

# **Handbook for United States Military Academy**



## **Plebe Parents Class of 2011**

### **USMA Purpose**

**"The purpose of the United States Military Academy is to provide the Nation with leaders of character who serve the common defense."**

### **USMA Mission**

**"To educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country; professional growth throughout a**

**career as an officer in the United States Army; and a lifetime of selfless service to the nation."**

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the world of West Point parenting and congratulations on your child's acceptance to the United States Military Academy. It's an honor to be part of one of the greatest traditions in the world ...the Long Gray Line. The West Point Parents' Clubs were organized to offer opportunities for fellowship and mutual support among local parents whose cadets are experiencing the rugged academic, physical and military training program at West Point. We encourage you to join us. Please take a moment to fill out and return the WPPCLSV- membership application provided.

Most parents say that the first year at West Point is the most difficult, not only for the cadets, but also for parents. This handbook is designed to help you through this special time as you give support to your cadet and survive the Plebe year yourself.

To assist you during this year, the **West Point Parents Club of the Lehigh and Schuylkill Valleys** provides several informational resources to supplement the information you are given by the Admissions Office at West Point:

- **Plebe Parent Handbook** provides information useful to parents of first year cadets.
- **Club Meetings** are held several times yearly. At meetings, family members can relay and discuss updates of USMA information, organize social events for club members, and plan projects that directly benefit cadets. During these meetings, parents also discuss their own concerns as well as recent experiences of their cadets.
- **Plebe Family Mentor Program** matches experienced club parents with plebe families in their area so that plebe parents have someone nearby to contact with their questions about West Point. Plebe family mentors offer useful, first-hand advice on many issues that make it easier to survive the plebe experience. Please contact a board member if you would like us to arrange for a mentor.
- **Internet Resources**  
**Please check our Website!**  
<http://www.west-point.org/parent/wppc-lsv-pa> Here you will find useful information on life as a West Point Parent as well as updates, photos and info more specific to our Club and it's activities.  
<http://www.west-point.org/parent/plebe-net> This site contains information about plebe year at USMA and is specifically for Plebe Parents  
<http://www.west-point.org/parent/wpp-net> This is an information only list and is a place to find information on leave dates, bus schedules etc. ALL parents should be a member/ part of this list.  
<http://www.west-point.org/parent/parent-forum> This is a high volume list where all parents are free to ask questions and receive an answer privately or on the forum.  
<http://usma.army.mil> Official website of the Academy

Anytime you have a question about West Point or just need someone to talk to, feel free to call your family mentor or any other Club member; we are here to support one another and share the information we have. We hope this handbook will answer most of your immediate questions and offer you helpful advice we've gathered over the years.

## **West Point Parents' Club Picnic- Sunday, June 3, 2007 @ The Griffith Home**

Each June, the WPPC has a picnic to welcome Cadet Candidates and their families. On hand will be Club members who can answer any questions you may have. Many topics of interest will be discussed informally at the cookout and our personal experiences can give you a glimpse of what you will be going through during the next four years. We all look forward to a fun filled and informative day.

During other meetings, you will get better acquainted with new parents. This is your chance to share news of your cadet's experiences while parents of upperclassmen do the same. You will hear first hand of all the wonderful events that are unique to the West Point experience.

## **THE FIRST YEAR IN REVIEW**

### **Reception Day (a.k.a. R-Day)– July 2, 2007**

This day marks the beginning of a unique experience for both you and your cadet. We strongly suggest that you accompany your cadet to West Point for R-Day. This will be a long and emotional day. West Point is a 2 1/2 hour drive so depending on your cadet's reporting time you may want to stay in a hotel nearby the night before to be sure you arrive on time in the morning. Candidate Report Times begin at 6:30 AM. If you do plan to go up the day before, it is also a good idea to walk around post on R-Day "eve" as this will be the last time your cadet will have the ability to "gaze around." Make your hotel reservations early.

Dress comfortably as you will be walking around and standing in lines during the day. If you are driving on R-Day, consider stopping for breakfast and make sure you have plenty of time to arrive on time! Don't forget to have your R-Day parking pass ready--it came in your packet from West Point.

Take a shuttle bus or walk to Ike Hall from the parking area. Be prepared to wait in line, an hour or so is not unusual. Your cadet's check-in time is on the instructions from the Admissions Department. Get into the habit now of arriving early.

You will accompany your cadet to the initial briefing inside the auditorium. After a rather brief welcome, you will be given a few minutes to say "Good-bye" and you will not see your cadet again for the rest of the day unless you are fortunate enough to spot him/her at the swearing-in ceremony and parade later in the day. *It is crucial that parents be aware of how quickly the separation takes place after the initial briefing. **Be sure to say all of your good-byes before you get inside.*** Being prepared for this sudden and traumatic separation will make it a little easier on your emotions.

