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

**INTRODUCTION TO  
COMBAT HUNTER  
B1E0795  
STUDENT HANDOUT**

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## Introduction to Observation Techniques

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### Introduction

In today's dynamic tactical environment, the ability to see, observe, and interpret what is around us is a crucial skill to master in order to successfully operate on the battlefield.

### Importance

Awareness is having knowledge of your surroundings and is a state of consciousness. Situational Awareness refers to the degree of accuracy by which one's perception of their current environment mirrors reality. Being observant of your environment and being able to recall details of what you see are skills that will allow you to better interpret your area of operations in battle. You want always to be the hunter, and never the hunted.

“Conflict may be viewed as time-competitive cycles of observation-orientation-decision-action (OODA).”

“First, each party to a conflict enters the fray by observing himself, his surroundings, and his enemy. In tactics, this equates to adoption of a hunting instinct: searching; actively looking; hunting for the enemy; and seeing what he is doing or is about to do. It also includes anticipating the enemy's next moves—getting inside his mind.”

“Second, based upon those observations, the combatant orients to the situation, that is, produces a mental image of the situation and gains situational awareness. This awareness becomes the foundation on which to erect a plan. **Generally, the better the orientation, the better the plan.**” -MCDP 1-3

Combat hunter is a **MIND SET**

There are 3 Pillars

- Observation (Basic)
- Combat Profiling (Intermediate)
- Tracking (Advanced)

### In This Lesson

You will learn techniques that will help you improve your observation skills and memory, and then learn how to apply those skills to interpreting your environment.

This lesson covers the following topics:

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## Learning Objectives

### Terminal Learning Objectives

Given a situation with changing levels of threat, adapt an alertness posture to the situation to align posture to threat. (0300-CMBH-1201)

Given an area to observe in daylight and in limited visibility, perform un-aided observation to identify objects and sounds. (0300-CMBH-1202)

### Enabling Learning Objectives

Given a mission, a commander's intent, and a situation with changing levels of threat, assess changing situation to maintain the initiative, adapt alertness posture to threats, and gain a tactical advantage. (0300-CMBH-1201a)

Without the aid of references, utilize the observation process to identify objects and sounds. (0300-CMBH-1202a)

Without the aid of references, utilize the elements of visual perception to identify objects and sounds. (0300-CMBH-1202b)

Without the aid of references, and considering unaided observation during daylight or limited visibility, search a field of view to identify objects and sounds. (0300-CMBH-1202c)

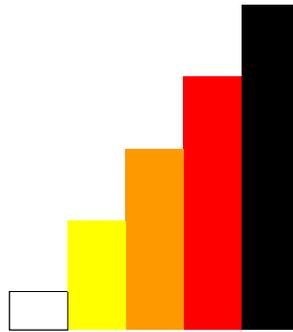
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## Cooper's Color Code

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Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Cooper developed a system for levels of awareness by color code. This system helps you determine your level of awareness and be better prepared mentally for the situation. The following are his color code conditions:



<b>White</b>	You are relaxed, unaware of your surroundings, and not prepared to react to anything. Heart rate is between 60 and 80 beats per minute (BPM).
<b>Yellow</b>	You are in a relaxed state of alert and have a general awareness of what is going on around you. You do not perceive any threats, but you are looking for and are aware of possible threats. This state can be maintained for a long period of time. Heart rate is between 60 and 80 BPM.
<b>Orange</b>	You are at a heightened state of alert and are getting ready to deal with a threat. Your mind is preparing for the reaction to the threat. This state cannot be maintained for a long period of time, and your body will want to revert to a state of yellow when the threat is gone. Heart rate is between 60/80 and 115 BPM.
<b>Red</b>	You are reacting to the threat and are in a fighting state of mind. You are executing the plan you developed while in a state of orange. You may experience focus lock, tunnel vision, and other adrenaline effects (shaking, sudden bursts of energy). Heart rate is between 115/145 and 175 BPM.
<b>Black</b>	You are in a state of catastrophic breakdown of mental and physical performance. This usually occurs when you are forced to react to a threat that you have not been able to prepare for, like when you go from white or yellow straight to black. Heart rate will be greater than 175 BPM.

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You and your Marines should strive to always be in the yellow.

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## Observation Theory and Techniques

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Observation is a three part process. You must see, assess and then communicate. You cannot be successful as a unit in the conduct of your mission if you are not using this three step process of observation.

