

USNA Parents-This ones for you!

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Well the countdown is getting closer to Induction Day. You may have already seen our Plebe Summer page. The information below is an anonymous Midshipman's mom compilation of the frequently asked questions she has seen about the Plebe year throughout her Mid's three years at the Naval Academy. We will be adding it to our Parent to Parent page of advice.

If you have questions feel free to write us at usnaparentcommunity@gmail.com. We will be posting answers to frequently asked questions. We also welcome blog submissions for consideration as we support the USNA parent community.

Thanks Navy Mom for these wise words!

Tips for incoming Plebes and their families:

Welcome aboard! You are about to embark on a unique journey as your son or daughter enters USNA and begins their training to be commissioned into the fleet in four short years. As is often said, the USNA experience is in three parts: Plebe Summer, Plebe year and the other three years. There will be ups and downs for your Mid and for you and we want to offer you some support as you enter this community.

By no means is this a complete list of all questions that may arise, however, this information should cover some of the most common questions asked by families as they prepare for Plebe Summer.

Before IDay:

- Tell your Plebe-to-be to run, run, run...and do lots of pushups and sit ups; if they are in top shape, Plebe Summer is tough...if they are not in great shape, they will make their lives that much tougher
- Running shoes they no longer need to be mostly white, but avoid shoes that draw attention to your Plebe; having good insoles is a good idea to avoid shin splints, knee issues, etc.;
- Memorize the Chain of Command, the Mission Statement of the Academy
- If your Plebe-to-be isn't used to memorizing things, they need to figure out a method to memorize information that works for them
- Your Plebe-to-be needs nothing other than the Order to report information; they are issued everything they need
- Make copies of all medical records and the passport (if your child doesn't have a passport yet, get one now)
- If you are traveling to Annapolis for IDay, make hotel/home rental reservations asap
- Spend lots of time with your Plebe-to-be
- Get connected to other USNA parents via Facebook pages (**USNA Class of XXXX Mom and Dad**, where XXXX is the current year.)
- Facebook is a good way to communicate with your Plebe once they are allowed media access after Plebe Summer (although this can vary by company)
- Talk about what they'd like in their first few care packages (know that Detailers look through care packages during PS and there are companies that restrict any junk food); don't break the rules, it gets the Plebe in trouble
- You may be notified of which company your Plebe-to-be will be in; during Plebe Summer, they will be in squads that use the company # and a letter; the letter is dropped once Plebe Summer is complete and for the remainder of their time at USNA, they will only refer to their company number
- Talk about who they'll call for their 3 phone calls
- Female Plebes-to-be: talk to them about how their cycle could be thrown off (keep a feminine product tucked in the uniform); they will be encouraged to start on the BCP and HPV vaccine they have a choice about this and need to decide what is right for them)
- I-Day
- Make sure your Plebe has a good breakfast; they may not be eating again until they see you (if you bring food to them) if they or their group is delayed by anything

- Plan on being at Alumni Hall 10 minutes BEFORE reporting time; DON'T be late (a Plebe drawing attention to themselves is generally not a happy Plebe flying under the Detailers' radar is key to not getting extra unwanted attention)
- Make sure everyone has ID to show when entering the Yard; ID's and bags are checked
- IDay is an extremely stressful day for incoming Plebes; expect a range of emotions. Stay calm, stay encouraging. USNA has done this for many years and there is a method behind the madness that you need to trust.
- Plan on being on the Yard all day and attend as many events as possible to keep busy; your Plebe will be going through paperwork, medical checkups, equipment issuing, amongst many other things. If you catch a glimpse of them, consider yourself lucky. Restrain yourself from calling out their name, which will draw unwanted attention to them.
- Bring water, sunscreen; if you have elderly attendees, find a place for them to rest or organize a wheelchair in advance. Walking distances tend to get long
- Go to Mid store, watch Plebes load and unload the screaming is hard to take for some, but there is a method to the madness and you need to trust the system (after all, the Detailers were in your Plebe's boat only 3 short years before and remember that day very well)
- Get "Brief Points" – slightly outdated, but still worth reading to understand some of what goes on at USNA a bit better
- After Plebes are sworn in you will get to see them for a few minutes; bring a blanket for them to sit on; food and water (something that won't stain their uniform); don't get makeup on their uniform
- Be prepared that they may be shell shocked; stay strong for them and be encouraging; remind them that this has been their goal for a long time and that "neither time nor tide stops for Plebe summer" either!
- It's an emotional day for parents too; don't make grand plans after the doors of Mother B (Bancroft Hall) close
 - Semper Gumby will be your new motto! For type A personalities like most of us probably aren't a necessary adjustment as we adjust to having our child in the military. We are going through training as well, as we ultimately prepare to send our kids off into the fleet a few years later

Plebe Summer:

After your Plebe enters Mother B, you may experience a range of emotions they're all normal; feel free to reach out to fellow USNA parents on Listserv or Facebook; Listserv will allow you to remain anonymous, if you so desire. Write to the moderator directly and either ask for a private answer or a post to Listserv without your information.