After your cadet departs, you should visit Eisenhower Hall where you will find Parents' Club representatives, endless "purchase opportunities" and helpful information. Shuttle buses will operate during the day to take you around West Point. Eisenhower Hall is air-conditioned and contains many comfortable seating areas, some with televisions. It is a pleasant spot to relax on this long day, especially if it's hot outside or if it is raining.

While at Eisenhower Hall:

- Pick up your new cadet's mailing address if you didn't find it in your packet from Admissions. Your cadet's company and squad will also be on this card.

We highly recommend that you bring a stamped envelope and note paper and write a note of congratulations to your new cadet and drop it into the mail while you are at Ike Hall. Your plebe will be thrilled to be one of the first to receive mail.

- Get tickets for lunch at the West Point Club, Hotel Thayer or Eisenhower Hall. There is also a snack bar located in Eisenhower Hall.
- Purchase season tickets for Army Football. This is very convenient and they take cash, checks or credit cards. If you do not purchase season tickets, your cadet can purchase individual game tickets for you.
- Tours of West Point are available from Eisenhower Hall and highly recommended.
- A parents' orientation is scheduled in Eisenhower Hall, usually around 3 PM and is very informative. Plan on attending. Bring a pen and paper to take notes and jot down dates that are important.

There is time after lunch to relax and wander around. If you would like to catch a glimpse of what the new cadets are going through, walk up to the area around the parade grounds and you can see through the sally ports to the area where they are being drilled. The West Point Museum and gift shop will be open and you can also cruise around Highland Falls to check out the shops and restaurants for future visits or Boodle deliveries.

Around 4 p.m., walk or shuttle up to the road in front of Trophy Point, to get a spot to view the Oath Ceremony. (In the event of rain, parents will receive tickets (2 per new cadet) at the Parent's Reception Center in the morning.) The Oath Ceremony will take place in Eisenhower Hall @ 4:30 PM.

When the ceremony begins, the cadets march and stand in formation by company, "A" company first and to the far left and "H" company to the far right as you face Washington Hall. Choose a location that gives you the best view of your new cadet's company. At the end of the brief ceremony, the new cadets will march behind the grandstand on the Plain and into Washington Hall. Bring your camera/camcorder but be aware that all New Cadets look remarkably the same in their short haircuts and uniforms.

This ceremony marks the first time cadets take their oath; they will reaffirm their oath at the beginning of Cow year. Both the ceremony and the pass-in-review are impressive and emotional because of the striking difference between the "child" you left at Ike Hall in the morning and the soldier you see march before you. Be prepared: the sense of pride you will feel for your son or daughter cannot be described! Only another West Point parent knows how you feel.

## **Cadet Basic Training (CBT) *a.k.a. Beast Barracks!***

Cadet Basic Training is a 6 1/2 week (565 1/2 hour) training program that effectively transitions each New Cadet from civilian to soldier and provides leadership opportunities to the upperclassmen. Training covers four main areas: Military Training: Moral, Ethical and Cadetship Training, Social Training, and Physical Training.

In the Military Training phase the New Cadet qualifies on the M-16 rifle, covers basic first aid, learns drill and ceremony, military customs and courtesies. The Moral, Ethical and Cadetship Training phase includes honor instruction, cadet regulations, cadet leadership development, and optional religious services. The Social Training phase covers etiquette and stress management. Physical Training involves conditioning, marching, confidence obstacle courses, physical testing and organized athletics.

**CBT is the most physically and emotionally demanding part of the four years at West Point. It is very important that your cadet arrive for Beast in excellent condition. Most candidates are aware of the physical challenges they will face at West Point. However, many candidates are inadequately prepared for the rigors of CBT.**

At the end of CBT, cadets take a Cadet Physical Fitness Test (CPFT). This is the first of many fitness tests required during their four years at West Point. **Prior physical conditioning is crucial to success in CBT.** It is important to develop strength and endurance. Sit-ups and pushups are best for developing abdominal and upper body muscles. Running is the best way to increase endurance. All New Cadets participate in a timed two-mile run. Depending on their qualifying times, they will be put into designated running groups: the fastest group is the green group, followed by black and gray, with gold being the slowest group. Minimum times for the two mile run for males should be under 16:00 minutes, and for females a time under 19:00 minutes.

As you can see, it is important for candidates to run as much as they can before R-Day. New candidates should time themselves before they report to see where they stand relative to this standard. The better shape a cadet is in the easier CBT will be. The cadet's best way to earn respect of upperclassmen is to be in top physical condition when they report.

