



Level: CEFR B1 /
ADFELPS 5 and above

Military English

Lesson: An Officer's Biography – Reading

TEACHER'S COPY

Overview:

This lesson presents vocabulary related to an army officer's life and career, in the context of a biography sent to the CO of a new unit.

In this lesson, you will:

- ✓ read and find the main idea in a text
- ✓ read for detail
- ✓ learn the meaning of new words
- ✓ use new words in writing
- ✓ practise writing your own biography

Prepare for Reading

Teacher's notes are indicated by this: **TN →**

TN → This lesson is very busy (there is a lot to get through!). If your students (Ss) are slower readers and writers, you might like to do this lesson over 2 sessions. Draw Ss attention to the green talking points and set a time limit of 5min. At the end of the time, ask some Ss one interesting thing about what they talked about.

1) Discuss these questions with a partner.

a. Before you start working in a new place, do you have to talk or write to your new CO?

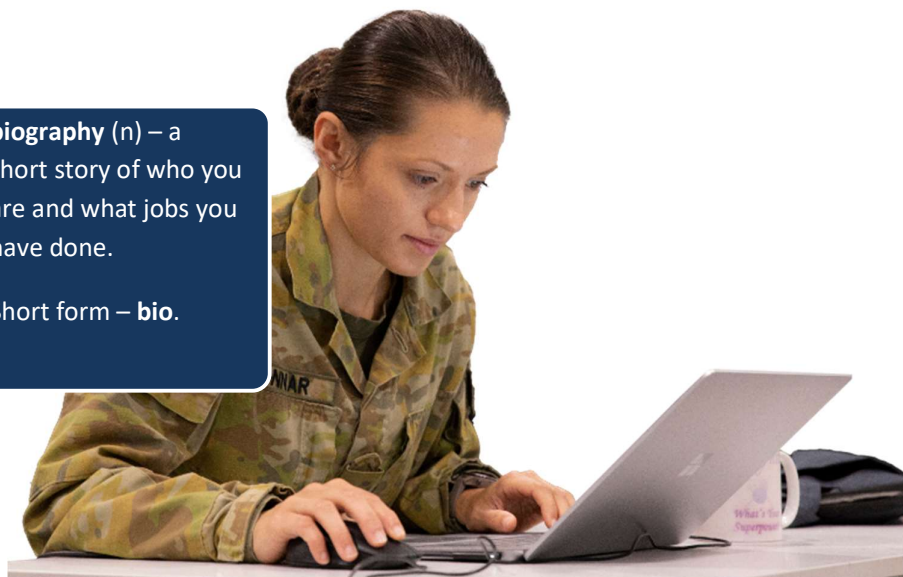
Yes? What do you write?

No? How do you usually introduce yourself?

b. How will you meet all the other people when you are in a new unit?

biography (n) – a short story of who you are and what jobs you have done.

Short form – **bio**.



2) In the ADF, before starting work in a new place, an officer must send a letter to his/her new CO.

TN → This exercise is about the conventions for an Australian bio. You may like to check if they write these letters in the same way in your context. Go over the instructions as a class and allow 5min for Ss to complete the activity. Monitor, and support Ss with unfamiliar vocab as necessary. When time is up, ask Ss to compare with their partner before checking answers (ans) as a class. If you know that similar letters in your context are different, point this out now.

a. Look at the list of topics below. Write the topics below in the correct box.

- rank
- when you joined the army, navy or air force
- any awards or medals you have
- things you're not good at
- what you like doing in your job
- past jobs
- future jobs
- education
- family
- spare time activities
- favourite food
- names of pets

what MUST be in a bio

- rank
- when you joined the army / navy/air force
- any awards you have
- past jobs (e.g. where you worked, what job you did)
- education

what MIGHT be in a bio

- future jobs (e.g. what you want to do in the future)
- spare time activities
- family

what is NOT in a bio

- things you're not good at
- what you like or don't like doing in your job
- names of pets
- favourite food

Reading

3) Read this letter from an Australian Army Officer quickly. Answer the questions, as you read.

- Is this formal or informal? How do you know? **TN → Formal. Tone and structure**
- Who is sending the letter? Who is receiving it? **TN → Penny Tarnar is sending. Maria Famm is receiving.**
- Do you think Penny will be good at her new job? Why/not? **TN → Ss own answers, but she sounds good, and that is the point of the letter!**

TN → Exercises 3 & 4 aim to have Ss notice the structure and writing conventions for this genre of writing. Allow approx. 5min for each activity, before Ss compare with their partners and you check ans as a class.



AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE TRAINING CENTRE

Defence International Training Centre

1 **Lieutenant Colonel Maria Famm**

Commanding Officer
Defence Force School of Languages
Royal Australian Air Force Base Williams
LAVERTON VIC 3027

Dear Ma'am

- I am **excited** to begin my Vietnamese language course at the Defence Force School of Languages so I **can go** to Vietnam in the future. I **would like to take** this opportunity to introduce myself.
- In 2018, I **was commissioned** into the Royal Australian Army Educational **Corps**, because I **wanted** a challenging and exciting **career**.
- My first **posting** as a Lieutenant **was** to **Headquarters** – Education Wing at Simpson **Barracks**, Melbourne. Here I **gave** educational support to the Defence Force School of Signals. In 2019, I **completed** the **Specialist** Service Officers' First Appointment Course at Royal Military **College** – Duntroon, Canberra. In 2020, I **was posted** to Army Education Centre – Central West at the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Edinburgh, South Australia. Here, I **provided** instructor professional development for the Warrant Officer and Non-Commissioned Officer Academy. At the end of 2021, I **was promoted** to the **rank** of Captain and then **posted** to the Army Logistics Training Centre at Latchford Barracks, Bonegilla in 2022. Here, I **provided** learning systems advice to the Workforce and Training Group trade **cells**. I **am** currently **posted** to the Defence International Training Centre as an instructor.
- I **am** married without children. My husband **is** an RAAF **Warrant Officer**, who **is based** at RAAF **Base** Point Cook, in Melbourne. I **like** sports, especially volleyball. I also **enjoy** playing the guitar.
- I **look forward to** improving my language skills at the Defence Force School of Languages to **help** me with my future posting to Vietnam.

Yours faithfully

7 **Penny Tarnar**

Captain
Instructor
0412 123 456
penny.tarnar@defence.gov.au

4) Order the parts of the letter. Look at the example.

- 2 The reason for writing.
- 3 When the writer joined the military and details of their training.
- 5 Personal life such as family and spare time.
- 6 Future plans.
- 1 The COs name and contact details.
- 4 List of postings highlighting why you will be good at the new job.
- 7 The writer's name and contact details.

Learning Military Vocabulary

5) The words in **bold** are important military words that you should learn. Match the military words on the left to their definitions on the right. Look at the example first.

TN → Ask Ss to look at the example. Explain: 1. match the words in bold on the left with the definition on the right; 2. the tables are separate so the ans for table one are only in table one. Give Ss 10 mins. It's important to monitor. Go around the class and randomly check Ss' ans. If they're incorrect, just say they're incorrect and let them work out the mistake. Give Ss more time if necessary. Then ask them to check with a partner. After this, ask individual Ss to give ans to the whole class, one S per ans.

Table one

I was commissioned into the...	c	a. (n) Military personnel live and sleep in these buildings.
Royal Australian Army Educational Corps	d	b. (v) When military personnel move to a different place to work for some time e.g. 2 years.
a challenging and exciting career	f	c. (v) To be given the right to lead in the military.
My first posting was to...	b	d. (n) A group who has the same kind of job or trade.
posting was to Headquarters – Education Wing	g	e. (n) An expert in their field.
To Simpson Barracks	a	f. (n) The jobs or work someone does over their lifetime.
Specialist Service Officers	e	g. (n) The place where military leaders plan and control operations.

Table two

Royal Military College	n	h. (n) A building or group of buildings where soldiers work and live.
I was promoted	m	i. (n) Small groups of people who work together on a special task or area. They are like small teams within a bigger group.
the rank of captain	k	j. (n) A high-ranking soldier.
Workforce and Training Group trade cells	i	k. (n) What level an officer or a soldier is. For example, lieutenant, captain, private, etc.
My husband is a Warrant Officer	j	l. (v) To stay at a main workplace or home location for a job in a particular place. For an officer, it is where they live and work most of the time.
who is based at	l	m. (v) when someone moves to a higher level or position in the military e.g. move from captain to major
Air Force Base	h	n. (n) a school that teaches or trains people for a job

6)  Now let's practise saying the words. Listen and repeat.

TN → Ask Ss to look at the words in bold in exercise five. Ask 'Why are some syllables underlined in those words?' (they show the stressed syllable in words that have more than one syllable). Ask the whole class to repeat after the recording, paying attention to the stress. Then play a second time, but ask individual Ss to repeat. Correct their pronunciation if needed, especially in regards to word stress.

7) Complete the sentences below with words from exercise four.

TN → Tell Ss an important part of learning new words is to use them correctly. This exercise will help them do this, as it uses some of the new words in different sentences. Give them 3-4min to do it individually (or, for weaker Ss, in pairs). For FB, first ask them to check in pairs, then call individual Ss to write their ans on the board. If their ans is incorrect, leave it as is for the moment. If there are any incorrect ans on the board, when all ans are on the board, elicit from the whole class which ones are incorrect.

