



SUN
TZU'S

THE ART OF WAR

Translation and Introduction

by Gary Gagliardi

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Join Us in Promoting Better Strategic Thinking

As taught by Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, the recipe for great strategy is not fighting others but developing strong positions that others do not want to challenge. Sun Tzu says that a great general is not the one who fights and wins a hundred battles but the one who finds a way to win without fighting a single battle. Fighting is expensive, but winning is easy if you understand the secrets of strategy.

Sun Tzu teaches that strength does not come from size, but from being united in the pursuit of a common goal. We get others to join us by discovering opportunities to work together that serve our mutual best interests.

For example, you were given this book because someone who knows you thought you would appreciate its ideas. In receiving it, you not only received valuable information but a valuable opportunity, an opportunity to join us in promoting good strategy. The person who gave you this book is a member of our Strategy Affiliates program, which gives rewards for spreading the word about Sun Tzu's strategic principles in our books, CDs, DVDs, on-line training, and other programs training people in Sun Tzu's strategy. You can join us by signing up for [a free trial of our Warrior Class on-line training](#), which also automatically enrolls you in our affiliates program.

This e-book contains the only award-winning English translation of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. This translation comes from *The Art of War Plus The Ancient Chinese Revealed*, which is the only version of the classic that shows the formulas that are the basis for the true science of strategy. These formulas are further explained in our other award-winning books, *The Art of War plus Its Amazing Secrets*, which examines the ancient Chinese graphical system that Sun Tzu used to develop his strategy, and *The Warrior Class 306 Lessons in Strategy*, which explains the practical application of the formulas hidden in each stanza of the original text. These works are now used around the world to study Sun Tzu, and led to our [on-line](#) and [live training classes](#).

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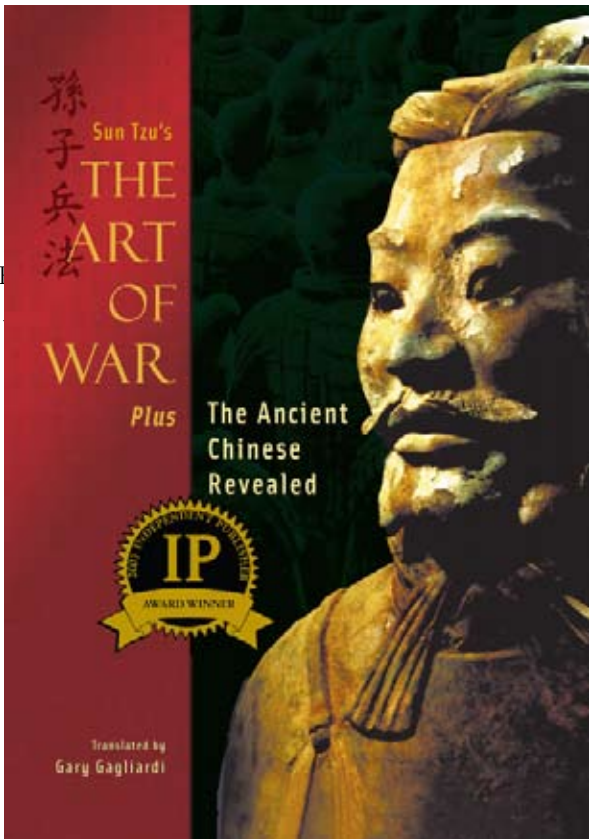
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*To my wife, Rebecca,
who makes it all wonderful!*



孫子兵法
Sun Tzu's
THE ART
OF
WAR

Plus
The Ancient
Chinese
Revealed



Translated by
Gary Gagliardi

孫 SUN (FAMILY NAME)
子 TZU (MASTER, TEACHER)
兵 BING (MILITARY, ARMY, WAR)
法 FA (METHODS, SYSTEMS, SKILLS)

From the book, *Sun Tzu's The Art of War Plus the Ancient Chinese Revealed*, which also includes the original Chinese formulas, their conceptual character-by-character translation, and explanations of the key Chinese concepts.

孫子兵法

THE
ART
OF
WAR

Translation and Introduction
by Gary Gagliardi
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Science of Strategy Institute

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Contents

	Introduction: How to Understand Sun Tzu More Easily	9
1	Analysis	12
2	Going to War.....	18
3	Planning an Attack.....	23
4	Positioning	29
5	Momentum	34
6	Weakness and Strength	41
7	Armed Conflict	49
8	Adaptability	56
9	Armed March	60
10	Field Position.....	71
11	Types of Terrain.....	80
12	Attacking With Fire	96
13	Using Spies.....	101

Introduction: How to Understand Sun Tzu More Easily

by [Gary Gagliardi](#)

Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* offers a timeless set of principles that can be applied to any of life's challenges. Though written in the context of warfare, its techniques for meeting challenges while minimizing conflict are invaluable in every area of today's increasingly competitive world. Unfortunately, the formulaic nature of the original Chinese is itself challenging. Fortunately, there is one definitive English translation, used as the basis for translation into other languages. This award-winning translation is called [*The Art of War Plus The Ancient Chinese Revealed*](#). This e-book of 101 short pages is a part of that larger work, but it translates every line of Sun Tzu.

In this version, I offer many side notes. Many of these notes offer a single message: this is math/science book written to an ancient standard, not a modern work of nonfiction.

What is the difference between ancient science and modern nonfiction? When reading modern nonfiction, you can read the lead sentence of most paragraphs and skim the rest and understand exactly what is being said. When reading science or math (modern or ancient), you have to read every word and every sentence carefully and think about the ideas. You can open a nonfiction book to any chapter and understand the basic ideas without studying the preceding chapters carefully. In math or science, if you skip even a few paragraphs (let alone a few pages or chapters), you are completely lost. With ancient science, you have the additional problem of having to understand the underlying scientific models of the era.

Because we translate Sun Tzu into normal English (instead of defining new terms, as you might in a math book), readers think they understand what is being said even when they don't. For example, in Sun Tzu's writing, the difference between "fight," "conflict," "battle," and "attack" is as great as the difference between "rational numbers," "irrational numbers," "real numbers," and "imaginary numbers" in math. We may understand what the words "rational" "irrational," "real," and "imaginary" mean, but those terms tell us little about how those terms define different types of numbers. The same is true in Sun Tzu's work. You may know what "fight," "conflict," "battle," and "attack" mean normally, but you don't understand the very specific ways these terms are used in *The Art of War* unless you go slowly and pay careful attention.

Sun Tzu carefully defines his terms from the very first page, but when translated into normal English, the result appears to be normal nonfiction. When we read "fight," "conflict," "battle," and "attack" we assume we know what is being said. We quickly forget (and often do not even notice) Sun Tzu's very specific definitions. Since "fight," "conflict," "attack," and "battle" mean very similar things in English, we miss most of the specific points that Sun Tzu is making. The problem remains even if the translation is as rigorous about using terms consistently as this one is.

My notes exist to call attention to what you are missing and how easy it is to forget terms defined and miss the real meaning. Another problem with translation is that much of the work describes a graphical mapping of strategic positions based on the ancient Chinese concept of the *bagua*, which I cannot even begin to explain here. It also uses an ancient system of counting tokens to calculate relative strengths and weaknesses, and again, adapting these concepts takes time.

The problem is that all this complexity is in the original Chinese. I am not keeping this complexity a secret. I explore the original Chinese in [a whole series of books](#). My books and seminars adapt Sun Tzu's ideas from their original ancient mathematical form into modern terms so that most people can utilize these ideas more readily. These books consistently win awards and are translated all over the world because these explanations of Sun Tzu are extremely valuable.

However, knowing how strategy works and using it are two different things. Like any martial art, the science of strategy requires practice. The fact is that you retain only 5 percent of what you read, and seldom does simply reading change your habits. If you really want to master Sun Tzu's system, you need to be drilled in its principles. Strategyschool.com [on-line training](#) was designed to help you learn strategy through practice in a way that is quick, easy, and maybe even fun. It is an interactive system that constantly questions (and scores) you, forcing you to think about competitive issues in a new way.

The best way to learn strategy is to teach it. Every organization in the world can profit from having its people make better decisions. In our live seminars, we educate people on the techniques of strategy and teach them to use special mapping and charting tools that make using Sun Tzu's system much easier. This is why trainers all over the world are using our presentation materials and techniques. We license our training tools at an extremely affordable price, both for those who want to use them in their own organizations and for those who want to join the Science of Strategy Institute as our trainers. See [StrategyTrainers.com](#) for more information.



Chapter 1: Analysis



SUN TZU SAID:

IThis is war.

It is the most important skill in the nation.

It is the basis of life and death.

It is the philosophy of survival or destruction.

You must know it well.

⑥Your skill comes from five factors.

Study these factors when you plan war.

You must insist on knowing your situation.

1. Discuss philosophy.
2. Discuss the climate.
3. Discuss the ground.
4. Discuss leadership.
5. Discuss military methods.

One of the many secrets of the work is that in the original, the Chinese is much more like formulas than sentences. For example:
Competition = survival + destruction
Survival skill = philosophy + climate + ground + leadership + method

Sun Tzu's system is the interaction of all these formulas together. The advantage of this formulaic approach is that you can instantly recognize how to respond to a specific situation if you do the analysis correctly. You can use the same formulas to analyze any challenging situation.

¹⁴It starts with your military philosophy.

Command your people in a way that gives them a higher shared purpose.

You can lead them to death.

You can lead them to life.

They must never fear danger or dishonesty.

¹⁹Next, you have the climate.

It can be sunny or overcast.

It can be hot or cold.

It includes the timing of the seasons.

²³Next is the terrain.

It can be distant or near.

It can be difficult or easy.

It can be open or narrow.

It also determines your life or death.

Like any work of science or mathematics, the goal of strategy is to simplify complex situations with methodology. To this end, a large portion of Sun Tzu's work is spent defining terms clearly. Much of what Sun Tzu writes may seem vague, but it is very specific if you keep track of all his formulas.

[In all of our books teaching strategy](#) based on Sun Tzu, we include a glossary explaining the key concepts Sun Tzu used and their relationships within the strategic approach.

²⁸Next is the commander.

He must be smart, trustworthy, caring, brave, and strict.

³⁰Finally, you have your military methods.

They shape your organization.

They come from your management philosophy.

You must master their use.

³⁴All five of these factors are critical.

As a commander, you must pay attention to them.

Understanding them brings victory.

Ignoring them means defeat.

2 You must learn through planning.

You must question the situation.