The purpose of CBT is threefold. First, is for the New Cadet to learn the traditions, courtesies and basic knowledge of the Army in general and West Point in particular. Second is training the New Cadet to follow orders instantly without question or excuse, teaching them basic combat skills, and having them complete a rigorous physical development program. Thirdly, the New Cadet will be taught time management and team building skills necessary to achieve the goals set out for them. Individual desires must be replaced by teamwork and group pride. These traits form the cornerstone of the military unit.

During these six weeks, New Cadets will experience one of the most demanding periods of their entire West Point career. More than 75 percent of their time will be devoted to learning basic military qualification skills, conducting physical training, practicing drill and ceremony, and participating in formal Honor Code/System education. The New Cadets are busy, seven days a week. Their typical day begins at 5:00 a.m. and ends at 10:00 p.m.

You will probably receive a ten-minute phone call in the first part of July. The time and day will depend on the squad leader and phone availability. Many New Cadets start to fit into the groove after the first two weeks of CBT. At the end of the first three weeks (First Detail), New Cadets enter the second three weeks of CBT (Second Detail). At this time, New Cadets receive a new squad leader, which means another adjustment must be made. Depending on the squad leader they get, it is a welcome change for some; but for others, it is yet another difficult adjustment. There are new names to remember and a new

chain of command to get used to. Your cadet may need some extra support at this time. Phone calls may be longer depending on how the adjustment to the new leadership has gone.

In the end they do survive this - and there is life after Beast. Here are some tips about mail and phone calls during Beast:

**Mail:** Send something everyday if you can, a note, postcard, cartoons, etc. They will not have time to write often but they look forward to mail. Try to keep news upbeat and chatty, they need to know that you are there and life goes on. A good suggestion is to purchase pre-stamped postcards from the Post Office and write your own address on them. This way your cadet can write a simple message to you and drop it into the mail. See section "**Addresses: Mail and Packages**".

**Phone Calls:** These are very sporadic. If possible, give them a telephone credit card or sign up for an '800' home phone number, so that they can phone when they can get the chance. **DO NOT CALL THEM.** This is a hassle for them. Unless it is an emergency, do not phone. During the academic year, many parents find it easier to send an e-mail note first when they need their cadet to call home. Cadets are so busy, they don't have time for chatting till weekends.

*Keep in mind that Beast Barracks is probably the hardest time emotionally, physically, and psychologically that your cadet will experience at West Point. During this time, be supportive and positive. Write often, don't ask lots of questions (time is limited) and listen, listen, listen.*

### **March Back from Camp Buckner – Aug. 13, 2007**

The last few days of Beast are spent at Camp Buckner where the new cadets learn military skills, and select their class motto. The cadets then march 12 miles back to West Point, tired but happy, marking the end of Beast. The March Back occurs on a Monday morning and is a great sight to see if you can go. Find a spot along Washington Road and make a big welcome back poster. The cadets are met at Washington Gate by the military band, representatives from the 50-year reunion class and the Army mules and then proceed to march the last two miles through the West Point community. The street is lined with well-wishers and spirits are high. This culminates in a pass-in-review in front of the Superintendent's house (Quarters 100), viewed by the Superintendent and honored guests. The March Back begins at approximately 9:00 AM, so get there early. The cadets cannot acknowledge you but they will look forward to seeing you if they know you are there. *This is not a day for a visit with your cadet but it is a powerful and convincing display of the soldiers they have become.*

### **Reorganization Week**

Commonly called "*Reorgi Week*", this is considered by some to be the absolute worst time of Plebe year. It comes just when the new cadets are feeling happy and proud that they survived "Beast" and are looking forward to being cadets instead of "Bean Heads." This week, all the upperclassmen have returned from their various summer duties and have plenty of time to harass the Plebes as they all prepare to begin the academic year. It only lasts a week, but it really dramatizes the fact that there are now three upperclassmen for every one Plebe.

### **Acceptance Day (a.k.a. A-Day) – Aug. 18, 2007**

This occurs in the middle of August on the Saturday after the March Back from Camp Buckner. "New" cadets no longer, the upperclassmen "accept" the cadets into the Corps. Your cadet joins his academic

year company for the first time. You now address mail to Cadet, not New Cadet (see section **Addresses: Mail and Packages**) Following the Acceptance Day parade, your cadet may be granted Walking Privileges for the first time. If your cadet gets this privilege he/she may be accompanied by other cadets whose parents live too far away to attend Acceptance Day. These are hungry cadets nonetheless and also need time to unwind with a family. Feeding cadets is an important part of your parental mission while your cadet is at West Point! ☺

**Walking Privileges:** These permit cadets to move about in a prescribed area just outside the boundaries of the post. They must be in uniform.

