



A SEMINAR ON CASEY'S SCHOOLS OF INSTRUCTION

SCHOOLS OF THE SOLDIER AND COMPANY

FORMING THE COMPANY

STEVE GIOVANNINI
16 DECEMBER 2025

School of the Company Instruction 373

Frequently Misused to Form the Company

Instruction 15 defines how the company should be arranged.

- 15. The formation of a regiment is in two ranks; and each company will be formed into two ranks, in the following manner: the corporals will be posted in the front rank, and on the right and left of platoons, according to height; the tallest corporal and the tallest man will form the first file, the next two tallest men will form the second file, and so on to the last file, which will be composed of the shortest corporal and the shortest man.

There is no command to form the Company from scratch!

A number of reenactors use a command derived from
School of the Company #373

1. *In two ranks, form company.* 2. *Company, right*—FACE. 3. MARCH.

Instruction 373

1. *In two ranks, form company.* 2. *Company, right—FACE.* 3. MARCH.

There are two prerequisites for use of this command:

1. The company has already been formed into two ranks in the manner indicated No. 15, Title I.
 - I.e., all the Corporals have been placed in the section and platoon breaks.
2. The officer has subsequently formed the Company into a single rank using School of the Company instruction #368.
 - 1. *In one rank, form company.* 2. MARCH.

ONLY after the Company has been formed and reduced to a single rank can the officer then RE-FORM the Company into two ranks.

- S.C. 373: The company being in single rank, when the officer shall wish to form it into two ranks, he will command:
 - 1. *In two ranks, form company.* 2. *Company, right—FACE.* 3. MARCH.

Casey's Infantry Tactics, School of the Company, Article V

FORMATION OF A COMPANY FROM TWO RANKS INTO SINGLE RANK, AND RECIPROCALLY.

368. The company being formed into two ranks in the manner indicated No. 15, Title I, and supposed to make part of a column, right or left in front, when the instructor shall wish to form it into single rank, he will command:

1. *In one rank, form company.* 2. MARCH.

369. At the first command the right guide will face to the right.

370. At the command *march*, the right guide will step off and march in the prolongation of the front-rank.

371. The first file will step off at the same time with the guide; the front-rank man will turn to the right at the first step, follow the guide, and be himself followed by the rear-rank man of his file, who will come to turn on the same spot where he had turned. The second file, and successively all the other files, will step off as has been prescribed for the first, the front-rank man of each file following immediately the rear-rank man of the file next on his right. The captain will superintend the movement, and when the last man shall have stepped off, he will halt the company, and face it to the front.

372. The file closers will take their places in line of battle, two paces in rear of the rank.

373. The company being in single rank, when the instructor shall wish to form it into two ranks, he will command:

1. *In two ranks, form company.* 2. *Company, right*—FACE. 3. MARCH.

374. At the second command the company will face to the right; the right guide and the man on the right will remain faced to the front.

375. At the command *march*, the men who have faced to the right, will step off, and form files in the following manner: the second man in the rank will place himself behind the first to form the first file; the third will place himself by the side of the first in the front-rank: the fourth behind the third in the rear-rank. All the others will, in like manner, place themselves, alternately, in the front and rear-rank, and will thus form files of two men, on the left of those already formed.

376. The formations above described will be habitually executed by the right of companies; but when the instructor shall wish to have them executed by the left, he will face the company *about*, and post the guides in the rear-rank.

377. The formation will then be executed by the same commands, and according to the same principles as by the front-rank; the movement commencing with the left file, now become the right, and in each file by the rear-rank man, now become the front; the left guide will conform to what has been prescribed for the right.

378. The formation ended, the instructor will face the company to its proper front.

Notes on reforming the Company

When reforming the Company per instruction 373, there is no “FRONT” command! When executed properly, the men are already faced TO THE FRONT.

Per instruction S.C. 375:

- “the right guide and the man on the right will remain faced to the front.”
- “the second man in the rank will place himself behind the first to form the first file; the third will place himself by the side of the first in the front-rank”

By placing themselves in this manner, they recover their dress-interval.

The use of the “FRONT” command is presumably based on instruction 378:

- S.C. 378. The formation ended, the instructor will face the company to its proper front.

The instructor needs to face them to the “proper front” because in instructions 376-377 the manual explains how to reform the Company by facing it to the Rear.

- S.C. 376. The formations above described will be habitually executed by the right of companies; but when the instructor shall wish to have them executed by the left, he will face the company about, and post the guides in the rear-rank.
- S.C. 377. The formation will then be executed by the same commands, and according to the same principles as by the front-rank; the movement commencing with the left file, now become the right, and in each file by the rear-rank man, now become the front; the left guide will conform to what has been prescribed for the right.
- 378. The formation ended, the instructor will face the company to its proper front.

In the context of instructions 376-378, the command to “face the company to its proper front” would be “ABOUT – FACE” ... not “FRONT”.

