

For Plebe Parents – Useful Things to Know...

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Approved by Commandant of Midshipmen, Capt Robert Allee`

Weeks before Indoc

Make reservations for Indoc and Acceptance Day NOW. Many places are already sold out. The Andrew Hotel and the Inn at Great Neck are the closest.

Make your kid work out every day, including running as much distance as he/she can accomplish (at least 2 miles – 5 miles is better). Your son/daughter should have received a letter from the Physical Education Department with recommended exercise routines to complete during the weeks before reporting. The routines work- if the kid does it. Indoctrination includes a lot of physical activity, including distance running. Speed is less important than distance/endurance. Physical fitness will be assessed periodically throughout their time at the Academy. The assessment always includes measuring body fat, running, sit-ups, and push-ups.

Can't have too much underwear – buy the cheap stuff and replace w/ higher quality during parents weekend. Make sure they are comfortable for running. Some prefer boxer briefs-must be white.

Good athletic socks and good running shoes. Candidates will be issued running shoes, but a good pair brought from home as a back-up is a good idea. Running shoes brought from home should be conservative style and color (white or grey with blue or black trim).

Teach them how to wash clothes – at times they will do their own laundry. Beginning with Indoctrination period for the Class of 2009 and for all classes the first trimester of the 2005/2006 academic year, a commercial laundry service has been contracted for that will do much of their laundry, including all personal and uniform clothing but not pillows or blankets. This contract remains in place for the Class of 2011. There are two self service laundry facilities on campus for student use at no charge after Indoc.

Female Haircuts – get a REAL short layered cut in the back and short bangs – you will not want the hair in your eyes and as little layered on top of your head.....and it WILL grow back. This is the ONLY time in your life you will go for function over fashion. Male Haircuts – regardless of the length of your son's hair when they report for Indoc, their head will be shaved within minutes of leaving O'Hara Hall. So as long as it is reasonably short, neat and clean – don't worry about making sure it is exactly ½ inch long before reporting.

From the Washington DC area, there is NO easy auto route to Kings Point. Throgs Neck route is most scenic parents think this is probably the best route. Bayonne Bridge

(Elizabeth, NJ) Bridge from NJ Turnpike is OK if you can figure it out. Outerbridge Crossing (Staten Island) route is very unpredictable but can be a good choice IF there are no accidents on the Belt Pkwy. You will encounter traffic no matter what time you depart home – unless you leave at 10:00pm or later.

Get high speed internet (cable/DSL) and install Instant Messenger and learn how to use it.

- You will appreciate it during Indoc to view all the pictures of the kids on a daily basis – you will haunt the daily postings. Dial up is simply too slow – you’ll be staring at your computer all night to download pictures – get frustrated and give up – high speed is the only way to go.
- IM is the best way to “talk” to your kid when they get their computers. Computers are normally issued at the end of Indoc, Monday, July 23rd 2007.
- Consider obtaining IM names for a few of his/her closest hometown friends; it’s easier for you to track them down or just stay in touch.

Phone cards are a must initially – make sure they know how to use it.

Calculator: They will need a graphing calculator – the school standard is TI-86. Most students already have one from their high school days. If the functions are similar to the TI-86 - it will probably be ok to use in lieu of buying another calculator now. If the graphing calculator they bring is not acceptable, they can always buy the TI-86 in the school store on campus.

Combination Locks – will need at least one – also will need another for athletic team lockers – consider buying in sets w/ same combination.

Fans are a must during Indoc – bring it w/ you. Leave in the box and make a sturdy handle – they will have to run w/ it across campus. Put an extension cord in the box. Three of the five companies of candidates will be housed in the newly rebuilt Jones, Barry & Palmer Halls, which are air conditioned. (The assignments are totally random and not made until the candidates are actually on board.) Window fans will not be needed or allowed in Jones, Barry or Palmer Halls, but smaller desk top or floor models are allowed and recommended.

Camera: Consider taking a hand me down during the first year then upgrading before they go to sea. Any type will work, but a digital will allow them to show/share photos instantly.

