# SUPPORT IS NOT A ROLE

## A Tabletop War Gamer’s Perspective on Team Shooters by Andy

I frequently hear Splatoon players say “any weapon can play any role in some circumstances” but what they are confusing is a role and a tactic. They mean is that any weapon can use any tactic. Frequently I hear Splatoon players say that Support is a bad role. I would describe it as an ineffective tactic.

**A role** is something that a weapon can do that no other weapon in a different role is capable of, and often has a tactic that they are better at then other roles but they can execute any tactic. A weapon *can* fill multiple roles. The goal is to get every role on the team. I use five roles so some weapons will have to multiple roles and chances are having multiples of any role with be helpful.

**A tactic** is a method or decision made in a battle to achieve your strategy.

**A strategy** is the plan made before the battle that includes a goal for the team, a goal for each individual soldier, and a recommended tactic for each individual soldier to achieve that goal.

Because circumstances change in the heat of battle getting tunnel vision on a specific tactic can stop your creativity, and getting roles and tactics confused contributes to that tunnel vision.

FLC wrote a wonderful guide on tactics but by calling these roles they may have inadvertently contributed to people who never read the document trying to “play support” if they came from another shooter that included healers, even while condemning trying to play support as “pretending to be useful”. I AGREE WITH EVERYTHING THEY WROTE \**if* \*you replace the word role with tactic.

## Roles that no other weapon can do

There are five roles that I use:

**Tank** – can place cover on the map

* Any weapon with splash wall
* Any brella
* Any weapon with Big Bubbler (to a lesser extent)

Their recommended tactics are skirmishing to stay alive in order to keep the other units alive and walling off choke points to stop the other team from moving.

Their gear should help with ink efficiency, such as last-ditch effort and sub ink saver; and gear to in the battle, such as quick super jump or quick respawn.

**Mobility** – can move in ways that no other unit can; they move fast, splat fast, and respawn fast.

* A brush can run fast, even over un-inkable surfaces.
* A Zipcaster user can get behind enemy lines quickly and safely
* A soldier with ninja squid can hide in ink to get in places unnoticed
* A curling bomb user can move quickly over enemy ink
* A very lightweight and accurate weapon with a high rate of fire can splat fast enough to clear their own path while dodging with squid rolls or dualie rolls

Their recommended tactics are flanking to force favorable number advantages, sharking and ambushing to surprise the enemy, and blitzing to splat quickly before the enemy can react, and hopefully cause them to feed.

Their gear should keep them in game because they tend to die frequently, such as quick respawn; help them move even fast, such as swim speed; and in some cases help them hide such as with ninja squid, or more frequently hide or dodge with super jump roll or hidden super jump.

Tanks and Mobility soldiers should especially focus on pushing the border of enemy territory whenever they have a numbers advantage. An ounce of prevention saves a pound of effort. Spawn camping might not be fun for the losers but it is deadly effective. At the minimum you want to control the zone around the objective.

It’s important to note that every role should push when they have the advantage; it’s the most important tactic and why the “support role” is so hated. Painting for a special is a better tactic for when you have a disadvantage and need to create an opening such as painting your own spawn area and using a displacement special like missiles to force the enemies off the tower. If you are “playing the Support role” then you are not helping to push or defend when you are needed on the front.

**Artillery** – can hit behind cover and control entire areas of an effect

* A blaster can hit behind cover
* A slosher can hit behind cover
* A charged fizzy bomb pops three times preventing any movement in an area for a long time
* A booyah bomb prevents any movement in a bigger area for a long time
* Suction bombs can stick to places other bombs can’t reach
* A torpedo forces the enemy to choose whether they want to stop what they’re doing and shoot it or whether they want to move.
* Most weapons have bombs so this role is easy to fill.
* Tri-stringer leaves an explosive similar to a suction bomb behind when they don’t directly hit forcing their opponent to move.

Their recommended tactic is making themselves annoying. They should try to force enemies to move somewhere they don’t want to be. An enemy sniper will have to move to a new perch, or the enemy will have to get off the tower if they don’t want to waste precious time in a respawn. The artillery want to be behind cover very close to their target.

Their gear should help with ink efficiency, but usually this is a secondary role for most of the weapons on your team so focus on gear for your primary role. If this is your primary role such as sloshing machine or blaster you’ll want to have good ink efficiency to pressure someone hiding behind cover as long as possible.

**Utility** – can give unique benefits to your team

* Beakons to help your team flank or respawn into the action safely
* Tacticooler to make your team zoomy woomy
* Point sensor and mines let you call out enemy locations without voice chat, especially in soloq

Their recommended tactic is to focus on their other role unless they have beakons. Special spam is very niche and prevents you from helping in other more important ways. It’s a tool to keep in your toolbox when you need a hero play but not a ‘most effective tactic’. They should also be very good at skirmishing. Without a bomb, you might not be as effective at splatting so make yourself a nuisance and stay alive – unless of course you are a slaying machine.

