

6 Six Things I Wish I had Known My First Year as a West Point Parent: Acceptance Day

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Acceptance Day (A-Day) couldn't come fast enough for us. We hoped for a victorious Cadet Basic Training(also known as Beast Barracks) for our cadet, one without injury or regrets and we wouldn't know the true outcome until we arrived to West Point for the Acceptance Day Parade. Seeing our son for the first time in person since R-Day was unforgettable. Although he was much thinner he looked so handsome and brave in his uniform. Our cadet was also never more grateful that we could be there for him that weekend. Below are six things I wish I had known about A-Day my first year as a West Point parent.

Bolingbrook Graduate Completes Basic Training at West Point

Mitchell Yelenosky is a member of the Class of 2014.

By Sherron Jeffrey (Patch Staff)

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- **Cadets change company assignments as soon as they complete Cadet Basic Training.** Our cadet was assigned to Company E during Cadet Basic Training and as soon as that ended he was moved to Company A, his academic company assignment. After “March Back” and during “Reorganization Week”, which take place the week preceding A-Day, you should have the opportunity to ask your cadet for his/her new company assignment and other details. This information is helpful for seating during the Acceptance Day Parade and for future correspondence. You should also ask for the name of his/her barracks since that turned out to be a good meeting place for us after the parade. This is why having a communication plan before R-Day, which I discuss in detail in my previous [blog](#), is very helpful.
- **A-Day is an opportunity to bring your cadet’s phone, charger, comfortable clothes and anything else he/she might request.** While cadets were required to wear their white over gray uniforms with appropriate

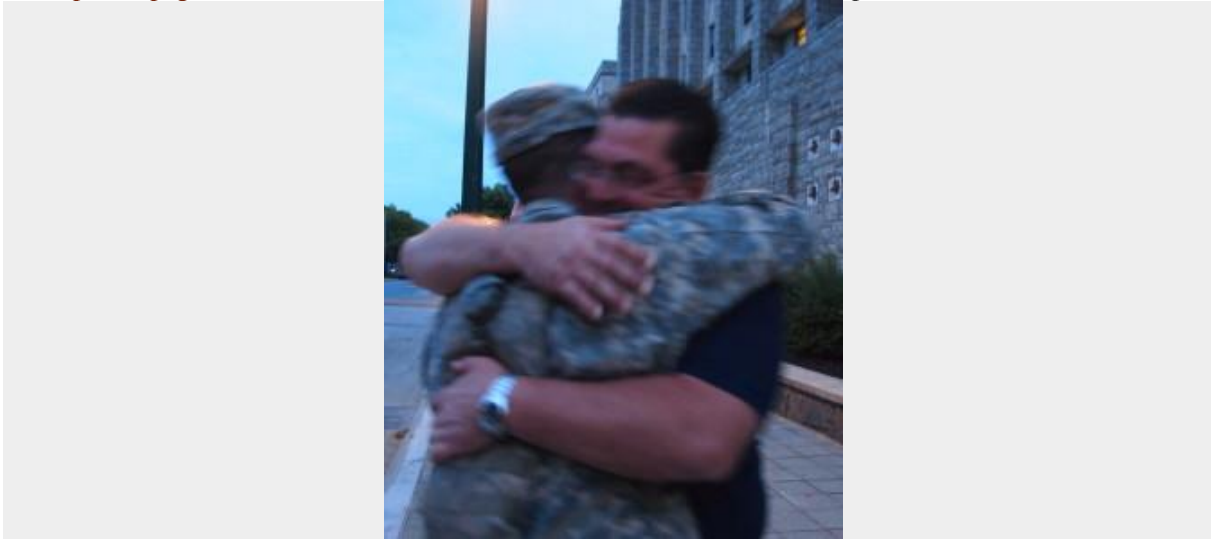
head gear at all times when in public, our cadet was thankful that we brought him some comfortable clothes for the hotel room, which is considered a private place. We did learn that swimming in the hotel pool is off limits since that is considered a public place. A-Day also gives you the opportunity to bring everything your cadet would like for his/her barracks including a boodle box full of their favorite snacks and a blanket such as a Woobie poncho liner blanket. Our cadet appreciated most that we didn't forget his phone and charger.



