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**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
WEAPONS TRAINING BATTALION  
MARINE CORPS COMBAT DEVELOPMENT COMMAND  
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134-5040

**DETAILED INSTRUCTOR GUIDE**

LESSON TITLE

COMBAT MINDSET

COURSE TITLE

DIVISION MATCH COURSE



**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
Weapons Training Battalion  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5040

**DETAILED OUTLINE**

**COMBAT MINDSET**

INTRODUCTION

(3 MIN)

1. GAIN ATTENTION. During fundamental marksmanship training you established a foundation for accurate shot placement in a controlled firing environment. However, Marines must be prepared to fire just as accurately in a stressful and rapidly changing combat environment. In combat, you must have the ability to evaluate your shooting skills and make adjustments to place accurate fire on target. Basic combat marksmanship training will enable you to become proficient in engaging targets under a variety of combat situations. It will reinforce the importance of applying the fundamentals of marksmanship for accurate and consistent shot placement. In addition, this training will stress the importance of developing a combat mindset that will prepare you for the mental, as well as the physical, challenges of the combat environment.
2. OVERVIEW. This lesson covers the principles of combat mindset for effective engagement of targets in a combat environment.
3. INTRODUCE LEARNING OBJECTIVES. The Division Match instruction is structured to prepare the shooter to fire the Division Match Course and is not a component of a formal school program. Therefore, students are not evaluated on this material. Therefore, there are no learning objectives.
4. METHOD. This lesson will be taught in a classroom setting using lecture.
5. EVALUATION. The Division Match instruction is structured to prepare the shooter to fire the Division Match Course and is not a component of a formal school program. Therefore, students are not evaluated on this material.



TRANSITION: When a target presents itself in combat, there may be very little time to take action. You must engage the target quickly and accurately. However, the stress and uncertainty of combat may cause a Marine to be less effective because he may not be adequately prepared to meet the additional challenges of the combat environment. The unique demands of combat dictate that you be both physically and mentally prepared to engage enemy targets.

BODY

(25 MIN)

(ON SLIDE #1)

**1. (5 MIN) EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STRESS**

Any perceived threat to one's physical safety induces a primordial response in the human body known as "Body Alarm Reaction." Body Alarm Reaction results in any combination of mental and physical responses designed to prepare the body for an enormously taxing effort of self-preservation - to run as fast as it has to, or to fight as hard as it has to for survival. The highest form of Body Alarm Reaction is the "Fight or Flight Reflex." The severity of these responses can vary among individuals and situations.

(ON SLIDE #2)

a. Physical Responses

1) Increased Heart and Respiratory Rate. The body's metabolic rate increases. Blood flow is diverted from the digestive system and extremities to the large muscle groups. The heart and respiratory rates increase to provide more fuel to the muscles. Increased oxygen flow can result in light-headedness or dizziness. Probable effects include loss of fine motor skills such as trigger control, sight alignment, weapons handling, etc.

2) Chemical Cocktail. The brain releases a "cocktail" of powerful hormones and chemicals. The body's endorphins release to reduce sensitivity to pain and adrenalin is released to provide more powerful contraction of muscles. The two combine to reduce manual dexterity, produce uncontrolled shaking and a sense of clumsiness.



3) Eyes. The pupils dilate to increase sensitivity to changes in light. Both eyes tend to remain open which increases the field of vision and depth perception allowing identification of targets, movement, colors, etc. However, physical stress can make acquisition of iron sights or the bullet drop compensator in a rifle combat optic (RCO) more difficult.

b. Mental Responses

1) Tunnel Vision. Tunnel vision is the singular focus on the threat at the exclusion of peripheral information and overall situational awareness. In tunnel vision, the focus becomes so restrictive or narrow that an indication of other targets is overlooked.

2) Auditory Exclusion. Auditory exclusion is the shutting down of extraneous auditory information by the mind in order to focus on the threat.

3) Tachypsychia (Speed of the Mind). When under stress, the mind processes information at a rate faster than normal. This can cause the perception of "slow motion" events.

4) Precognition. Precognition is hyper-sensory perception or a false 'sixth sense'. It manifests itself by the mind predicting an outcome based on sensory input so that when the outcome happens, you say "I knew that was going to happen." Therefore it is critical to have a plan of action for likely scenarios.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: To be effective, the Marine must be mentally and physically conditioned to mitigate the responses associated with mental and physical stress.



## 2. (10 MIN) STRESS MITIGATION

In a combat environment, you must be constantly prepared for possible target engagement. It will not be enough to know the techniques for engaging a target. You must develop the mental discipline to prepare for enemy contact. Mental conditioning trains towards a conscious state of awareness, which prepares you to pull the trigger on a target. In the confusion, noise, and stress of the combat environment, you must have the ability to eliminate any hesitation, fear, or uncertainty of action and to focus on the actions required to fire well-aimed shots. The key factors in the development of a combat mindset include both physical and mental preparation.

