

INSPECTOR'S GUIDE (TRAINER)



VFW Inspectors

Trainer Booklet

Overview: We have created a training module to assist Departments and Districts to educate and train Inspectors. This Training Booklet should be used to provide talking points for those facilitating the VFW Inspectors training. The training is meant to be interactive (with group participation). The entire module should take approximately 1 hour to complete.

Materials Needed:

- The room should be arranged in work groups at tables with 4-8 people at each table.
- Each table should have a current Podium Edition.
- Each participant will need a copy of the “VFW Inspectors – Participant Handout.”
- Laptop, projector, and screen (if available).

Mission Statement: Post Inspections are on-site interviews between the Inspector and Post leadership where the Inspector acts as an advisor to ensure the Post is operating pursuant to the provisions of the VFW Bylaws and that the Post operates for the purposes defined in our congressional charter. By collecting data, assessing operations, and lending best practices, the Inspector acts as a diligent instructor who imparts knowledge and guidance of Post operations. After inspection, the Inspector brings their findings and recommendations to their Leadership's attention in order to create a standard for the Post and to ensure a strong foundation for the future.

Every VFW officer is a leader first, and the Inspector is no different. To be a leader within the VFW means connecting with those around you; inspiring them with a shared sense of mission; and through education and engagement, mobilizing them in order to accomplish a common goal.

Trainer:

Inspectors are more than data collectors, they are observers and educators. They are leaders and mentors.

So to start our training we first need a firm **mission statement**.^{*} Although this is rather lengthy for a mission statement it encapsulates the mission of an inspector and their role as a leader. It helps us set the standard; a standard we hope all will embrace.

This mission statement will be your guide during this exercise.

Effective leaders are active, connected, and engaged – effective inspectors are no different.

**If you're wondering how to come up with your own mission statement, please consult our Leadership and Development Training behind the member login at vfw.org.*

Inspectors Are Prepared: Before Inspection

1. **What are you doing to prepare?** *Proactive Inspectors prepare themselves and prepare the Post in order to identify problems and course correct a strategy.*
 - a. Do you know the Post officers and their membership? What are their VFW backgrounds, knowledge, and goals? How can you utilize their strengths to accomplish the mission?
 - i. Keeping in mind the questions above, identify three (3) proactive steps you can take to prepare:
 1. Yourself
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 2. The Post
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

Trainer:

The better one prepares themselves and the Post, the better the results.

For exercise 1. Yourself: Review Past Inspections; not necessarily to review past deficiencies, but to evaluate the level of thoroughness of the previous inspections.

Evaluate the operation and main focus utilizing Post's social media accounts, websites, community service report, membership stats.

This will help each inspector create talking points and a plan of action.

For exercise 2. The Post: Phone calls, written reminders of day and time. Utilize these reminders to explain your process and how the Post can best prepare documents for your review.

Inspectors Are Informed: During Inspection

1. As an Inspector, it's often too easy to become fixated on your own point of view and spend your time trying to convince others of your opinions instead of trying to find out theirs. By asking questions and listening carefully to answers, we can discover valuable perspectives other than your own and may be able to find amicable solutions to problems. That's valuable because we often make faulty assumptions about other Post officers and members:
 - a. We believe people are good at the same things we are good at - they aren't.
 - i. What is the collective institutional knowledge of the Post officers? Don't assume just because an Officer has held a position for an extended time that their operations are flawless.
 - b. We believe people are energized by the same things that energize us - they aren't.
 - i. What are the goals of the Post? How are these goals being translated in their operations?
 - c. We believe people see the big picture in the same way we do - they don't.
 - i. After assessing and identifying weak points in Post operations and procedures, ask the Post officers to give you possible solutions. How does their big picture differ from yours? This may give you invaluable perspective into how those Officers perceive the mission.

Can you Identify where your or another Inspector's faulty assumption hindered the inspection process?

Trainer:

What are you doing during the Inspection? What is your demeanor and attitude?

By asking questions and listening carefully to answers, you can discover valuable perspectives other than your own and may be able to find amicable solutions to problems.

Being informed means more than just having VFW knowledge – it means taking the time to listen to those who you are inspecting and guiding them to a solution

We cannot assume anything!

Assumptions are a one sided conversation; Inspections should be a dialogue between you as the inspector and the Post members.