Get them a credit card for school supplies & travel home and an ATM card from home bank. The Navy Federal Credit Union (www.navyfcu.org) is on campus and all are eligible for membership after Indoc. Discuss now. Traveler’s checks might be needed if you choose not to use a credit card. Figure out how to send money electronically to their

accounts – a home based bank ATM card might be easier if you are computer challenged but the Navy FCU works fine also.

Give them pre-addressed / stamped envelopes (not postcards), if you want any mail from them, especially during Indoc.

Pack some safety pins

Day before Indoc

Many KP coaches (traditional sports and waterfront) host a BBQ the day before Indoc – this is a must attend event and is usually ‘by invitation-only’. Coaches and fellow teammates can play a significant role in the success of your candidate, besides it’s nice to meet other kids and parents. Check w/ coaches.

Get a good night's sleep and get up early and have a good breakfast.

Candidates are better off having as few personal possessions as humanly possible until AFTER acceptance day (that’s Parents Weekend in September). Bring photos of family/home in small book or frame.

Try to convince them to take a little extra time during uniform issue time, while there is no opportunity to try them on – at least hold them up to gauge the size. Bigger is better than smaller in most cases. Nothing is worse than having to run in tight shorts during Indoc.

Discuss and remind your Candidate that nothing they do during Indoc will be correct – it’s just the way it is and when corrected – DO NOT take it personally, everybody gets corrected, it’s part of the program.

Discuss w/ them the thoughts they will likely experience that first night on campus “What the heck am I doing here?” or a few nights later when they say “I can’t take this crap anymore!” Everyone will likely experience these thoughts and feelings – BE PREPARED and discuss ahead of time, only you know how to guide your child through this difficult process. Bottom line - Indoc is tough and it’s meant to be that way, but will be over before they know it. They will survive.

On Induction Day:

Bring your camera!

Don’t be the first to show up for Indoc, nor the last. Put all documents that you need to bring in a big envelope. Take picture with family at the O’Hara Hall Gymnasium Eagle BEFORE they enter. Give them hug & kiss because once they enter, they will NOT return.

Remember to give them some cash - \$20.00 to \$50.00 is plenty, but not a twenty or fifty dollar bill. Must have quarters in case they need to use the pay phone or an upper classmen needs change for a dollar.

Take one last look at your child (the backside) as he/she enters O'Hara Hall and commit to memory – you will need this image of your child to find him/her on Barney Square at the lunch muster. By this time, all candidates should be in uniform (solid blue BDU pants, black boots, academy grey T-shirt, and Merchant Marine ball cap) and it is extremely difficult to identify them. I used to advise parents to memorize the shoes also, but since the Class of 2008, running shoes were issued the first day of Indoc and now the class of 2011 will be issued boots so this tactic won't work anymore as they will all be the same.

Wear a somewhat distinctive color shirt to spot them at first, both child and parents.

Stand outside O'Hara Hall until you see your son/daughter exit and then disappear. MIDN in the area will encourage you to leave and go to parent's hospitality area – ignore this advice until you have seen your Candidate exit O'Hara Hall.

Walk around the campus and hit the school store for goodies. You may see your son/daughter in the hallways or on Barney Square in formation (see distinctive shirt). Barney Square is sometimes referred to as the Grinder. You may be told you can't enter certain areas – honor that when told. Take pictures and laugh (try not to cry).

Consider buying the “Acta Non Verba” photo book to take home. The author/editor of this book will usually be on campus to personally sign on Indoc day and parents weekend.

At the appointed hour (usually 11:00am) – attend the Superintendent and staff briefing in Ackerman Auditorium, then follow the crowd to Barney Square where you will view the Mess Muster. This is your last opportunity to see (not talk to) your child as they line up on Barney Square in their new shorts & shirt, already sporting a new haircut and all looking alike & terrified. You may have the chance to wave at them – which is why YOU wear the distinctive shirt.

Once you find your student on Barney Square – take several photos of him/her and also those kids in the company formation – you will need these pictures of others in his/her company to help you find your student on the daily web site photos. You may think you can spot your child in any picture – but TRUST ME – you will not be able to find them in group photos unless you know what others in their company look like. Remember they always travel in packs during Indoc.