The boundaries of Walking Privileges are:

North - Washington Gate

East - Hudson River

West - Highway 9W (cadets may visit establishments on 9W)

South - Bear Mountain traffic circle; cadets driven by car may go to the Bear Mountain State Park area south of the traffic circle (including the Bear Mountain Inn).

### **Academic Year—First Semester**

The academic year begins immediately after Acceptance Day weekend on August 20, 2007. Classes usually have fewer than fifteen students and are very challenging to even the brightest students because plebes have so much to do every day that is not academic. Encourage your Plebe to keep up with academics. The Academy, while educating the whole person, stresses academics. Your Plebe is well advised to study hard and develop good study habits. One of the most important lessons to be learned early on is "time management."

### **Labor Day Weekend**

Labor Day Weekend is a time of relaxation, catching up on sleep, and most of all enjoying the fact that most of the upperclassmen are on leave. In the past, the Superintendent has granted the Corps a weekend leave and for the past few years plebes have been included so be prepared to drop your plans and pick up your cadet if leave is allowed. If not, your cadet will be proud to show you his/her new world. Plebes will probably be restricted to post for most of the weekend with a few walking privileges into Highland Falls. The weather is generally beautiful and makes this a great time for a visit.

If you plan to visit West Point, make reservations right after R-Day, otherwise, you will not be able to get a room close to West Point. *Keep in mind that your cadet cannot be out of uniform at any time while in public.* There have been times in the past when Plebes, during Labor Day weekend, were allowed to visit with their parents in their motel rooms (bring a T-shirt and shorts for them to change into provided they do not leave the room.) For the most part, plan on spending your days on post.

Upperclassmen are generally off post for Labor Day weekend so your cadet can spend time with you, whether it be visiting and relaxing in a motel room or having a picnic down at South Dock or Delafield Pond. A deck of cards, board games, a boom box, a cell phone to call friends, etc. can take their minds off of upperclassmen or academics and provide hours of quiet entertainment. Sometimes just sitting around a motel room watching TV is enjoyable, as they have not had that privilege in two months.

Note: Hotel Thayer offers a brunch on Sundays. Reservations are requested. Cadets eat for reduced price at the Thayer brunch.

### **Health Care While on Leave**

All Cadets are covered by Tri-care while at West Point or on leave. Should they require medical attention, they or a parent should call their West Point Primary Care provider at 845-938-4004 for referral or Tri-care at 1-888-333-4522. They should also notify their TAC immediately. Cadets should carry this information, including TAC's phone number, with them at all times. Rest assured, they are covered; just follow the directions.

### **After Labor Day Weekend**

From Labor Day on, things start to settle into a routine at West Point. There will be emotional ups and downs along the way so be ready to give your support and encouragement. Cadets' academic performance is tested frequently. They may receive poor grades on papers, an "F" on a quiz or do poorly on a WPR (Written Partial Review). Challenges seem like mountains to students who have never had a "C" on a paper before. Be prepared! Phone calls can be emotional and upsetting. This is the time to listen and encourage your cadet. By the end of the first few weeks the cadets know what is expected of them and how to work within the system. Everyone looks forward to weekend football games and tailgates, Thanksgiving leave, the Army/Navy Game and Winter Break.

### **ARMY Football- More Than A Game: Fall Tailgating**

One of the highlights of fall is football weekends and tailgating. Football days at West Point are a sight to behold. Cadet Reviews, the march on prior to the game, cannons booming, cadet antics, half-time shows - the list goes on and on. Be prepared for a fun-filled busy day. Living as close as we do, you may wish to attend at least one football game and join our parents club for a tailgate for who knows how many cadets? Many parents purchase season tickets and attend all home games (season tickets come with parking passes). Others purchase tickets to single games.

Whichever you choose to do, try to attend at least one home game and plan to join us at our "official" tailgate site at Buffalo Soldier Field just inside Thayer Gate. It is advised that you arrive early, set up for your tailgate (some of us have a pre-game and post-game tailgate) and then shuttle to the Review, return for a snack and then shuttle to the game. Generally, your site will not be disturbed during the game but please remember to secure your area and lock up your vehicle.

If you arrive on Friday night before the game, stop up at Michie Stadium and watch the JV football team. They usually start about 4 PM.

On the morning of each home game Parents' Clubs from around the country sponsor coffee and pastry for Parents' Club members. Be sure to stop by the West Point Club around 9 AM to meet other Parents' Club members, enjoy a cup of coffee or juice, and pick up tickets for preferred seating to view the Review on the Plain before the game.