³You must ask:

Which government has the right philosophy?

Which commander has the skill?

Are you frustrated because planning doesn't work in many situations? In classical strategy, planning works only in controlled situations. In competitive situations, you need to do analysis in which you question the nature of your situation instead of planning.

The science of strategy teaches an organized, systematic method of analysis, starting with the five factors introduced in the following chapters. In our [Warrior Class on-line training](#), you learn how to perform this basic analysis automatically when you are confronted with a challenge.

Which season and place have the advantage?
Which method of command works?
Which group of forces has the strength?
Which officers and men have the training?
Which rewards and punishments make sense?
This tells when you will win and when you will lose.

¹²Some commanders perform this analysis.
If you use these commanders, you will win.
Keep them.
Some commanders ignore this analysis.
If you use these commanders, you will lose.
Get rid of them.

3 Plan an advantage by listening.
Adjust to the situation.
Get assistance from the outside.
Influence events.
Then planning can find opportunities and give you control.

Our flight and fight instincts get us into trouble. Once you are trained in the science of strategy you can counter your natural tendencies to act on instinct rather than skill.

Anyone can learn strategy. It requires simply the development of a new perspective. Strategy is a specific methodology for automatically seeing every situation in terms of how you can improve your position, but many fields have their own language for describing “position.” For example, our book *9 Formulas for Business Success* translates Sun Tzu into simple business formulas that anyone can use.

4 Warfare is one thing.
It is a philosophy of deception.

³When you are ready, you try to appear incapacitated.

When active, you pretend inactivity.

When you are close to the enemy, you appear distant.

When far away, you pretend you are near.

⁷You can have an advantage and still entice an opponent.

You can be disorganized and still be decisive.

You can be ready and still be preparing.

You can be strong and still avoid battle.

You can be angry and still stop yourself.

You can humble yourself and still be confident.

You can be relaxed and still be working.

You can be close to an ally and still part ways.

You can attack a place without planning to do so.

You can leave a place without giving away your plan.

As an information-based science, strategy forces us to focus on questioning the quality of information.

The good news is that all information is inherently flawed because all people disguise their true positions. Sun Tzu's methods factor this fact in. Unlike planning, strategy works where key information is unknown.

¹⁷You will find a place where you can win.

You cannot first signal your intentions.

5 Manage to avoid battle until your organization can count on certain victory.

You must calculate many advantages.

Before you go to battle, your organization's analysis may indicate that you might not win.

You can count few advantages.

Many advantages add up to victory.

Few advantages add up to defeat.

How can you know your advantages without analyzing them?

We can see where we are by means of our observations.

We can foresee our victory or defeat by planning.

Don't be misled when Sun Tzu's stanzas seem like vague aphorisms. Putting scientific equations in prose takes away a lot of their beauty. Try translating $E=MC^2$ into a sentence.

This verse, for example, describes "counting," but Sun Tzu is describing a system of "resource tokens." In this system, "adding up" was a matter of balancing winning and losing tokens. These tokens are part of a larger visual mapping system.



Chapter 2: Going to War

作戰

SUN TZU SAID:

I Everything depends on your use of military philosophy.

Moving the army requires thousands of vehicles.

These vehicles must be loaded thousands of times.

The army must carry a huge supply of arms.

You need ten thousand acres of grain.

This results in internal and external shortages.

Any army consumes resources like an invader.

It uses up glue and paint for wood.

It requires armor for its vehicles.

People complain about the waste of a vast amount of metal.

It will set you back when you attempt to raise tens of thousands of troops.

Learning strategy naturally makes you more financially successful even if that is not your primary goal. Classical strategy treats all challenges as fundamentally economic: finite resources must be applied to meet an unlimited number of needs.

The concept of “an invader” is critical in strategy. The assumption is that all positions must be advanced into new areas over time. You must “invade” new areas to make progress in advancing your position.

¹²Using a huge army in battle makes success very expensive .

Long delays create a dull army and sharp defeats.

Attacking enemy cities drains your forces.

Long, violent campaigns that exhaust the nation's resources are wrong.

¹⁶Manage a dull army.

You will suffer sharp defeats.

Drain your forces.

Your money will be used up.

Your rivals will multiply as your army collapses and they will begin against you.

It doesn't matter how smart you are.

You cannot get ahead by taking losses!

²³You hear of people going to war too quickly.

Still, you won't see a skilled war that lasts a long time.

²⁵You can fight a war for a long time or you can make your nation strong.

You can't do both.

You can instantly recognize when you are making expensive decisions. These statements are simple mathematical equations. For example: large = slow = expensive

The purpose of [our books](#), [CDs](#), [DVDs](#) and [on-line training products](#) is to give you the ability to use these equations in practical decision making every day.

2 Make no assumptions about all the dangers in using military force.
Then you won't make assumptions about the benefits of using arms either.

³You want to make good use of war.
Do not raise troops repeatedly.
Do not carry too many supplies.
Choose to be useful to your nation.
Feed off the enemy.
Make your army carry only the provisions it needs.

Strategy clarifies what you can and cannot know about the future. The science offers you a set of rules that create good outcomes despite the unavoidable uncertainties.

This section provides the basis for ideas presented later in the work that deal with chaos or complexity. Strategy is designed for dynamic, unpredictable environments, while traditional planning is designed for controlled, predictable environments.

3 The nation impoverishes itself shipping to troops that are far away.
Distant transportation is costly for hundreds of families.
Buying goods with the army nearby is also expensive.
High prices also exhaust wealth.
If you exhaust your wealth, you then quickly hollow out your military.
Military forces consume a nation's wealth entirely.
War leaves households in the former heart of the nation with nothing.

⁸War destroys hundreds of families.
Out of every ten families, war leaves only seven.
War empties the government's storehouses.
Broken armies will get rid of their horses.
They will throw down their armor, helmets, and arrows.
They will lose their swords and shields.
They will leave their wagons without oxen.
War will consume 60 percent of everything you have.

Though translated into the tangible resources of war—horses, armor, helmets, etc.—these items are also a metaphor for the generic resources that you cannot afford to lose if you want to meet competitive challenges.

You can eliminate the risk of long-term failure if you protect your resources. This means picking battles where you know how to prevent your own defeat.

4 Because of this, it is the intelligent commander's duty to feed off the enemy.

²Use a cup of the enemy's food.
It is worth twenty of your own.
Win a bushel of the enemy's feed.
It is worth twenty of your own.

⁶You can kill the enemy and frustrate him as well.
Take the enemy's strength from him by stealing away his money.

⁸Fight for the enemy's supply wagons.
Capture his supplies by using overwhelming force.
Reward the first who capture them.
Then change their banners and flags.
Mix them in with your own wagons to increase your supply line.
Keep your soldiers strong by providing for them.
This is what it means to beat the enemy while you grow more powerful.

5 Make victory in war pay for itself.
Avoid expensive, long campaigns.
The military commander's knowledge is the key.
It determines whether the civilian officials can govern.
It determines whether the nation's households are peaceful or a danger to the state.

This page contains one of the key equations in strategy, used to understand many other parts of the book. Can you spot it? You can get a FREE trial lesson in some of the key equations of *The Art of War* if you [CLICK HERE](#).



Chapter 3: Planning an Attack

謀攻

SUN TZU SAID:

I Everyone relies on the arts of war.

A united nation is strong.

A divided nation is weak.

A united army is strong.

A divided army is weak.

A united force is strong.

A divided force is weak.

United men are strong.

Divided men are weak.

A united unit is strong.

A divided unit is weak.

As you develop the *warrior's mind*, you will automatically use this important rule for analyzing and subdividing organizations. The strategic factor of "philosophy" creates unity in an organization, and that unity is the source of strength. Division is the source of weakness.

The relationships of "united" versus "divided," and "strength" versus "weakness" are well defined in the science of strategy—the first pair in this chapter and the latter in Chapter 6.

¹²Unity works because it enables you to win every battle you fight.

Still, this is the foolish goal of a weak leader.

Avoid battle and make the enemy's men surrender.

This is the right goal for a superior leader.

2 The best policy is to attack while the enemy is still planning.

The next best is to disrupt alliances.

The next best is to attack the opposing army.

The worst is to attack the enemy's cities.

5 This is what happens when you attack a city.

You can attempt it, but you can't finish it.

First you must make siege engines.

You need the right equipment and machinery.

It takes three months and still you cannot win.

Then you try to encircle the area.

You use three more months without making progress.

Your command still doesn't succeed and this angers you.

You then try to swarm the city.

This kills a third of your officers and men.

You are still unable to draw the enemy out of the city.

This attack is a disaster.

As you learn, you master more of the connections in strategic thinking. For example, these four policies connect to the four skills rivals use to advance their positions against yours. In Sun Tzu, numbers identify specific lists. "Four" always connects to the four skills in advancing a position. "Five" connects to the five key factors. "Six" connects to the six dimensions of an opportunity, and so on. This tradition goes back to the *I Ching* and the *ba gua* as [we explain on our science of strategy site.](#)

3 Make good use of war.

Make the enemy's troops surrender.

You can do this fighting only minor battles.

You can draw their men out of their cities.

You can do it with small attacks.

You can destroy the men of a nation.

You must keep your campaign short.

⁸You must use total war, fighting with everything you have.

Never stop fighting when at war.

You can gain complete advantage.

To do this, you must plan your strategy of attack.

You use strategy not only to win a conflict. You use its various forms of leverage to prevent opponents from contesting your advances.

Chinese is a more precise language for strategy, largely because Sun Tzu defined his terms. Our terms “fight,” “battle,” and “attack” all suggest conflict. As you master strategy, you learn how to use all these different methods while avoiding conflict. You will automatically understand the critical difference after going through our [Warrior Class on-line training](#).

Have you noticed how our sections and lines are numbered? Our translation is the only one that retains the chapter/block/line context of the original Chinese. In our *Chinese Revealed* book, which is the source of this translation, you can see the original Chinese formulas with each character explained.

¹²The rules for making war are:

If you outnumber enemy forces ten to one, surround them.

If you outnumber them five to one, attack them.

If you outnumber them two to one, divide them.

If you are equal, then find an advantageous battle.

If you are fewer, defend against them.

If you are much weaker, evade them.

¹⁹Small forces are not powerful.

However, large forces cannot catch them.

4You must master command.

The nation must support you.

³Supporting the military makes the nation powerful.

Not supporting the military makes the nation weak.

⁵The army's position is made more difficult by politicians in three different ways.

