
CHAPTER FOUR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

I. Introduction

Up to this point, this course has been primarily concerned with educating you in tactics. First, you studied the nature, style, and levels of war as a foundation for putting tactics in its proper context. Then, you studied the development of modern tactics through three generations. Finally, you learned about the Marine Corps' tactical doctrine of maneuver warfare and saw it applied in examples. The focus was on teaching you **what** tactics is.

This chapter will help you to understand **how** to do it, i.e., how to educate and train both your subordinates and yourself. During peacetime, your most important task is to prepare for war. Two elements essential to this process are education and training. This chapter will first explain what education is and why it is important, and then show you how to train in tactical decision making.

II. Education

Most Marines agree that a military education is important. Marines must learn and use a common terminology. They must learn command and staff procedures and techniques like the call for fire, all of which are part of a Marine's education.

In a broader sense, military education is more than terminology, procedures, and techniques. It includes developing the ability to estimate the situation. For example, as a platoon commander in combat, you will estimate your situation based on the factors of mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and fire support available, and time (METT-T). But you cannot do this mechanically. For example, you cannot consider only what your company commander assigned you to do. You must consider what both the company and battalion commanders are trying to accomplish and adjust your actions to serve their goals. A proper military education allows you to do this. It teaches you how to think through a combat situation. Sometimes you must decide whether to attack or defend. If you choose to defend, you must decide where and how to defend. Education is fundamental to your ability to think through a solution. It helps you decide **what** you should do, and then **how** to accomplish it.

The first goal in education is to develop an understanding of the nature of war. The first chapter of this course gave you a starting point: war is a clash of hostile, independent wills in an uncertain, rapidly-changing environment. You should study the history of conflict: why men fight and how they react in combat. From a broad understanding of the nature of war, you can begin to understand what it takes to succeed in combat, not only at your level but also at the higher levels. You cannot fight well unless you understand what result is wanted at higher levels and **why**.

With regard to tactics, military education has several specific goals:

First, leaders must develop a shared way of thinking. A shared way of thinking is a prerequisite of a command and control style based on mission orders. Subordinate leaders who learn **how** to think will act appropriately in the absence of explicit directions. This can only happen when leaders receive an education soundly based in a common approach to warfare.

Second, a proper education allows a leader to spot opportunities in various situations. You cannot assess a situation properly unless you can place it in the broader context of what higher levels are trying to achieve. Part of this assessment is the ability to spot an opportunity and exploit it. One of the goals in a military education is to learn to spot such opportunities when they arise.

Finally, a sound military education teaches you both judgment and military thinking. You should study military history to learn the thought processes of the great captains. Rommel's book, *Attacks*, provides excellent examples of how one small unit leader thought through tactical problems in combat.

How do you begin a program to educate yourself and your subordinates in tactics? First, read about and discuss tactics with your peers and subordinates. The bibliography and articles in the appendices to this course are a good place to begin your reading program. You will learn of other sources as you read and discuss tactics with other Marines. Professional self study is the foundation of every Marine's professional military education program.

As you read, think about your own tactical experience. All Marines have varied experience in tactics, and you gain the most when you relate a new idea to your own experience. Don't read just for reading's sake; think about what you are reading. If you do, you will begin to see patterns in what you read that confirm some of your ideas. It helps to have a mentor--someone who is knowledgeable in tactics and can bring out the right lessons of a book--but it isn't absolutely necessary.

Second, you should begin or join a military seminar program. Some commanders sponsor a seminar program as part of their officer or SNCO development program. Good seminars do more than provide an audience for speakers knowledgeable in a subject. They provide a forum for active debate and discussion of relevant military matters. It only takes a little effort for a group of officers or SNCOs to get together and organize a seminar or symposium. You will find the exchange of ideas valuable to your education.