Try to figure out what company they have been assigned to by observing their position on the Grinder and listening to the commands. Observe others in the same company – look for other tall/short kids – you can spot your child in the Indoc pix by cueing off other kids in the company since they travel in packs together.

You will be dismissed by 12:30 p.m. or so after they march into the dining hall. You must leave. Go to NYC for Friday night and celebrate! Go to a show/museum/spend the night!

Do not leave Great Neck until you mail that first letter (not a postcard). Here's how to address during the Indoc period:

Candidate {student full name here} 2011
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy
Kings Point, NY 11024-1699

Mail call for candidates is only Monday-Friday and not everyday and never on the weekends. It's important to hear encouraging words from home – send mail everyday and number/date your letters as they may not arrive in order.

During the Indoc period, your students are Candidates. After the Indoc period, they will have the title of Plebe Candidate. As soon as they have been accepted on Acceptance Day, they will officially be Plebes. Your students are not Midshipmen until they have been recognized which takes place sometime in March/April.

Alarm clocks are not allowed during Indoc – if they absolutely must have one, you may ship after Indoc. If brought to Indoc, it will be confiscated and returned sometime after Indoc.

[During / After Indoc](#)

Check the website EVERYDAY during Indoc – view pictures. One of those days you WILL SEE him/her, but in some cases – only if you followed the day of Indoc tip to memorize as many candidates in your student's company. They always travel in packs w/ fellow company mates.

Be home to get that first phone call and make sure your MIDN has a phone card to call home. Call is limited to no more than 5 minutes, but it will seem like a 30 second call, so plan your discussion ahead of time and keep the list by the phone. Nothing is more discouraging for your child than to wait in line to call home and get the answering machine – he/she gets one chance, can call again later – but waits in line again. You need to be there for him/her. Make sure he/she knows what number to find you at on Saturday and Sunday after the first full week of Indoc. Cell phones not acceptable at this point, they will be using a pay phone. Your mission is only to give encouraging words – some will be crying – be ready for this, it is very common.

During Indoc – if they are hurt, the standard procedure, even for relatively minor injuries, is to transport them to the hospital ER, and you likely will not hear about it, unless while in the ER – they just happen to call home. Remind them (now) that if they go to the hospital ER, USMMA is their home address – 300 Steamboat Road, Attn: Patton Hall, Kings Point, NY 11024 NOT their 'real' home address. The Academy will handle ALL

their healthcare needs either on campus or through a comprehensive contract with North Shore University Hospital (<http://www.northshorelij.com>) or through Federal workers' comp. If you chose not to follow this advice, be prepared to endure months of bills to your home address and several phone calls to the Academy to correct. Trust me – been there – done that.

Math Placement test will be administered during Indoc – this plus their SAT scores and high school math grades determines which level of math class they will have to take – there are 4 possible options: (1) remedial math or college mathematics (requires summer school the following year-nobody wants this), (2) Calculus 1 extended (meets 4 times/week) (3) Calculus 1 (meets 3 times/week) or (4) Studio Calculus (advanced).

Church – whether you believe or not - attend – it's an air-conditioned, hassle free zone to relax.

Send mail from all friends and relatives during Indoc AND into the year. Recruit EVERYONE to send funny and inspirational mail so they get something every day if possible. Do NOT send “stuff” until September Acceptance Day. Food is ok to send the second week but be sure to send at least 2 dozen (5 dozen is better) of whatever to share. These packages are considered community property and will be immediately consumed upon opening.

Many little notes & things via mail are better than saving up and sending one big package.

You may send school supplies and computer-related accessories after Indoc. Do not send games/movies until parent's weekend – they simply don't need the distraction.

Parents Weekend (14-16 September 2007)

This is a must attend event – plan now – be there for your son/daughter.

You will see a new person this weekend and especially when they come home for their October break! They will want to show off for their grandparents/teachers, etc. Let them! Some of their old buddies may now not fit that category anymore.