According to studies about 90% of the information that your brain uses in order to orient and make decisions comes from your sense of vision. This makes it extremely important to assess what you see and to put it in context and sometimes take it out of context in order to see what is actually there or see what is missing or out of place.

Observation is a two way street. If you can see the enemy then the enemy can see you. There are ways to camouflage yourself when attempting to observe others as well as ways to avoid being observed by others. Being familiar with these methods of camouflage is important in order to use them to your advantage and to understand how the enemy will try to hide themselves from you.

The communication process depends greatly upon the circumstances of your immediate situation. It may be appropriate to simply report information to higher headquarters via radio and continue your current operation; for less time-critical information, you may be able to delay communication until the debrief of your operation. Other situations may dictate an immediate response. Should you come into contact with an enemy unit and they are unaware of your presence, you most likely will have time to communicate an ADDRAC report to orient the rest of your unit and prepare for an assault. If in that same scenario the enemy appears aware of your unit's presence, your communication process may consist of firing the first round followed by additional instructions, as able.

**Context and Scanning.** Our eyes give us a majority of the information that our brain processes in order to gain situational awareness and build a picture of your surroundings. Our brain, however is a very powerful tool and has a tendency to fill in the blanks or make some things look like they belong when they actually do not because of the context that the objects are in. For instance for Americans, all the years of reading from left to right allow human brain to fill in things that may not actually be there when scanning a scene in that direction because of the context that they are in. Context is a powerful tool which enables us to make quick decisions. However, observation at times requires you to take a detailed look at areas, objects and/or people in order to assess a possible threat or course of action. It is important to see what is actually there and not what the enemy wants you to see or what your brain is causing you to believe is there. Scanning an area in the opposite direction (right to left) than your brain is used to seeing things is one way to allow you to break out the details necessary to accurately assess the environment.

**Using Binoculars to Aid in Observation.** Binoculars are a great tool to aid in observation. They allow you to get a magnified view of an object or area that is off in the distance. In that magnified view you are able to make out greater detail. Items or details that your unaided eye would not be able to pick up are now presented with enough clarity to actually assess what you are seeing. Communicating the details that you see to others within the unit will complete the three step process of See, Assess

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and Communicate. It will also increase the situational awareness for unit leaders and members of your unit to accomplish the mission.

**Binocular Techniques.** The following are techniques that can be used in order to aid the individual Marine or unit leaders in recognizing and assessing threats in the environment that they are operating in.

**Burning through Vegetation**

A bush or piece of vegetation that blocks your vision of things behind it to the un-aided eye can be seen with the help of binoculars. Place the binoculars to your eyes and focus the binoculars past the branches that are in front of you. Objects on the other side of the bush or vegetation can be seen clearly while you remain hidden and camouflaged.

**Cresting the Top of Hills**

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Using the just mentioned technique of burning through vegetation can allow you to remain on the military crest of the hill that you are on and observe the other side. Walk up the hill until your head is just above the crest of the hill. You will have enough standoff from the vegetation on the hill top that you will not be noticed. Place your binoculars to your eyes and focus through the vegetation in front of you in order to bring objects on the other side of the hill into view while remaining hidden and camouflaged.

**Looking through Holes**

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When you come up to a wall or surface that has small holes in it you can use your binoculars to see what is on the other side without exposing yourself to danger. Hold one of the oculars up to the hole in the wall or surface. Look into that ocular with one of your eyes. Objects on the other side can be seen and focused on.

**Looking into Shadows**

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A shadow can be used to mask figures and objects. Using binoculars can help you see those figures and objects that you would not otherwise see if you looking with the un-aided eye. Because of their ability to magnify a picture and collect light, binoculars give the user the ability to see into the shadows. Place the binoculars to your eyes and look at the shadow or into a shaded area. Fill the field of view of the binoculars with the shadowed area. This allows your pupils to adjust to the light level that is in the field of view and allows you to focus on the figures or objects present in that shadow.

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## Nine Elements of Visual Perception

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### Line, Edge and Outline

The boundary or border, a spatial location, a separation or distinction.

Everything, especially man-made items, have a line or edge to them. These lines and edges often lead to the outline of an object. The human eye picks up lines, edges and outlines very easily. An untrained individual may see a line or edge while a trained individual will see outline.

Any object silhouetted against a contrasting background is conspicuous. Any smooth, flat background, such as water, a field, or best of all, the sky, will cause an object to become well delineated. However, special care must be taken when searching areas with an uneven background, as it is more difficult to detect the silhouette of an object

### Shape

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A shape is the visual characteristic surface configuration of a thing. It is distinguished from its surroundings by its outline, contour, or figure.