Third, you can wargame with your peers and subordinates. The purpose of wargaming is not to see who wins or loses, but to teach students to make quick, logical decisions, using a coherent thought process, while under pressure. You should encourage your commander to include wargaming in his leadership training program.¹ Appendix B lists some commercially available war games that allow maneuver warfare.

War is a human undertaking. Despite advances in technology, men in combat will always be required to think and reach decisions in uncertain and confusing situations. Your ability to think logically and creatively, under the stress of battle, must always be a fundamental objective of your military education.²

III. Training

... Training is the application of education. It is learning how to do maneuver warfare in the "real world," the world of friction. If you want to think of education as the classroom, training is the lab.... Good training

*broadens your education. As you learn how to do maneuver warfare through training, you also come to understand it better.*³

In peacetime, training your subordinates is the most important thing you do. While education is important, it is not enough; many Marines understand maneuver warfare tactics conceptually, but do not apply them. Your success in combat largely depends on how well you train.

Training can be broadly categorized into two areas: Technical and tactical training. Technical training is often called training in the basics. It ranges from mounting and firing a machine gun to assaulting an enemy position. Techniques are taught through memorization and drill. They become habitual; the more you drill in techniques the better you do them.

Tactical training is different. Recall from the course introduction that tactics is a combination of techniques and education. Where techniques are learned procedures, tactics is a thinking process. You make tactical decisions by judging the situation and choosing appropriate techniques. Tactics is always situational; it is, essentially, a process of reaching a decision.

In tactical training, you have four basic goals:

First, you want to develop an active, aggressive spirit among your subordinates. You want your subordinate leaders to show initiative. To develop initiative, you must encourage it among subordinates and allow them to make mistakes. When a subordinate makes a mistake, you should point out where he went wrong but praise his initiative. Subordinates who fail to act should be treated more severely. You want subordinate leaders who actively seek enemy weaknesses and exploit them, not subordinates who hesitate to act unless explicitly directed to.

Second, you want your subordinates to learn to think logically under battlefield stress. The combat environment--fear, uncertainty, fatigue, and weather extremes--poses an extraordinary challenge to the Marine troop leader. You want to condition your subordinates to think clearly and make sound decisions in the fog and friction of battle. You also want subordinate leaders who can think, decide, and act quickly because they understand how important tempo is.⁴

Third, you want to develop a common thought process among the leaders of your unit. To use mission orders, your subordinates must learn to think the way you do. By training your subordinates tactically, your subordinate leaders learn to communicate implicitly, which keeps your operational tempo high. When issuing combat orders, your commander's intent is not simply one short statement in the Execution paragraph. It is shared thoughts that you have developed with your subordinates through working together on a day-to-day basis.

Last, you want to develop character in your subordinates when you train them in tactics. Success in combat often requires taking considerable risk. Only Marines who are strong in character accept risk. When you train your subordinates in tactics, you must create situations that force them to accept risk to succeed; it is the best way to mold and test their character.

How to train tactically

There are several ways to train your subordinates tactically. One of the easiest is to conduct map or sand table exercises. To run a map exercise, you first create a tactical scenario on a map. You can also draw diagrams on a flip chart. You then develop the situation and force your subordinate leaders to make decisions and give orders. Then you discuss their orders, focusing on their thought processes and judgement. By critiquing their decisions and orders, your subordinates learn to think as you do. When you critique them, you should not say "This is what you should have done", but instead, "When you made that decision, this is what you should have been thinking." A sand table exercise is similar to a map exercise. It is a good way to discuss tactical problems and possible solutions. Remember, your objective is not to develop the solution for a particular situation, but to apply the fundamentals and discuss various solutions. Your subordinates learn your thought processes this way. You can also demonstrate specific techniques or tactical fundamentals on the sand table. In combat, you will never face two situations that are exactly alike; therefore, it is not practical to develop standard solutions for every situation. However, if your subordinates learn to think as you do, they will act appropriately in the absence of explicit instructions.