- Every parent handles Plebe Summer differently. Some go on "business as usual" while others worry deeply. Your son or daughter is learning to function in a military setting. Here are some suggestions:
- Send care packages but don't expect your Plebe to get them until a few weeks in; Detailers have to get them from mail services and go through them training Plebes is their top priority, not care packages:
 - Address during Plebe Summer: See PTR Package
 - Suggestions for care packages: nutrition bars, energy drink powder, jerky, nuts, deodorizers, preferred socks/underwear/bras (white), encouraging notes, jokes, cartoons; for females: preferred underwear as the issued underwear are granny panties, preferred feminine products)
 - DO NOT SEND CONTRABAND! Any form of media, electronics is not allowed; junk food can be considered contraband but that varies by company Some Plebes don't get

care packages for various reasons if you are so inclined, send a package to the Chaplain's Office c/o "Any Plebe" and the chaplains will distribute them.

- Go Waldo hunting on FB and Listserv! Plant a garden, clean out the garage, train for a marathon, bake cookies, work overtime...keep yourself busy; your Plebe is very busy being indoctrinated into the military life they will lead
- Plebes take placement tests their first week at USNA, amongst many other activities
- Plebes get 3 phone calls on set days and times; make sure you are ready to take the call! Have a list of questions, but let your Plebe do the talking if they are so inclined
- Plebes may not be very communicative beyond the first note, which they have to write (some of those remain blank). You can help your Plebe by writing notes that have the questions you want answered so they can fill in the blanks (EG: 1. My roommates names are, 2. My favorite thing so far is, 3. The food is, etc.
- About half way through Plebe Summer, a new set of Detailers arrive; this is a stressful time for Plebes as they have to adjust to new Detailers and potentially a different leadership style.
- Remember that Detailers are not their friends, but their trainers; also remember that each and every Detailer went through Plebe Summer themselves and Detailers are up earlier than the Plebes and go to bed later than the Plebes; they will push them, but they will also take care of their charges.
- Plebes may be homesick - stay encouraging; encourage them to make it through the week, through the end of Plebe Summer, etc.
- "Broken Plebes" = injured Plebes happen; they will be attended to according to the severity of their injury; as of the moment they take the Oath, they are considered adults and "the Navy's charges", so they must give permission for you to be contacted in case of any medical issues
- NEVER under any circumstances contact their Detailers or Officers; if you have a concern or emergency, get in touch with the Chaplains office (Tel: 4102931100) and they will handle each situation as warranted; they are wonderful people who help in many ways!
- Several Plebes will decide that USNA is not for them; they will have the opportunity to think about their decision, talk to Detailers, Chaplains; they may go to Tango Company (the company where they are given time to decide, but ultimately also begins the outprocessing, if the Plebe decides to leave) and may call you. Be positive and encouraging and remind them why they wanted to serve, etc. (there is a document that goes into further detail) If your child decides that USNA is not for them, you may be very disappointed but respect their decision they are still the great kid you dropped off on I-Day!
- If planning to attend PPW, make hotel/rental home reservations ASAP
- If you are planning on attending PPW, during a phone call or letter ask your Plebe if he/she wants to invite anyone to dinner, if you are ok with extra company
 - Towards the end of Plebe Summer, your Plebe will meet their sponsor parents; some are out of town and don't make the meeting; it can be very disappointing if your Plebe doesn't hear in advance, but rest assured that sponsor parents are the Mid's angels while at USNA

Plebe Parent Weekend:

- Reunion time!
- Your Plebe will want to leave the Yard ASAP they have not been off the Yard in 7 weeks! Follow their lead to decide what to do; visiting their room is advisable so you have an idea of what their room looks like; the only other opportunity you will get to visit the insides of Mother B is during their 2/C Parent weekend, which takes place in the fall, usually in association with a football game
- Know that many Plebes won't have family there but let your Plebe decide whether/who they want to invite along
- Plebes have just been through some tough weeks; they will likely be VERY tired and will probably want to sleep a lot
- There's lots to do in the area (mall, heading to DC, watch a movie, etc.), but let your Plebe be

the one deciding how much or little to do

- Traffic is terrible around Annapolis (aka “DTA” = Downtown Annapolis) during this weekend, so allow lots of extra time to get back to the Yard
- Plebes MUST stay in uniform at all times except when on leave (leave= vacation; liberty= allowed to go to out in tricity area, which is Annapolis, D.C. and Baltimore); they may wear their PT gear to be more comfortable; they are issued swim suits, if they want to go swimming;
- Plebes may not drive a car, except when on leave
- Bring some of their favorite food, if possible; take them for dinner
- They may want to connect with their friends and will have their cell phone and will look for computer access (when in uniform, they cannot walk and talk/text)
- If the girl/boy-friend come, they will want to spend some time together (decide early whether the “significant other” attends this weekend)
- Plebes do not “rate” (are not allowed) any small appliances (this may vary by company), so no need to buy all the usual college stuff; they’ve been issued everything they will need
- Time will go quickly and your Plebe is likely to start getting quiet the day they have to return to the Yard; it’s normal, stay encouraging
- HELLO (or HELLO) night – the night the upper class meets “their” Plebes; depending on the company it can range from no big deal to a pretty tough night for Plebes; they are likely to be nervous about meeting the upper classmen

Plebe Year:

- Plebe year is a LONG year! Plebes are scrutinized and they are continuously trained by the upper class
- Classes can be tough; there is “EA” – extra help sessions they can attend if they are struggling
- Don’t expect to hear much from your Plebe; they are very busy and their access to cell phones is very limited
- Their life is very restricted for their first year, but each year it gets better!
- Plebes have town liberty on Saturdays only; occasionally there may be extra liberty granted but don’t count on it
- Make plans Thanksgiving Break if your Plebe is close enough to get home; some airlines allow for waivers of change fees for active military, while others don’t make sure you check with the airline before booking anything; even better, let your Plebe make his/her travel plans as they know best what works for them
- Plebes can ride with upper classmen to/from the airport if they need a ride; they can also see if their sponsor family can give them a ride; there are shuttles that take Mids to and from BWI (which is the BY FAR most convenient airport to fly in and out of); Reagan airport is about a 3045 minute drive or 1 hour metro ride and Dulles is about an 6090 minute drive with no public transport other than shuttles.
- Making plans for Christmas Break takes some patience they must find out first when their last exam AND military obligation (EG: standing watch) is; when getting back, always allow at least 3 hours for them to get back to the Yard
- The time period between Christmas and Spring Break is known as “The Dark Ages”; it’s a new semester, they are still Plebes, it’s cold and stays dark late and gets dark early – send a care package; encourage them. Many USNA clubs have organized Dark Ages care package drives
- Sea Trials is a day-long training progression which is physically very demanding
- Herndon – if you want to see some happy faces, attend Herndon climb! The Herndon monument will be greased top to bottom and the Plebes must climb it to replace the Dixie cup with a Mid cover before they can be considered “Plebes no more” (they become Youngsters after Commissioning; some older classmates will tell you it’s after their Youngster cruise); the event is timed and capped off by the singing of Blue and Gold; most Plebes want to leave the Yard and go for a fun stroll around town or the mall (must be in uniform); some may want to take along friends, others don’t let your Plebe-no-more guide you.
- After Commissioning, Plebes (4/C) become 3/C and after their Youngster Cruise, they are officially “Youngsters”; 3/C become 2/C and 2/C become 1/C or Firsties; they are allowed to put on

their new should boards after Commissioning (Firsties are “in rank”, meaning they have one stripe, until Reform, which takes place in August upon the return of the Brigade of Midshipmen.

- Unless they have zero block training (in which case they miss Sea Trials and Herndon Climb), Plebes will need to be on the Yard until Commissioning.
- The summer is partitioned into four training blocks, each of which is roughly 3 weeks (read document on Summer Training for details); one of these blocks is leave, however, they can choose to forego leave, or may need to/want to do summer school at USNA. Just as your Plebe, you are on a steep learning curve over the next several months and perhaps even years. Your Plebe will be able to answer many questions, however, you can also rely on Listserv Moderators, the Listserv group or Facebook USNA groups to ask questions.

Best of luck!

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