UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
THE BASIC SCHOOL
MARINE CORPS TRAINING COMMAND
CAMP BARRETT, VIRGINIA 22134-5019

TACTICAL FUNDAMENTALS B2B2269 STUDENT HANDOUT

Tactical Fundamentals

Introduction and Importance	The Marine Corps prides itself in warfighting excellence. Integral to this is a leader's ability, regardless of rank or billet, to not only make timely decisions, but tactically sound decisions. Tactical leaders hone their warfighting skills through the focused study of tactics, utilizing the nine principles of war and the six tactical tenets. When properly applied, the nine principles of war and the six tactical tenets provide the transition from the theoretical application of tactics to the practical.

Prerequisites	Keep the following references in mind as you read this handout: MCDP 1 Warfighting, introduced you to the inherently violent and chaotic nature of war. We mitigate this through clear communication of intent and simple plans, but must always understand that chaos can never be completely removed. The Marine Corps concept for winning under these conditions is maneuver warfare, the theory of which is to strike the enemy's critical vulnerability at the decisive time and place, with massed fires to bend the enemy to our will. (Warfighting) MCDP 1-3 Tactics, used Warfighting as its base, and expounded on how we fight, the art and science of warfare, and introduced you to the tactical tenets by chapter. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics)

In This Lesson	This lesson will give you a framework for making sound tactical decisions and understanding the decision making process at the tactical level of war. At its core are two evaluative concepts: the nine principles of war, and the six tactical tenets. These concepts form the basis you will use to make and evaluate sound decisions in the future. This lesson covers the following topics:

Topic	Page
The Principles of War and Tactical Tenets	4
The Art and the Science of Tactics	5

Learning Objectives

Terminal Learning Objectives

TBS-CORE-2104 While serving as a leader of Marines, make sound and timely decisions to support the mission of the Marine Corps and maintain combat readiness.

TBS-CORE-2102 While serving as a leader of Marines, be technically and tactically proficient to support the mission of the Marine Corps and maintain combat readiness.

Enabling Learning Objectives

TBS-OFF-2102b Without the aid of references, identify the six tactical tenets of Marine Corps Warfighting, in accordance with MCDP-1/ MCWP 1-3.

TBS-OFF-2102i Without the aid of references, describe the principles of war without error.

TBS-OFF-2120j Without the aid of references, describe the maneuver warfare concepts without error.

The Principles of War and Tactical Tenets

The discussion of tactics and the nine principles of war is one founded in doctrine, laid in MCDP 1 Warfighting. MCDP 1 also lays the foundation for the Marine Corps' use of doctrine, in which it states, "Our doctrine does not consist of procedures to be applied in specific situations so much as it sets forth general guidance that requires judgment in application. Therefore, while authoritative, doctrine is not prescriptive." (Warfighting, 56) In short, to effectively apply our tactical doctrine, one must not look for the formula in which to apply the theory, but rather understand the theory itself and recognize when and where it is applicable.

Tactics is "the art and science of winning engagements and battles…" (Warfighting, 30). Specifically, it refers to the concepts and methods we use to accomplish a particular objective in either combat or military operations other than war. In war, tactics "…includes the use of firepower and maneuver, the integration of different arms, and the immediate exploitation of successes to defeat the enemy." (Warfighting, 30) In addition to the application of firepower, tactics is also focused on the sustainment of forces during combat. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 3)

The Marine Corps' warfighting philosophy of maneuver warfare is rooted in the nine principles of war (Marine Corps Operations, B-1). Commonly identified by the acronym MOOSEMUSS, they are central to the understanding of tactics, and are at the heart of the practical application of tactical theory. The principles of war lend, "rigor and focus to the purely creative aspects of tactics and provide a crucial link between pure theory and actual application." (FM 3-90 Tactics, 2-3)

In combat our objective is victory. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 5) Key to accomplishing our objective lies in the successful execution of Marine Corps tactics. This execution "…hinges on the thoughtful application of a number of tactical concepts so as to achieve

success on the battlefield." (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 11) Following is the list of "tactical tenets":

- Achieving a decision.
- Gaining an advantage.
- Being faster.
- Adapting.
- Cooperating.
- Exploiting success and finishing.