Their recommended gear is special saver and special up or gear to manage sub ink efficiency – unless this hinders their primary role.

**Suppression** – can pressure areas that no one else can reach

* A charger has a long threat range
* A splatting can shoot at a far distance with a high rate of fire

Their recommended tactic is to control a zone. Splatting is great but you can get a 20-0 KD and still lose the game. Zone control is about choosing targets. If you can’t splat them then stop them from moving where they want to go. Another recommended tactic is to push as far up as you possibly can safely without overextending and making yourself vulnerable. You want to control the whole map. Tell yourself “This is MY zone”. For you every game is splat zones and the zone you want to control is the length of your laser in every direction away from the objective. The enemy cant score points if they can’t touch the objective. Even if you don’t splat them you’ve got to keep them moving. You are the goalie.

Their recommended gear should keep the enemy away from the objective. If they have a displacement special, then they should use special charge; if they have a long range, they could use respawn punisher to keep the enemy in their spawn and away from the objective longer.

The main difference between this and artillery is range. Imagine being able to punch someone and then run away before they can punch you back - this is essentially the same thing as throwing a rock at them.

Artillery threatens things behind cover, suppression threatens things far away.

## Tactics for all soldiers

A role is something no other role can do. A tactic can be done by any role.

And easy way to know they difference is to fill in the blanks of this sentence:

A (role) can (unique quality) in order to (tactic) .

A mobile Tetra can roll in order to flank.

A suppression Charger can shoot very far in order to displace a Hydra.

A tank Squeezer can place a Splash Wall in order to block a choke point.

An artillery Blaster can shoot around ledges to displace a Charger.

A utility Dapple can place a Beakon in order to flank.

Some other important tactics that all roles should be fulfilling are painting behind the soldiers in front of you to give them an escape route, painting behind your enemies to block their escape, painting in front of your enemies to stop their advance, pushing when you have a number advantage, pushing when you have a number advantage, pausing to break feeding, holding your special until it has synergy with a teammate’s special, and pushing when you have a numbers advantage.

This is the fluid part of FLC’s document; choose the tactic in the moment. Your role might be better at using a hammer but grab the screwdriver if you need it.

## Strategies

A lot of people confuse the words tactic and strategy. A tactic might be practiced in training but isn’t planned to be executed until you know you need it. A strategy is the plan to win before you ever pick up your gun. You might say “if you run into this situation use this tactic” is a strategy.

FLC’s 4 “Priorities First” is a great example of a strategy. It’s the plan guiding you on which tactic to use.

Personally, I like to make a list of team member’s goals.

Team goal: place the rainmaker on the pedestal

∟Tank’s goal: stop the enemy from getting close to the objective

∟ Tank’s recommended tactics: place a wall between the enemy and the objective

∟ Tank’s secondary tactic: splat the enemy while hiding behind a wall

∟ Tank’s tertiary tactic: place a wall in a narrow path to block the enemy rainmaker

∟Mobility’s goal: stop the enemy from getting close to the objective

∟ Mobility’s recommended tactics: paint ink between the enemy and the objective and

paint the ground in front of the rainmaker carrier

∟ Mobility’s secondary tactic: splat the enemy from a flank

∟ Mobility’s tertiary tactic: splat the enemy from the front

∟Suppression’s goal: place the rainmaker on the objective

∟ Suppression’s recommended tactics: carry the rainmaker

∟ Suppression’s secondary tactic: paint ink between the enemy and the objective and

paint the ground in front of the rainmaker carrier if it’s not you

∟ Suppression’s tertiary tactic: splat the enemy

∟Utility’s goal: help your team get back to the game

∟ Utility’s recommended tactics: place beakons everywhere

∟ Utility’s secondary tactic: paint ink between the enemy and the objective and

paint the ground in front of the rainmaker carrier

∟ Utility’s tertiary tactic: splat enemies

THESE TACTICS ARE THINGS TO PRACTICE BETWEEN GAMES NOT A TO-DO LIST!

## About me

I’m not a competitive Splatoon player but I have been playing competitive tabletop wargames for 15 years and winning local tournaments. The slow place of the game gives a lot of time for reflection and mistakes are painful for the rest of the game, so the lessons really sink in. My interest in strategy has led me to read a lot about real world military tactics and battle reports or strategy theory from other tabletop war gamers.

Before I read FLC’s document or had a discussion online about Splatoon roles I immediately recognized the similarities between small squad tactics and large military tactics. The biggest difference is room for error – if you make a mistake in your tactics there is less room for someone else to cover for you.

My hope is that people stop talking in terms of roles and start talking in terms of tactics to help new players realize that they don’t need to stick to one play but need to be able to adapt to the situation. I believe this was FLC’s goal as well and I think new language in the community will help accomplish this.