Consider arriving Thursday night before Parents Weekend so you can go to the Friday a.m. classes, etc. Sign up for the “Beat Retreat” performance Friday night – it is awesome, but the room is hot (not air-conditioned so dress appropriately and arrive early as every seat will be filled. They will want to eat a good meal (translation – expensive) Saturday night & sleep Sunday morning. Find a good Sunday “all you can eat brunch.” Port Washington, NY has several and is scenic, but there are others.

DO NOT bring girl/boy friends to parent's weekend without first discussing ahead of time w/ your son/daughter – their relationship may have changed – and surprise, mom and dad don't know.

Consider bringing them a cell phone at this time, if they don't already have one. They can use them under limited circumstances. No cell phone carrier has superior service on campus and few can talk from their rooms. Nextel tower is right on campus – walkie talkie feature can be useful. SIMM chips may work overseas.

Headphone privilege may be granted to your student's company for good behavior so you may want to bring a pair of these. Speakers are not allowed.

Other General Comments:

Car Insurance: Check w/ your carrier to determine reduced rates. If your carrier is USAA, they will cover your student at no charge while at the academy provided you list him/her as a non-operator. When contacting USAA for this coverage, inform the USAA service representative that the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy is listed within IOP as one of the qualifying military schools.

Shopping on the Internet is good – ship direct to school. They can also get their own supplies, etc. that way. Popcorn Factory has well-priced goodie packages.

DVDs & CDs are great presents during the year.

Job opportunities: waiter at Melville Hall, park cars, server at local county club.

Check AMTRAK's student advantage card (reduced fares) – train is good transportation from DC to NYC. Be sure to purchase a “reserved seat” ticket otherwise expect to sit on the floor. The trip is too long to stand. Air shuttles (Delta & USAir) have deals if you can buy in advance. Bus is the cheapest option. (See separate handout for discussion of various transportation options from the DC area).

You may not see them after New Years – many teams have spring break trips.

Laundry soap is issued during Indoc – after that – buy your own.

Mid-Atlantic Parents Club communication is almost exclusively thru email – some free services such as hotmail (unless you have paid for additional capacity) will not accept some of the emails w/ graphics and attachments. AOL will not confirm delivery and if you have on spam filters – it will reject all club email.

Many of the sport/club teams travel to the area for local events – if I know ahead of time I will share w/ all and if you know – please let me know. It's a real nice touch to be able to supply some home cooking, support on the sidelines and sometimes a place to sleep for team members when in town.

Pay attention to the Regimental Calendar – particularly to the leave and liberty periods. Midshipmen are not permitted to depart early or return late from a leave or

liberty period unless they have specific permission, and permission is only granted for the reasons below. If extra leave time is required for a specific function, a Midshipman must request it in advance. Some of the reasons that extra leave or liberty may be granted are:

- Personal or family emergencies (emergency leave for death or sickness of a family member will be granted without restriction)
- Medical appointments
- Rewards (i.e. extra liberty authorized by competent authority for scholastic, regimental, athletic or other achievements)
- To attend important family events (e.g. wedding or graduation of close relative)
- Exceptional circumstances (e.g. long distance travel where arrangements necessitate extra time)

Reasons extra leave or liberty will not normally be granted for:

- Personal convenience
- When travel arrangements that do not conflict with academic or regimental requirements are available
- To extend holidays or regular leave periods
- When instructors do not concur with missing class

Note: Getting a better priced ticket is not an adequate reason to extend leave or liberty time. Midshipmen who make travel arrangements that conflict with leave/liberty times, without getting permission for the leave/liberty first, are subject to disciplinary action.

Electric razors are not allowed during Indoc but are usually ok after parents' weekend. A fabric pill shaver might be useful after Indoc to shave their blankets. Some kids won't like the issued pillow; a plain white standard size washable pillow might be desired by your student.

At some point the Alumni Foundation will request donations. Don't feel pressured to donate especially if this is beyond your family needs but if able, consider donating generously. It will directly benefit the midshipmen. Be aware of what activities your student participate in and are they adequately funded (especially travel funds) be that a sports team, the band, etc. Your donation can be restricted to that specific activity or unrestricted. It's your choice but I don't recommend restricting the funds unless you are aware of a specific need that you want to benefit.