Another method is the terrain walk. A terrain walk is a valuable extension of the map exercise. When you conduct a map exercise using a local map, you can then conduct a terrain walk to look at the actual terrain and see if your subordinates' decisions were appropriate. This type of exercise is extremely valuable in developing a leader's ability to relate contour lines and symbols on a map to the actual relief of the ground.

A variation of the terrain walk is the Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWT). In his book, *Battle Leadership*, Adolf von Schell explains how a company commander might conduct a TEWT:

Go out on the ground with your platoon commanders, your sections leaders, your squad leaders. Tell them: "You are marching with your platoons on this road." After marching awhile, give the leaders a bit of information or an impression. March quietly on and then give them another bit of information. Build up your problem in this manner. Never ask them for a decision. Tell them that they must decide not only what to do but when to do it. You will then see how terribly difficult it is.... to make a decision.⁵

A TEWT's effectiveness is limited only by your imagination. To encourage initiative, you should sometimes develop situations where your subordinates must disregard their assigned mission to accomplish your intent. Consider the example of Captain Robert Barrow, USMC, in Korea in 1950:

While advancing through Seoul, Captain Barrow's company arrived at some high ground overlooking a railway yard and passenger depot (see figure 4-1). In checking over the low ground and rail yard ahead, one of the company's forward observers spotted North Korean soldiers behind the rail embankment. Captain Barrow brought up his machine guns, had his FOs call in mortar and artillery fire, and reported the situation

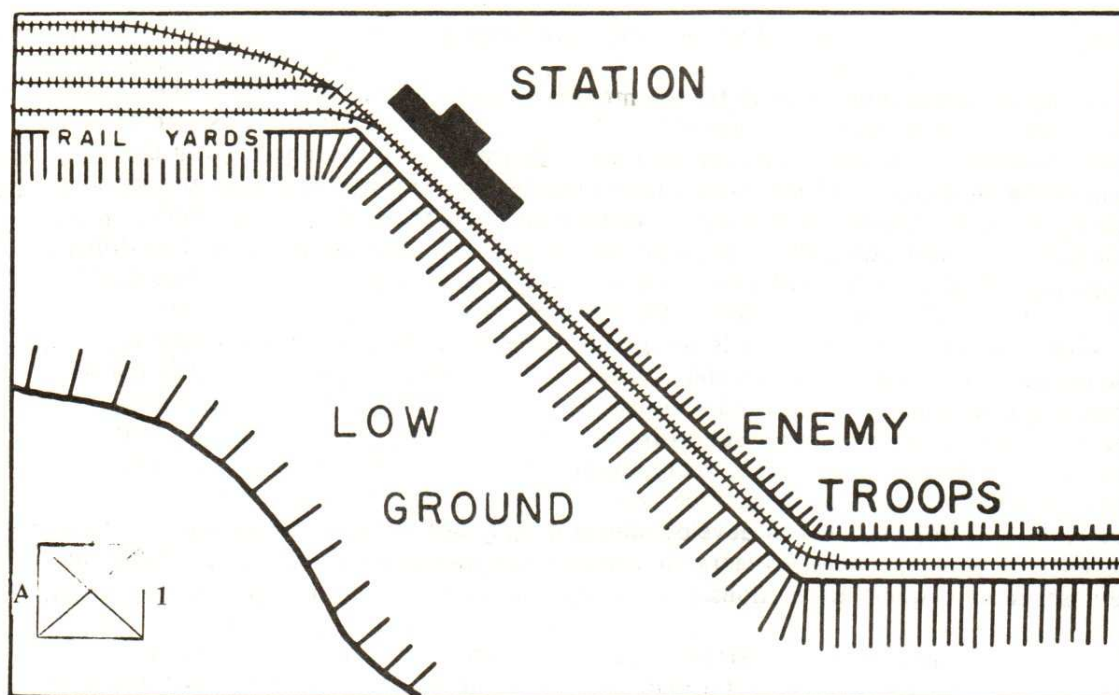


Fig 4-1.