Outlines are created when lines and edges come together. When we perceive the outline, it becomes a shape.

The human eye readily picks up shapes, especially of other humans or potential threats (e.g. rifle). Some objects can be recognized instantly by their shape, particularly if it contrasts with the background. Experience teaches people to associate an object with its shape or outline. At a distance, the outline of objects can be seen well before the details can be determined. The human body and the equipment that a Marine carries are easily identified unless the outline has been altered. Marines can alter this outline by applying camouflaging techniques.

### Contrast or Value

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Contrast is a difference, especially a strong dissimilarity, between entities or objects compared. Value is the relative importance or tone of something, darkness or lightness of color.

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Color	<p>The aspect of things that is caused by differing qualities of the light reflected or emitted by them, definable in terms of the observer or of the light as:</p> <p>The appearance of objects or light sources described in terms of the individual's perception of them, involving hue, lightness, and saturation for light sources.</p> <p>The characteristics of light by which the individual is made aware of objects or light sources through the receptors of the eye, described in terms of dominant wavelength, luminance, and purity.</p> <p>Colors have a value to them as well as a baseline. The greater the contrasting color, the more visible the object becomes. This point is especially true when the color is not natural for that area. The best camouflage colors are those that are most difficult to determine exact color. Color alone will usually not identify the object but is often an aid in locating it.</p>
Texture	<hr/> <p>The distinctive physical composition or structure of something, especially with respect to the size, shape, and arrangements of its parts, appearance and feel of a surface.</p> <p>Similar to color, texture has a baseline. An object with a smooth surface reflects light and becomes more obvious than an object with a rough surface that casts shadows on itself. An extremely smooth object becomes shiny. If an object has a surface that contrasts with its surroundings, it becomes conspicuous.</p>
Rhythm and Flow	<hr/> <p>The patterned, recurring alternations of contrasting elements, movement or variation characterized by the regular recurrence or alternation of different quantities or conditions; a pattern created by lines, forms and colors.</p>
Movement	<hr/> <p>Movement is one of the biggest disturbances to a baseline. The human eye is strongly attracted to any movement. The human eye can detect another human or animal within seconds by watching the movement of an appendage.</p> <p>a. Physical movement is from the person actually moving. This is readily detectable.</p> <p>b. Visual movement is from a person disturbing vegetation or an object, thus causing the vegetation or object to move. This could also be a lack of movement which creates an</p>

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Light (reflecting, sunlight and shadow)	<p>anomaly in the baseline.</p>
	<hr/> <p>Light impacts colors and the value of colors. Some animals have a dark back and light underbelly. The sun lightens the dark back color and the shadow cast from above darkens the lighter underbelly near the ground making the animal seem less three-dimensional.</p>
	<p>Flat surfaces reflect light while rough surfaces absorb it. The reflections from a belt buckle, watch, or optical device can be seen over a mile away from the source. Any shine will attract the observer's attention.</p>
	<p>In sunlight, an object or a man will cast a shadow that can give away his presence. Shadows may be more revealing than the object itself. Care must be taken to detect alterations of the natural shape of a shadow. Where light is excessively bright, shadows will look especially black. Contrast will be extreme, and in this exaggerated contrast the observer's eye cannot adjust to both areas simultaneously. This requires the observer to "isolate" the shadowed area from the bright sunlight so that his eye can adapt to the shadow.</p>
Positive and Negative Space	<hr/> <p><u>Positive Space.</u> Positive space is a space that takes up mass (solid objects) such as buildings, trees, signs, vehicles, etc. Typically, a Marine cannot see through positive space. The human eye will naturally move from positive space to positive space, as the eye is attracted to this. Example: Tree lines, your eyes are attracted to trunks and prominent branches.</p>
	<p><u>Negative Space.</u> Negative space is the space between the positive spaces. This is the area of shadow and background activity that an untrained observer often overlooks. Good camouflage resembles negative space; it doesn't resemble positive space, such as a leaf. When observing, a Combat Hunter must observe the negative space as well. The Marine, like the enemy, wants to operate in the negative spaces when possible.</p> <hr/>

## Summary

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The techniques discussed here are tools that will help you better observe your environment and operate within it. Maintaining the proper state of alert, remembering what you see, and evaluating what is normal and what is abnormal for your environment are all techniques that will make you better able to execute your mission.

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