

# The Military Leader

Grow Yourself... Grow Your Team



(This list was compiled by The Military Leader. [Click here](#) to find many more.)

## 35 Words of Wisdom for Cadets & New Officers

“Rank is given you to enable you to better serve those above and below you. It is not given for you to practice your idiosyncrasies.”

~ General Bruce Clarke

“The test of a leader lies in the reaction and response of his followers. He should not have to impose authority. Bossiness in itself never made a leader. He must make his influence felt by example and the instilling of confidence in his followers. The greatness of a leader is measured by the achievements of the led. This is the ultimate test of his effectiveness.”

~ General Omar Bradley

“The most important thing I learned is that soldiers watch what their leaders do. You can give them classes and lecture them forever, but it is your personal example they will follow.”

~ General Colin Powell

“Always do everything you ask of those you command.”

~ General George S. Patton

“When things go wrong in your command, start searching for the reason in increasingly larger concentric circles around your own desk.”

~ General Bruce Clarke

“Soldiers will not follow any battle leader with confidence unless they know that he will require full performance of duty from every member of the team.”

~ General Dwight Eisenhower

“I may not have been the best combat commander, but I always strove to be. My men depended on me to carefully analyze every tactical situation, to maximize the resources that I had at my disposal, to think under pressure, and then to lead them by personal example.”

~ Dick Winters, summarizing the essential tasks of the military leader

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”

~ President John Kennedy

“You can assign a man to a leadership position, but no one will ever really be a leader until his appointment is ratified in the hearts and minds of his soldiers. Your soldiers will gauge how well you are doing. You can fool bosses, and at times even peers, but you can’t fool your subordinates. Look into their eyes—you’ll really learn something.”

~ General William Livsey

“Leadership in the field depends to an important extent on one’s legs, and stomach, and nervous system, and on one’s ability to withstand hardships, and lack of sleep, and still be disposed energetically and aggressively to command men, to dominate men on the battlefield.”

~ General George Marshall

“...every single soldier must know, before he goes into battle, how the little battle he is to fight fits into the larger picture, and how the success of his fighting will influence the battle as a whole.”

~ Field Marshall Montgomery

“In every battle there comes a time when both sides consider themselves beaten; then he who continues the attack wins.”

~ General Ulysses S. Grant

“The very things you want from a leader are the very things the people you are leading expect from you.”

~ Dave Ramsey

“...the success of a military commander depends largely upon his practical turn of mind, whether it be in planning and directing military operations in the field or managing the business of transportation and supply. Military science is based on principles that have been deduced from the application of common sense in the conduct of military affairs...military genius is really only the capacity to understand and apply simple principles founded on experience and sound reasoning.”

~ General John Pershing

“If I were asked to define leadership, I should say it is the projection of personality. It is the most intensely personal thing in the world because it is just plain you. The qualities that distinguish a leader from other men are courage, will power, initiative, and knowledge. If you have not got those qualities you will not make a leader; if you have them, you will.”

~ Field Marshal Sir William Slim

“A company commander’s first object should be to gain the love of his men, by treating them with every possible kindness and humanity, enquiring into their complaints, and when well-founded, seeing them redressed. He should know every man of his company by name and character.”

~ Frederick Wilhelm Von Steuben

“It is easy enough to provide soldiers with their basic needs—food and shelter, for example—but it takes skillful, imaginative and dedicated leaders to create an atmosphere where soldiers and their family members share a sense of purpose and belonging.

The message is that better soldiers demand more from their leaders. In this sense authority flows from competence, not rank. You will find in the days ahead that your ability to lead will be challenged by young soldiers anxious to succeed. They will not challenge you from the bottom of the ladder but from the top. Your future as a leader will be based upon how well you learn to manage success.”

~ General Maxwell R. Thurman 1985

Principles of successful commanders in their relations with their troops:

“He should give praise where praise is due, ungrudgingly by word of mouth or written order. He should show himself as frequently as possible to his troops and as impressively as possible. He should never indulge in sarcasm, which is being clever at someone else’s expense and always offends. He should tell his soldiers the truth, save when absolutely necessary to conceal plans.”

~ Lee Knowles lectures, Trinity College, 1939

“...I submit to you that leaders will never be more or less than their soldiers’ evaluation of them. This is the true efficiency report. From most of your troops you can expect courage to match your courage, guts to match your guts, endurance to match your endurance, motivation to match your motivation, esprit to match your esprit, a desire for achievement to match your desire for achievement. You can expect a love of God, a love of country and a love of duty and they won’t mind the heat if you sweat with them, and they won’t mind the cold if you shiver with them.

You see, you don’t accept the troops, they were there first. They accept you And when they do, you’ll know. They won’t beat drums, wave flags, or carry you off the drill field on their shoulders, but you’ll know. You see, your orders will appoint you to command. No orders, letters, no insignia of rank can appoint you as a leader. Leadership is an intangible thing. Leadership is developed within yourselves and you’ll get stronger as you go.”

~ Author Unknown

“Only if you reach your potential as a leader do your people have a chance to reach their potential. You can’t give people what you do not have. If you want to increase the potential of your team, you need to keep growing yourself.”

~ John Maxwell

“Leadership can be defined in numerous ways, but probably the simplest definition is that leadership in any unit revolves around the ability of the person in charge to move a group of people, as a team, in the direction of a common goal. All of the terminology and concepts that have been used to describe successful leaders and successful leadership are built into this definition.

The bottom line is that a leader, in order to be successful by any definition, needs to have the necessary skills to create an environment in which subordinates have confidence in their abilities and their equipment, mutual respect for each other and for the leader and will respond immediately, as a team, then the leader specifies a mission.

Every soldier is a leader regardless of his rank or position. His attitude, opinions, desires and deportment mold the approach to mission taken by those above him and his subordinates. It is the summation of this leadership by ‘every soldier’ that makes our Army a winner.

NCO’s must lead soldiers in execution of the activities of the day. Such leadership is exemplified in understanding the instruction or task at hand before beginning; in giving clear, concise instruction; and in being a demanding, willing teacher and an aggressive role model.”

~ Author Unknown

“When you are commanding, leading [soldiers] under conditions where physical exhaustion and privations must be ignored, where the lives of [soldiers] may be sacrificed, then, the efficiency of your leadership will depend only to a minor degree on your tactical ability. It will primarily be determined by your character, your reputation, not much for courage—which will be accepted as a matter of course—but by the previous reputation you have established for fairness, for that high-minded patriotic purpose, that quality of unswerving determination to carry through any military task assigned to you.”

~ General George C. Marshall, Speaking to officer candidates in September 1941

General Colin Powell’s Rules:

1. It ain’t as bad as you think. It will look better in the morning.
2. Get mad, then get over it.
3. Avoid having your ego so close to your position that when your position falls, your ego goes with it.
4. It can be done!
5. Be careful what you choose. You may get it.
6. Don’t let adverse facts stand in the way of a good decision.
7. You can’t make someone else’s choices. You shouldn’t let someone else make yours.
8. Check small things.
9. Share credit.
10. Remain calm. Be kind.
11. Have a vision. Be demanding.
12. Don’t take counsel of your fears or naysayers.
13. Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.

“...and through all this welter of change and development your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolate. It is to win our wars. Everything else in your professional career is but corollary to this vital dedication. All other public purposes, all other public projects, all other public needs, great or small, will find others for their accomplishments; but you are the ones who are trained to fight.

Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the nation will be destroyed, that the very obsession of your public service must be Duty, Honor, Country....”

~ General Douglas MacArthur