Sun Tzu teaches you how to do the math to pick the right response. Here, the issue is relative local strength, but situations get more complicated when you add relative size to other factors such as your field position, the type of terrain, and so on. We cover these more advanced techniques in [Strategy School](#).

The methods described here—"surround," "attack," "divide," "battle," "defend," and "evade"—are very specific and are covered in several different places in this book, not just this one passage. It takes training before you see the big picture automatically.

Ignorant of the whole army's inability to advance, they order an advance.

Ignorant of the whole army's inability to withdraw, they order a withdrawal.

We call this tying up the army.

Politicians don't understand the army's business.

Still, they think they can run an army.

This confuses the army's officers.

¹²Politicians don't know the army's chain of command.

They give the army too much freedom.

This will create distrust among the army's officers.

¹⁵The entire army becomes confused and distrusting.

This invites invasion by many different rivals.

We say correctly that disorder in an army kills victory.

There were no politicians, as we know them today, in Sun Tzu's era, but there were decision-makers and decision-influencers who played political roles within organizations.

[In our books and audios teaching strategy](#), we describe classical strategy's division between "competitive" and "productive" parts of organizations and different types of decision-making within organizations in more detail.

5 You must know five things to win:

Victory comes from knowing when to attack and when to avoid battle.

Victory comes from correctly using both large and small forces.

Victory comes from everyone sharing the same goals.

Victory comes from finding opportunities in problems.

Victory comes from having a capable commander and the government leaving him alone.

You must know these five things.

You then know the theory of victory.

6 We say:

“Know yourself and know your enemy.

You will be safe in every battle.

You may know yourself but not know the enemy.

You will then lose one battle for every one you win.

You may not know yourself or the enemy.

You will then lose every battle.”



The pattern of the five requirements for victory ties closely to the five factors in analysis, which, in turn, tie to the five elements in classical Chinese science, philosophy, and medicine. After some training, you understand these connections automatically.

Part of the power of strategy is that only the wisest people take the time and effort necessary to master its lessons. For live events on Sun Tzu, visit www.seminarsonstrategy.com.



Chapter 4: Positioning



SUN TZU SAID:

I Learn from the history of successful battles.

Your first actions should deny victory to the enemy.

You pay attention to your enemy to find the way to win.

You alone can deny victory to the enemy.

Only your enemy can allow you to win.

⁶You must fight well.

You can prevent the enemy's victory.

You cannot win unless the enemy enables your victory.

⁹We say:

You see the opportunity for victory; you don't create it.

When you start to master strategy, you see everything as a matter of positioning. You analyze your current position to understand your best possible choices. You establish future positions with the intention of opening up better choices.

As in chess, you need to understand how the pieces can move to understand your position. The warrior's mind has the ability to immediately recognize the critical elements of positions.

2 You are sometimes unable to win.

You must then defend.

You will eventually be able to win.

You must then attack.

Defend when you have insufficient strength.

Attack when you have a surplus of strength.

7 You must defend yourself well.

Save your forces and dig in.

You must attack well.

Move your forces when you have a clear advantage.

11 You must always protect yourself until you can completely triumph.

3 Some may see how to win.

However, they cannot position their forces where they must.

This demonstrates limited ability.

Strategy teaches you how to make much better decisions. This starts by putting your decisions into the framework of advancing or defending positions. When do you defend your position? When do you try to advance it? Do you ever abandon it?

Much of classical strategy is based on making basic either/or choices between two opposite courses—here, attacking (advancing) and defending. We call these elements complementary opposites: two sides of the same situation.

⁴Some can struggle to a victory and the whole world may praise their winning.

This also demonstrates a limited ability.

⁶Win as easily as picking up a fallen hair.

Don't use all of your forces.

See the time to move.

Don't try to find something clever.

Hear the clap of thunder.

Don't try to hear something subtle.

¹²Learn from the history of successful battles.

Victory goes to those who make winning easy.

A good battle is one that you will obviously win.

It doesn't take intelligence to win a reputation.

It doesn't take courage to achieve success.

¹⁷You must win your battles without effort.

Avoid difficult struggles.

Though translated here in terms of “effort,” it is often easier to explain classical strategy in terms of “leverage.” Certain specific types of decisions require the presence of leverage. When leverage is missing, the opposite course must be chosen.

This depends on knowing the specific definition of terms. For example, battle doesn't mean fighting, but “meeting an enemy or challenge.” [In our books, CDs, and DVDs teaching strategy](#), we explain these choices in the context of specific challenges.

Fight when your position must win.
You always win by preventing your defeat.

²¹You must engage only in winning battles.
Position yourself where you cannot lose.
Never waste an opportunity to defeat your enemy.

²⁴You win a war by first assuring yourself of victory.
Only afterward do you look for a fight.
Outmaneuver the enemy before the first battle and then fight to win.

4 You must make good use of war.
Study military philosophy and the art of defense.
You can control your victory or defeat.

⁴This is the art of war:

1. Discuss the distances.
2. Discuss your numbers.

In Sun Tzu's usage, "fight" specifically means using all your resources. Did you notice that definition earlier in the text? Did you remember it when reading this section? Again, the specific way Sun Tzu uses language is different from the more general usage in English. In Chinese, characters are not verbs, nouns, or adjectives. They are concepts that we have to translate into verbs, nouns, and adjectives in English, which waters them down.

3. Discuss your calculations.
4. Discuss your decisions.
5. Discuss victory.

¹⁰The ground determines the distance.
The distance determines your numbers.
Your numbers determine your calculations.
Your calculations determine your decisions.
Your decisions determine your victory.”

Again, we see that the five points of discussion listed here map specifically to the five key factors defined in Chapter 1. Can you connect them properly? By using these patterns, Sun Tzu compresses a lot of information into his simple formulas.

Sun Tzu was the first advocate of practice, repetition, and drill in mastering a new skill. If you simply read his work, you cannot internalize these methods. Why not try a [Warrior Class free trial](#) to learn them through our automated training system?

¹⁵Creating a winning war is like balancing a coin of gold against a coin of silver.
Creating a losing war is like balancing a coin of silver against a coin of gold.

5 Winning a battle is always a matter of people.
You pour them into battle like a flood of water pouring into a deep gorge.
This is a matter of positioning.



Chapter 5: Momentum



SUN TZU SAID:

1 You control a large group the same as you control a few.

You just divide their ranks correctly.

You fight a large army the same as you fight a small one.

You only need the right position and communication.

You may meet a large enemy army.

You must be able to sustain an enemy attack without being defeated.

You must correctly use both surprise and direct action.

Your army's position must increase your strength.

Troops flanking an enemy can smash them like eggs.

You must correctly use both strength and weakness.

2 It is the same in all battles.

You use a direct approach to engage the enemy.

You use surprise to win.

Again, two opposing concepts—surprise and direct action—are defined both in terms of each other and in terms of when they are used in meeting challenges.

The choice between two complementary opposites makes decisions in competitive situations much easier.

⁴You must use surprise for a successful invasion.
Surprise is as infinite as the weather and land.
Surprise is as inexhaustible as the flow of a river.

⁷You can be stopped and yet recover the initiative.
You must use your days and months correctly.

⁹If you are defeated, you can recover.
You must use the four seasons correctly.

¹¹There are only a few notes in the scale.
Yet you can always rearrange them.
You can never hear every song of victory.

¹⁴There are only a few basic colors.
Yet you can always mix them.
You can never see all the shades of victory.

The natural impression that this section is poetic as opposed to substantive is completely wrong.

All the images involved—weather, land, days, months, seasons, notes, the scale, colors, shades, flavors, etc.—are tied clearly and specifically to the five factors of strategic analysis via the five Chinese elements and their connections. Knowing those connections makes the specific meaning clear.

¹⁷There are only a few flavors.
Yet you can always blend them.
You can never taste all the flavors of victory.

²⁰You fight with momentum.
There are only a few types of surprises and direct actions.
Yet you can always vary the ones you use.
There is no limit to the ways you can win.

²⁴Surprise and direct action give birth to each other.
They are like a circle without end.
You cannot exhaust all their possible combinations!

3 Surging water flows together rapidly.
Its pressure washes away boulders.
This is momentum.

Water is one of the key elements tied to one of the key strategic factors, climate. When you are trained in Sun Tzu's system, these connections are obvious.

Water is also one of the most frequently used metaphors in Sun Tzu. As you study Sun Tzu, you learn the role it plays in Chinese philosophy and the [history of the martial arts](#).

⁴A hawk suddenly strikes a bird.
Its contact alone kills the prey.
This is timing.

⁷You must fight only winning battles.
Your momentum must be overwhelming.
Your timing must be exact.

¹⁰Your momentum is like the tension of a bent crossbow.
Your timing is like the pulling of a trigger.

4 War is very complicated and confusing.
Battle is chaotic.
Nevertheless, you must not allow chaos.

⁴War is very sloppy and messy.
Positions turn around.
Nevertheless, you must never be defeated.

Are timing and momentum the complementary opposites we have seen elsewhere? No, because you don't choose between them, but they are part of the same general approach.

The key is that Sun Tzu has defined momentum much more specifically than its usual use in English. It is not winning. It is taking control of the situation with surprise.

⁷Chaos gives birth to control.
Fear gives birth to courage.
Weakness gives birth to strength.

¹⁰You must control chaos.
This depends on your planning.
Your men must brave their fears.
This depends on their momentum.

¹⁴You have strengths and weaknesses.
These come from your position.

¹⁶You must force the enemy to move to your advantage.
Use your position.
The enemy must follow you.
Surrender a position.
The enemy must take it.
You can offer an advantage to move him.

Remember when we said Sun Tzu works in mathematical terms similar to the modern ideas of chaos theory?

However, he uses these ideas in a way that makes good decisions quick and easy to make once you see how all the parts fit together.

You can use your men to move him.

You can use your strength to hold him.

5 You want a successful battle.

To do this, you must seek momentum.

Do not just demand a good fight from your people.

You must pick good people and then give them momentum.

⁵You must create momentum.

You create it with your men during battle.

This is comparable to rolling trees and stones.

Trees and stones roll because of their shape and weight.

Offer men safety and they will stay calm.

Endanger them and they will act.

Give them a place and they will hold.

Round them up and they will march.

The science of strategy connects the rules of basic physics to the rules of human psychology, especially the psychology of groups. This makes it easier to predict the most likely course events will take.

In classical strategy, the same rules defined physical and psychological momentum.

¹³You make your men powerful in battle with momentum.

This should be like rolling round stones down over a high, steep cliff.