These concepts are not stand-alone ideas but are combined so as to achieve an effect that is greater than their separate sum. Part of the art and science of tactics lies in knowing where and when to apply these concepts and which combinations to use to achieve the desired effect. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 11) Before we discuss the details of each tenet we will first gain a better understanding of the art and science of tactics.

The Art and the Science of Tactics

The Art of Tactics	The art of tactics lies in how we creatively form and apply military force in a given situation. It involves the creation, positioning, and maneuver of combat power. For example, understanding tactics allows us to answer questions such as: When do we attack the enemy using a frontal, flanking, or enveloping attack? This creativity is a developed capacity acquired through education, practice, and experience. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 4)
The Science of Tactics	The science of tactics lies in the technical application of combat power. It includes mastering the techniques and procedures that contribute to the warfighting skills such as marksmanship, gunnery, land navigation, and close air support. The execution of these techniques and procedures must become second nature to us, requiring intensive and continuous training. Without mastery of basic warfighting skills, artistry and creativity in their application are impossible. We must always strive for "brilliance in the basics" at all levels to ensure success. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 4)

The Common Question   The common question asked when attempting to understand the art and the science of tactics is, which is more important? The true tactician realizes that the question itself is flawed, in that it makes the assumption that one is more important than the other. Tactical victory is achieved when art and science are applied with equal weight. A common acronym used in the Marine Corps is TTPs or tactics, techniques, and procedures. TTPs is used commonplace to describe the way in which the Marine Corps does nearly everything. All MOSs (military occupational specialties) have established TTPs that govern their day-to-day operations. It is fitting then, that TTP itself embodies both the art and the science of tactics. Within the acronym, "tactics" refers to the art, while "techniques and procedures" is the science. It is evident that to truly achieve victory, one must apply a unique combination of art and science to every problem.

The Principles of War

The nine principles of war are aids to a leader as they consider how to accomplish a mission. As opposed to being prescriptive steps or actions that must be accomplished, they are guidelines for conducting operations through all the levels of war; strategic, operational, and tactical. (Warfighting, 28-32) Sightless adherence to these principles will not guarantee success, but each deviation increases risk. It is the tactician who will thoughtfully apply these principles, recognizing the risk versus gain of any omission, to focus their tactical thought into execution. The nine Principles of War are easily remembered by the acronym MOOSEMUSS. They are defined below:

Mass	The concept of "concentrating the effects of combat power at the decisive place and time to achieve decisive results." (Marine Corps Operations, B-1) As you learned in Warfighting, we must first identify which factors are critical to the enemy, and then identify a relative vulnerability to that center of gravity – this is the enemy's critical vulnerability. Vital to the concept of mass is having the insight to identify the decisive place and time in which to attack the enemy's critical vulnerability. Concentrated fire power is irrelevant if applied to an objective of no significance. We seek mass to overwhelm the enemy in an attempt to deliver the decisive blow. It applies not only to fires, but supporting elements as well. It is closely related to economy of force, as force available is limited and we must decide when and where it is appropriate to mass or economize our force.
Objective	The concept of "direct[ing] every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective." (Marine Corps Operations, B-2) Related to mass and economy of force, we must know where to mass and where to economize, which is defined by a decisive objective. It is also related to unity of command, as each subordinate must be led by the intent of one commander, towards the commonly defined objective. Communication is also critical, ensuring that the elements of the military operation are acting in consonance towards the same end.
Offensive	The concept that we, as a fighting force, are continuously focused on "seize[ing], retain[ing], and exploit[ing] the initiative." (Marine Corps Operations, B-2) Maintaining an offensive mindset does not imply that we seek to avoid defense. Rather it implies the use of the defense as a temporary expedient to prepare to resume the offense. Offense being the decisive form of combat, it is the method by which we exploit the enemy vulnerability, impose our will, and determine the course of war.

