



THE CONTINUUM OF LEARNING

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The deliberate process of combining education, training, and experience to produce the right expertise and competence to meet the Air Force's operational needs is the key element of developing an [Airman](#). The continuum of learning (CoL) focuses on developing Airmen who thoroughly understand the mission, the organization, and [Air Force doctrine](#). These complementary aspects of force development are essential in tailoring the right development to the right person at the right time. This is an ongoing process, continuously being examined for new needs.

Education, training, and experience are the components of the CoL. Education and training represent a large investment of resources and are the primary tools in developing Airmen. They apply to the development of Airmen at all leadership levels. Education, training, and experience are distinct but related force development activities.

Bottom Line:

Force Development leverages education, training, and experience to produce adaptable, creative, knowledgeable Airmen.

Education provides critical thinking skills, encouraging exploration into unknown areas and creative problem solving. Its greatest benefit comes in unknown situations or new challenges; education prepares the individual for unpredictable scenarios. Conversely, training is focused on a structured skill set, and the results of training performance should be consistent. Thus, training provides the individual with skill expertise. Education and training together provide the tools for developing Airmen. For a further discussion on the differences between education and training, see Volume 2, [Appendix C](#). Experience, the continuously growing part of any Airman's career, is where the synthesis of education and training occurs.

The Air Force believes in learning along the entire timeline or continuum of an Airman's service, beginning with the learning obtained from accession sources, and continuing throughout a career. Over the course of service in the Air Force, each Airman will have the opportunity to be a leader. Through the CoL, the Air Force exposes Airmen to a broad-based education, training, and experience framework that equips them with the competencies to serve as leaders as they progress in rank and responsibility.