Momentum is critical.

You are now only about a third of the way through the text.

While each verse seems simple in itself, Sun Tzu has been adding concept on top of concept and relationship on top of relationship. By this point, no casual reader can understand clearly what is being said because everything refers to early concepts. This is why [training \(try it free\)](#) is so important.

The casual reader assumes that, as in modern prose, each verse makes a simple point. The truth is that each new idea is now being explained within a sophisticated framework of specific ideas. New ideas continually expand existing definitions.



Chapter 6: Weakness and Strength

虛實

SUN TZU SAID:

I Always arrive first to the empty battlefield to await the enemy at your leisure. After the battleground is occupied and you hurry to it, fighting is more difficult.

³You want a successful battle.

Move your men, but not into opposing forces.

⁵You can make the enemy come to you.

Offer him an advantage.

You can make the enemy avoid coming to you.

Threaten him with danger.

⁹When the enemy is fresh, you can tire him.

When he is well fed, you can starve him.

When he is relaxed, you can move him.

Weakness and strength were already defined in relationship to two other terms that are tied to a single key factor in strategy. Do you remember what the two other terms were? They were “united” and “divided.” The key element they relied on was a shared philosophy.

2 Leave any place without haste.
Hurry to where you are unexpected.
You can easily march hundreds of miles without tiring.
To do so, travel through areas that are deserted.
You must take whatever you attack.
Attack when there is no defense.
You must have walls to defend.
Defend where it is impossible to attack.

⁹Be skilled in attacking.
Give the enemy no idea where to defend.

¹¹Be skillful in your defense.
Give the enemy no idea where to attack.

3 Be subtle! Be subtle!
Arrive without any clear formation.

Remember when “attack” and “defense” were discussed? Once you understand when to defend and when to advance, you need to know how to advance. This is covered here.

One problem with simply reading *The Art of War*—as opposed to [studying the science of strategy](#)—is that it was not written for the uninitiated. Sun Tzu expected students to be drilled on basic ideas before moving on, in each chapter, to more advanced ideas.

Ghostly! Ghostly!

Arrive without a sound.

You must use all your skill to control the enemy's decisions.

⁶Advance where he can't defend.

Charge through his openings.

Withdraw where the enemy cannot chase you.

Move quickly so that he cannot catch you.

¹⁰Always pick your own battles.

The enemy can hide behind high walls and deep trenches.

Do not try to win by fighting him directly.

Instead, attack a place that he must recapture.

Avoid the battles that you don't want.

You can divide the ground and yet defend it.

Don't give the enemy anything to win.

Divert him from coming to where you defend.

Different translations translate the concepts of "weakness and strength" as "emptiness and fullness" or even "need and satisfaction." All are legitimate, but more important is how these two concepts are connected to the overall structure Sun Tzu has developed so far.

4 Make other men take a position while you take none.
Then focus your forces where the enemy divides his forces.
Where you focus, you unite your forces.
When the enemy divides, he creates many small groups.
You want your large group to attack one of his small ones.
Then you have many men where the enemy has but a few.
Your larger force can overwhelm his smaller one.
Then go on to the next small enemy group.
You can take them one at a time.

5 You must keep the place that you have chosen as a battleground a secret.
The enemy must not know.
Force the enemy to prepare his defense in many places.
You want the enemy to defend many places.
Then you can choose where to meet the enemy.
His forces will be weak there.

Though *The Art of War* is studied all over the world, it is best studied in conjunction with other texts explaining its ideas in more detail.

Sun Tzu never gives examples of how to use his principles. However, our products explain our experience in using his principles.

7If he reinforces his front lines, he depletes his rear.
If he reinforces his rear, he depletes his front.
If he reinforces his right flank, he depletes his left.
If he reinforces his left flank, he depletes his right.
Without knowing the place of attack, he cannot prepare.
Without knowing the right place, he will be weak everywhere.

¹³The enemy has weak points.
Prepare your men against them.
He has strong points.
Make his men prepare themselves against you.

6You must know the battleground.
You must know the time of battle.
You can then travel a thousand miles and still win the battle.

⁴The enemy should not know the battleground.
He shouldn't know the time of battle.

Symbolically, the right, left, back, and front maps to the four points of the compass.

The four points of the compass, plus its center, are the basis for mapping the five key factors that define a strategic position and the four secret steps in advancing a position, which is why Sun Tzu uses the formulation several times to express his approach to finding openings, the topic of this chapter.

His left flank will be unable to support his right.
His right will be unable to support his left.
His front lines will be unable to support his rear.
His rear will be unable to support his front.
His support is distant even if it is only ten miles away.
What unknown place can be close?

¹²You control the balance of forces.
The enemy may have many men but they are superfluous.
How can they help him to victory?

¹⁵We say:
You must let victory happen.

¹⁷The enemy may have many men.
You can still control him without a fight.

7 When you form your strategy, know the strengths and weaknesses of your plan.

Here are those four compass points again. Why are they repeated? A clue: the difference between “deplete” and “support” is closely tied to the topic of this chapter, finding opportunities.

The science of strategy is being very systematically described here, but in simply reading the book, we move so quickly through these

When you execute a plan, know how to manage both action and inaction.

When you take a position, know the deadly and the winning grounds.

When you enter into battle, know when you have too many or too few men.

5 Use your position as your war's centerpiece.

Arrive at the battle without a formation.

Don't take a position in advance.

Then even the best spies can't report it.

Even the wisest general cannot plan to counter you.

Take a position where you can triumph using superior numbers.

Keep opposing forces ignorant.

Everyone should learn your location after your position has given you success.

No one should know how your location gives you a winning position.

Make a successful battle one from which the enemy cannot recover.

You must continually adjust your position to his position.

8 Manage your military position like water.

Water takes every shape.

What does Sun Tzu mean by a "war's centerpiece"? You have to know what factor Sun Tzu puts at the center of his compass for mapping a position. In classical Chinese, the center was the ground, but for Sun Tzu, it was your philosophy.

It avoids the high and moves to the low.

Your war can take any shape.

It must avoid the strong and strike the weak.

Water follows the shape of the land that directs its flow.

Your forces follow the enemy, who determines how you win.

⁸Make war without a standard approach.

Water has no consistent shape.

If you follow the enemy's shifts and changes, you can always find a way to win.

We call this shadowing.

¹²Fight five different campaigns without a firm rule for victory.

Use all four seasons without a consistent position.

Each day passes quickly.

A month can decide your failure or success.

Here again we see Sun Tzu's interconnection of concepts. The five campaigns are tied to the five key factors defining a position. The four seasons are tied to the four steps in advancing a position.

Weakness and strength are the engine in Sun Tzu's system. If you want to learn a little more for free, you might want to go to warriorclassblog.com the free blog discussing Sun Tzu's concepts.



Chapter 7: Armed Conflict

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SUN TZU SAID:

I Everyone uses the arts of war.
You accept orders from the government.
Then you assemble your army.
You organize your men and build camps.
You must avoid disasters from armed conflict.

⁶Seeking armed conflict can be disastrous.
Because of this, a detour can be the shortest path.
Because of this, problems can become opportunities.

⁹Use an indirect route as your highway.
Use the search for advantage to guide you.
When you fall behind, you must catch up.
When you get ahead, you must wait.
You must know the detour that most directly accomplishes your plan.

This chapter ends the first half of the book, which lays out the basic competitive framework. At this point, Sun Tzu has defined literally dozens of key concepts, so many that most casual readers will have lost track of them completely. For the real student of strategy, this is where the science gets even more interesting.

This chapter plays an important role in summarizing the first half of the book and introducing the more detailed second half, which looks at more specific conditions and the special responses that they require.

¹⁴Undertake armed conflict when it creates an advantage.
Seeking armed conflict for its own sake is dangerous.

2 You can build up an army to fight for an advantage.
Then you won't catch the enemy.
You can force your army to go fight for an advantage.
Then you abandon your heavy supply wagons.

⁵You keep only your armor and hurry after the enemy.
You avoid stopping day or night.
You use many roads at the same time.
You go hundreds of miles to fight for an advantage.
Then the enemy catches your commanders and your army.
Your strong soldiers get there first.
Your weaker soldiers follow behind.
Using this approach, only one in ten will arrive.
You can try to go fifty miles to fight for an advantage.
Then your commanders and army will stumble.

The concepts of “advantage” and “fighting” were specifically defined earlier. If you don't remember what they mean, you won't understand what Sun Tzu specifically means by “fighting for an advantage” here.

“Advantage” means an opening where you have an opportunity to outperform rivals. “Fighting” means investing all your resources. A basic idea of strategy is that you cannot, through your own efforts, create an opening. Investing resources to try to create openings never works in any situation, for the specific reasons Sun Tzu explains here.

Using this method, only half of your soldiers will make it.
You can try to go thirty miles to fight for an advantage.
Then only two out of three get there.

¹⁸If you make your army travel without good supply lines, your army will die.
Without supplies and food, your army will die.
If you don't save the harvest, your army will die.

²¹Do not let any of your potential enemies know what you are planning.
Still, you must not hesitate to form alliances.
You must know the mountains and forests.
You must know where the obstructions are.
You must know where the marshes are.
If you don't, you cannot move the army.
If you don't, you must use local guides.
If you don't, you can't take advantage of the terrain.

This list refers to specific topics—mountains, marshes, forests, alliances, etc.—that Sun Tzu defines *later* in the text.

He makes his point about the importance of knowledge by intentionally introducing ideas that you cannot understand at this place in the text.

3 You make war using a deceptive position.

If you use deception, then you can move.

Using deception, you can upset the enemy and change the situation.

You can move as quickly as the wind.

You can rise like the forest.

You can invade and plunder like fire.

You can stay as motionless as a mountain.

You can be as mysterious as the fog.

You can strike like sounding thunder.

¹⁰Divide your troops to plunder the villages.

When on open ground, dividing is an advantage.

Don't worry about organization; just move.

Be the first to find a new route that leads directly to a winning plan.

This is how you are successful at armed conflict.

Though these topics are defined later, any reader of ancient Chinese would recognize these associations, which again go back to the *I Ching* and the *ba gua*.

For Western readers, we explain these concepts in plain, practical terms in our other books and our training programs.

4 Military experience says:
“You can speak, but you will not be heard.

You must use gongs and drums.

You cannot really see your forces just by looking.

You must use banners and flags.”

⁶You must master gongs, drums, banners, and flags.

Place people as a single unit where they can all see and hear.

You must unite them as one.

Then the brave cannot advance alone.

