tests:

- ✓ The Air Force Officers Qualifying Test (AFOQT)
- ✓ The Aviation Selection Test Battery Officer Aptitude Rating (ASTB OAR)
- ✓ The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery General Technical (ASVAB GT)
- ✓ The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Marine Officer Candidate School (ASVAB Marine OCS)

By taking these tests, you discover your strengths and weaknesses, learn how to pace yourself, get a better feel for what's on the test so you're better equipped to answer different types of questions, and sharpen your problem-solving skills for test day. Practice is essential in improving memory recall and critical thinking skills, and this part provides plenty of problems to run through.

Part V: The Part of Tens

No *For Dummies* book would be complete without a Part of Tens. In this quick and easy part, we give you tips for studying well and strategies for dealing with multiple-choice questions. By improving memory retention and knowing how to answer multiple-choice questions more accurately and efficiently, you have the tools you need to achieve peak performance.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, you'll notice icons in the margins. These icons flag important information to take note of. Here's what they mean:



This icon highlights the most important information and insights in the book. In short, this material should be read and applied often.



Strategy is no substitute for knowledge and skills, but it certainly can help you answer questions faster and with greater accuracy. So when you see this icon, you know you're staring at one of our tips to improve your performance.



The test is peppered with pitfalls, and we're here to point them out and steer you clear of them. Look for the Warning icon to spot trouble before it sinks you on the test.



We believe that the best two ways to learn anything is by viewing and doing — seeing how it's done and doing it yourself. We use the Example icon to flag these opportunities for you to practice what you've learned.

Where to Go from Here

Where to go from here really depends on you. To get the most out of this book, we recommend reading it from cover to cover. However, you may take a different approach, and this book is structured in a way that makes it conducive to a variety of study methods.

For example, you may want to take one of the practice tests in Part IV first, sort of as a diagnostic tool to identify your weak and strong subject areas. You may then focus more of your efforts on chapters related to your weakest subjects. If you choose to take a test as a way to get a baseline of your skills, consider reading Chapter 3 first to improve your performance without having to spend time exploring specific subject areas.

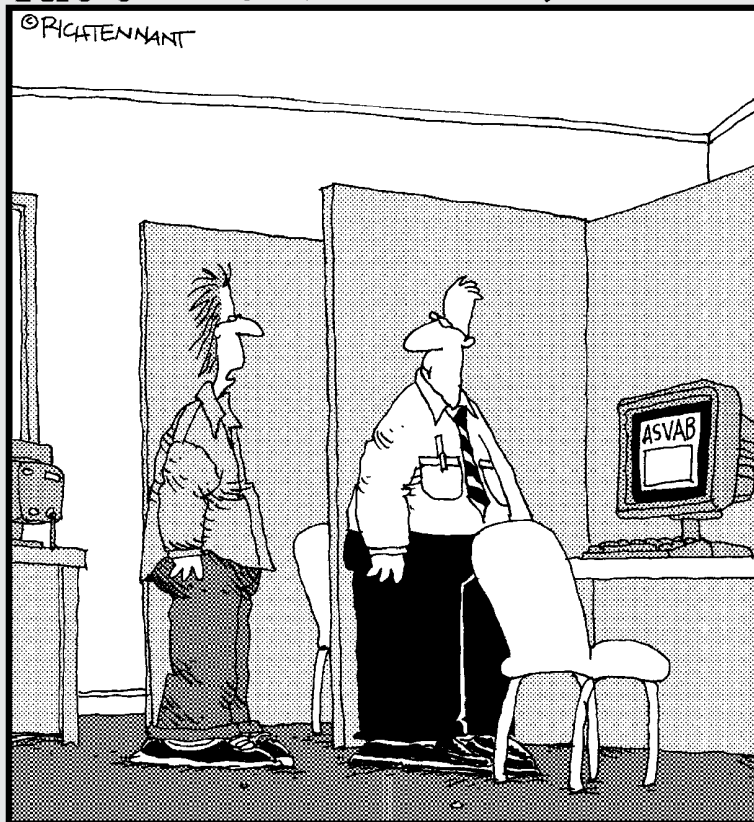
Another option is to warm up with material you already firmly grasp and then work up to more challenging subjects. For example, if you're confident in your vocabulary and reading skills, start with the chapters in Part II and then work on your weaker areas. Also, if you're familiar with a given subject area and don't want to spend a great deal of time reviewing what you already know, consider skimming the chapter for tips and warnings. And be sure to check out the examples to improve your performance without acquiring new knowledge or skills.

