



Step

Feet move, step by step, one after the other continuously, or figuratively, by successive degrees, by gradual and regular progress. We make or take a step, walk in a person's steps, and keep pace with another's. Progress is measured step by step. **The Oxford English Dictionary** devotes six pages to "step," variations of verb usage alone ranging from "step between" through: step into, on, off, out, over, to, aside, back, down, forth, forward, in, off, out, together, and up; in transitive form, to step down, in, or across. US Army Field Manual 22-5 defines "step" as "... the prescribed distance measured from heel to heel of a marching man." That distance is thirty inches, two and one-half feet for the short and for the tall, for those legged long or short.

A first step is basic to any endeavor. At Valley Forge, the Prussian staff officer Friedrich Wilhelm, Baron von Steuben, viewed a ragtag and bobtail American army and promptly began to prepare his "Blue Book," **The Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States**, published in 1779. He recognized the urgent need to instill in every soldier a sense of alertness, urgency and attention to detail, to establish objectives for developing teamwork, confidence, pride, *esprit de corps*, and discipline. The need is just as real today, not only in a strictly military context but also for simply getting along successfully in daily life.

Steps in military training build self-discipline which enables an individual to set realistic goals for himself and to work systematically, in a series of steps, to achieve it. In formal learning too, students work step by step, comparable to the process of life being education in itself, acquired one step at a time, initiated at birth and continuing until that inevitable final one.

A lockstep march through life, however, contains an inherent societal danger: doing what the other guy's doing, because he's doing it, mimicry which stifles individuality and creativity. Education prepares people to evaluate and to accommodate to new situations. Just as Baron von Steuben taught drill movements to the colonial rabble, to develop discipline and confidence, from which organization, chain of command, and control improved as each man had a specific place and task within a formation, through transfer the well-disciplined individual adjusts his steps, however measured, enabling him to keep an ear tuned to the beat of a different drummer, and to decide, in or out of step, when and where he'll march in unison, when and where he'll vary his cadence to adjust and to adapt to the needs and exigencies of changing situations, places, and times.

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