

What a Soldier Ate

A **ration** is the amount of food authorized for one soldier (or animal) for one day. The Confederate government adopted the official US Army ration at the start of the war, although by the spring of 1862 they had to reduce it.

According to army regulations for camp rations, a Union soldier was entitled to receive daily 12 oz of pork or bacon or 1 lb. 4 oz of fresh or salt beef; 1 lb. 6 oz of soft bread or flour, 1 lb. of hard bread, or 1 lb. 4 oz of cornmeal. Per every 100 rations there was issued 1 peck of beans or peas; 10 lb. of rice or hominy; 10 lb. of green coffee, 8 lb. of roasted and ground coffee, or 1 lb. 8 oz of tea; 15 lb. of sugar; 1 lb. 4 oz of candles, 4 lb. of soap; 1 qt of molasses. In addition to or as substitutes for other items, desiccated vegetables, dried fruit, pickles, or pickled cabbage might be issued.

The marching ration consisted of 1 lb. of hard bread, 3/4 lb. of salt pork or 1 1/4 lb. of fresh meat, plus the sugar, coffee, and salt. The ration lacked variety but in general the complaints about starvation by the older soldiers was largely exaggerated.

Generally the Confederate ration, though smaller in quantity after the spring of 1862 and tending to substitute cornmeal for wheat flour, was little different. But the Confederate commissary system had problems keeping rations flowing to the troops at a steady rate, thus alternating between abundance and scarcity in its issuances.

Soldiers of both armies relied to a great extent on food sent from home and on the ever present Sutler. *"The Civil War Dictionary"* by Mark M. Boatner III

A Day in the Life of a Soldier

Imagine you are no longer a student. You have joined the army as a private in the artillery. As a private in the Confederate army, you will be paid \$132 a year, or \$11 each month. You will be paid \$156 a year, or \$13 each month, if you are a Union soldier. Your enlistment (membership) in the army will last for three years.

Shortly after enlisting you are sent to a place called the Camp of Instruction (basic training). The Camp of Instruction will last several weeks. In the Camp, you will attend the School of the Soldier. This means instructors will teach you how to stand at attention, salute, march, and perform many of the other duties of a soldier.

As a soldier, you are on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Your day will generally go like this:

5:00 a.m. A bugler will sound (play) "reveille" on a bugle. Everyone must get up, get dressed and prepare for morning roll call.

5:15 a.m. The bugler sounds "assembly" and everyone falls in for roll call.

6:00 a.m. The next bugle call is "breakfast call."

7:00 a.m. "Fatigue call" is played telling the soldiers to prepare for inspection. You must make sure your musket, uniform, bunk, and barracks are clean.

8:00 a.m. After inspection, the bugler plays "drill call." For the next four hours, until noon, you will practice all the things you learned at the Camp of Instruction.

12:00 p.m. "Dinner call" is sounded and you are allowed to eat your lunch.

1:00 p.m. "Drill call" is sounded again. Until 4:00 p.m. you drill, drill, and drill.

4:00 p.m. You will spend this time cleaning your equipment, barracks, cannons, and the fort.

6:00 p.m. "Attention" is called to give you a few minutes to get ready for roll call. Next, the bugler plays "assembly" and everyone falls in for dress parade roll call. This means everyone is in full uniform. You are carrying your musket and wearing all your equipment.

7:00 p.m. The bugler now plays "assembly of the guard." Those soldiers assigned to guarding the fort begin performing this duty. The remaining soldiers eat their evening meal and relax.

8:30 p.m. - "Attention" is played followed by "assembly." At this time roll call is taken and you are dismissed.

9:00 p.m. - "Tattoo" is sounded. This means everyone must go to bed. Your day is finally over.

Life of a Civil War Soldier

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Antietam National Battlefield
P.O. Box 158
Sharpsburg, MD 21782



Life of a Civil War Soldier Lesson Plan

Introduction

Theme: This lesson plan transmits 19th Century soldiers' experiences to 21st Century students.

Goal: To help students learn about the life of a common soldier and the Battle of Antietam.

Objectives-Students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the life of a 19th Century soldier to a modern soldier.
- Comprehend the significance of the Battle of Antietam.
- Identify the clothing and equipment of a Civil War Soldier.

Curriculum Links: National Center for History in Schools, UCLA, [United States Era 5, Civil War and Reconstruction \(1850-1877\)](#).

What a Soldier Wore

Soldiers were generally issued a pair of wool pants with braces (suspenders), a cotton shirt, a sack coat, a forage cap or kepi, a pair of brogans (shoes), wool socks, a wool greatcoat (overcoat), a belt with belt buckle and cap pouch, a cartridge box for holding ammunition, a rifle, and bayonet.

You can show your students the photos of the Civil War soldiers and dress one student in the uniform that has been provided.

Explain that soldiers wore several layers of clothing and had to carry everything with them. The first layer of clothing a soldier would wear would be his cotton drawers (they do not have to wear these). Then the soldier would wear wool socks and a cotton shirt. The wool pants go on next, with the suspenders (braces) over the soldiers' shoulders. Next the soldier would put on the brogans (shoes) and sack coat.

The cartridge box, with the sling would go over the left shoulder and the box resting on the right hip. The belt goes over the cartridge box to hold everything in place. The cap pouch

should be just in front of the cartridge box. The soldier would then put on the forage cap. The haversack and canteen goes over the right shoulder and hangs on the left side.

Braces: Suspenders were used instead of a belt to hold up a man's pants.

Brogans: Leather shoes usually with heel plates to extend their wear.

Cap Pouch: Small pouch worn on belt. It held percussion caps for firing the musket.

Cartridge: Small paper tube filled with gun powder and a lead bullet (Minie Ball).

Cartridge Box: Leather pouch with attached sling, worn over the shoulder that contained 40 rounds of ammunition (cartridges).

Drawers: Long, lightweight cotton (or flannel in winter) 19th Century underwear.

Forage Cap or Kepi: Dark blue wool uniform cap with leather brim.

Haversack: Tarred canvas bag that a soldier carried keepsakes from home, personal belongs, and three days worth of food when on the march.