



How to Become a SEAL - Starting to Prepare as a Teenager

by Stew Smith

Here is an email I receive quite often from young teenagers who know they want to serve their country, but are curious how to start preparing themselves for the military training - especially SEAL and other Special Ops programs. Pass this along to any young teenager thinking they want to serve.

Hi Stew,

If I wanted to become a Navy SEAL when should I start training? I am 15 years old and have wanted this since I was 10. What are the requirements for becoming one? I have read some of your articles and wanted some advice on some tips towards training, and towards getting though the course? Do I have the right mentality etc?

First, thanks for your decision to want to serve your country. It is always nice to see someone in their teens thinking of their future and service in the same thought. What I am about to share with you is the LONG answer as I get this question often and feel it deserves the full answer - taking you from your present age in high school and to and through BUDS.

Step 1: Learn to be a team player.

I cannot emphasize this enough as it requires experience and an understanding of being part of a team. Knowing how to work toward a goal whether that goal is to drive a ball down the field or to train for an event with other team members is important to your future. When I was young I played five sports and was never exceptional at them all but good enough to be a team captain when I became a senior in high school. I truly feel that my training for these sports enabled me to understand what it means to work hard toward a goal and be a better leader and follower.

Step 2: Get Some Leadership Skills

Whether you are a team captain, class president, or head of a community service group - all of these skills will help you understand what it means to lead and to follow orders. Being a good leader is important but being a good listener and able to follow rules and other leaders is just as important.

Step 3: Study Hard

Dummies usually get weeded out just as those who fail a PT test in the military. Make sure you graduate high school, perhaps get some college (good but not necessary), and study a foreign language. Any foreign language is fine at this level in high school as it is more understanding how languages and other cultures work that will help you with more important languages later (Chinese, Russian, Arabic, etc). Also understand Algebra and Science, as you will see this math and physics in Dive Training when you apply Laws of Physics to the body while diving.

Step #4 Graduate High School / GED / College

Now at 17-18 years old is where your options start to open up. You have to have a high school diploma to enlist. Recently they have started to accept a GED certificate but depending upon your choice of service you may need a semester of college level classes to join the military. You can enlist as young as 17 years old with the signature of a parent or guardian or you could decide to attend college for a few years or graduate. Many SEAL enlisted are college graduates with advanced degrees even. So after college you can either enlist, join as an officer by attending OCS - Officer Candidate School OR you could get a military scholarship and attend college for free by joining an ROTC college or the U.S. Naval Academy. All sources can lead to attending BUDS as an officer. This will also give you four more years to REALLY train hard as well.

*NOTE - Do I even need to say stay away from drugs and alcohol as it has no purpose in this training...

Step#5 - If You Choose to Enlist

There are many opportunities for the enlisted SEAL or Special Ops soldier. Not only will you receive some of the best training in the world, but you can also earn thousands of dollars in bonuses. Presently, the Navy is paying BUDS graduates \$40,000 for successfully completing the training and earning the SEAL designation. But, when you meet the recruiter you will be assigned a SEAL mentor once you have signed in. SEAL Mentors are former SEALs / Special Ops who help you properly prepare for the training you have signed to do. You have to sign up with the Delayed Entry Program to meet with the SEAL Mentor and do the workouts. You will not sign up at first as a SO - Special Operator - you have to pass the BUDS Physical Screening Test (PST) first before you can be part of the SEAL Challenge Program. This means you have to pick another Navy designation when you join, but that goes away after to pass the PST.

Step #6 - Acing the PST

You want to go to Boot Camp in the best shape of your life. Do not think the Navy is going to get you in SEAL shape during Boot Camp. You need that foundation NOW and hopefully after a lifetime of fitness and athletics you will have the ability to build on that foundation. This means you need the following scores on the PST to have about an 80% chance of graduating BUDS.

Swim 500yds (side, breast or CSS stroke)	in under 9:00 (sub 8:00 for officers)*
80-100 pushups	in 2:00 (100+ for officers)*
80-100 situps	in 2:00 (100+ for officers)*
15-20 pullups	(20+ for officers)*
1.5 mile run	in 9-10 minutes (sub 9:00 for officers)*

* Officer billets are much more competitive and require higher scores to be accepted generally. This is because there are 80% more enlisted than officers.

Just reaching the minimum standards will give you a 6% chance of graduating BUDS. What you need is a fitness program to achieve these scores. For the enlisted, the good news is that you get some pre-training after Boot Camp which is run by SEAL instructors in Great Lakes. There you get to workout and get back into shape after losing some of it due to Boot Camp schedule. This program is designed to better prepare you for SEAL training and it is tough. If you can get into above average shape prior to Boot Camp and use that time as a taper, then you will be in perfect shape to start ramping up for BUDS again after Boot Camp. However, I recommend within at least 4-6 months of attending Boot Camp you should be running in boots and swimming in fins. Same for officer candidates.

Step # 7 - Attend SEAL or other Special Ops Training

Here is where a lifetime of training all come to the ultimate test. Years of training in sports, school, daily life events should have created a disciplined and motivated person ready to NOT only survive training BUT compete to win events in the training programs. Those who go to Special ops training programs to compete never think about quitting (usually) as compared to those seeking to merely survive the training.

Good luck with your challenge. I know it may seem like forever until you get there, but time will fly and you will wish you had more time to train if you do not start now. The best thing about this method of preparation is that if you should change your mind you have set yourself up for success in ANYTHING you select.