

**Class of 2029**  
**Graduate March Back Training Guide**

This information is based on previous march backs and is subject to change

You should not participate in the Graduate March Back if you are not physically fit. If you are out of shape or if you have medical issues/concerns, please do not register!

For Graduates, there are two options to participate in the march back:

**Option 1 - March from Lake Frederick (total distance is approximately 14 miles)**

You will face two major challenges.

First is a lack of sleep due to the very early departure time. Make sure you are well rested before you arrive.

Second is the terrain, which is a series of rocky paths, mostly uphill, some downhill, but all challenging. **You need to be physically fit.**

The distance from Lake Frederick to the Ski Slope is approximately 12 miles. The rate of march is 20 minutes per mile. It takes about 4 hours to complete and will begin before daybreak.

The profile of the march is below.



Graduates will march in the prescribed uniform.

Graduates are placed evenly throughout the New Cadet Companies. You will be assigned a specific platoon and company. You must stay with this platoon during the entire march to the ski slope. If you cannot keep pace with your assigned company you will be placed in the straggler control vehicle.

The route and terrain are as follows. Note, there will only be a few brief rest stops between Lake Frederick and the Ski Slope.

1) The first three miles are the most difficult. It is on rough and narrow gravel roads and mostly uphill. It is a true test of your physical conditioning.

2) The next 5.5 miles are also on gravel roads which are up and down like a roller coaster. It is difficult, but not as tough as the first three miles. This portion ends at Round Pond with a short rest stop.

3) The last 3.5 miles are mostly on asphalt on either downhill or level terrain. The last mile is on the golf course ending at the ski slope. When you reach the base of the Ski Slope, the Cadets and Graduates will part company. Graduates assemble and rest in the Class of 1948 Ski Lodge.

**It is important to keep yourself hydrated during the march.**

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**Option 2 - March from the Ski Slope (total distance is 2 miles)**

Graduates are bused from Buffalo Soldier Field to the Class of 1948 Ski Lodge to link-up with the other Graduates who completed the march from Lake Frederick.

Graduates will march in the prescribed uniform; received at registration.

Graduates march in formation behind the New Cadet Companies. This portion of the march is mostly downhill or flat and takes about 30 minutes to complete.

**A suggested training program for those marching back from Lake Frederick**

1. You should begin training at least three months out. You must feel confident in your ability to walk a long distance, with limited visibility, under challenging environmental and terrain conditions.

2. Start out with a distance you can easily handle with at least three sessions per week. Increase one or two of your sessions by a mile each week until you feel you can handle a 14-mile hike with ease. On the days you aren't walking, do some other aerobic exercise.

3. You must be able to go up and down steep inclines at a brisk pace, so include hilly terrain in your routes. If you live in flat country, consider using stairwells or sports stadium bleachers. All you need is one hill or set of stairs – just repeat, over and over!

4. Plan a day of rest after your longest walk of the week. Try not to get over-fatigued, which could lead to illness or injury. If you find yourself overtired and irritable, you are probably training too hard. Intersperse more rest days or slow your pace.

5. Get exposure to walking in the dark or early morning. Ensure you wear reflective gear.

6. Train on a rocky and hilly trail – this will prepare you for the rough surfaces you'll face in the dark during the first portion of the route.

7. A suggested training plan for the first week is below. Add a mile or 30 minutes to your plan each week until you reach 14 miles.

Sunday	1 mile Walk
Monday	Rest Day
Tuesday	1 Hour Walk
Wednesday	Rest Day
Thursday	3 mile Walk
Friday	Rest Day
Saturday	Other Aerobic Exercise

8. By 1 August, you should feel confident that you can walk at least 14 miles (at a 20 minute per mile rate of march) over hilly terrain and varied surfaces with no more than two short breaks.

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**Suggested personal equipment and supplies.**

1. Hiking Boots/Shoes: Your single most important item. Don't wear running shoes. Recommend you wear a waterproof hiking boot that supports your ankle to reduce the chances of an ankle sprain. Make sure they fit well with a heavyweight sock. Buy them early, so you can break them in.

2. Hiking/Trekking Pole(s): Some Graduates use a hiking/trekking pole(s). They add extra stability when walking over loose rock or sandy surfaces, especially at night. If you use a hiking/trekking pole(s), be conscious of where you place the tip(s) – you don't want to hit another marcher!

3. Hiking Socks: Recommend a cushioned sock that wicks moisture. Make sure you carry an extra pair during the march.

4. Back Pack: A small/light back pack is recommended to carry water, extra socks, a rain jacket, foot powder, band aids, etc.

5. Hydration: You will receive a water bottle with your registration items. However, we recommend that everyone bring a Camelbak or other hydration device.

6. Uniform: All Graduates marching at West Point will wear the shirt and hat issued at registration. Graduates will have to purchase a pair of shorts/pants for the march. The Academy will announce the color of the shorts/pants. There are no exceptions!

**SAFETY**

**Physical Fitness** - You should not participate in the Graduate March Back if you are not physically fit. If you are out of shape or if you have medical issues/concerns, please do not register!

**Water** – Make sure you stay hydrated during the march. Each Graduate receives a water bottle you can refill for the march. You may want to bring a Camelbak or other hydration device.

**Sleep** - You will get a limited amount of sleep on Sunday night and you are participating in a long march over difficult terrain. As a result, you will be very tired after the march. Therefore, plan to have someone drive you home or to the airport or make arrangements to stay another night.