Sundays also feature a variety of activities at West Point: rugby matches at Buffalo Soldier Field, soccer at Clinton Field, baseball at Doubleday Field, lacrosse at Michie, etc. Whatever the season's sport, West Point cadets will be playing it.

### **Plebe Parent Weekend**

Plebe Parent Weekend takes place in October. It is an absolute must for all parents who can possibly make it. The Plebes take over all Corps duties at West Point and have the opportunity to show off the Academy to their families, show you what their new life is like. West Point sends out an information booklet so that you can plan your stay but it is important to make hotel reservations as soon as you know you are going.

You will have the opportunity to see your son's or daughter's room, classrooms, meet their instructors and TAC officers, and get the "Grand Tour" of such places as the Superintendent's Quarters, and the Mess Hall. Tickets are required for some of these events and your cadet must order them in advance. Thousands of people come to West Point to visit their cadets. You'll meet the parents of your cadet's friends, some of whom will become your friends, too.

The formal banquet in Washington Hall and hop in Eisenhower on Saturday night are musts - cadets in full dress, parents in evening wear, girlfriends in formals - a night to remember.

**Off Post Privileges (OPP's):** Your plebe will have this on Plebe Parent Weekend. OPP's allows them to travel up to 75 miles away from West Point when accompanied by an adult family member. They may wear civilian clothes. They must report back to their Company each evening by the required time.

**Remember to reserve your hotel rooms early. There are some facilities at West Point that you will not be allowed to visit at any other time. This is a once in a lifetime experience.**

### **Thanksgiving Leave**

All cadets are granted weekend leave. This is a great time to celebrate, to give thanks for the first extended visit home. Don't be surprised if your cadet asks to have other cadets join your celebration; remember, many cadets live too far away to go home for a weekend and would be thrilled if you invited them into your home. This is a great time to sit around the table and just let them talk about their experiences. You learn a lot about the West Point experience by listening to these funny and fast-paced cadet conversations.

### **Army/Navy Game- December 1, 2007**

An event not to be missed! This year the game will be played in Baltimore. Our club will charter a bus. Often cadets and their friends return home on the bus after the game. Make your reservations early for a great weekend of college football and fun! Win or lose, it's a wonderful weekend. Plan to be there!

### **Winter Break**

Term End Exams (TEE's) are finished according to class schedules. Plan your pick-up time and place and don't forget to arrange car pools if at all possible. Winter Break brings last minute shopping for your cadet who hasn't had a minute to purchase gifts, sleeping late (for the first time in months), and eating everything in sight.

**All -Service Academies' Military Ball** is a special event during Winter Break. Cadets from our area have attended this awesome event hosted by the Delaware Valley All-Service Academies' Military Ball Organization. Held in the Philadelphia area on December 26<sup>th</sup> annually, parent volunteers of cadets and midshipmen from Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, and Navy work together to plan this

evening of dinner and dancing in honor of the cadets and midshipmen at the U.S. Service Academies. Look for your invitation to arrive around Thanksgiving. And if you plan to attend, remind your cadet to bring home the Full Dress uniform to wear to the Ball. Army will host this year!

The hardest farewell often comes when your Plebe returns to West Point after the first Winter Break. The time spent home was so much fun, and the freedom felt so good, it is tough to go back to the regimentation and all "gray" everything, including the weather. This is aptly named the "gloom period", be prepared for about a two week readjustment period.

## **Academic Year—Second Semester**

Academic work resumes with new course assignments and expectations.

### **Presidents' Weekend**

Depending on their performance, cadets may be granted leave at this time. In any event, they have a three-day weekend.

### **Recognition**

In mid-March, the Corps holds a ceremony called Recognition. Your cadet will speak of this often. Finally, the upperclassmen shake hands with the Plebes, learn first names, and recognize Plebes as real people. Plebes are allowed to do the same. One of the biggest hurdles of the first year is over. A feeling of accomplishment sets in as well as the permission to relax a little, all of which can be a boon to the Plebe.

### **Spring Break**

All four classes can now take Spring Break beginning the weekend after Recognition. This is a chance for cadets to unwind, sleep, and refresh their batteries. Your cadet may want to come home, visit friends' families, or spend some time where it's warm and sunny.

### **After Spring Break**

Congratulations! Plebes are now well on their way to being mentally, physically and emotionally fit. They have withstood the test and they can be proud. Firsties are stressing about graduation; Cows are stressing about being Firsties; Yearlings are discussing summer assignments and your Plebe is hearing the good and bad stories about "the best summer of their lives" at Camp Buckner. Spring is in the air and the Academy is digging out of the winter gloom. Keep up the support and remind your cadet that the first year is almost over.