to battalion. Under pressure from higher headquarters to maintain a high rate of advance, battalion called back and directed Captain Barrow to continue advancing. When the first artillery rounds landed on and beyond the railroad embankment, hundreds of enemy soldiers started running from behind it. The company's machine gunners began mowing them down at a terrific rate. There was good reason not to move--the machine gunners and FOs were killing North Koreans while the company was safely deployed on higher ground. Captain Barrow decided against advancing into the low ground where the enemy was still present in strength. Battalion called again and insisted that Captain Barrow move out. When he again tried to explain the situation, battalion remained insistent--advance! Captain Barrow turned off his radio, held his position, and sent a messenger back to report the situation. Later, the battalion commander arrived, quickly grasped what was going on, and gave his approval of Captain Barrow's action.⁶

Free Play Training

Free play training is the best method for training your unit tactically. A free play exercise is probably the closest simulation of combat. It presents junior leaders with unpredictable, rapidly changing situations that demand initiative and innovative tactics.

To conduct a free play exercise, develop a scenario that pits two forces against each other. Place the two forces in an area and give each a mission that is appropriate to the scenario and similar to what it might have to do in combat. For example, in one scenario, you might assign each the mission of destroying the other

force. You do not control the exercise, for example, by directing one unit to conduct a river crossing or defend a specific location. Rather, each force is free to do whatever it chooses to carry out its mission.

Free play training simulates combat well because it introduces friction in the form of uncertainty, stress, disorder, and opposing wills. This last condition is most important; only in opposed, free play conditions can the art of tactics be fully exercised. When you control one of the forces to make **specific things happen**, you eliminate the element of independent, opposing wills that is the essence of combat.⁷

Free play exercises can be conducted at any level from the MEF to the fire team. Let's look at one fire team-size exercise developed in 1988 by a company of the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines.

Example 4-1

Two fire teams are placed at opposite ends of a field and each is given the mission of destroying the other fire team and its command post (see figure 4-2). Each team is armed with its T/E weapons, blank ammunition, and smoke grenades; each man is outfitted with MILES equipment. The exercise begins when an umpire signals "Go".

When this exercise was conducted at Camp Pendleton, several lessons became obvious. The team leader could not effectively control his entire team. The winning fire team broke down into two-man teams that maneuvered against the enemy, while the SAW gunner provided suppressive fire from a rear position. The successful team also used its smoke grenades more effectively than the losing team.

MILES equipment adds realism to the exercise. If you want to keep score, you can assign one point for each enemy kill, and 3-5 points for a successful assault on the command post (in example 4-1, practice hand grenades were used to simulate destroying the CP). You must use caution when you keep score; some techniques might be inappropriate for combat, but work well to score, points. You must not let troops *game the game* or they will learn bad habits that would prove disastrous in combat.

Free play exercises are also valuable because they are **time competitive**. When you fight another force in free play training, you try to gain and maintain the initiative. To do this, you must be **fast**; your tempo must be higher than the enemy's. You learn to work fast and make quick estimates and decisions when you do free play training. Controlled exercises are much less valuable because they are not time competitive.

Good free play training demands good umpiring. The umpire is not a controller; his function is to observe a unit's actions and resolve engagements between opposing forces. For example, when one unit ambushes another, the umpire may kill the ambushed unit or force it to retreat. His most important function, however, is in the post exercise critique. The umpire should lead the critique. He must be tactically competent so that he can draw out the lessons learned from the exercise. You will not gain all that you should from free play training unless your umpires are competent and aggressive.