Great Inspectors are informed and not only utilize the resources available to them they make sure the Post Officers they are inspecting are also informed.

- d. VFW tools and training.
 - i. Commander-In-Chief General Orders, National Headquarters Bulletin
 - ii. Department, District, and Post Bylaws
 - iii. VFW Podium Edition (Congressional Charter, Bylaws, Manual of Procedure, and Ritual)
 - iv. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised
 - v. VFW.org Training Hub (VFW Training and Support)
 - vi. Department Training Programs (Schools of Instruction)
- e. Identify a possible shortcoming in VFW knowledge or procedure you might find in a Post and provide a solution, being sure to include which resource you used and directions to where the resource can be found.

- i. _____

Trainer:

We must utilize VFW tools to be successful. We must pass along knowledge... Mentor, not only the officers, but members of the Post.

An inspector must not be passive; for every deficiency an Inspector finds, they must be will to educate and assist in providing a solution.

How well versed are the officers of the Post you are inspecting? If they have a problem, do they know where to look for the solution? The better the Post Officers within your Department are versed is the VFW resources available to them, the better capable they will be of solving internal issues. This relieves the burden on the Department and you as an inspector.

Exercise (e i): Every unit is chartered to fulfill the purpose of the organization. Using the “purposes” as outlined in our Congressional Charter of the Podium Edition, identifying a Post “shortcoming” and your solution to it.

For example:

Maybe the Post is not involved in Community Service Programs.

#5 in our “purpose” is to “foster true patriotism...”

Identify a VFW program and ways to assist them in completing this fraternal obligation.

2. Great Inspectors are polite but firm: how to deal with difficult people. Part of being a leader is having a thick skin, patience, and understanding when dealing with difficult people. [John F. Gwizdak, Past Commander-in-Chief]

- a. The 4 members of every Post.
 - i. **Comrade Helen Hammer** – Sits in the back of the meeting and complains about every piece of business.
 - ii. **Comrade Billy Bylaws** – Favorite question, “Is that in the Bylaws?” Wants to disrupt your meeting by challenging parliamentary procedure.
 - iii. **Comrade N.O. Change** – Favorite phrase, “We’ve always done it like that.” Adverse to any and every change proposed – refuses to abandon the past.
 - iv. **Comrade Henry Give ‘em Hell** – He wasn’t at the meeting, but won’t hesitate to voice his disapproval of the business conducted. Wants to subvert any progress made with gossip and misinformation.
- b. How do you handle these people? Be professional, be polite, have character, but be speak up and be firm. Identify three leadership attributes every Post Officer/Inspector should have, and how these attributes can be affectively applied in a Post or during an inspection.

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

Trainer:

This is a carryover from our VFW Leadership and Development training which can be found behind the membership login at vfw.org. Every Inspector should remember that poise during an inspection is important to protect (or even restore) the legitimacy of the Inspection process.

Exercise (b): We have all seen great leadership, and we have seen poor leadership. Think about those who you looked up to, inspired you and emulate those attributes.

Attribute (n); an inherent characteristic.

- Set high standards
- Live up to those standards & mentor those who attempt to follow them
- Create and share vision; be visible and out front
- Instill hope

Lead by example!

Inspectors Guidance: Deficiencies

1. **When identified, how are discrepancies handled?** *While each Department may have a differing approach when handling a Post or Post Officer's deficiencies, one constant remains: when deficiencies are ignored, no matter how minor, they can have devastating effects.*
 - a. Where Post operations are properly analyzed and evaluated, discrepancies brought to light can be corrected and overall functioning of the Post can be expected to improve.
 - b. It is important to not only provide a solution at the time of inspection, but to also show where the solution can be found. An Inspector is a mentor there to help the Post achieve a common goal, not merely to point out problems.

2. **Scenario:** While inspecting a Post you find the Adjutant's meeting minutes to be legible; however, lack substance.
 - a. Corrective Action: Reference Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law which describes the essentials for meeting minutes and apply these to the Post's operation. For example, explain the following constitutes the most essential points for inclusion for meeting minutes: Type of meeting (regular or special); Name of the organization; Date, time and place; Presence of a quorum; Officer roll call; Action taken on minutes of the last meeting; Main motions and resolutions, whether adopted or lost, but not those withdrawn, and any and all other motions (such as postponed, tabled, refer, etc.) that were adopted;

Trainer:

When identified, how are discrepancies handled?