The fearful cannot withdraw alone.

You must force them to act as a group.

¹²In night battles, you must use numerous fires and drums.

In day battles, you must use many banners and flags.

You must position your people to control what they see and hear.

This section offers practical advice about military communication, but it is easy to miss its connections to the larger system. Notice that this is the fourth block in this chapter. These four blocks describe the four skills in advancing a position.

We haven't mentioned the “block” (indicated by large block numbers) and “stanza” (each verse) system and its use in developing the meaning in these lessons. In ancient Chinese, chapters, blocks, and stanzas repeat key concepts, changing wording to emphasize different ideas as we repeat verses in a song. This approach adds meaning in a systematic way that is easy to memorize.

5 You control your army by controlling its morale.
As a general, you must be able to control emotions.

³In the morning, a person's energy is high.

During the day, it fades.

By evening, a person's thoughts turn to home.

You must use your troops wisely.

Avoid the enemy's high spirits.

Strike when his men are lazy and want to go home.

This is how you master energy.

¹⁰Use discipline to await the chaos of battle.

Keep relaxed to await a crisis.

This is how you master emotion.

¹³Stay close to home to await the distant enemy.

Stay comfortable to await the weary enemy.

Remember the discussion earlier about timing in the chapter on momentum? Is this discussion related? How?

In our [Warrior Class on-line training](#), we use questions like this to continually challenge your competitive thinking. You are allowed to go on to the next section only when you have mastered the current one.

Stay well fed to await the hungry enemy.

This is how you master power.

6 Don't entice the enemy when his ranks are orderly.

You must not attack when his formations are solid.

This is how you master adaptation.

4 You must follow these military rules.

Do not take a position facing the high ground.

Do not oppose those with their backs to the wall.

Do not follow those who pretend to flee.

Do not attack the enemy's strongest men.

Do not swallow the enemy's bait.

Do not block an army that is heading home.

Leave an escape outlet for a surrounded army.

Do not press a desperate foe.

This is how you use military skills.



The specific items in this section are covered in more detail later in the text.

Here the point is that avoiding the wrong action is often more important than choosing the right action. This is important because, as you master classical strategy, it is often more important to avoid the wrong action than pick the right action. Our drills at strategyschool.com teach you to instantly see potential missteps.

Since conflict can be so costly, good strategy eliminates unnecessary conflict in people's lives. Visit www.strategy-shop.com for more about all our books, audios, and video products.



Chapter 8: Adaptability

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SUN TZU SAID:

I Everyone uses the arts of war.
As a general, you get your orders from the government.
You gather your troops.
On dangerous ground, you must not camp.
Where the roads intersect, you must join your allies.
When an area is cut off, you must not delay in it.
When you are surrounded, you must scheme.
In a life-or-death situation, you must fight.
There are roads that you must not take.
There are armies that you must not fight.
There are strongholds that you must not attack.
There are positions that you must not defend.
There are government commands that must not be obeyed.

This is a pivotal chapter. Sun Tzu has finished laying out his basic framework for making strategic decisions. The next half of the book has a different purpose.

Here he warns us that before we can really use this system, we have to master an additional level of complexity. That level of complexity was introduced in the previous chapter and will be explained in more detail in the next three long chapters.

¹⁴Military leaders must be experts in knowing how to adapt to find an advantage.
This will teach you the use of war.

¹⁶Some commanders are not open to making adjustments to find an advantage.
They can know the shape of the terrain.
Still, they cannot find an advantageous position.

¹⁹Some military commanders do not know how to adjust their methods.
They can find an advantageous position.
Still, they cannot use their men effectively.

2 You must be creative in your planning.
You must adapt to your opportunities and weaknesses.
You can use a variety of approaches and still have a consistent result.
You must adjust to a variety of problems and consistently solve them.

Sun Tzu's concept of "adaptability" doesn't mean doing whatever you think. It means doing exactly what is required given the situation.

The following chapters cover an array of overlapping conditions defining the situation specifically.

3 You can deter your potential enemy by using his weaknesses against him.
You can keep your potential enemy's army busy by giving it work to do.
You can rush your potential enemy by offering him an advantageous position.

4 You must make use of war.
Do not trust that the enemy isn't coming.
Trust your readiness to meet him.
Do not trust that the enemy won't attack.
Rely only on your ability to pick a place that the enemy can't attack.

Strategy focuses on establishing a position rather than on defeating enemies as its goal.

However, in the following chapters, Sun Tzu will explain that a key aspect of any position is its strengths relative to opposing positions.

5 You can exploit five different faults in a leader.

If he is willing to die, you can kill him.

If he wants to survive, you can capture him.

He may have a quick temper.

You can then provoke him with insults.

If he has a delicate sense of honor, you can disgrace him.

If he loves his people, you can create problems for him.

In every situation, look for these five weaknesses.

They are common faults in commanders.

They always lead to military disaster.

¹¹To overturn an army, you must kill its general.

To do this, you must use these five weaknesses.

You must always look for them.



The five key factors are again the basis for this statement about leadership, especially leadership as specifically defined in Chapter 1.

If you don't remember that definition of leadership, you will miss how this discussion of flaws is based on excesses rather than absences. You may want to go back to Chapter 1 and find the five characteristics of commanders. It actually gets easier and easier to remember all these elements when you study because they connect together. For more about our training programs you can see [this list here](#).



Chapter 9: Armed March

SUN TZU SAI D:

I Anyone moving an army must adjust to the enemy.
When caught in the mountains, rely on their valleys.

Position yourself on the heights facing the sun.

To win your battles, never attack uphill.

This is how you position your army in the mountains.

⁶When water blocks you, keep far away from it.

Let the invader cross the river and wait for him.

Do not meet him in midstream.

Wait for him to get half his forces across and then take advantage of the situation.

¹⁰You need to be able to fight.

You can't do that if you are caught in water when you meet an invader.

Position yourself upstream, facing the sun.

Never face against the current.

Always position your army upstream when near the water.

This is the first of the three longest and most complex chapters in Sun Tzu's work. These chapters explore all the details that make every situation unique and the prescriptions for finding the right response to the situation. These chapters rely much more heavily on past definitions, text organization, and past interconnections for their meaning.

行軍

¹⁵You may have to move across marshes.
Move through them quickly without stopping.
You may meet the enemy in the middle of a marsh.
You must keep on the water grasses.
Keep your back to a clump of trees.
This is how you position your army in a marsh.

²¹On a level plateau, take a position that you can change.
Keep the higher ground on your right and to the rear.
Keep danger in front of you and safety behind.
This is how you position yourself on a level plateau.

²⁵You can find an advantage in all four of these situations.
Learn from the great emperor who used positioning to conquer his four rivals.

2 Armies are stronger on high ground and weaker on low.
They are better camping on sunny southern hillsides than on shady northern ones.
Provide for your army's health and place men correctly.

Notice that Sun Tzu doesn't list the four ground conditions he is discussing.

Technically, these conditions represent three barriers plus their absence. The first is an excess of ground, mountains. The second an excess of climate, water. The third is an excess of ground and climate combined, marshes. The fourth is the lack of excess. This is important because the number three is connected to barriers to progress, not to four skills for advancing a position.

Your army will be free from disease.

Done correctly, this means victory.

⁶You must sometimes defend on a hill or riverbank.

You must keep on the south side in the sun.

Keep the uphill slope at your right rear.

⁹This will give the advantage to your army.

It will always give you a position of strength.

3 Stop the march when the rain swells the river into rapids.

You may want to ford the river.

Wait until it subsides.

⁴All regions can have seasonal mountain streams that can cut you off.

There are seasonal lakes.

There are seasonal blockages.

There are seasonal jungles.

One of the great benefits of learning strategy is that all of its lessons can be connected metaphorically to competitive situations in other environments. In doing our many adaptations of Sun Tzu's work, we explain the types of conditions, for example in the business environment, that you can map to these classical competitive situations.

There are seasonal floods.
There are seasonal fissures.
Get away from all these quickly.
Do not get close to them.
Keep them at a distance.
Maneuver the enemy close to them.
Position yourself facing these dangers.
Push the enemy back into them.

¹⁶Danger can hide on your army's flank.
There are reservoirs and lakes.
There are reeds and thickets.
There are mountain woods.
Their dense vegetation provides a hiding place.
You must cautiously search through them.
They can always hide an ambush.

Here, we have the three challenges that limit progress. They are called "distance," "dangers," and "obstacles." They map to mountains, waters, and marshes. Each concept has a precise meaning but these concepts are specifically defined later in the text.

4 Sometimes, the enemy is close by but remains calm.
Expect to find him in a natural stronghold.
Other times he remains at a distance but provokes battle.
He wants you to attack him.

5 He sometimes shifts the position of his camp.
He is looking for an advantageous position.

7 The trees in the forest move.
Expect that the enemy is coming.
The tall grasses obstruct your view.
Be suspicious.

11 The birds take flight.
Expect that the enemy is hiding.
Animals startle.
Expect an ambush.

There are many specific lessons in this long section, but the general lesson is the same: we can get information only by interpreting the changes in the environment, but that information is never perfect.

¹⁵Notice the dust.

It sometimes rises high in a straight line.

Vehicles are coming.

The dust appears low in a wide band.

Foot soldiers are coming.

The dust seems scattered in different areas.

The enemy is collecting firewood.

Any dust is light and settling down.

The enemy is setting up camp.

5 Your enemy speaks humbly while building up forces.
He is planning to advance.

³The enemy talks aggressively and pushes as if to advance.
He is planning to retreat.

This section gives a clear outline for interpreting an opponent's intentions. Can you simply outline the system it describes?

Again, remembering all these details would be impossible if they weren't connected to an underlying system. Anyone can use this system, but it takes some training to master it.

⁵Small vehicles exit his camp first.
They move the army's flanks.
They are forming a battle line.

⁸Your enemy tries to sue for peace but without offering a treaty.
He is plotting.

¹⁰Your enemy's men run to leave and yet form ranks.
You should expect action.

¹²Half his army advances and the other half retreats.
He is luring you.

¹⁴Your enemy plans to fight but his men just stand there.
They are starving.

¹⁶Those who draw water drink it first.
They are thirsty.

There is a secret in the change of topic here that can help you understand your rivals. At first the topic was seeing your rivals' activities by changes in the environment. Here the topic changes to seeing your rivals' plans in how they behave. Strategy is all about foreseeing the future just a little bit better than others.

¹⁸Your enemy sees an advantage but does not advance.
His men are tired.

