

AOSB BRIEFING

Commentator: The first stage of becoming an Army officer is a 2-day briefing at Westbury in Wiltshire. You get briefed on the Army, on the selection tests and on your aptitude for the job. This is an opportunity for you to discover what being an Army officer is all about, to talk to experienced officers and see if the job is right for you.

During the 2 days there are physical and mental assessments. They will be looking for candidates who are self-confident, that can remain calm under pressure, who are decisive and have the personality to lead others.

They do not expect to see the finished article, nor do you have to be committed to becoming an Army officer at this stage. This is your opportunity to find out if you may have what it takes and to prepare for selection.

Various officer candidates: I'm very keen to get into the Army. Obviously I've got other things that I'd like to do if I didn't get into the Army, but definitely the Army's my primary career choice.

I've set my heart on it so, I mean I really would like to get in.

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't apprehensive because at the end of the day it's the career path I want to get into.

100% effort on everything, just try and do my best at everything and not slack off on things, but have a good time as well.

Commentator: The first assessment you'll do is designed to look at your mental aptitude. This consists of 3 elements: a verbal test, a numeric test and an abstract reasoning test. Next it's time to join your group and introduce yourself to each other.

Officer: We get a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds coming through here in Westbury and it doesn't matter where people have been to school, what they've done with their lives, what their backgrounds are at all.

Various officer candidates: I'm 19 years old and I'm on my gap year at the moment.

I'm very keen on my acting, I've just finished an inspector course.

Officer in classroom: Thank you very much, take a seat. Right, what we're going to do now is we're going to move onto the group discussion and we'll start by discussing some topics that I will introduce.

Commentator: This is a discussion based on news and current affairs, so it helps if you've read the papers and are up to date on world news. Here it is important to listen to the other members of the group and absorb what they're saying without speaking over them or shouting them down. Inject a bit of life and humour into your dialogue and chances are the audience will listen and take note; so will the assessors!

Officer in classroom: What I'm going to do now for the next half hour or so is just give you a quick tutorial just to talk to you about the planning exercise and some of the preferred methods of approaching it and solving the problems.

Officer: The point of the planning exercise is to see how they can assess the problem, identify the aims that they need to achieve and work out a number of different courses of action of how they can best achieve those aims.

We realise that for many of these candidates, this is their first exposure to anything like this and it would be unfair of us to expect it to be a perfect solution; it very rarely will be. But as long as they can apply the brain that they have to the problem and come up with a reasonable solution, then that's what we're looking for really.

Officer interviewer: How are you doing? OK, just put your paperwork down there and take a seat.

Commentator: The interviews are an opportunity for you to show them who you really are, so just be yourself.

Officer interviewer: I'm looking for somebody with a bit of passion, a bit of motivation, a bit of drive and determination that can convince me in 5 minutes why they will make a good platoon commander.

Commentator: They could talk to you about current affairs, Army knowledge, as well as assessing your mental arithmetic.

Officer interviewer: How long in hours and minutes would it take you to do 47 miles at 5 miles an hour?

Commentator: Integrity is an important asset and one they take seriously, so make sure your CV is accurate and honest.

Officer candidate: It's 9 point, 9 hours and 24 minutes.

Officer interviewer: Got there in the end! OK, good.

Commentator: At the end of the first day you'll probably retreat to the Mess for a well-earned break. It's a good time to relax and catch up with your colleagues, but remember not to overdo it in the bar as you will be doing physical assessments in the morning!

Officer: We'll show them which knots they need to know as a tutorial, how to use cantilevers, how to make best use of planks of wood in cleaning an obstacle. This is a tutorial and then they have a chance of showing that they've understood the lessons.

Commentator: This is about applying mental agility and flexibility of mind, with the ability to think on your feet: the attributes of a good Army officer.

Officer: We look for who's coming up with the practical ideas, who's solving the problems and who is able to communicate their ideas to the group with credibility.

Officer instructor: And stop there – your time is up! That bar is touched 'out of bounds' and '41' – if that was a minefield, you would be dead!

Commentator: Fitness is an important attribute to being an officer and during the briefing candidates will be assessed on their general level of fitness, so it helps if you are well-prepared for the challenges.

At the end of the 2 days the officers will spend time assessing each participant in turn, reflecting on their personal traits, their fitness, their academic and leadership qualities and how they coped under pressure.

Officer: Big, smiley chap, fit, strong, good all round; he's a clear Category 1.

Commentator: The candidates are given one of 4 categories: Category 1 indicates a candidate has done sufficiently well to be suitable to go forward to Main Board, which is the selection to

become an Army officer. Category 2 imposes a time delay before attending Main Board, this could be for a number of reasons. Category 3 indicates that even with a considerable improvement, Main Board could be very difficult and Category 4 deems you not suitable for officer selection.

Officer: But I've seen considerable uplift this morning outside, excellent performance, so I want to give her the benefit of the doubt.

Commentator: They take the job very seriously as they are assessing potential officers of the future who could be commanding soldiers in the most demanding situations.

Officers discussing candidates: I think he's got the potential, but if he were to appear before Main Board, in the short term, he just wouldn't get through.

62 would have been a straight Category 1, but performed poorly on the physical tests.

OK.

So 26 Phys?

Yep, 26 Phys, happy with that.

Various officer interviewers: Well, I'm going to put you out of your misery straight away and tell you you've got a Category 1.

Well done, good effort, Category 1.

You've got a Category 2 with a delay of 24 months.

Keep working on your current affairs, make sure you've got a good idea what's happening in the world, work on your mental arithmetic as well and if you put those things right I think you've got a good chance at Main Board.

Various officer candidates: Overall I have really enjoyed it and I've met a lot of people that I get on well with.

In many ways it's quite similar to any other job interview, you've got to put in the preparation.

I sort of came expecting the physical stuff to be hard and the mental stuff to be a bit easier and it was actually the opposite way round.

There was a lot more mental tests than I thought there would be.

Instructor: It's important for candidates to remember that if they found anything physically or mentally challenging at briefing, they should expect to find greater physical and mental challenges at Main Board.

Commentator: It is really important you take on board the final report at briefing. It will tell you exactly what your strengths and weaknesses are and what areas you need to work on. You will have experienced the sort of tests that are used for the selection that happens at Main Board, also held at Westbury, which is more physically and mentally challenging.

Various officer candidates: They didn't pull any punches. They told us to work on specific things, so I'm just going to focus exactly what he's told me to do. I'm just going to go away and work on it, especially mental arithmetic!

I'm definitely going to keep up to date with current affairs.

Generally just need to sort of work on fitness and things, like most people.

I know what to improve on now and I'm really looking forward to the Main Board.