

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
FIELD MEDICAL TRAINING BATTALION-EAST
PSC BOX 20042
CAMP LEJEUNE, NORTH CAROLINA 28542-0042

MCECST

2401-COMM-1001 Hand and Arm Signals

TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Given a command or situation, while wearing an assault load, communicate using hand and arm signals by performing 16 out of 40 signals correctly.
(2401-COMM-1001)

ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Without the aid of reference, identify 16 of the 40 hand and arm signals, in accordance with reference MCRP 3-10A.4 Marine Rifle Squad.
(2401-COMM-1001a)
2. Given a tactical scenario and a hand and arm signal command, execute the appropriate hand and arm signal, to ensure optimal performance within the given mission, in accordance with reference MCRP 3-10A.4 Marine Rifle Squad.
(2401-COMM-1001b)

1. **PURPOSE OF SIGNALS:** Signals are used to transmit commands or information when voice communications are difficult, impossible, or when silence must be maintained. The following are the different types of signals that can be used when trying to communicate:

a. **Whistle:** A whistle is an excellent signaling device for the small unit leader. It provides a fast means of transmitting a message to a large group. However, unless the signal is pre-arranged and understood, it may be misinterpreted, and there is always a danger that units close by will hear them and cause confusion. Battlefield noise may reduce the whistle's effectiveness.

b. **Special:** Special signals consist of all methods and devices used to transmit commands or information that are not standard throughout the Marine Corps. A few examples of utilizing a special signal are helmet-tapping or pyrotechnics (i.e. colored smoke, star clusters, flares, etc.). Before a fire team leader devises his/her own special signal, they must first check with their squad leader to ensure that they are not using a special signal that already has a set meaning to the team. All special signals must be rehearsed and understood by each member of the fire team before they can be executed.

c. **Hand-and-Arm Signals:** Hand-and-arm signals are easy to execute, silent, and require minimal movement. They are standardized throughout the military and can be used in all tactical situations. They also provide a standard way in which to communicate, i.e. when your fire team is assigned to work with a different squad, and there is no opportunity to rehearse special signals.

2. **The most common types of Visual Signals:** Hand and Arm, Flag, Pyrotechnic, Chemical Light Sticks, and Flashlight.

3. **Visual Signal Uses:**

a. **Hand and Arm** - Primary squad signal method, Used to maintain silence.

b. **Flag** - Used on Naval Ships, MOUT, Fires and Weather Conditions.

c. **Pyrotechnic** - Used for far distances, Used for objectives & S.O.P. dictated.

d. **Chemical Light Sticks:**

(1) **Standard** - Far distances, Objectives, Surface to Air & S.O.P. dictated.

(2) **Infrared (IR)** - Night Vision Objectives, Surface to Air & S.O.P. dictated.

e. **Flashlights** - As S.O.P. dictates.

4. **Advantages of Visual Signals:** Ability to maintain silence.

5. **Limitations of Visual Signals:**

a. Poor Visibility due to terrain restrictions.

b. Possibility of being misunderstood.

c. Vulnerable to enemy interception and may be used for deception purposes.

2. **HAND AND ARM SIGNALS:**

a. **Forward / Advance (When Starting From The Halt).** This hand-and-arm signal is used to move out from your halted position in a desired direction:

(1) Face and move in the desired direction of march; at the same time extend the arm horizontally to the rear.

(2) Then swing the arm overhead and forward in the direction of movement until it is horizontal, palm down.

(3) After you have received and passed on the signal, immediately move out in the direction given.

b. **Change Direction.** This hand-and-arm signal is used when you want your fire team to change direction:

(1) Raise the hand that is on the side toward the new direction across the body, palm to the front.

(2) Then, swing the arm in a horizontal arc, extending arm and hand to point in the new direction.

(3) After you have received and passed on the signal, change direction automatically.

c. **Enemy in Sight.** This hand-and-arm signal is used when the enemy is in visual sight:

(1) Hold the rifle horizontally, with the stock in your shoulder, the muzzle pointing in the direction of the enemy.

(2) Aim in on the enemy target and be ready to engage him/her if you are detected.

(3) After you have received and passed on the signal, come to the ready and prepare to engage or await orders from your patrol leader.

d. **Assemble.** This hand-and-arm signal is used to bring all Marines to one location to pass on orders or "word":

(1) Raise the hand vertically to the full extent of the arm, fingers extended and joined, palm to the front, and wave in large horizontal circles with the arm and hand.