Part I

An Officer and a Test

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"It's an Armed Services aptitude test taken on a computer, and you're telling me my hours of experience playing World of Warcraft count for nothing?"

In this part . . .

Consider Part I to be your basic training for the Officer Candidate Tests. Here, we show you how to go from Point A to Point B: from where you are right now to the point at which you become a bona fide officer. We bring you up to speed on the tests you'll be taking so you know what to expect. And we reveal valuable test-taking tips and strategies that'll pay handsome dividends when test time rolls around.

Don't get us wrong. You still have a lot of preparation ahead of you before you're ready to ace the test, but this part sets a solid foundation on which to build your knowledge, skills, and confidence.

By the way, Chapter 1 presents some general information that you're unlikely to encounter on any of the tests. It does, however, give you an idea of some of the basics you'll run into in the military environment relating to structure, pay and benefits, and occupational specialties as well as links to more information.

Chapter 1

The Path to Becoming an Officer

In This Chapter

- ▶ Looking into different officer occupations and opportunities
- ▶ Comparing officer ranks and compensation levels
- ▶ Choosing a path for becoming an officer
- ▶ Discovering warrant officer opportunities

So you want to be an officer? Good for you!

Military service — the “Profession of Arms” — is an honorable, enjoyable, and rewarding pursuit, but it’s not without challenges. When the time comes, you’ll take an oath to

Support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, to bear true faith and allegiance to the same, to obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, in accordance with regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Taking this oath is a significant commitment to yourself as well as to your country and to your subordinates, peers, and superiors. To fulfill your duty, you must be true to yourself and committed to serving others through leadership. Significant responsibilities and expectations accompany the position, and achieving officer status requires considerable effort and training. But don’t let the challenge stop you. If you’re dedicated to becoming an officer, this book is here to help. This chapter reveals what you can expect as an officer in the United States armed forces and shows you how to pursue your goals toward becoming one.

Officer as leader

Wanting to be an officer presumes that you also want to be a leader. Not all leaders are officers, but all officers are called on and expected to be leaders. Prerequisites for being an officer include integrity, honesty, and ethics. Most importantly, you must be more concerned about others and fulfilling your mission than you are about yourself.

The concept of leadership focuses on two things: your mission (or job) and your people. Most of the time, you can balance the two, but if you encounter a situation that requires you to make a choice, the mission *must* come first. Making this choice is almost always difficult, but that's why you get paid the big bucks!

The old quote "You are an officer and a gentleman, by Act of Congress only," isn't quite 100 percent accurate. First, the quote needs a gender update. The military in recent decades — to its great credit — has substantially expanded opportunities for women. And second, you do indeed become an officer by Act of Congress, but whether you act as a lady or gentleman is entirely up to you!

As a final note on leadership, consider what General Colin L. Powell, former Secretary of State and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said: "Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible."

Exploring Military Officer Occupations and Opportunities

Opportunities abound in the military, especially when you achieve officer status. Start thinking now about your areas of interest and where you feel your strengths lie. The military can help place you on a career path that leads you to success and satisfaction. The following sections provide details about various specialties in the armed forces.



Not all of the specialties in the following sections are available in all branches of the military, but most are.

Combat specialty officers

When people hear the term "military officer," they often think of combat specialty officers. These folks plan and direct military operations, supervise missions, and lead forces in combat. They typically specialize by type of unit (for example, infantry, artillery, armor, or special operations). They may further specialize based on mission type or weapon system.

