

## Inside the Basic Division Officer Course, Part 1

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My name is David Glaser and I'm a brand new ensign, fresh out of Officer Candidate School (OCS), and headed to Basic Division Officer Course (BDOC). (Cue to *rest of the group*- "Hi David"). With the recent changes to the Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) pipeline, I spent two months at the commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet headquarters, until the next BDOC class was ready to kick-off. I was asked by the staff to create a few blog posts before, during and after BDOC to quell perceptions, enlighten future SWO candidates headed to BDOC on rumors vs. reality, and update fleet SWOs on what the BDOC curriculum offers now.

In my BDOC preparations, I spent time talking with the current BDOC students and current SWOs. They overwhelmingly said that for many new SWOs the United States Coast Guard (USCG) Rules of the Road (ROR) is the biggest learning curve to overcome. Knowing this and knowing I prefer reading from hard copies, I bought the *USCG Navigation Rules and Regulations Handbook*. I also found that there are resources on the USCG website, such as PDFs, practice tests and other resources. As well, there's an E-DIVO app that has practice tests.

While I am preparing for ROR, I am also excited for the hands-on learning, particularly the Conning Officer Virtual Environment (COVE) simulator. Since OCS has a COVE, we were able to get a few simulator lessons, which I found incredibly valuable as both a visual learner and future SWO. The COVE allows students to simulate being a conning officer, as well as create various navigation challenges – from man overboard to avoiding mines. I am excited to see the full capabilities of the COVE at BDOC!

Through my years of study, I've read stories of sailors fighting the ship; using their training to save themselves, their ship, and their shipmates. For this reason, I have an appreciation for the Damage Control (DC) training I received at OCS and think the DC training I will receive at BDOC will be invaluable to my future shipboard tour. I believe in practical training and the muscle memory that develops from it. I hope BDOC gives me a chance to experience multiple reps at the fire and wet trainers.

I'm eager to learn and get on the path toward becoming a Surface Warfare Officer. BDOC allows me, the student, to focus my own professional development without all the daily distractors of ship life. I'll be back in a month or so to give the SITREP on what I've learned up to that point. Until next time.



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February 17, 2019 at 10:03 am | [Edit](#)

Hi David, welcome to SWOdom! I retired as a SWO a year and half ago after 41 years and have seen a lot of changes. Here are some things I think are important. Being a DIVO is a challenging job, and BDOC should give some basics on your duties. What is needed is to give you the tools to understand how much is involved, how to manage time, and how to prioritize. You will spend a lot of time with your Chief and senior enlisted to run the division and need to know when to trust and when to verify. Your MAIN job is to qualify SWO or you don't get to advance. Keep focus. As for qualifying, you can run every simulator known to man, but actually driving the ship gives you the feel of the ship and the ocean. Each ship is different and has its own nuances, and every underway the seas are different. Embrace the opportunity to conn every chance you get. As for seamanship and being a good mariner you need to know the rules of the road, not just the words but the meaning behind them. Getting that and the feel of the ship/seas will serve you well in tight situations. Finally, we are in the electronic age of plots and charts. You would do well to take manual charts of your home port and plot your own courses in and out. In doing so you find the ranges, the turn bearing/ranges, and the points of interests.

Understanding these by doing it manually adds to your confidence that the electronic systems are working properly. Developing the “seaman's eye” allows you to drive with confidence without being stuck looking at a radar or display. Good luck with your class and future endeavors in the fleet!!

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