The Principles of War (Continued)

Security	The concept of "never permit[ing] the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage." (Marine Corps Operations, B-2) We look to, at appropriate times and places, adopt measures to prevent the enemy from imposing their will on us faster than we can react. It allows us to ensure our freedom of action on the battlefield and preserve our combat power for decisive action. It does not imply the over- application of caution to eliminate risk, but rather seeks to enhance our operations through bold maneuver and acceptance of calculated risk.
Economy of Force	The concept of "allocate[ing] minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts." (Marine Corps Operations, B-3) This goes hand-in-hand with the concept of mass. In order for us to concentrate decisive combat power at the decisive point, we must know where to economize forces at our secondary efforts. This also implies an acceptance of calculated risk at these secondary efforts. Limited attacks, defense, deceptions, or delaying actions can help us economize forces allowing us to weight the main effort with mass.
Maneuver	The concept that we seek to "place the enemy in a disadvantageous position through the flexible application of combat power." (Marine Corps Operations, B-3) The traditional understanding of maneuver is a spatial one; that is, we maneuver in space to gain a positional advantage. (JP 1-02, 200) However, in order to maximize the usefulness of maneuver, we must consider maneuver in other dimensions as well. The essence of maneuver is taking action to generate and exploit some kind of advantage over the enemy as a means of accomplishing our objectives as effectively as possible. That advantage may be psychological, technological, or temporal as well as spatial. Especially important is maneuver in time—we generate a faster operating tempo than the enemy to gain a temporal advantage. It is through maneuver in all dimensions that an inferior force can achieve decisive superiority at the necessary time and place. (Warfighting, 72) Maneuver alone will not defeat a force, however maneuver in conjunction with Mass, Surprise, and Economy of Force allows a seemingly inferior force to achieve decisive superiority at the necessary time and place.

The Principles of War (Continued)

Unity of Command	Best exemplified by commander's intent, "Unity of Command" is the concept that "for every objective, [we] ensure unity of effort under one responsible commander." (Marine Corps Operations, B-4) Mass, economy of force, and maneuver would be impossible without the vision of a single leader. To ensure that vision is carried to the lowest levels while still allowing for flexibility and initiative we use commander's intent. It allows for and leverages mass, objective, and economy of force at the decisive point.
Surprise	The concept that we seek to "strike the enemy at a time or place or in a manner for which he is unprepared." (Marine Corps Operations, B-4) It does not require the enemy to be caught unaware, but rather that he becomes aware too late to react effectively. May include the use of speed (maneuver in time), unexpected forces (mass), operating at night (psychological and technological maneuver), deception (psychological maneuver), security, variation in techniques, and use of unfavorable terrain (spatial maneuver).
Simplicity	The concept that the preparation of "clear, uncomplicated plans and clear, concise orders ensures thorough understanding" (Marine Corps Operations, B-4) and therefore ease of execution. Plans and orders should be as simple and direct as the situation and mission dictate. This reduces the chance of misunderstandings that inject internal friction and therefore cause ineffective execution. Ceteris paribus (all variables being equal), the simplest plan is preferred.

Achieving a Decision

In the past, military forces often won only incremental gains when they sought victory – taking a hill or a town, pushing forward only a few kilometers or adding to the body count. Sometimes these incremental gains were a result of a competent enemy or the chaotic nature of war. However, many times commanders sought incremental gains as a means to achieve victory. Therefore, the Marine Corps has embraced a more flexible, imaginative, and effective way to wage war called maneuver warfare. In contrast to tactics based on incremental attrition, tactics in maneuver warfare applies Mass through a weighted main effort at the decisive point to attain the Objective, or decisive action. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics,15)

Achieving a Decision (Continued)

Understanding the Situation	How do we achieve decisions? The first step is for the unit leader to understand the situation. The successful tactician studies the situation to develop in his or her mind a clear picture of what is happening, how it is happening, and how it might further develop. Considering the factors of mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and fire support available, time and civil considerations (METT-TC), the unit leader must think through all actions that determine the desired result and ascertain the means to achieve that result. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 25)
Analytical Decision Making	Analytical decision making is the most comprehensive and accurate type of decision making. The reason is the time available allows for a detailed review of the situation and comparison of multiple options that subsequently lead to a decision and resulting action. Your tactical planning classes will take you through the methods and tools we use to conduct an analytical decision making process prior to execution. Remember however that analytical decision making is not limited to the preparation phase of an operation. It continues into the conduct and consolidation phases as well, albeit to a lesser degree due to the nature of those environments. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 26)
Intuitive Decision Making (Pattern Recognition)	As the situation changes so will the solutions and the actions that derive from it. For every situation, the unit leader must decide which of the countless and other confusing pieces of information are important and reliable. The unit leader must determine what the enemy is trying to do and counter those efforts. The unit leader's skill is essentially pattern recognition, which is the ability to build a complete picture with very little information. Pattern recognition is the ability to understand the significance and dynamics of a situation with limited information. Pattern recognition is essential for success on the battlefield. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 25-26)
Acting Decisively	Our ability to understand a decision is useless if we are not prepared to act decisively. When the opportunity arrives, we must exploit it fully and aggressively, committing every ounce of combat power we can muster and pushing ourselves to the limits of exhaustion. The keys to this are: • Identifying enemy critical vulnerabilities, (gaps or critical vulnerabilities)