### a. Physical Preparation

1) In combat, targets can present themselves without warning. Therefore, it is essential to maintain proper balance and control of your weapon at all times so you can quickly assume a firing position, present the weapon, and accurately engage the target. However, you must keep in mind that speed alone does not equate to effective target engagement. You should fire only as fast as you can fire accurately. Never exceed your physical capabilities to assume a good firing position and to apply the fundamentals of marksmanship.

2) To be effective in combat, you must train to perfect the physical skills of shooting so they become second nature. The stress of battle, coupled with the often limited time available to engage targets, will require your concentration on the mental aspects of target engagement, e.g., scanning for targets, detection of targets, selection and use of cover. The more physical skills you can perform automatically, the more concentration you can give to the mental side of target engagement.

b. Mental Preparation. While combat is unpredictable and constantly changing, you can prepare yourself mentally for the contingencies of battle so you can readily act when confronted with a target.

1) Knowledge of the Combat Environment. Be constantly aware of your surroundings to include the terrain, available cover, possible areas of enemy contact, etc. This awareness will enable you to select and assume a firing position and to quickly and accurately engage targets.



2) Plan of Action. In combat, the situation will dictate the action to be taken. You must identify and evaluate possible courses of action and develop a plan for target engagement that will be appropriate to the requirements of the situation.

3) Confidence. You must believe in your ability to engage targets accurately in any combat situation. If you feel comfortable and confident in your capabilities, it will be easier to focus on firing well-aimed shots on target.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: The development of a combat mindset can be associated with the three carries for the rifle with the three-point sling. The use of each carry is dictated by the perceived level of threat. Each carry should signify a stage of mental preparedness for combat. The intensity of your mental and physical preparation will be dependent on the likelihood of enemy contact. At this point, your physical technique for assuming each carry should be automatic, allowing you to focus attention on the development of the appropriate level of mental preparation associated with each carry. The threat level should dictate which of the carries is assumed.

### 3. (10 MIN) DEVELOPMENT OF A COMBAT MINDSET

a. No Immediate Threat Present. When no immediate threat is present, the Tactical Carry (with web sling) or Controlled Carry (with three-point sling) is assumed. In terms of mental preparation, this is the lowest level of awareness for a Marine in a combat environment. However, you should be constantly alert and aware of any activity in your surroundings. To be prepared for target engagement at this level, you must:

- 1) Be aware of likely areas of enemy contact.
- 2) Be aware of the condition of your rifle and have a plan for putting the rifle into action.
- 3) Establish a plan or course of action to present the weapon to a target should a target appear.

b. Contact Likely (Probable). When contact is likely (probable), the Alert is assumed and your rifle should be in Condition 1. When enemy contact is likely, you should:



- 1) Expect enemy contact and be constantly prepared to present the weapon.
- 2) Be mentally prepared for contact. Plan a course of action for immediate response to a target. Modify your plan of action as the situation dictates.
- 3) Be physically prepared to fire. Maintain proper balance at all times. Avoid self-induced physical fatigue. For example, do not grip the weapon so tightly that your fingers, hands, tire.
- 4) Search the entire area for indications of enemy targets and for suitable terrain features that offer cover and concealment. Avoid restricting the search to a single location because this will prevent an awareness of your sector of the battlefield and of likely enemy contact.

c. Contact Imminent. When contact with an enemy target is imminent, assume the Ready. Your rifle should be in Condition 1. In this carry you should be at your highest level of awareness and should be constantly searching for and expecting a target. To fire well-aimed shots upon target detection, you must be at the peak of your mental preparation. All distractions must be eliminated with the entire focus on firing an accurate shot. To prepare to engage a target, you must:

- 1) Keep the rifle oriented in the general direction of observation (eyes, muzzle, target).
- 2) Maintain a clear field of view above the weapon sights until the target is detected.
- 3) Be mentally and physically prepared to engage targets.
- 4) Search the entire area for indications of enemy targets. Do not allow your focus to become so restrictive or narrow that an indication of other targets is overlooked.

Confirm by questions.
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TRANSITION: For a Marine to be successful in combat, he must be prepared to fire even before a target is identified. Through proper physical and mental preparation, the Marine can efficiently identify and engage an enemy target without sacrificing the basic marksmanship principles that form the foundation for accurate shooting.



OPPORTUNITY FOR QUESTIONS:

(1 MIN)

1. Respond to questions from the class.
2. Prompt students with questions to the class.
  - a. QUESTION: What are the key factors in the development of a combat mindset?

ANSWER: Physical and mental preparation.

- b. QUESTION: What level of contact has the lowest level of awareness for a Marine in a combat environment and what carry is it associated with?

ANSWER: No immediate threat present; Tactical Carry.

- c. QUESTION: What level of contact has the highest level of awareness for a Marine in a combat environment and in what condition should your rifle be?

ANSWER: Contact imminent; Condition 1.

<p><b><i>INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:</i></b> Ask Marines as many questions as necessary to ensure they fully understand the material presented in this lesson.</p>
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SUMMARY:

(1 MIN)

Training for basic combat marksmanship will prepare you to engage targets in a combat environment. During this training, you will acquire new skills for target engagement, while building on basic fundamental marksmanship skills. In addition, this training will emphasize the development of the combat mindset and the mental and physical preparation to engage targets accurately in any combat situation.



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