When you look in the local paper and see an announcement that another local young man or woman will be attending one of the Academies, you suddenly realize that just a year ago you were making your plans for West Point. Time flies!

Term End Exams (TEE) come fast and furiously. Keep sending Boodle and mail, but don't expect to hear a lot from your cadet—there's no time for anything but studying and papers.

### **Summer Leave**

Your cadet is released immediately after graduation ceremonies. Leave after Plebe year may be as long as three weeks. Give your cadet plenty of space, psychologically and physically, because it's been a demanding year. Let them catch up on sleep, friends, movies, and conversation.

Drive safely and enjoy your cadet's first "real" leave.

## THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW (that the Academy doesn't tell you)

### Things That Should Have Been Done Yesterday

- Make sure that all of your paperwork has been sent to West Point and that you have copies of everything that was mailed - paperwork does get lost.
- Convince your cadet to get up early and RUN, RUN, RUN (they can always go back to bed after their run.) This will soon be a way of life and the transition is a little easier if they make a little sacrifice now.
- Purchase items that are needed for "R" day.
  - Small duffel/travel bag.
  - Black shoes with laces. Start wearing these around the house now so they will be well broken in. It is also a good idea to practice polishing them - one less thing to learn at West Point.
  - Combat Boots.
  - Razor - electric or battery operated.
  - Sturdy, inexpensive watch.
  - Alarm clock, battery operated.
  - Small penlight flashlight with extra batteries.
  - Nail polish remover (small bottle) - to remove lacquer finish from brass.
  - Soft, lint-free cloth for shining shoes.
  - Supply of stamped envelopes with a piece of stationery inside of each and a supply of self-addressed (to you) postage-paid postcards for quick notes home.
  - Disposable camera
- Make your hotel/motel reservations if you plan to stay over.
- Set up a checking account with one parent as a co-signer. Most banks offer special student packages with ATM cards, credit cards and a checking account. You may want to look into this. *Personal note: we were thankful on several occasions to have a "linked" account so that getting money to our cadet was as simple as dropping by an ATM and punching a few buttons to transfer funds immediately into his account.*
- Convince your cadet to RUN, RUN, RUN and then RUN some more.
- On a card small enough to fit into their wallet, write down important phone numbers and addresses. Slip it into their wallet.
- Get a telephone credit card or '800' home phone number and have your cadet memorize the number.

### Transportation

The cost of transportation to West Point for your cadet on R-Day will be reimbursed by USMA, *save your receipts and be sure to record your mileage.* Your cadet must submit forms for reimbursement and they will need this information.

## Telephone

Some cadets are allowed to phone home during the first week of Beast while for others it may be another week or so. Don't be discouraged if you don't hear from them right away.

The first call home is usually filled with emotions and is sometimes a real "downer". This is normal! The cadets have had it with standing in formation, learning Plebe Knowledge, getting haircuts, testing, the whole thing! Be prepared to listen, listen, listen. They need to get this off their chest and you are their support. Be positive and be a good listener!

A telephone calling card, or 800 number for your cadet will cost less than collect calls. Telephone expenses will be high, but phone conversations will be very important to you and your cadet. Let them know when you will be at home, a letter that tells them when you will be home all afternoon or evening is helpful. Make every effort to keep phone lines open and be there for the calls. With so little free time, it is very disheartening to get a busy signal when a Plebe needs a lift from Mom or Dad. Call waiting is a good feature to add to your phone service at this time.

Keep a pencil and note pad handy to write down questions you will have and to jot down things you will want to share with the rest of the family. You may want to learn to use your answering machine to record your cadets calls to share with the family. You will be surprised when your cadet tells you that they are really interested in what you had for dinner last night - they really do miss you and home.

## Mail

Keep it coming! Keep the cards and letters positive and encourage your cadet to think in positive terms. Emphasize taking each day one at a time. Urge them not to take the harassment personally and tell them to maintain a sense of humor. Enclose a photo, band-aid for blistered feet, or maybe just a simple cartoon from the newspaper.

Mail call with no mail is very discouraging. Try and send as many letters and cards as possible during beast and the first year.

It is a good idea to pick up pre-stamped post cards from the post office and write your own address on the front. Your cadet can write a quick message letting you know that they are still hanging in there and simply drop the card into the mailbox.

Don't expect too many letters. Plebes are ordered to write the first letter (it's required) and after that Plebes are just toooooo busy to write.

## Addresses: Mail and Packages

Mailing Addresses for Plebe Year. Your cadet's P.O. Box number remains the same for all four years. Note different zip code for Central Guard Room.