Acting Decisively (Continued)	• Shaping the operating area to our advantage.
	• Utilizing strict economy of force in secondary efforts.
	• Maintaining an offensive mindset by weighting and applying our main effort with mass, surprise, and security against the enemy's vulnerability at the decisive time and place.
	Identifying enemy critical vulnerabilities is imperative. By identifying them, we can focus our efforts on the critical vulnerability that will cause the enemy bend to our will most quickly. (*MCDP 1-3 Tactics,29-30*)
Shaping the Operating Area	Now that the unit leader has an estimate of the situation and has determined which critical vulnerabilities to exploit, the battlefield can begin to be shaped to our advantage. Shaping the battlefield includes both lethal and non-lethal activities such as:
	• Planning fires to fix the enemy.
	• Using an axis of advance to facilitate movement.
	• Designating objectives to focus combat power.
	• Using deceptive measures to reinforce enemy expectations.
	Shaping activities can make the enemy vulnerable to attack through surprise, impede his ability to maneuver (facilitating the maneuver of friendly forces), and otherwise dictate the time and place for a decisive battle. Shaping forces the enemy to adopt courses of actions favorable to us. (*MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 31*)
Designating a Main Effort	Of all the actions going on within our command, we recognize designating a main effort as one of the most critical elements of our success. The main effort is a unit assigned the responsibility for accomplishing the mission; it is the focal point on which we mass the combat power of the force. Making effective use of mass and security for the main effort and economy of force for those supporting efforts that compliment it ensure mission success at the decisive point. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 32-33)

Gaining an Advantage

After we understand the situation and achieve a decision, we must work to leverage that which we know, and that which we have, to maximize our advantage over the enemy. Central to gaining an advantage is deciding on what, where, and when our decisive points and actions are. Below are several examples of how we can seek to gain an advantage. Note the application of the principles of war.

Combined Arms	The most common means of gaining an advantage lies in the use of combined arms. It is based on the idea of presenting the enemy not merely with a problem, but with a dilemma — a no win situation. We combine supporting arms, organic fires, and maneuver in such a way that any action the enemy takes to avoid one threat makes them more vulnerable to another. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 39-40)
Maneuver	Traditionally, maneuver has meant moving in a way that gains positional advantage. For example, we may maneuver by enveloping an exposed enemy flank or by denying the enemy terrain critical to his goals. We may maneuver by threatening the enemy's lines of communications and forcing him to withdraw. We may maneuver by seizing a position which allows us to bring effective fire to bear against the enemy but which protects us against enemy fires. We may maneuver in other dimensions as well. For instance, we may also maneuver in time by increasing relative speed and operating at a faster tempo than the enemy. Normally we maneuver both in time and space to gain advantage and, ultimately, victory at the least possible cost. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 41-42)
Exploiting the Environment	The use of the environment offers tremendous opportunities to gain advantage over the enemy. We must understand the characteristics of any environment where we may have to operate: jungle, desert, mountain, arctic, riverine, or urban. More importantly, we must understand how the effects of terrain, weather, and periods of darkness or reduced visibility impact on our own and our adversary's ability to fight. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 42-43)

Gaining and Advantage (Continued)

Surprise

Achieving surprise can greatly increase leverage. In fact, surprise can often prove decisive. We try to achieve surprise through deception, stealth, and ambiguity. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 47)

- Deception: "War is based on deception." (Sun Tzu, 91) We use deception to mislead our opponents with regard to our real intentions and capabilities. We hope the enemy will realize this deception only when it is too late for them to react. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 47)

- Stealth: Stealth is most advantageous when maneuvering against an enemy. It provides less chance of detection by the enemy, leaving him vulnerable to surprise action for which he may be unprepared. Marines may also employ stealth by lying in wait for an approaching enemy—an ambush. The ambush is perhaps the most effective means of surprising opponents, especially at the lower tactical level where surprise through stealth is easiest to achieve. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 48)

- Ambiguity: It is usually difficult to conceal all our movements from the enemy, but we can sometimes confuse him as to the meaning of what he sees. "The enemy must not know where I intend to give battle. For if he does not know where I intend to give battle he must prepare in a great many places." (Sun Tzu, 98) Ambiguity allows us to increase the enemy's uncertainty, giving us the advantage.