²⁰Birds gather.
Your enemy has abandoned his camp.

²²Your enemy's soldiers call in the night.
They are afraid.

²⁴Your enemy's army is raucous.
The men do not take their commander seriously.

²⁶Your enemy's banners and flags shift.
Order is breaking down.

²⁸Your enemy's officers are irritable.
They are exhausted.

Visit ScienceOfStrategy.com
and buy any of [our books](#)
[adapting the strategy](#) of Sun
Tzu to see how you can put
each of these methods of pre-
dicting your opponents to work
in a practical way.

³⁰Your enemy's men kill their horses for meat.
They are out of provisions.

³²They don't put their pots away or return to their tents.
They are desperate.

³⁴Enemy troops appear sincere and agreeable.
But their men are slow to speak to each other.
They are no longer united.

³⁷Your enemy offers too many incentives to his men.
He is in trouble.

³⁹Your enemy gives out too many punishments.
His men are weary.

⁴¹Your enemy first acts violently and then is afraid of your larger force.
His best troops have not arrived.

This chapter focuses on “moving,” one of the four skills in the Progress Cycle, but movement is more than simply doing what you have planned. The most interesting limits on movement are actually explained in Chapter 11, “Types of Terrain.”

⁴³Your enemy comes in a conciliatory manner.
He needs to rest and recuperate.

⁴⁵Your enemy is angry and appears to welcome battle.
This goes on for a long time, but he doesn't attack.
He also doesn't leave the field.
You must watch him carefully.

6 If you are too weak to fight, you must find more men.
In this situation, you must not act aggressively.
You must unite your forces.
Prepare for the enemy.
Recruit men and stay where you are.

⁶You must be cautious about making plans and adjust to the enemy.
You must gather more men.

7 With new, undedicated soldiers, you can depend on them if you discipline them.

The strategic question is: when do you stop? This is one answer to that question, but there are at least three other conditions that can affect that decision. You have already seen one related to the environment, when "rivers swell with rain," in other words, when conditions in the environment are changing too rapidly.

They will tend to disobey your orders.
If they do not obey your orders, they will be useless.

⁴You can depend on seasoned, dedicated soldiers.
But you must avoid disciplining them without reason.
Otherwise, you cannot use them.

⁷You must control your soldiers with esprit de corps.
You must bring them together by winning victories.
You must get them to believe in you.

¹⁰Make it easy for people to know what to do by training your people.
Your people will then obey you.
If you do not make it easy for people to know what to do, you won't train your people.
Then they will not obey.

¹⁴Make your commands easy to follow.
You must understand the way a crowd thinks.

Strategy works only because you are working with other people, and humans are more predictable and controllable than events. If you think you work alone, you need more training in strategic perspective. We want to help you make the best decisions possible. This is what we call developing the “warrior’s mind.”
Try a [free trial of Warrior Class training](#) for more information.



Chapter 10: Field Position

地形

SUN TZU SAID:

I Some field positions are unobstructed.

Some field positions are entangling.

Some field positions are supporting.

Some field positions are constricted.

Some field positions give you a barricade.

Some field positions are spread out.

⁷You can attack from some positions easily.

Other forces can meet you easily as well.

We call these unobstructed positions.

These positions are open.

On them, be the first to occupy a high, sunny area.

Put yourself where you can defend your supply routes.

Then you will have an advantage.

The chapter begins with more definitions. All of these definitions might seem hard to remember, but there is a simple pattern to them. Part of mastering strategy is spending the time to learn this pattern so it comes as second nature.

¹⁴You can attack from some positions easily.
Disaster arises when you try to return to them.
These are entangling positions.
These field positions are one-sided.
Wait until your enemy is unprepared.
You can then attack from these positions and win.
Avoid a well-prepared enemy.
You will try to attack and lose.
Since you can't return, you will meet disaster.
These field positions offer no advantage.

These six "field positions" (literally "ground forms") are extreme conditions in a three-dimensional array. We have already mentioned the nature of this array. Can you remember it? Three is the number describing barriers to progress. Six is now the number indicating the six extreme situations of "distance," "dangers," and "obstacles."

²⁴You cannot leave some positions without losing an advantage.
If the enemy leaves this ground, he also loses an advantage.
We call these supporting field positions.
These positions strengthen you.
The enemy may try to entice you away.
Still, hold your position.
You must entice the enemy to leave.

You then strike him as he is leaving.
These field positions offer an advantage.

³³Some field positions are constricted.
Get to these positions first.
You must fill these areas and await the enemy.
Sometimes, the enemy will reach them first.
If he fills them, do not follow him.
However, if he fails to fill them, you can go after him.

³⁹Some field positions give you a barricade.
Get to these positions first.
You must occupy their southern, sunny heights in order to await the enemy.
Sometimes the enemy occupies these areas first.
If so, entice him away.
Never go after him.

⁴⁵Some field positions are too spread out.

The power of strategy is that it gives you the tools to recognize common situations and know instantly how to react. Once you have begun taking our training, you will think about all these elements naturally as part of the big picture of your situation.

Your force may seem equal to the enemy.
Still you will lose if you provoke a battle.
If you fight, you will not have any advantage.

⁴⁹These are the six types of field positions.
Each battleground has its own rules.
As a commander, you must know where to go.
You must examine each position closely.

2 Some armies can be outmaneuvered.
Some armies are too lax.
Some armies fall down.
Some armies fall apart.
Some armies are disorganized.
Some armies must retreat.

⁷Know all six of these weaknesses.
They create weak timing and disastrous positions.
They all arise from the army's commander.

Notice again that these weaknesses form a pattern of six. By now, you should realize that this isn't an accident, but can you see the deeper connections to the key pattern of six?

¹⁰One general can command a force equal to the enemy.
Still his enemy outflanks him.
This means that his army can be outmaneuvered.

¹³Another can have strong soldiers but weak officers.
This means that his army is too lax.

¹⁵Another has strong officers but weak soldiers.
This means that his army will fall down.

¹⁷Another has subcommanders that are angry and defiant.
They attack the enemy and fight their own battles.
The commander cannot know the battlefield.
This means that his army will fall apart.

²¹Another general is weak and easygoing.
He fails to make his orders clear.
His officers and men lack direction.

Again we go through a series of definitions. Remember, these definition are like mathematical equations. Together they create an easy-to-visualize network of interconnecting ideas that anyone can master if given the proper training.

This shows in his military formations.
This means that his army is disorganized.

²⁶Another general fails to predict the enemy.
He pits his small forces against larger ones.
His weak forces attack stronger ones.
He fails to pick his fights correctly.
This means that his army must retreat.

³¹You must know all about these six weaknesses.
You must understand the philosophies that lead to defeat.
When a general arrives, you can know what he will do.
You must study each general carefully.

3 You must control your field position.
It will always strengthen your army.

³You must predict the enemy to overpower him and win.
You must analyze the obstacles, dangers, and distances.

The good news is that mastering strategy does not require memorizing all these situations by rote. We make mastering the key elements of strategy more like playing a game where you have to get a certain score to advance to the next level. Anyone can develop the “warrior’s mind” through our Warrior Class lessons ([free trial here](#)).

This is the best way to command.

⁶Understand your field position before you meet opponents.

Then you will succeed.

You can fail to understand your field position and meet opponents.

Then you will fail.

¹⁰You must provoke battle when you will certainly win.

It doesn't matter what you are ordered.

The government may order you not to fight.

Despite that, you must always fight when you will win.

¹⁴Sometimes provoking a battle will lead to a loss.

The government may order you to fight.

Despite that, you must avoid battle when you will lose.

¹⁷You must advance without desiring praise.

You must retreat without fearing shame.

Most readers sense that there are deep lessons in Sun Tzu's work, but they don't have the time to research what those lessons are. We developed [the Science of Strategy Institute](#) as a resource to make learning these principles easy and fun.

The only correct move is to preserve your troops.

This is how you serve your country.

This is how you reward your nation.

4 Think of your soldiers as little children.

You can make them follow you into a deep river.

Treat them as your beloved children.

You can lead them all to their deaths.

⁵ Some leaders are generous but cannot use their men.

They love their men but cannot command them.

Their men are unruly and disorganized.

These leaders create spoiled children.

Their soldiers are useless.

5 You may know what your soldiers will do in an attack.

You may not know if the enemy is vulnerable to attack.

You will then win only half the time.

Notice another pattern here. Both of the last two chapters in this second section of the book end with a discussion of managing people. The most advanced principles in classical strategy explain human psychology under competitive pressure. The science of strategy might be said to combine simple mathematics and basic physics with psychology.

You may know that the enemy is vulnerable to attack.

You may not know if your men have the capability of attacking him.

You will still win only half the time.

You may know that the enemy is vulnerable to attack.

You may know that your men are ready to attack.

You may not, however, know how to position yourself in the field for battle.

You will still win only half the time.

¹¹You must know how to make war.

You can then act without confusion.

You can attempt anything.

¹⁴We say:

Know the enemy and know yourself.

Your victory will be painless.

Know the weather and the field.

Your victory will be complete.

In the end, your success depends on only one issue: do you understand enough strategy to apply its rules consistently? Everyone tries to use strategy, but only those skilled in its methods are successful. A single missing piece prevents you from completing a puzzle. If you learn more easily through *audio and video* means, you can join our on-line www.strategyschool.com to get access to all our audio and video at low on-line prices.

Chapter 11: Types of Terrain

九地

SUN TZU SAID:

I Use the art of war.

Know when the terrain will scatter you.

Know when the terrain will be easy.

Know when the terrain will be disputed.

Know when the terrain is open.

Know when the terrain is intersecting.

Know when the terrain is dangerous.

Know when the terrain is bad.

Know when the terrain is confined.

Know when the terrain is deadly.

We begin again with more definitions of more situations. This time the magic number is nine. The numbers five, four, three, six, and nine all have special meaning in Sun Tzu's system. They are all part of the larger pattern.

This pattern does get more complicated in these final chapters, which offer more detailed instructions on how to recognize and respond to specific situations. People remember only about 5 percent of what they read; this makes it impossible to remember all this detail from just reading this book, which is why we offer so much [on-line training](#).

¹¹Warring parties must sometimes fight inside their own territory.

This is scattering terrain.

¹³When you enter hostile territory, your penetration is shallow.

This is easy terrain.

¹⁵Some terrain gives you an advantageous position.

But it gives others an advantageous position as well.

This will be disputed terrain.

¹⁸You can use some terrain to advance easily.

Others can advance along with you.