	During Cadet Basic Training	After Acceptance Day	After Recognition
Regular Mail & Packages	New Cadet "Last Name" CBT Co. ____	Cadet "Last Name" P.O. Box ____	Cadet "First Name & Last Name" P.O. Box ____

via USPS	P.O. Box _____ West Point, NY 10997	West Point, NY 10997	West Point, NY 10997
Packages via UPS, FEDEX, etc	New Cadet "Last Name" CBT Co. _____ C/O Central Guard Room Building 745C West Point, NY 10996	Cadet "Last Name" Co. – Reg. _____ C/O Central Guard Room Building 745C West Point, NY 10996	Cadet "First Name & Last Name" Co. – Reg. _____ C/O Central Guard Room Building 745C West Point, NY 10996

### **Boodle (Care Packages From Home)**

DO NOT send boodle until told it is OK by your cadet when he or she is allowed to receive it, usually on A-Day. If you must send a package during CBT, please confine the contents to necessities like contact lenses, etc.; "goodies" received during CBT will be surrendered to and consumed by the cadre.

Send or bring the first boodle (all their favorite goodies with some nutritional food thrown in) in an airtight container. Rubbermaid makes some great boodle boxes - from shoe box size up to very small suitcase size but ask your cadet what size to get!! The first boodle box is important, as this is what your cadet will store future boodle in.

Include newspaper articles of interest to your cadet, cartoons, pictures, and of course boodle - homemade cookies are a big hit at West Point, powdered drink mixes, candy, their favorite junk food, small cans of tuna or chicken, peanut butter, jelly, crackers, etc. Dinner is an optional meal at West Point so on occasion, when studying for a WPR is more important than dinner, whatever is in the boodle box becomes dinner.

Send small but frequent packages rather than large ones because space is limited. Send them US Postal Service, UPS, or Federal Express. Shipping times and rates vary, so check with the different carriers in your area for more information. Generally, packages sent via the USPS are delivered to the cadet's mailbox and packages sent via UPS or other delivery services arrive at the Central Guard desk and then delivered directly to your cadet's room, which they appreciate.

### **Cadet Finances**

Monthly paychecks will be deposited directly to your cadet's bank account. Any bounced check will cause extreme anguish so remind your cadet to be very careful with check writing. They don't have much money in their accounts so a little extra money for snacks and the rare trip away from the post will be appreciated.

Your cadet does not always have access to an ATM machine to get cash so a few dollars (one dollar bills for the soda machine) tucked into a card or letter each week is very helpful and well appreciated.

### **Visits to West Point**

Always make reservations as early as possible when planning an overnight visit to West Point. Most of the Plebes prefer to have parents stay at a hotel off post within walking limits so they can get away and have a chance to relax. During the fall, if there is a home football game, some local hotels require a two-night stay. Be sure to check with the hotel about this and don't forget to get and write down your reservation number.

## **The Fourth Class System**

Year classes at West Point are designated in this manner. The Seniors (Firsties) are the First Class Cadets. They are the leaders of the Corps. They hold the brigade, regiment, battalion, company, and platoon leadership positions. The Juniors (Cows) are the Second Class Cadets. They are the squad leaders. The Sophomores (Yearlings) are the Third Class Cadets. They are the team leaders. The Freshmen (Plebes) are the Fourth Class Cadets. They are the followers, members of the squad. The Fourth Class Cadets are dealt with in a particular manner, and this manner is called the Fourth Class System.

The purpose of the Fourth Class System is to develop leaders of character by initiating and further developing the leader training that each cadet will receive while at West Point. It is not only used to develop Plebes but is also used to develop the leadership skills of the upper class. The upper class cadets learn some of their leadership skills during their summer experiences but mostly by administering the Fourth Class System within West Point. It is designed to teach New Cadets to be subordinate in a system of hierarchy. It will also teach discipline, self-control and how to operate in a highly structured environment. The system is administered by the upper class with guidance from the staff of officers.

It is the mission of USMA to educate and train the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate shall have the attributes essential for professional growth as an officer of the Regular Army and to inspire each to a lifetime of service to the nation. This training has as its bedrock the values of honor and consideration for others. Cadets are challenged to develop leadership through a personal ownership of standards. These standards include living honorably, treating others with respect and dignity and insuring individual and unit discipline, decency and propriety. Cadets are challenged to achieve precision in formations and drill and to maintain high standards of personal appearance. Corps cohesion is the thread that runs throughout the entire Fourth Class System. This ensures teamwork at all levels and develops a personal pride in being a West Point Cadet.

The leader training of cadets is initiated during their Fourth Class year. This is accomplished by providing opportunities to learn and to practice in a challenging environment and receive direct, face-to-face feedback. During this training, the Fourth Class cadets will develop pride in being a part of the West Point and Army tradition. They will develop a firm foundation that will promote and enhance an understanding of the military profession. They will develop a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence that will enable them to function in a demanding environment.