Being Faster

Speed in combat is relative to the enemy. We do not necessarily need to move as fast as we can; we need only to act faster than the enemy. One must keep this in mind to prevent the reckless pursuit of speed at the cost of effectiveness against the enemy. Individual concepts are described below.

Being Faster

Speed

"In small operations, as in large, speed is the essential element of success." (Patton, 323) Speed often determines how fast something is moving. However, when referring to military action, speed is more than just moving quickly. Speed is measured by your successes or failures against the enemy. It may be the physical ground covered by a unit over a given time and distance. It is also an intangible concept. In Decision Making, you will be introduced to the "Boyd's Cycle", or the "OODA Loop" --observe, orient, decide, and act. Operating against an enemy, speed is ultimately defined by your unit's actions; how fast leadership can orient on a "gap," formulate a plan, and disseminate a plan for action.

Tempo

Tempo is a large element of being faster as well. Marines are constantly looking to maximize time. Tempo is employing speed in relation to the timing of events. Despite planning for extended operations by exercising economy of force, a unit cannot operate at top speed indefinitely. The key is to have seamless transitions between events, such as consolidating after an attack, so the tempo does not slow down.

Five Ways to Increase Speed and Tempo

As unit leaders, we must always focus on building tempo. A Marine leader is always cognizant of time. Time is one thing there is never enough of and can no longer be capitalized on again once it has been spent. Once we account for the need to maximize our time in planning and execution, the five things we can do to increase our speed and tempo are:

- Simplicity: The first way to increase speed is keeping things simple. Clear, uncomplicated plans enhance understanding, and facilitate ease of efficient execution. Ceteris paribus, the simplest plan is preferred. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 72)

- Decentralization: "In the confused and often chaotic battlefield environments of today, only the smallest groups are likely to keep together, especially during critical moments." (English, 217) The second way to increase speed is to leverage unity of command by decentralizing, using mission tactics and commander's intent.

Five Ways to Increase Speed and Tempo (Continued)

- Warfighting teaches that mission tactics are "assigning a subordinate a mission without specifying how the mission must be accomplished." (Warfighting, 87) The responsibility to determine the "how" falls on the subordinate with the commander's intent guiding his or her decision making. The commander's intent is the overall purpose for accomplishing the mission based on mission tactics. Even in a changing environment, a subordinate who understands the "why" can act without risking diffusion of effort or loss of tempo. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 72-74)

- Experience and Communication: The third method to increasing speed and tempo is through experience. At The Basic School, we use garrison and tactical billets, sand table exercises (STEXs), and discussion groups to simulate stresses of combat and build experience. As our experience increases through repetitions, our ability to communicate implicitly and laterally improves. Implicit communications are the mutual understandings that require little or no actual talking or writing. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 74) Implicit communications occur when individuals or units that have worked together over time create a mutual understanding, and in time this mutual understanding can translate into standard operating procedures (SOPs). A well trained and experienced unit will communicate laterally and implicitly, accomplishing the mission at the lowest level while working within commander's intent. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 74-76)

- Positioning: The place in time and space where transitions occur can be called a friction point. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 68) Effective leaders increase speed by "leading from the front" directly at the point of friction. This effectively provides mass to the main effort, as a commander who is forward can more quickly influence the battle as the situation develops. Commanders must strive to identify the point of friction, and the point of influence that will most directly impact the battle. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 76-77)

Five Ways to Increase Speed and Tempo (Continued)	• Maintaining speed through time: Finally, it is important to not only be faster but to maintain an efficient tempo superior to that of the enemy. Such endurance is made possible through physical and mental toughness, providing security for our forces, and economy of force. Physical toughness develops not only the speed, energy, and agility to move faster, but it also develops the endurance to maintain that speed for longer durations. With this endurance, we not only outpace the enemy but maintain a higher tempo longer than the enemy can. Mental toughness builds the ability to concentrate for longer periods of time and to penetrate below the surface of the problem. Security and economy of force allows us to preserve our combat power until the decisive point it is needed. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 77)

Adapting

Adapting to situations presented on the battlefield allows us to exploit fleeting opportunities to build surprise, economy of force, and mass at the decisive point. There are two types of adaptation; anticipation and improvisation.

