

# 3: What Training did Soldiers Receive?

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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Training had two main purposes in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during its time on the Western Front between 1916 and 1918. Firstly, a new recruit had to be inducted into military forms of discipline, command and order. This was partially achieved through a program of basic training carried out in Australia, Egypt or England and, in a sense, was maintained for as long as a man was in the service. It involved marching and drilling with the rifle, cleaning and caring for personal equipment and being scrutinised and inspected in ways quite different to ordinary civilian life. For example, in May 1917, a memorandum to officers in the 12th Training Battalion from the Commanding Officer drew attention to the following:

*It was quite evident from the state of the boots in the huts that regular inspections are not made by the Officers and NCOs [non-commissioned officers]. No boots should be allowed to get in a bad state of wear but must be sent to the bootmaker without delay for repair.*

*Several men were found with hair long and unshaven. This is quite inexcusable.*

Secondly, after basic training there followed the far more serious exercise of turning a man into a fighting soldier at least partially prepared for the kind of warfare he was about to experience in France and Belgium. The topics and exercises in the syllabus of training for No 1 Training Company of the 15th Training Battalion during their last three weeks of the company's fourteen weeks of training was fairly typical. Basically, apart from daily physical training, the recruits covered the following: entrenching, wiring, firing rifle grenades, firing the Lewis light machine-gun, dealing with a gas attack, using hand grenades, using the bayonet, and routines to be followed in the trenches. These courses of instruction were then put into practice during what were called 'Field Days', when men would practice using the skills they had acquired in mock attacks both by day and by night. How well men had learnt to use their weapons in cooperation with each other in training would soon be tested in the harsh reality of the front line.

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## AIMS

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Students at Level 1/2/3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know that soldiers carried out a variety of training for war</li><li>• Understand how the training related to trench warfare</li></ul>
Students at Level 2/3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empathise with soldiers whose training would include some brutal tactics</li><li>• Understand how the training related to trench warfare</li></ul>

## CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

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Level 1/2/3:	<p>Have students list what training they think a soldier would need when he enlisted. How long do they think this training would take?</p> <p>All students should look at the photograph exercise on Worksheet 3.1.</p>
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Training was an important part of a soldier's life. Each soldier received some training in camp when they enlisted and some more when they arrived overseas.

- 1 What sort of training do you think the soldiers would have completed? List the things you think they would need to do.
- 2 Look at these images of different sorts of training. Write a caption underneath each one that explains what sort of training is being shown, and why a soldier would need to do this.



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- 3 Which of these would a soldier probably do in Australia, and which would he probably do overseas?