The training will instill discipline and an unyielding sense of duty, unity, teamwork and class identity. They will manage time effectively through a system of prescribed duties, which contribute to individual and unit efficiency. They will appreciate the problems and perspectives of subordinates in a military organization and they will develop an understanding of proper senior-subordinate relationships.

The Fourth Class System will develop a sense of honor in the Fourth Class Cadet. High ethical standards are the very soul of the Army Officer Corps and must be understood and adhered to by each officer as part of his or her way of life.

At USMA, acceptance by the cadets of the spirit of the Honor Code as an unyielding part of their daily life is the principle method of developing personal integrity. The code pertains to all aspects of a cadet's life. This applies to small things as well as more important ones. The Four Class System addresses the issue of conduct as it relates to military decorum and performance. Issues such as how to address officers, how to walk, what to wear, when to talk etc. Are covered under the area of conduct. The Fourth Class System addresses the cadet's duties and sets out the limits and restrictions that the cadet will live under. These restrictions include where and when the Fourth Class may or may not enter certain areas, when they can have radios, the wearing of jewelry etc., etc., etc.

During the Fourth Class year, the cadets will have to learn all sorts of knowledge, starting at CBT and continuing throughout the academic year. They will have to learn items found in the Bugle Notes, company bulletin boards, the "New York Times," athletic events and West Point facts. They will be required to know about the monuments, statues, the Great Chain, Mac Arthur's message, badges, tabs, how long until graduation, 500th Night, how long until Army beats Navy in football and a myriad of other crucially important facts. If you want to know something about West Point, just ask a Plebe.

One of the tasks of the Fourth Class System is to take young women and men from different cultural backgrounds and value systems and mold these values and habits at once to conform to the model necessary for a well functioning military organization. This change is often emotionally painful. Often the New Cadets feel that they will receive reprimands when they make mistakes only to find that even at other times they often get negative comments and warnings instead of accolades. Part of this is to build a little humility into a group of young people, who in a large part, have not had to deal much with the lack of success. For the first time, many of these cadets will have to deal with feelings of inadequacy. Persons with humility know their weaknesses as well as their strengths. The Army cannot tolerate arrogance in a leader. Plebes will fail and will develop from their failures. The Fourth Class System insures that sense of humility and fosters growth.

## OTHER TIPS AND ADVICE

Be prepared for at least one letter or phone call telling you that your cadet wants to quit. This may happen at a particularly stressful time, after your cadet has had contact with a friend at another college telling him or her about all the free time and parties, or most frequently, after contact with an unfeeling upperclassman.

When the problem arises, you may need to remind your son or daughter and yourself of the advantages they have: the opportunity to learn to follow the commands of others followed by the responsibility to lead and command, an academic program that includes a broad field of subjects, a student-teacher ratio that is unequaled in any other school, incredible athletic facilities and opportunities to participate in many different sports and travel to many places. Be sympathetic and flexible. Listen to them and remember the incredible pressure they are under. Get your cadet to give it one more day... one more week... Quitting is a serious decision; there is no second chance. Remind them that "this too shall pass" and tomorrow will be different from today.

Encourage your cadet to participate in social and athletic activities. Encourage your cadet to continue any religious practices. Common bonds can be found in many different places: West Point is a community of people bound by a common purpose and its members have a strong supportive bond.

Don't worry too much about medical attention for your Plebes. They have an excellent hospital at West Point and if the problem is serious, they will be sent to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, DC. If there is a problem, you will be notified. Some cadets end up in the hospital overnight for a serious cold or flu. Don't worry! The only way they can be dismissed from daily duties is if they are in the hospital.

If there is a family emergency you can contact the TAC officer. You will receive his name and phone number. Write it down and be sure to keep it handy in the event of an emergency. You can also call the Central Guard Room, open 24 hours a day.

## SUMMARY

You must constantly reinforce the positive with your cadet; never let them lose sight of the objective. Your cadet is joining the oldest fraternity/sorority in the United States with the likes of Grant, Lee, MacArthur, Patton, Eisenhower and Schwartzkopf. This is not just a college education but also a life experience that develops leaders for the 21st century.

***Everyone at West Point wants your Plebe to succeed!***

Nothing comes without sacrifice and your cadets will make many sacrifices during their years at West Point. Their reward will be an overwhelming sense of pride in their many accomplishments and enormous opportunities for a brilliant future. When they walk out to receive their diplomas on graduation day, they will have earned the ovations they receive and will become honored members of the Long Gray Line.

NOTE: This booklet contains information from a variety of sources, including material from parent clubs, USMA publications, and our cadets and parents.