Anticipation	The first basic way to adapt is to anticipate, by which we mean to introduce new methods, schemes, or techniques for future use. In order to anticipate, we must be able to forecast future actions, at least to some extent. Our forecasts should be based on a thorough estimate of the situation (METT- TC), but may also be based on past experiences. Often a forecast involves considering what we learned through trial and error in training, exercises, or actual combat. All planning at all echelons is a form of anticipatory adaptation—adapting our actions in advance. Another important tool for tactical adaptation is the use of immediate-action drills or standing operating procedures. These are practiced, predesigned, generic actions which cover common situations. Having a collection of these tools at our disposal allows us to react immediately in a coordinated way to a broad variety of tactical situations. Immediate-action drills do not replace the need for tactical judgment; they merely provide a way to seize initiative in the early stages of a developing situation until we can take more considered action. They provide the basis for adaptation. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 82)

Adapting (Continued)

Improvisation   The second basic way to adapt is to improvise, to adjust to a situation on the spur of the moment without any preparation. Like anticipation, improvisation is key to maneuver warfare. Improvisation requires creative, intelligent, and experienced leaders who have an intuitive appreciation for what will work and what will not. It requires commanders who have a strong situational awareness and a firm understanding of their senior commander's intent so that they can adjust their own actions in accordance with the higher commander's desires. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 83)

Flexibility   Lesson text We have several techniques to help us develop adaptability. One of these is to make flexible plans. Flexible plans can enhance adaptability by establishing a course of action that provides for multiple options. Flexibility is built during planning. A thorough estimate of the situation (METT-TC), will allow us to make sound judgments about what the enemy will likely do, facilitating our planning to counter him. A commander should develop a primary plan to counter what he thinks the enemy is most likely to attempt, but should always be thinking of how he can defeat other less likely courses of action. Flexible plans avoid unnecessary detail that not only consumes time in their development but has a tendency to restrict subordinates' latitude. Instead, flexible plans lay out what needs to be accomplished but leave the manner of accomplishment to subordinates. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 84-86)

This decentralization improves adaptability by pushing decision making authority down as much as each situation allows. This means that commanders on the scene and closest to the events have the latitude to deal with the situation as required on their own authority—but always in accordance with the higher commander's intent. Decentralization speeds up reaction time: we do not have to wait for information to flow up to a higher commander and orders to flow back down. It increases the responsiveness of the organization, which in turn increases adaptability. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 86-87)

Cooperating

Cooperation is defined as the union of self-discipline and initiative in the pursuit of a common goal, or objective. It is a component of control. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 92) Control can generally be divided into two types:

Cooperating (Continued)

Centralized Control   Centralized control tends to be in one direction and works
from the top down: someone at a higher level makes us
conform to what higher dictates because only one person
does the thinking for the organization — the one in control.
Centralized control decreases speed/tempo. (MCDP 1-3
Tactics, 92)

Decentralized Control   In contrast, decentralized control works from the bottom up
given intent from top down. Command is the exercise of
authority and guidance, and control is felt as feedback
about the effects of the action taken because thinking is
required at all levels. This feedback allows the unit leader to
adapt to changing circumstances and to command the
subsequent action. Cooperation is required in decentralized
control. Subordinates work together laterally and from the
bottom up to accomplish tasks that fulfill the commander's
intent, requiring Unity of Command. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 92-
93) Cooperation means we take the initiative to help those
around us accomplish our shared mission. (Command and
Control, 39-41) Decentralized control increases
speed/tempo.