This is open terrain.

²¹Everyone shares access to a given area.

The first one to arrive there can gather a larger group than anyone else.

This is intersecting terrain.

²⁴You can penetrate deeply into hostile territory.

Then many hostile cities are behind you.

This is dangerous terrain.

Though these nine conditions are described as “terrain,” the Chinese character means “earth” or “ground”—the same “ground” that is one of the five key factors in Chapter 1. However, that character also means “condition” and “situation.” Here, the conditions described are situations that arise over time as you advance your position.

²⁷There are mountain forests.
There are dangerous obstructions.
There are reservoirs.
Everyone confronts these obstacles on a campaign.
They make bad terrain.

[In our books teaching strategy](#), we describe these nine “terrains” as “stages of a campaign.” Understanding them as stages is very useful in using the techniques presented in this chapter.

³²In some areas, the entry passage is narrow.
You are closed in as you try to get out of them.
In this type of area, a few people can effectively attack your much larger force.
This is confined terrain.

³⁶You can sometimes survive only if you fight quickly.
You will die if you delay.
This is deadly terrain.

³⁹To be successful, you must control scattering terrain by avoiding battle.
Control easy terrain by not stopping.
Control disputed terrain by not attacking.

Control open terrain by staying with the enemy's forces.

Control intersecting terrain by uniting with your allies.

Control dangerous terrain by plundering.

Control bad terrain by keeping on the move.

Control confined terrain by using surprise.

Control deadly terrain by fighting.

2 Go to an area that is known to be good for waging war.

Use it to cut off the enemy's contact between his front and back lines.

Prevent his small parties from relying on his larger force.

Stop his strong divisions from rescuing his weak ones.

Prevent his officers from getting their men together.

Chase his soldiers apart to stop them from amassing.

Harass them to prevent their ranks from forming.

Each new block of text describes each of these terrains in more detail. As we explained, Sun Tzu established this pattern much earlier in the work and expects you to recognize it now.

⁸When joining battle gives you an advantage, you must do it.

When it isn't to your benefit, you must avoid it.

¹⁰A daring soldier may ask:

“A large, organized enemy army and its general are coming.
What do I do to prepare for them?”

¹³Tell him:

“First seize an area that the enemy must have.
Then he will pay attention to you.
Mastering speed is the essence of war.
Take advantage of a large enemy’s inability to keep up.
Use a philosophy of avoiding difficult situations.
Attack the area where he doesn’t expect you.”

3 You must use the philosophy of an invader.
Invade deeply and then concentrate your forces.
This controls your men without oppressing them.

⁴Get your supplies from the riches of the territory.
It is sufficient to supply your whole army.

“Invasion” has a very specific meaning in classical strategy. We mentioned it in the first chapter. Do you remember it? It means moving into a new territory. At this point, almost every word has been defined earlier in the text in a very clear manner.

⁶Take care of your men and do not overtax them.
Your esprit de corps increases your momentum.
Keep your army moving and plan for surprises.
Make it difficult for the enemy to count your forces.
Position your men where there is no place to run.
They will then face death without fleeing.
They will find a way to survive.
Your officers and men will fight to their utmost.

¹⁴Military officers who are committed lose their fear.
When they have nowhere to run, they must stand firm.
Deep in enemy territory, they are captives.
Since they cannot escape, they will fight.

¹⁸Commit your men completely.
Without being posted, they will be on guard.
Without being asked, they will get what is needed.
Without being forced, they will be dedicated.
Without being given orders, they can be trusted.

Sun Tzu's system can make you more successful in every aspect of your life. The formulas that Sun Tzu uses give every verse two meanings. One is apparent to the casual reader but it often seems vague or trivial. The deeper, more powerful meanings are revealed to those who are spend the time to master classical strategy.

²³Stop them from guessing by removing all their doubts.
Stop them from dying by giving them no place to run.

²⁵Your officers may not be rich.
Nevertheless, they still desire plunder.
They may die young.
Nevertheless, they still want to live forever.

²⁹You must order the time of attack.
Officers and men may sit and weep until their lapels are wet.
When they stand up, tears may stream down their cheeks.
Put them in a position where they cannot run.
They will show the greatest courage under fire.

4 Make good use of war.
This demands instant reflexes.
You must develop these instant reflexes.
Act like an ordinary mountain snake.

It is hard to miss the big numbers that identify new text blocks, but do you notice the little numbers at the beginning of each verse? We use these numbers in all our *Art of War* books to make it easier to refer to specific lines or equations in the book for study.

If people strike your head then stop them with your tail.

If they strike your tail then stop them with your head.

If they strike your middle then use both your head and tail.

⁸A daring soldier asks:

“Can any army imitate these instant reflexes?”

We answer:

“It can.”

Remember the point of these three long chapters. Once you understand how to quickly diagnose your situation, you know instantly how to react appropriately.

¹²To command and get the most out of proud people, you must study adversity.

People work together when they are in the same boat during a storm.

In this situation, one rescues the other just as the right hand helps the left.

¹⁵Use adversity correctly.

Tether your horses and bury your wagons' wheels.

Still, you can't depend on this alone.

An organized force is braver than lone individuals.

This is the art of organization.

Put the tough and weak together.

You must also use the terrain.

²²Make good use of war.

Unite your men as one.

Never let them give up.

5 The commander must be a military professional.

This requires confidence and detachment.

You must maintain dignity and order.

You must control what your men see and hear.

They must follow you without knowing your plans.

⁶You can reinvent your men's roles.

You can change your plans.

You can use your men without their understanding.

⁹You must shift your campgrounds.

Notice again how the topics in these more advanced lessons lead naturally to a discussion of managing people. These later chapters focus much more heavily on the complex details of human psychology. Here, the focus is on getting the best result when you are working with others.

You must take detours from the ordinary routes.

You must use your men without giving them your strategy.

¹²A commander provides what is needed now.

This is like climbing high and being willing to kick away your ladder.

You must be able to lead your men deep into different surrounding territory.

And yet, you can discover the opportunity to win.

¹⁶You must drive men like a flock of sheep.

You must drive them to march.

You must drive them to attack.

You must never let them know where you are headed.

You must unite them into a great army.

You must then drive them against all opposition.

This is the job of a true commander.

²³You must adapt to the different terrain.

You must adapt to find an advantage.

This verse sounds repetitive and poetic, but notice that pattern of six. This relates to the unobstructed, entangling, supporting, constricted, barricaded, and spread-out field positions we discussed earlier. Could it be that each line says something important about managing people on these terrains? There is also a connection of the six field positions to the nine terrains here, but it would require more explanation than I can put in these side notes.

You must manage your people's affections.

You must study all these skills.

6 Always use the philosophy of invasion.

Deep invasions concentrate your forces.

Shallow invasions scatter your forces.

When you leave your country and cross the border, you must take control.

This is always critical ground.

You can sometimes move in any direction.

This is always intersecting ground.

You can penetrate deeply into a territory.

This is always dangerous ground.

You penetrate only a little way.

This is always easy ground.

Your retreat is closed and the path ahead tight.

This is always confined ground.

There is sometimes no place to run.

This is always deadly ground.

Here, Sun Tzu again lists the nine terrains but in a slightly different form. Why? In the original, he listed them in the order of progress. Here he lists them in the order of where you find the best opportunities. Do you see why we describe these nine terrains as the stages of a campaign? Strategy teaches that competitive situations tend to unfold in a certain way.

¹⁶To use scattering terrain correctly, you must inspire your men's devotion.

On easy terrain, you must keep in close communication.

On disputed terrain, you try to hamper the enemy's progress.

On open terrain, you must carefully defend your chosen position.

On intersecting terrain, you must solidify your alliances.

On dangerous terrain, you must ensure your food supplies.

On bad terrain, you must keep advancing along the road.

On confined terrain, you must stop information leaks from your headquarters.

On deadly terrain, you must show what you can do by killing the enemy.

²⁵Make your men feel like an army.

Surround them and they will defend themselves.

If they cannot avoid it, they will fight.

If they are under pressure, they will obey.

7 Do the right thing when you don't know your different enemies' plans.
Don't attempt to meet them.

Here is another list of the nine terrains and how to use them. What is different here? How does this difference relate to the people with whom you are working?

³You don't know the position of mountain forests, dangerous obstructions, and reservoirs?

Then you cannot march the army.

You don't have local guides?

You won't get any of the benefits of the terrain.

⁷There are many factors in war.

You may lack knowledge of any one of them.

If so, it is wrong to take a nation into war.

¹⁰You must be able to control your government's war.

If you divide a big nation, it will be unable to put together a large force.

Increase your enemy's fear of your ability.

Prevent his forces from getting together and organizing.

¹⁴Do the right thing and do not arrange outside alliances before their time.

You will not have to assert your authority prematurely.

Trust only yourself and your self-interest.

Remember that each line—well, sometimes two lines—of the text works like an equation. These equations connect to one another in sophisticated ways. Our work makes it easy for you not only to understand these equations but to use them. When Sun Tzu says you must know all of them to be successful, he is telling you that you have to study them, not just be exposed to them once.

This increases the enemy's fear of you.
You can make one of his allies withdraw.
His whole nation can fall.

²⁰Distribute rewards without worrying about having a system.

Halt without the government's command.
Attack with the whole strength of your army.
Use your army as if it were a single man.

²⁴Attack with skill.

Do not discuss it.
Attack when you have an advantage.
Do not talk about the dangers.

When you launch your army into deadly ground, even if it stumbles it can still survive.
You can be weakened in a deadly battle and yet be stronger afterward.

³⁰Even a large force can fall into misfortune.

If you fall behind, however, you can still turn defeat into victory.

Many statements seem innocuous to the casual reader, but I hope these notes have made you aware that phrases such as "attack with skill" are very condensed. Another way to say this would be, "You must use all four skills in a cycle to move into new areas successfully." Remember, each ground has its own rules.

You must use the skills of war.

To survive, you must adapt yourself to your enemy's purpose.

You must stay with him no matter where he goes.

It may take a thousand miles to kill the general.

If you correctly understand him, you can find the skill to do it.

8 Manage your government correctly at the start of a war.

Close your borders and tear up passports.

Block the passage of envoys.

Encourage the halls of power to rise to the occasion.

You must use any means to put an end to politics.

Your enemy's people will leave you an opening.

You must instantly invade through it.

⁸Immediately seize a place that they love.

Do it quickly.

Trample any border to pursue the enemy.

Use your judgment about when to fight.

