

**THE POLICE
HOW-TO
GUIDES**

**HOW TO AVOID FAILING
THE FTO PROGRAM**

by William Harvey
POLICE MAGAZINE

www.PoliceMag.com

**dig
deeper**
READ OUR **HOW TO GUIDES**

 BOBIT BUSINESS MEDIA RESEARCH SERVICES

HOW TO AVOID FAILING THE FTO PROGRAM

These five behavior patterns will keep you on track to pass your probationary period and become a full-fledged officer

You've had to fight the employment gauntlet, pass the pre-testing torture course, suffer and survive the police academy and now a field training officer program. What is a recruit to do? First of all, calm down and know that we've all explored these waters, so there is no need for Jacques Cousteau.

This course of learning is a program with a specific length of field time factored in it. No, this is not a prison where you can build up good-behavior time for an early release. You must understand that every department has its own FTO program that has incremental learning phases built in.

Study the program and prepare to maximize your experience. Trust me, there will be days you wished you were still under the FTO's watchful eye. Many a day, you will wish you had paid better attention to your FTO.

There will be some days that you'll feel that you're not learning anything and that this is a total waste of your time. On these days, don't become rattled when the FTO starts to test, quiz or push you to perform. The slow days are the ones to catch up on administrative duties. On the other hand, there will be some days where daily calls will take up every second — observe, absorb and learn.

Have new officers failed the FTO period, become "reruns" or been fired? Yes. Each is a different story, but these are possibilities in life. Some had issues that the process or even the academy didn't catch, but the realities of the street and the FTO program caught. So yes, you can fail.

To ensure that you win, bring with you these behavior patterns each day:

With an **open mind**, you'll see real life, rather than role-play or created crime scenes. These are real and some may rattle you.

HOW TO AVOID FAILING THE FTO PROGRAM

Positive "can do" behavior is a must. I don't believe in attitude; you develop positive or negative behavior in response to stimulus. Bring a positive outlook, and when you're placed in a situation where we want you to produce, you'll win. No whining allowed! Give it your best at all times.

Develop an **ability to take criticism**. You may get constructive criticism throughout the day. Yes, there will be days like this. Don't personalize criticism or occasional failures. These occur and how you recover is often just as important as the correction.

Learning will continue. The day you stop learning, please turn in your shield. Just because you've graduated the academy, don't think you've stopped training. If you ever stop learning, you'll cease to grow and function as a tactical and technically proficient police officer.

Apply past learning. You'll have "building block" moments. One call or task will build upon past positive performances, and this will add more elements to the learning of this moment. Your ability to recall the KSAs (knowledge, skills and abilities) that you possess will enhance this learning moment. This adds up to success.

Passing the FTO program isn't difficult, if you accept that this is another learning station in life. Bring your best and apply all you know, and you'll pass with flying colors.

Before you know it, someday soon you'll be back in FTO school. This time, you'll be passing on your knowledge.