(2) After you received and passed on the signal, immediately converge on the Marine who passed the signal.

e. **Fire Team.** This hand-and-arm signal is used to designate that the fire team is going to receive a follow-on signal:

(1) Your non-firing hand should be placed diagonally across the chest.

(2) After you have received and passed on the signal, stand-by for the follow-on signal by the team leader.

f. **Form Column.** This hand-and-arm signal is used for rapid movement from points "A to B":

(1) Raise either arm to the vertical position.

(2) Drop the arm to the rear, describing complete circles in a vertical plane parallel to the body.

(3) After you received and passed on the signal, move into a column, and in the direction of movement.

g. **Skirmishers Left/Right.** This hand-and-arm signal is used to direct your firepower to the front, for certain terrain, such as a finger, draw, or hill:

(1) Raise both arms horizontally, palms down. If it is necessary to indicate a direction, move in the desired direction at the same time.

(2) When signaling for fire team skirmishers, indicate skirmishers right or left by moving the appropriate hand up-and-down.

(3) Moving the left hand will always indicate skirmishers left; moving the right hand will always indicate skirmishers right.

(4) After you have received and passed on the signal, move into that designated combat formation and direction.

h. **Echelon Left/Right**. This hand-and-arm signal is used to direct your fire power in a certain direction, left or right, for certain terrain (i.e. a finger, draw, or hill):

(1) This signal may be given either facing towards or away from the unit.

(2) Extend one arm 45° below the horizontal, palm to the front. The lower arm indicates the direction of the echelon.

(3) After you have received and passed on the signal, move into that designated formation and direction.

i. **Wedge**. This hand-and-arm signal is used for all around security (Every Direction):

(1) Extend both arms downward and to the side at an angle of 45 degrees below the horizontal, palms to the front.

(2) After you have received and passed on the signal, move into the designated formation.

j. **Freeze**. This hand-and-arm signal is used to stop in place; DO NOT MOVE AT ALL:

(1) Make a fist with either hand, thrust that hand upward vertically to the full extent of the arm, and hold it in that position until the signal is understood.

(2) After you receive and pass the signal, immediately freeze in place and await a follow-on signal.

k. **Increase Speed.** This hand-and-arm signal is used to increase speed:

(1) Raise either hand to the shoulder, fist closed.

(2) Rapidly thrust the fist upward vertically to the full extent of the arm and back down to the shoulder several times.

(3) After you have received and passed on the signal, speed up your rate of movement as signaled.

l. **Decrease Speed.** This hand-and-arm signal is utilized when there is a need for a unit to slow their pace:

(1) Extend either arm horizontally to the side, palm to the front, and wave arm downward several times keeping the arm straight.

(2) The arm will not move above the horizontal.

(3) After you received and passed on the signal, slow your pace down.

m. **Close-up.** This hand-and-arm is used to tighten-up the combat formation:

(1) Start the signal with both arms extended to the side, palms forward; bring palms together in front of body momentarily.

(2) When repetition of the signal is necessary, the arms are returned to the starting position by movement along the front of the body.

(3) After you have received and passed on the signal, immediately tighten-up your position in the combat formation.

n. **Open-up, Extend.** This hand-and-arm signal is used to open-up the combat formation:

(1) Start the signal with arms extended in front of the body, palms together; then bring the arms to the horizontal position at the sides, palms forward.

(2) When repetition of this signal is necessary, the arms are returned along the front of the body to the starting position and the signal is repeated until understood.

(2) After you have received and passed on the signal, immediately open up your position in the combat formation..

o. **Shift**. This hand-and-arm signal is used to shift left or right until the patrol leader signals to stop. You are still moving in the original direction of movement:

(1) Using your non-firing hand, first point to the units or individuals concerned, then beat on chest with fist, and then point to the location you desire them to move to.

(2) After you have received and passed on the signal, shift in the designated direction.

p. **Halt**. This hand-and-arm signal is used to stop the combat formation:

(1) Carry either hand to the shoulder, palm to the front; then thrust the hand upward vertically to the full extent of the arm and hold it in that position until the signal is understood.

(2) After you received and passed on the signal, you stop and take a knee facing outboard providing security.

References:

Marine Rifle Squad, MCWP 3-11.2