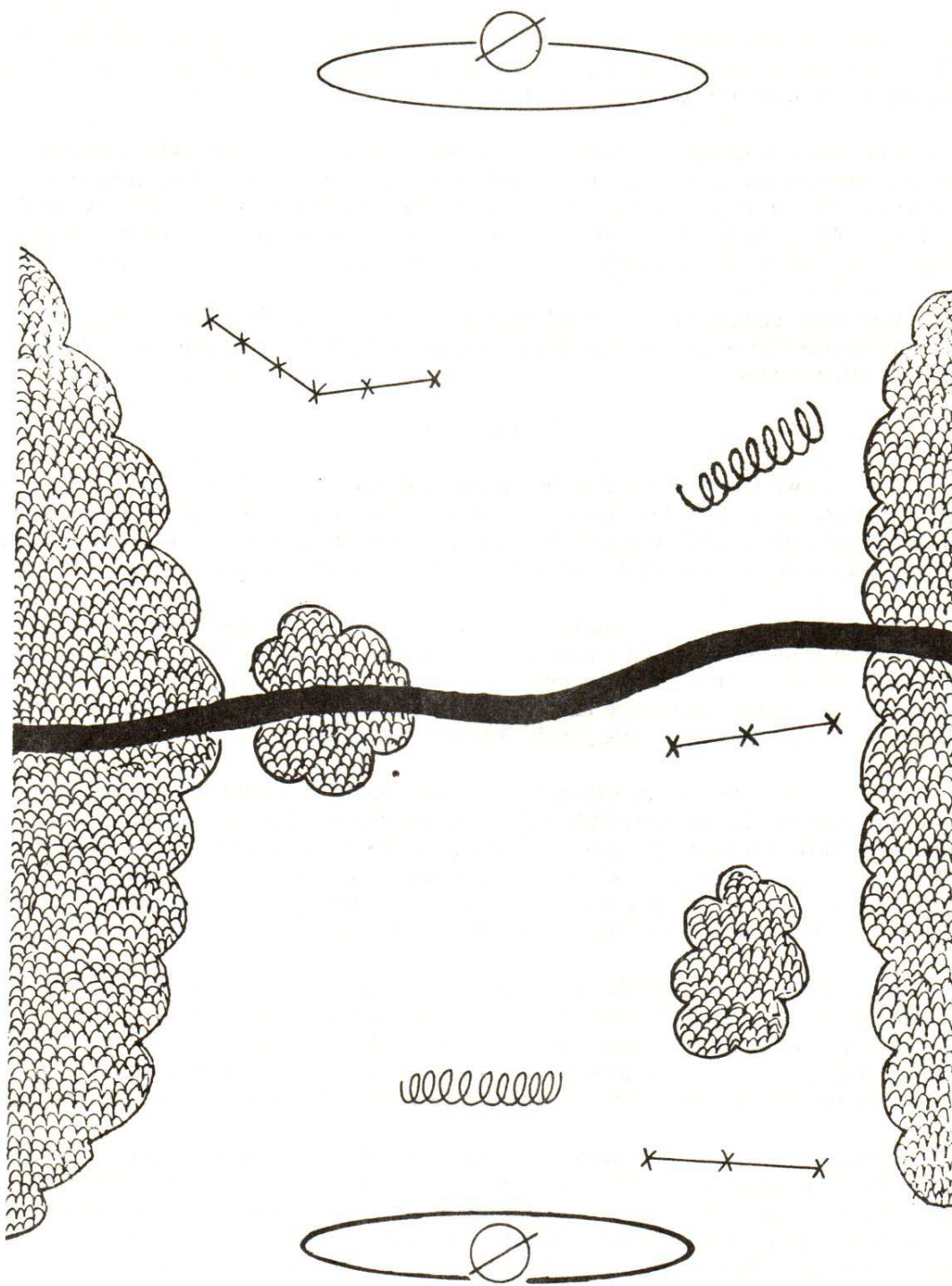


Fig 4-2.

Training Tips

1. The classroom lecture is the least effective method of training Marines for combat. You can teach some concepts in the classroom, but you should spend most of your training time solving tactical problems on the sand table or in the field. Demand that subordinate leaders read about and discuss tactical principles and ideas, and then apply them in the field. You must train your unit by exposing it to many situations so that you and your subordinates can figure out what works through experience.