Acceptance Day Parade

- **The A-Day parade is exciting and emotional.** The A-Day parade marks the formal integration of the New Cadets into the Corps of Cadets. Their basic training is complete and they are about to begin the academic portion of their training at West Point. It was a beautiful sunny day and there was a lot of commotion and excitement as parents and families waited for the Acceptance Day Parade and Ceremony to begin. There are many vantage points to view the parade, we ended up on the sidelines where we were able to meet many upperclassmen, teachers and of course other families just like ours.
- **Your cadet will be anxious to leave and anxious to return.** Our cadet, as well as many other cadets, wanted to get away as fast and as far away as possible from West Point after the Acceptance Day Parade. Who can blame them after a grueling 6 1/2 weeks of Beast? The Courtyard Marriott Hotels in Newburgh were booked, so for A-Day we stayed in Fishkill. It wasn't too far from West Point so we could get him back to the barracks in a reasonable amount of time and at the same time it was far enough away that he might (and did) get a break from the upperclassmen that led him during Cadet Basic Training. Plebes, which are what your cadets are called after the A-Day ceremony, are released by their respective Company Tactical Officer as soon as they complete their last task/duty. Typically this happens within an hour to an hour and a half after the completion of the parade, but it can be longer. After being released, your cadet will have to return back to West Point late that same evening. He/she can leave post again early Sunday

morning to return before the 7 pm formation drill (reporting times might be earlier depending on the company). Be aware that your cadet will most likely want to return earlier than report times on Sunday so that he/she can get organized for formation and his/her first week of classes. Make sure to visit your [West Point parent page](#) for more exact details on release and reporting times and protocol.



The night before A-Day we had the unexpected opportunity to see our son at an Ice Cream Social hosted by his company. Stay in touch during your travels in case you are one of the few fortunate ones to get this rare opportunity since it is up to each company to decide when and what type of activities to host, if any. We didn't find out until the previous evening while already on the road to New York.

- **Your cadet will most likely want to sleep, eat, talk a bit and not do much else but he/she will be very happy to see you!** After the parade, we met our cadet at his barracks, took a few more pictures and then whisked him away from West Point. He was hungry so we ate at the Red Line Diner and then went back to the hotel so he could take a nap. After that we went out to dinner, chatted some more and then returned him back to post. We ran out of time otherwise we would have taken him to see a movie. Sunday morning my husband left early morning to bring him back to the hotel, where he changed into comfortable clothes, took another nap, called some friends and just hung out with us until it was time to go to a late lunch and report back to West Point. Once back at West Point our cadet gave us a tour of the campus. When we sensed that he was getting anxious we walked him back to his barracks. We ended up saying our farewells at around 4 pm. It was difficult to say goodbye but we were happy that he was healthy and able to continue his West Point journey.



- **Your cadet will be treated respectfully by strangers.** When we took our son to dinner after the A-Day parade our waitress informed us that a customer wanted to buy our cadet a drink or anything else from the menu as a thank you for his commitment to serve our country. We were touched and thankful for this stranger's thoughtfulness, however what followed next is what made this moment even more memorable. Without us having to say a word, our cadet asked the waitress to point the customer out to him. He then proceeded over to the stranger's table to shake his hand and to thank him for his generosity. Our son was already acting like an "Officer and a Gentleman" and he had only just begun his West Point journey. After A-Day give your cadet time to adjust to his/her new routine. He/she might not respond right away, but text your cadet once in a while and continue to send mail and care packages. Also try to plan a weekly or bi-weekly phone call, text session or video chat. Consistent (but not overbearing) communication helped our cadet to stay upbeat during those occasions where he felt discouraged and overwhelmed. Make sure to find out what other families have experienced and take the time to read and check out the [West Point Parent page](#) (which has the [Information for Cadets and Parents Booklet](#)), your [local parent club handbook](#) and the many West Point Facebook pages dedicated to parents. Congratulations again on your cadet's appointment and remember to stay "Army Strong" during this amazing journey!

Previous blogs: ["5 Things I Wish I Had Known My First Year as a West Point Parent: The Appointment Letter"](#) & ["10 Things I Wish I Had Known My First Year as a West Point Parent: Reception Day \(R-Day\)"](#). Please note: These are not the views of the United States Military Academy at West Point. These are my personal observations, recommendations and opinions to hopefully help parents during this important time in their lives.