- a. *What is your Department doing to elevate pressures on the Department of minor deficiencies?*

- b. *Does your Department have specific training or written policy, utilized by Inspectors, for correcting specific deficiencies with a specific action?*

Inspectors should never have the attitude or perceive short comings and deficiencies as an "Ah ha, I got you" moment.

Name of proposer of a motion (seconder's name if required); Reports of all officers and committees; Previous parliamentary notices, such as a notice to rescind, reconsider, all proper points of order and appeals, etc.; Any other action or proceeding worthy of record; hour of the meeting adjournment; Social or other events of the meeting occurring before, during or after the session, including names of guest speakers for the record.

3. What type of corrective action might an inspector make on the following deficiencies?
- a. Post Adjutant does not maintain a file of current orders or circulars issued from higher authority.

- b. Post does not have an effective recruiting and retention program.

- c. Post does not maintain a relief fund.

- d. Disbursements of Post funds not approved by the Post Commander.

Deficiencies of major magnitude, where inspectors suspect or can identify fraud should be reported immediately to your Department Headquarters.

Trainer:

Exercise (3): The corrective action should always include where the Post officer can find the answer. The Inspector should remember to mentor and educate during an inspection; otherwise, the deficiencies will continue.

Deficiencies of major magnitude, where inspectors suspect or can identify fraud should be reported immediately to your Department Headquarters.

Inspectors Follow-up: After Inspection

1. **What are you doing to follow-up?** *After an inspection, it is important to submit a detailed report to your leadership for review. Make sure you follow-up with Department to ensure deficiencies have been addressed in a timely manner.*
- a. Follow-up with the Post to identify corrective action was taken and to field any additional questions. Identify three methods that can be implemented in order to follow-up with a Post that has deficiencies.
- i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____
- b. A great Inspector follows-up with a Post even when no deficiencies are found. This not only shows the Post that their operations are being held accountable, but also that their Post is appreciated. Identify three methods that can be implemented in order to follow-up with a Post where no deficiencies were found.
- i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____
-

Trainer:

Emphasize the importance of mentoring and providing solutions.

Exercise (a): Follow up in a more formal way. Did your corrective action suggestion work, if not, help develop another plan of action or provide a resource.

Exercise (b): Follow up by attending a Post function or Event, reminded them of the good work they are doing and encourage.

Conclusion and Review

When challenging the status quo, it's easy to say "we can't change that because it's tradition!" or "why change when we've always done it this way?", but in order to succeed and to grow we must not only be willing to change we must embrace it.

Think of 3 practices within your organization that have made you successful in the past. Now, re-examine these practices by asking the following questions of all three.

1. Does this practice still work? (Does it still serve its original function?)
2. Does this practice impede my efforts? (Is it holding me back or preventing me from trying something new?)
3. Is this practice marginalizing and excluding those who I'm trying to reach? (Am I unable to work with certain groups simply out of tradition- am I limiting my network and sphere of influence because of the past?)

It is undoubtedly hard to let go of practices that have made you successful in the past. As long as circumstances do not change, there is no reason to; however, changing times call for changing practices, and in our dynamic society this inevitably means the failure to adapt is the failure to thrive.

The difference between Inspectors and great Inspectors is intent: great Inspectors, like leaders understand they are part of a team and make it their mission to lead their team through inspiration and education in order to help them accomplish a shared goal. Once the goal is accomplished, leaders recognize their team – they say "thank you".

Thank you for serving our country and thank you for continuing to serve your brothers and sisters through the VFW.

Trainer:

Look at current practices within your Department. How might you be an agent of change?

Change the perception of what an Inspector should be/can be.

Think of 3 practices within the inspection process that made you successful...

Does the practice:

1. Still work?
2. Impede your efforts?
3. Marginalize or exclude those you are trying to reach?

Changing times call for changing practices.

The difference between Inspectors and great Inspectors is intent: great Inspectors, like leaders understand they are part of a team and make it their mission to lead their team through inspiration and education in order to help them accomplish a shared goal. Once the goal is accomplished, leaders recognize their team – they say "thank you".

Make sure you thank your class for taking the time to train and become more educated and informed leaders.