Engineering, science, and technical officers

Engineering, science, and technical officers focus on several different areas. Here's a brief rundown:

- ✓ **Army engineer officers** may plan and supervise everything from the design and building of bridges, dams, and living quarters to the establishment of minefields in a combat environment.
- ✓ **Environmental science officers** may oversee the testing of air, water, and soil quality as well as direct environmental cleanup efforts.
- ✓ **Officers in technical fields** may design and oversee development of aircraft, ships, and weapons systems within the research and development programs of each of the services. Computer engineers, many of whom are in the communications field, often develop and implement large, complex computer systems.

Executive, administrative, and managerial officers

The military is a large, mostly self-sustaining community that must maintain a group of executives, administrators, and managers to carry out the daily business of serving the community's needs. These officers must plan, implement, and manage departments large and small in areas including finance, health administration, personnel management, purchasing and contracting, and international relations. Senior executives and administrators coordinate the activities and budgets of the various departments, including giving testimony at Congressional hearings, so the entire military organization runs like a well-oiled machine.

Healthcare officers

The military has its own healthcare system that's fully staffed with officers who serve as doctors, nurses, dentists, veterinarians, occupational and physical therapists, speech and hearing specialists, dieticians, pharmacists, psychiatrists and psychologists, optometrists, and any other healthcare specialist imaginable. These officers perform the same services as their civilian counterparts (and thus need the same credentials). The only difference between the two is that the officers serve in the armed forces and may find themselves treating patients in combat situations.

Human resources officers

If you count all the people of all the armed forces who are involved in human resources (HR), the armed forces probably have the largest HR department in the country. The armed forces employ officers who serve as recruiting specialists, career counselors, personnel managers, and education and training directors. Human resource development officers must ensure that all service members have the resources they need to achieve their full potential.

Legal services officers

Legal issues aren't limited to the civilian population. The military deals with all sorts of legal issues as well; these issues pertain to both the military itself and to military personnel and their families. Attorneys and paralegals in the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps often advise their commanders on issues related to government contracting, international relations, administrative and environmental law, and civilian and military personnel law.

The various JAG Corps officers also provide legal counsel to commanders and individual service members in formal legal proceedings of courts martial and in the more informal nonjudicial proceedings. And they provide legal assistance with such things as wills and powers of attorney, both of which are critical to members who may be deployed anywhere in the world on short notice.

Lawyers often become officers through direct commission, as explained in the section "By appointment only: Receiving a direct commission," later in this chapter.

Media and public affairs officers

Media and public affairs officers serve as liaisons between the military and civilian populations. They develop and produce radio and television commercials and Web content for recruiting purposes, videos for training, and press releases and news reports for informing the public. Some officers even coordinate the activities of military bands and various public displays and demonstrations, including flyovers at major sporting events and holiday celebrations.

Protective service officers

The responsibilities of protective service officers extend far beyond the oversight of military police to deal with all aspects of protecting the safety of people and property on military bases and vessels. While military police focus primarily on law enforcement, emergency management officers plan and prepare for emergencies and respond when disaster strikes.

Support services officers

Support service officers attend to the basic physical, emotional, and social needs and well-being of military personnel and their families. They oversee food service, conduct worship services and address spiritual needs (as chaplains), and strive toward establishing an environment (as social workers) that's less conducive to common social ills, including substance abuse and racism.

Transportation officers

Transportation officers play a key role in every military operation by ensuring that personnel, equipment, and supplies arrive where they need to and when they need to. Officers typically specialize by mode of transportation — air, sea, or land — according to their training and experience. Some officers specialize as navigators. Engineers may oversee operations aboard ships and other large vessels, including the vessel's maintenance, repair, electrical system, and power generation. Transportation officers also may oversee the efforts and activities of various departments in meeting their collective transportation needs and goals.

Grasping the Basics of Military Rank

Every organization has a structure that enables individuals to work together to achieve organizational goals. Knowing the military's structure provides you with an organizational chart that enables you to see where you fit in, what opportunities you have to advance, and what you can expect in terms of responsibility and compensation.

The following sections feature charts to help you envision the overall rank and structure of the military along with pay grades for each group: enlisted personnel, warrant officers, and commissioned officers.