2. Learn to critique effectively. The post-exercise critique is vital to the success of an exercise. An effective critique draws out the lessons that should be learned. It also teaches subordinate leaders how you think, which helps develop implicit communication within your unit. When you lead a critique, you should go back to the beginning of the exercise and lead your Marines through it. Your focus should be on thought processes; stop at various stages of the exercise and ask leaders to explain their decisions and how they reached them. For example, you might stop at one point and ask "When you arrived at the ford and saw you had to cross the stream, what action was taken? What do you think of that now, Sergeant Brooks? How about it Private Ramsey, what do you think? What else should have impacted on the squad leader's estimate of the situation?" When you lead the discussion this way, you get everyone involved. This is essential to the learning process. If you find yourself doing all the talking during a critique, you are probably making a poor critique.⁸

3. Always remember that **everything is training**. You cannot lead your unit in garrison using a highly centralized, closely controlled style, and expect the unit to exhibit great initiative in the field. You must not allow a zero-defect mentality to creep into your unit; if your senior operates that way, you must have the moral courage to stop it at your level. You should look at everything you do from the perspective of your combat mission. Decide what is really important and see that it gets top priority. In peacetime, it's easy for a unit's priorities to get twisted around.

Notes

1. Willian S. Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*, (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 44.
2. Lind, pp. 41-42.
3. Lind, p. 44.
4. Lind, p. 46.
5. Captain Adolf von Schell, *Battle Leadership*, (Quantico, Va.: The Marine Corps Association, 1982), p. 56.
6. Provided by Capt Brian Lavender, USMC, in *IP 6-4 Tactical Problems for Plt. Ldrs./Co. Cmdrs.*, (Marine Corps Development and Education Command, 1982), pp. 11-12.
7. *FMFM 1 Warfighting*, (Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 1989)
8. LtGen Arthur S. Collins, Jr., *Common Sense Training*, (Novato, Ca.: Presidio, 1987), pp. 93-94.

Chapter Review

During peacetime, your most important task is preparing for war. One aspect of this is gaining a military education. A proper military education teaches you how to think through a combat situation. It improves your judgement and helps you to see opportunities in a situation. By educating yourself and your subordinates together through unit schools, map exercises, and terrain walks, you and your subordinate leaders develop a *shared way of thinking*. This is important to a unit whose command and control is based on mission orders.

Training is the application of education. It can be broadly categorized into two areas: **technical** and **tactical** training. Techniques are learned through rote memorization and drill. They include mounting and firing weapons, communications procedures, and immediate action drills. The more you drill in techniques, the better you do them.

Tactical training is different. Unlike drill, tactics is a thinking process. You make tactical decisions by judging the situation and choosing appropriate techniques. When you train subordinates tactically, you want to force them to decide and act in situations that simulate combat as closely as possible. You want them to learn to think logically under battlefield stress. You also want to develop an active, aggressive spirit in them.

There are several ways to train tactically. Sand table and map exercises are the easiest. A terrain walk can be a valuable extension of the map exercise. Tactical training is best done through free play exercises. Free play exercises present the leader with unpredictable, rapidly changing situations that demand initiative and innovative tactics. Free play training simulates combat well because it introduces friction in the form of uncertainty, stress, disorder, and opposing wills.

Most importantly, remember that **everything is training**. You cannot use one leadership style in garrison and another in the field. You must look at everything you do from the perspective of your combat mission.

Chapter Exercise

1. The fundamental objective of military education is to develop your ability to think logically and creatively, under the stress of battle. List three ways to educate yourself to meet this goal.

2. Explain how to run a map exercise.

3. Explain the difference between technical and tactical training.

4. How can tactical training develop character?

5. Explain what free play training is.

6. Explain how to properly lead an exercise critique.
