

All hands article by the MCPON on Induction and Initiation

Chief Petty Officers around the Fleet are making preparations to train and develop a new generation of CPOs. This August, when the results come out, Induction will begin and every one of you will see bits and pieces of it.

It is a time-honored process that has gone by several names and has changed over the years. The most traditional title was “Initiation”. For decades the term carried with it an air of mystery and even a little fear for those who were on the brink of going through it. Hundreds of thousands of Chief Petty Officers can proudly claim to be initiated, and their pride is justified. To be initiated meant you had been challenged, you had passed, then you had been accepted. More than that, you had proven yourself worthy to join the Navy’s Chiefs Mess.

Initiation was effective because a Chief Selectee was intentionally taken out of his comfort zone and asked to accomplish things that would have been impossible without all their energy, initiative and, most of all, the collective efforts of all the selectees he was being initiated with.

Induction is how we refer to the process now and it’s what we use to prepare our Selectees to enter our Mess. It was built on the traditions and the qualities we value most from Initiation. Both processes challenge a Selectee. Both carry with them a feeling of acceptance, and both terms will never be confused with anything passive or easy.

Those Initiated CPO's who have gone before us left a remarkable legacy of leadership. They were first and foremost deckplate Chiefs who were connected to their Sailors. The Induction process should build upon that and focus on a continuum of training from throughout the year and the passing of knowledge from one generation of Chiefs to the next.

Last year we brought some of the Initiation traditions back. We invited our retired, initiated, CPOs back into the process and we stressed the value of our heritage as Chiefs. This year, we’ll do the same. I’ve emphasized to our Chiefs Mess that we should recall the good things about Initiation, the serious tone and the challenge that accompanied that term. And I’ve asked that our Chiefs bring that tone back.

A Chief Selectee who wears anchors for the first time this September 16th will know that they have earned them. He or she will know they’ve been accepted by the Mess. A new Chief will be ready to lead Sailors on the deckplate and advise our leadership without hesitation. They’ll do that because Induction trains them to. It’s something I hope all of you strive for. Wearing anchors is a noble goal, shipmates. Part of that goal is proving yourself for the six weeks leading up to that pinning ceremony.

If there are first class petty officers in your command selected to Chief this summer, watch them during Induction. See how they progress and grow as leaders. It’s an inevitable transformation, one that benefits the entire Fleet. It’s a tradition I’m proud of and hope you are, as well.