Self-Discipline   The common bond that ensures cooperation between
Marines is self-discipline. "There is only one kind of
discipline, PERFECT discipline. If you do not enforce and
maintain discipline, you are potential murderers." (Patton,
376) Self-discipline will not allow us to shirk responsibility or
blame others. A discipline failure —often a failure to act —
is a personal failure. Our form of discipline is absolute.
There is no time off. Someone else may be in charge, but
that does not absolve us from the responsibility to do
everything we can to achieve the common goal. It does not
reduce our responsibility to cooperate with fellow Marines in
our unit and beyond. This discipline is a mindset, a way of
thinking and behaving. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 95-98)

Exploiting Success and Finishing

Exploiting success and finishing are hallmarks of our aggressiveness and indomitable
fighting spirit as Marines. It is not enough merely to gain an advantage. The enemy will
not surrender simply because he is placed at a disadvantage. The successful leader
exploits any advantage aggressively and ruthlessly not once but repeatedly until the
opportunity arises for a finishing stroke. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics,101)

Exploiting Success and Finishing (Continued)

Consolidation
The definition of consolidation is the re-organization of our forces after seizing an objective we intend to hold against the enemy. (JP 1-02) Here our aims are limited to protecting what we have already gained. This may seem contradictory to maintaining an offensive mindset, however, any number of reasons may direct us to choose this course. Perhaps we lack the strength or logistics to continue to advance. Our new gain may be of critical importance, and the risk of losing it outweighs the advantages of any further gains. Perhaps the new gain by itself grants a significant advantage. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics,103)

Exploitation
The second way to pursue an advantage is through exploitation — an offensive tactic that is designed to disorganize the enemy in depth. (JP 1-02) Exploitation usually follows a successful attack that has created or exposed some enemy vulnerability. For example, an attack that has torn a gap in enemy defenses allows us to attack vital enemy rear areas. The object of exploitation is not to destroy the combat forces directly opposing us, even though they may be weakened. Instead, the object is to disrupt the entire enemy system by attacking important activities and functions. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 103-104)

Pursuit
The third way to exploit advantage is through pursuit — an offensive tactic designed to catch or cut off a hostile force, which has lost cohesion and is attempting to escape, in order to destroy it. (JP 1-02) If the intent is to bring about the final destruction or capture of the enemy's forces, then pursuit should be pushed with the utmost vigor. Pursuit is what turns operations into routs and how overwhelming victories often occur. (MCDP 1-3 Tactics, 104)

Summary

What You Have Learned

This classroom instruction lays the foundation for sound tactical judgment through the understanding of the six tactical tenets and their focused application congruent with the principles of war. We have gained an appreciation for the requirement to be decisive in battle. To accomplish this, we must clearly visualize the battle-space through a thorough estimate of the situation (METT-TC), recognize patterns, and make decisions intuitively. We have also discussed ways we can gain advantage over the enemy and force him to bend to our will. We also explored how to be faster in relation to the enemy, to adapt to changing conditions, to cooperate for success, to exploit success, and to finish the enemy. Finally, we discussed how we can begin to act on these ideas during our training for combat.

Everything we do in peacetime should prepare us for combat. Our preparation for combat depends upon training and education that develop the action and thought essential to battle. Applying the six tactical tenets will ensure that leaders at all levels have the ability to understand the tactical decision making process at the tactical level of war. Sound and timely tactical judgment will ensure success in planning and execution. (MCDP 1-3, Tactics, 127-128)

Where You Are Going Next

In Decision Making you will learn how officers are primarily decision makers. Our weapon is the unit we command. We decide on a course of action and then clearly communicate that decision to our unit. Our Marines translate that decision into action. Decision Making will help you understand the importance of how you make decisions, and the importance of making risked-based decisions in a time competitive environment.

References

Reference Number or Author	Reference Title
English, John A.	On Infantry
Patton Jr., General George S.	War As I Knew It
Sun Tzu,	The Art Of War
FM 3-90	Tactics
JP 1-02	Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms
JP 3-0	Joint Operations
MCDP 1	Warfighting
MCDP 1-0	Marine Corps Operations
MCDP 1-3	Tactics
MCDP 6	Command and Control

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Term or Acronym	Definition or Identification
Commander's Intent	A device designed to help subordinates understand the larger context of their actions. The purpose of providing intent is to allow subordinates to exercise judgment and initiative – to depart from the original plan when the unforeseen occurs – in a way that is consistent with higher commander's aims. (Warfighting, 89)
Operational Level of War	The level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas. (JP 3-0)
Strategic Level of War	The level of war at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) strategic security objectives and guidance, then develops and uses national resources to achieve those objectives. (JP 3-0)
Tactical Level of War	The level of war at which the battles and engagements are planned and executed to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces. (JP 3-0)

Notes