Recommended technique for forming the Company

This technique uses the fundamental skills taught in School of the Soldier: Right/Left - FACE; Doubling; and Right/Left - DRESS

1. Set the 1st Corporal in place.
2. Have the men fall in on the 1st Corporal in a single line, tall to small.
3. Command: *"In each rank—Count TWOS."*
4. Remind the men:
 - when facing in the direction of the Left Guide, the 1's double.
 - when facing in the direction of the Right Guide, the 2's double.
 - when facing to the left, the men doubling step up to the left
 - when facing to the right, the men doubling step up to the right.
5. Form the Company into two ranks
 - Option 1
 1. Position the 1st Corporal and the man on his left to form the first file of the Company.
 2. Direct the first file to stand fast.
 3. Direct the rest of the Company: "Company, Left - FACE."
 1. Note: This places the taller man in the rear of each file
 4. Direct the rest of the Company: "Without undoubling; Company, Right - FACE"
 5. Command: "Company, Right - DRESS"
 - Option 2
 1. Direct the entire Company: "Company, Right - FACE."
 1. Note: This places the shorter man in the rear of each file
 2. Direct the rest of the Company: "Without undoubling; Company, Left - FACE"
 3. Command: "Company, Right - DRESS"
6. Rearrange soldiers to pair similar body widths in each file (see discussion on next slide)
7. Place the Corporals in the Front Rank at the Section and Platoon Breaks.

Forming the Company

Pair similar body-widths in each file

- Requiring the tallest man to be in the Rear Rank as a “safety” issue is a reenactorism.
- Civil War soldiers were trained to fire by both the Front Rank and the Rear Rank.
 - The men-in-the-rear file over the arm of the men-in-the-front, not the shoulder; and the men-in-the-front raise the right elbow a little less “in order to facilitate the aim” of the men-in-the-rear.”
 - S.S. 182. When recruits are formed in two ranks to execute the firings, the front-rank men will raise it, little less the right elbow, in order to facilitate the aim of the rear-rank men.
- Per School of the Soldier, the left heel of the man on his right, is the target for the movement of the men-in-the-rear when aiming the musket.
 - S.S. 183. The rear-rank men, in aiming, will each carry the right foot about eight inches to the right, and towards the left heel of the man next it the right, inclining the upper part of the body forward.
- If each Rear Rank soldier is not properly aligned behind his Front Rank file partner when the Company is formed, i.e. head aligned behind head, then the man-in-the-rear will not be able to properly execute aiming and firing the musket.
 - Neither the direct file nor the oblique file.
 - Regardless of whether the Company is firing by the Front Rank or firing by the Rear Rank

Significance of Pairing similar body widths

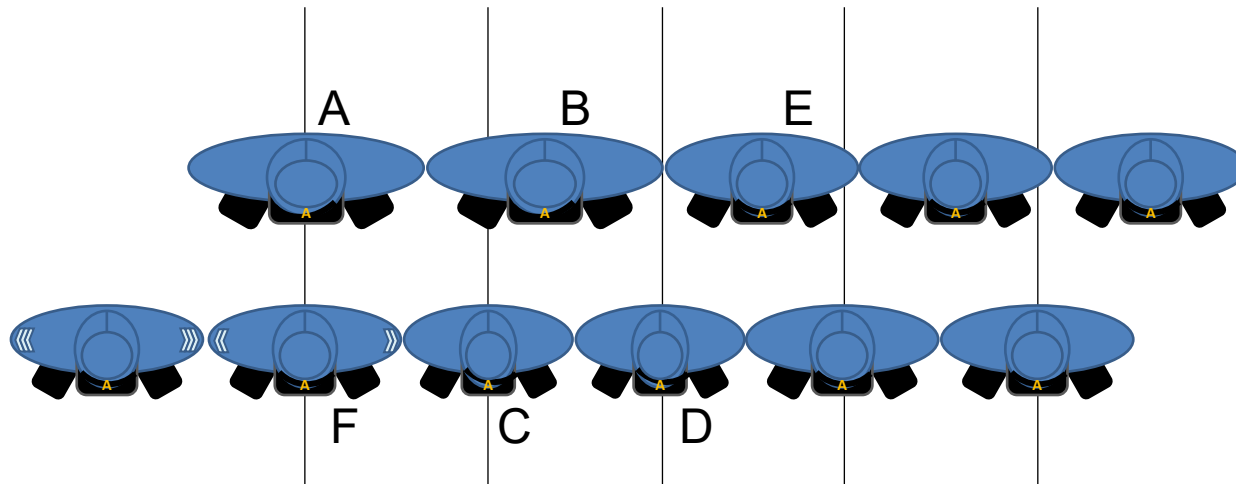
Soldiers A and B are taller and broader than most others.

Soldiers C and D are narrower than most others.

Soldiers E and F are of similar width.

Their position in the ranks prevents the Rear Rank men from being able to align their heads behind that of their file partners.

This skewed alignment adversely impacts the ability of the Rear Rank men to fire over the depressed arm of their file partner.



Significance of Pairing similar body widths

Pairing Soldiers A with B, C with D, and E with F (the Cpl) as file partners reduces the alignment skew of the Rear Rank.

Repositioning soldiers of similar body widths enables the Rear Rank men to align their heads behind that of their file partners.

Thus enabling the Rear Rank men to fire correctly over the depressed arm of their file partner.