How do you apply the idea of “government” to your own use of strategy? In Sun Tzu's view, every competitor—including you—has a “government” component and an “army” component, a productive capacity and a competitive capacity. Knowing when and where to govern, that is, plan, and when and where to use strategy is a critical idea.

¹²Doing the right thing at the start of war is like approaching a woman.

Your enemy's men must open the door.

After that, you should act like a streaking rabbit.

The enemy will be unable to catch you.

Strategy as seduction? What situation better describes competition? As in real competition, you don't even have to have a specific rival, but you are always competing in a relationship. Strategy is the key to seduction and seduction a key to strategy.

We sold out of our adaptation of Sun Tzu to relationships, but it is and all our out-of-print books are always available in electronic format to members of our [Strategy School](#).



Chapter 12: Attacking With Fire

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SUN TZU SAID:

I There are five ways of attacking with fire.

The first is burning troops.

The second is burning supplies.

The third is burning supply transport.

The fourth is burning storehouses.

The fifth is burning camps.

⁷To make fire, you must have the resources.

To build a fire, you must prepare the raw materials.

⁹To attack with fire, you must be in the right season.

To start a fire, you must have the time.

¹¹Choose the right season.

The weather must be dry.

You start to practice strategy and it completely changes your life. Since casual readers approach the work literally, they tend to skip this chapter about "fire attacks" because they think that they are never going to attack anyone with fire or have to defend against fire. But strategy is a set of rules. Here, the rules are about how you use weapons, specifically, those created by conditions in the environment.

Most of those to whom we offer this book will not even make it this far reading it. Fewer will spend any time thinking about its ideas. Only a very few have the desire and fire needed to master its power. Those are the ones for whom we exist.

¹³Choose the right time.

Pick a season when the grass is as high as the side of a cart.

¹⁵You can tell the proper days by the stars in the night sky.

You want days when the wind rises in the morning.

2 Everyone attacks with fire.

You must create five different situations with fire and be able to adjust to them.

³You start a fire inside the enemy's camp.

Then attack the enemy's periphery.

⁵You launch a fire attack, but the enemy remains calm.

Wait and do not attack.

⁷The fire reaches its height.

Follow its path if you can.

If you can't follow it, stay where you are.

The pattern of five is repeated again here, twice: first with targets and then situations. By now, after reading these notes, you should know how to connect the dots, that is, connect these elements to the five key elements described in Chapter 1.

¹⁰Spreading fires on the outside of camp can kill.
You can't always get fire inside the enemy's camp.
Take your time in spreading it.

¹³Set the fire when the wind is at your back.
Don't attack into the wind.
Daytime winds last a long time.
Night winds fade quickly.

The rules in this chapter apply to all weapons, but they are tailored for “environmental” weapons. Nothing is more powerful in strategy than leveraging the environment. If you read our [strategy blog](#), we give examples of the [fire attacks](#) that are commonly used in politics and business.

¹⁷Every army must know how to adjust to the five possible attacks by fire.
Use many men to guard against them.

3 When you use fire to assist your attacks, you are clever.
Water can add force to an attack.
You can also use water to disrupt an enemy.
It does not, however, take his resources.

4 You win in battle by getting the opportunity to attack.

It is dangerous if you fail to study how to accomplish this achievement.

As commander, you cannot waste your opportunities.

⁴We say:

A wise leader plans success.

A good general studies it.

If there is little to be gained, don't act.

If there is little to win, do not use your men.

If there is no danger, don't fight.

We have mentioned three times in these notes that the term “fight” doesn't mean “conflict.” What does it mean? It means “use all your resources and hold nothing back.” In strategy, it is an action of last resort. By now, perhaps you can see how clarifying these ideas gives impact to what Sun Tzu is saying. See how knowing the real meaning of the work's terms changes the meaning of every line?

¹⁰As leader, you cannot let your anger interfere with the success of your forces.

As commander, you cannot let yourself become enraged before you go to battle.

Join the battle only when it is in your advantage to act.

If there is no advantage in joining a battle, stay put.

¹⁴Anger can change back into happiness.

Rage can change back into joy.

A nation once destroyed cannot be brought back to life.

Dead men do not return to the living.

¹⁸This fact must make a wise leader cautious.

A good general is on guard.

²⁰Your philosophy must be to keep the nation peaceful and the army intact.

You may one day master the science of strategy. When you do, you will make better decisions because you will have to rely less on your emotions. Sun Tzu teaches that emotions are a poor basis for decision-making. People make decisions based upon emotion only because they have no systematic basis, such as the principles of strategy, for making better decisions.



If you have read this far you might have the right stuff to become a strategic expert in your field, visit strategytrainers.com, where you can learn about becoming a licensed trainer of the Science of Strategy Institute. The best way to master strategy is to train others.

Chapter 13: Using Spies

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SUN TZU SAID:

I All successful armies require thousands of men.
They invade and march thousands of miles.
Whole families are destroyed.
Other families must be heavily taxed.
Every day, a large amount of money must be spent.

⁶Internal and external events force people to move.
They are unable to work while on the road.
They are unable to find and hold a useful job.
This affects 70 percent of thousands of families.

¹⁰You can watch and guard for years.
Then a single battle can determine victory in a day.
Despite this, bureaucrats worship the value of their salary money too dearly.
They remain ignorant of the enemy's condition.

Strategy can make you rich both in money and in wisdom. Sun Tzu saves his most critical and important chapter for last. Strategy closely connects the issues of economics and information. Information is the topic of this chapter, but the value of information starts with some important economics.

The result is cruel.

¹⁵They are not leaders of men.

They are not servants of the state.

They are not masters of victory.

¹⁸People need an intelligent leader and a worthy commander.

You must move your troops to the right places to beat others.

You must accomplish your attack and escape unharmed.

This requires foreknowledge.

You can obtain foreknowledge.

You can't get it from demons or spirits.

You can't see it from professional experience.

You can't check it with analysis.

You can only get it from other people.

You must always know the enemy's situation.

We are coming to the end of the text here and are just now getting to some of its most important lessons. In my business adaptation, *9 Formulas for Business Success*, I put the ideas from this chapter up front because good information sources are the starting point for all strategy.

2 You must use five types of spies.

You need local spies.

You need inside spies.

You need double agents.

You need doomed spies.

You need surviving spies.

⁷You need all five types of spies.

No one must discover your methods.

You will then be able to put together a true picture.

This is the commander's most valuable resource.

¹¹You need local spies.

Get them by hiring people from the countryside.

¹³You need inside spies.

Win them by subverting government officials.

You shouldn't be surprised at this point by the pattern of five. As you grasp the dimensions of the five key elements, you see that they are the key to understanding Sun Tzu.

You might be a little surprised to learn that the term translated as "spies" is really closer in meaning to "go-between." What Sun Tzu is really talking about here is what a computer person might call "interfaces," points at which people connect to people through other people.

¹⁵You need double agents.

Discover enemy agents and convert them.

¹⁷You need doomed spies.

Deceive professionals into being captured.

Let them know your orders.

They then take those orders to your enemy.

²¹You need surviving spies.

Someone must return with a report.

3Your job is to build a complete army.
No relations are as intimate as the ones with spies.

No rewards are too generous for spies.

No work is as secret as that of spies.

⁵If you aren't clever and wise, you can't use spies.

If you aren't fair and just, you can't use spies.

Strategy is a science of information management for decision-making, but not the computer type of information management. It is understanding information gathered from real, live people. We spend a lot of time explaining why in our [books](#) and [courses](#).

If you can't see the small subtleties, you won't get the truth from spies.

⁸Pay attention to small, trifling details!

Spies are helpful in every area.

¹⁰Spies are the first to hear information, so they must not spread information.

Spies who give your location or talk to others must be killed along with those to whom they have talked.

4 You may want to attack an army's position.

You may want to attack a certain fortification.

You may want to kill people in a certain place.

You must first know the guarding general.

You must know his left and right flanks.

You must know his hierarchy.

You must know the way in.

You must know where different people are stationed.

You must demand this information from your spies.

This chapter brings us full circle in strategic theory. The book begins with analysis, but analysis begins with information. Good strategy develops a feedback loop in which good analysis followed by good strategic moves leads to better information and better decisions and better moves.

¹⁰You want to know the enemy spies in order to convert them into your men.

You find sources of information and bribe them.

You must bring them in with you.

You must obtain them as double agents and use them as your emissaries.

¹⁴Do this correctly and carefully.

You can contact both local and inside spies and obtain their support.

Do this correctly and carefully.

You create doomed spies by deceiving professionals.

You can use them to give false information.

Do this correctly and carefully.

You must have surviving spies capable of bringing you information at the right time.

²¹These are the five different types of intelligence work.

You must be certain to master them all.

You must be certain to create double agents.

You cannot afford to be too cost conscious in creating these double agents.

Knowledge is power. Strategy is the knowledge of power. We provide this free version of Sun Tzu's work because we want to give you an idea of what you can learn and do with history's most powerful knowledge.

5 This technique created the success of ancient Shang.
This is how the Shang held its dynasty.

3 You must always be careful of your success.
Learn from Lu Ya of Shang.

5 Be a smart commander and a good general.
You do this by using your best and brightest people for spying.
This is how you achieve the greatest success.
This is how you meet the necessities of war.
The whole army's position and ability to move depends on these spies.



Lu Ya was an officer under a Shang-dynasty tyrant who got inside the tyrant's information network to overthrow him.

Sun Tzu wrote for the people of his time, who understood his cultural references. How can you master his powerful system without having his system explained by those who have done the research?

This is the “end” of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, **but** the book was written as a loop. In [9 Formulas for Business Success](#), we use the last chapter in the beginning of the book. Sun Tzu expected students not only to reread the book but to study its system so that they could learn more on each rereading.

At this point, you have to make a decision. Are you satisfied just being able to say you read *The Art of War* or do you to be among the few who go on to master its methods to control your life and change the world?

What is more success in life worth to you? What is it worth to master what has proven to be history's most powerful success system? Success fads comes and go, but the real methods of successful strategy endure over thousands of years for a reason.

HERE IS A SPECIAL INCENTIVE TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP!

We want to encourage you to keep studying Sun Tzu. You can choose any of our great books (starting at 99 cents each), audio CDs, and video DVDs at [our Strategy Shop](#) and a 20 percent discount on any first order with the **coupon code WEL1006** on checkout. Or you can get the same 20% discount on our on-line training courses and downloads at our [Strategy School membership](#) using the code **292F83DE33**. You can even start with a [FREE trial](#).

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