- a. When I went across to the headquarters the CO was in her office.
- b. The highest rank in the army is General.
- c. I went to military college to do officer training for 3 months.
- d. The General works at a large army base in the capital of my country.
- e. I am a Lieutenant. In two years, I hope to be promoted to Captain.

8) Look at CAPT Tarnar's letter on page 3 again. Highlight the verbs in the text.

- What tense are they in?
- Are they active or passive? Why?

TN → On your copy, the active verbs are **pink** (excited; can go; would like to take; wanted; was; gave; completed; provided; provided; am; is; like; enjoy; look forward to; help) and the passive verbs are **green** (was commissioned, was posted, was promoted...posted; am posted; is based). Elicit that past simple is used for past postings and present for facts about Penny and her current post. More about how to form the passive here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWzmwCbz6ow>

Explain to Ss that we use the passive when the subject of the sentence is not the agent (verb doer). Write the sentence, "I was promoted in 2022". Ask Ss "Who decided that I should get a better job?" Ans - My boss, not me. Elicit the form – verb to be + v3/past participle).

Direct Ss' attention to the gap fill below. Tell Ss that they will need to decide whether the verb in brackets should be active or passive and also what the correct tense is. Allow students to work in pairs if you feel they need the extra support. Allow 5 mins and then have Ss compare with their friends. Elicit the correct answers as a class and have Ss explain why they answered the way they did.

- 9) Read sentences from another bio below. Can you put the verbs in the right tense and correct voice (passive or active)? Look at the example.

- 1) Currently, I am based (base) at the Defence Force School of Languages.
- 2) I joined (join) the RAN in 1990 as an Apprentice at HMAS Nirimba.
- 3) I was based (base) in this position within the United States Fifth Fleet as the Director of Operations for the Combined Maritime Forces in 2018.
- 4) I served (serve) as the Chief of Staff to the Chief of the Defence Force from 2022-2021.
- 5) I was commissioned (commission) as an officer in 2024.
- 6) I was promoted (promote) to the rank of Commodore in 2009.
- 7) I look/am looking (look) forward to being deployed as a peacekeeper in the future.
- 8) In the future, I want to be posted (post) overseas.

Speaking practice

- 10) Congratulations! You have your new dream posting and are getting ready to write a letter introducing yourself to your new CO! Make notes about the following.

TN → In this activity, Ss brainstorm ideas for the final writing task. Allow 5min for Ss to make notes before discussing their ideas with a partner.

- What the job is and where it is
- When you joined the military and your training
- List of postings highlighting why you will be good at this job
- Personal life such as family and spare time
- Future plans

- 11) Tell your partner about yourself using the notes above. Do they think you will be good at the new job? Do they have any other ideas for your letter?

TN → Ask Ss to take turns talking about themselves. Set a time limit of 2min for each S. When they're done, ask the whole class for a show of hands: "Put your hand up if you think your partner will be good at the new job."

Writing practice

TN → Ss should try to write this in class. Set a time limit. Depending on the level of your class, 30-40 mins should be enough. If time allows, have Ss peer review each other's work. Collect the writing at the end of class and mark it. In your feedback, don't forget to talk about what Ss did well as well as ways that Ss can improve!

12) Now try writing your own letter of introduction.

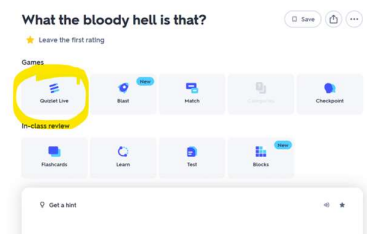
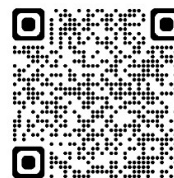
- Use pages 2-5 to help you structure your writing.
- Try to use as many of the words from this lesson as possible

13) Before you give your writing to a partner who will read your bio, check if you have used

- past and present tense
- passive and active voice correctly
- vocabulary from the lesson

- For more practice with the words you've learned here, scan the QR code for a set of flashcards. You can do some more study on the vocab in this lesson on your own with these. →

TN → If you have time left over, play Quizlet live to consolidate the lesson. You will need to be logged into Quizlet for you to start the game as a teacher. Otherwise, you cannot see the icon. **Here is a video on how the game works -** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q64qTBfK0iE>



- This lesson links with: Lesson – An Officer's Biography (Listening)

© Commonwealth of Australia 2025

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth), no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Department of Defence.