



ACTIVITY

Drill Like a Marine

1812 Marines on USS *Constitution* spent time drilling on board—practicing marching and following directions in unison. Teach your students to drill like a Marine using commands from the time period. This Marine drill is like a game of ‘Simon Says’. If you are interested in a similar game, try the sailor’s version called ‘[Captain’s Coming](#).’

Drill Like a Marine

Educator assembles children, and explains that children are going to practice marching in a line like 1812 Marines. Hand out wooden “muskets” and instruct your new “recruits” how to stand and hold “musket”. (You can use a wrapping paper cardboard tube, or anything 2-3 feet long and thin for your “musket”).

The following commands and descriptions are extracted from period drill manuals.

1. **Recruits line up** shoulder-to-shoulder, the tallest on the right of the line, the shortest on the left.
2. **Begin with *The position of a Soldier under Arms***

In this position, the soldier stands straight, with heels two inches apart and toes turned out, the belly drawn in a little and the chest out.

The soldier’s shoulders are square to the front and kept back.

The right arm hangs down at the side. The left hand carries the musket like this:

Fingers curled under the butt, and the stock resting against the left shoulder. The barrel should be nearly perpendicular.

Attention!, from *The Elements of War*, Isaac Maltby, 1811



3. **Give command *Attention!*** Everyone assumes the “position of the soldier” and stands silently.
4. **Practice facings:**

Give the command: *To the Left-Face!* (Everyone turns in place to the left)

Give the command: *Front!* (Everyone turns back around, to face forward)

Give the command: *To the Right-Face!* (Everyone turns in place to the right)

Give the command: *Front!* (Everyone turns back to face forward)

Give the command: *To the Right About-Face!* (Everyone turns clockwise 180 Degrees, so that they are now facing what was the back of the line)

Give the command: *To the Right About-Face!* (Everyone turns clockwise 180 Degrees, so that they are now facing back to the front)

5. You may **practice facings** several times.

6. **Marching:**

During the War of 1812, the Marines marched with what was called the “Common Step”. Each pace was two feet, and they marched to a beat of 75 steps per minute. It may be difficult to get young kids to walk this slowly, but with older children it might be possible. The other important difference between modern marching and marching during the period is that soldiers were taught to point their toes as they marched.

From *The Elements of War*, Isaac Maltby, 1811

7. Practice Marching:

Give the command: *To the Front- March!* (Everyone steps off together with their left foot.)

Give time by saying the cadence: *Left, Left, Left, Right, Left!* (To make sure everyone steps on the proper foot at the proper time.)

Give the command: *Halt!* (Everyone stops marching.)

Give the command: *To the Right About- Face!* (To go back the other direction, Everyone turns in place 180 degrees clockwise. They are now facing the way they came.)

Give the command: *Company- Dismissed!* (Once back to the beginning, and the recruits may disperse.)

This sequence of commands is just a suggestion. Each educator may adapt them to suit the needs of the situation.

