

**The
Art of
War**

by
Sun Zi

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1. Planning

There are Five Factors governing the art of war.

There are Seven Considerations to forecast victory or defeat.

In addition to profiting from my suggestions, use any helpful circumstances beyond the ordinary rules.

Warfare is based on deception.

Attack the enemy when they are unprepared; emerge where you are not expected.

You are more likely to win if you plan.

1. Sun Zi said: The art of war is of vital importance to the State; it is a matter of life and death; it is a road to safety or ruin. Hence it must be investigated.
2. The art of war, then, is governed by Five Factors; these are to be taken into account in one's deliberations, when seeking to determine the conditions existing in the field: Moral Influence, Nature, Terrain, Leadership, and Method.—
 - 2.1. *Moral Influence* causes the people to be in complete accord with their ruler; thus, the people will be prepared to live and die, unafraid of danger.
 - 2.2. *Nature* signifies entities that operate without purpose, like night and day, cold and heat, times and seasons.
 - 2.3. *Terrain* comprises—
 - 2.3.1. Distances, great and small;
 - 2.3.2. Danger and security;
 - 2.3.3. Accessible and Constricted battlegrounds; and
 - 2.3.4. Chances of life and death.

- 2.4. *Leadership* represents the virtues of—
 - 2.4.1. Wisdom,
 - 2.4.2. Sincerity,
 - 2.4.3. Benevolence,
 - 2.4.4. Courage, and
 - 2.4.5. Discipline.
- 2.5. *Method* can be understood by—
 - 2.5.1. Organizational control,
 - 2.5.2. Leadership systems,
 - 2.5.3. Creation and maintenance of paths by which resources may reach the army, and
 - 2.5.4. Controlled use of resources.
- 3. The Five Factors governing the art of war ([2.1, 2.5]) should be familiar to all generals; they who know them will be victorious; they who do not know them will be defeated.

4. Therefore, in your deliberations, evaluate the Seven Considerations to determine the military conditions.—
 - 4.1. Does your ruler have Moral Influence?
 - 4.2. Does your general have ability?
 - 4.3. Are advantages of Nature and Terrain harmonized?
 - 4.4. Is discipline rigorously enforced?
 - 4.5. Is your army strong?
 - 4.6. Are officers and troops highly trained?
 - 4.7. Are rewards and punishments consistent?
5. By means of these Seven Considerations I can forecast victory or defeat.

6. The general who listens to my suggestions and acts on them, will be victorious; keep such a general in control. The general who does not listen to my suggestions nor acts on them, will be defeated; dismiss such a general.
7. In addition to profiting from my suggestions, use any helpful circumstances beyond the ordinary rules.
8. In accordance with favorable circumstances, one should modify one's plans.
9. Warfare is based on deception.—
 - 9.1. The following strategies depend on your condition (Table A1):
 - 9.1.1. If you are capable, seem incapable;
 - 9.1.2. If you are able to advance, seem unable to do so;
 - 9.1.3. If you are near your goal, seem far from your goal; and
 - 9.1.4. If you are far from your goal, seem near your goal.

10. The following strategies depend on disadvantages of the enemy (Table A2):
 - 10.1. If the enemy is greedy, hold out baits to entice them;
 - 10.2. If the enemy is disordered, capture them;
 - 10.3. If the enemy is irritable, irritate them; and
 - 10.4. If the enemy is underestimating you, encourage their arrogance.
11. The following strategies depend on advantages of the enemy (Table A3):
 - 11.1. If the enemy is poised, be prepared for them;
 - 11.2. If the enemy is strong, avoid them;
 - 11.3. If the enemy is relaxed, tire them; and
 - 11.4. If the enemy is united, separate them.
12. Attack the enemy when they are unprepared; emerge where you are not expected.
13. These military strategies ([7, 12]), leading to victory, cannot be decided nor divulged prematurely.

14. Now the generals who win battles make thorough plans in their sanctuaries before the battles begin. The generals who lose battles make but partial plans. Thus do thorough plans lead to victory, and partial plans to defeat; you are more likely to be defeated if you do not plan! It is by attention to this point that I can foresee who is likely to win or lose.

2. Waging War

The cost of developing an army of many people will reach a significant total each day.

Be thoroughly acquainted with the dangers of wars, so you can thoroughly understand the profitable ways of waging them.

Get food from the enemy.

Use the enemy to augment your strength.

Let your great object be victory, not lengthy operations.

1. Sun Zi said: In the operations of war, to develop an army of many people, the following are general rules:
 - 1.1. We will need many—
 - 1.1.1. Chariots,
 - 1.1.2. Wagons,
 - 1.1.3. Soldiers, and
 - 1.1.4. Supplies;
 - 1.2. The internal and external expenses include—
 - 1.2.1. Entertainment,
 - 1.2.2. Transportation,
 - 1.2.3. Security,
 - 1.2.4. Maintenance, and
 - 1.2.5. Miscellaneous.
2. Thus, the cost of developing an army of many people will reach a significant total each day.

3. When you engage in actual fighting, if victory is long in coming, then the troops' weapons will grow dull and their ardor will be damped. If you besiege a city, you will exhaust your strength.
4. Again, if the campaign is prolonged, the resources of the State will not be equal to the strain.
5. Now, when your weapons are dulled, your ardor damped, your strength exhausted and your funds spent, neighboring warlords will spring up to use your extremity. Then no person, however wise, will be able to avert the consequences that must ensue.
6. Thus, though we have heard that haste in war causes mistakes, cleverness has never been associated with long delays.
7. There is no instance of a nation having benefited from prolonged warfare.

8. It is only one who is thoroughly acquainted with the dangers of wars who can thoroughly understand the profitable ways of waging them.
9. Skillful warriors do not conscript a soldier a second time, nor are their supplies refilled.
10. Bring your military equipment from home, and get food from the enemy. Thus the army will have food enough for its needs.
11. Poverty of the State may occur if all its supplies are transported long distances. Transporting supplies to an army over long distances causes the contributors to be impoverished and unmotivated.
12. The proximity of an army causes prices to go up, and high prices cause contributors' wealth to be drained away.
13. When contributors' wealth is drained away, they will be afflicted by heavy exactions.
14. With this loss of wealth and exhaustion of strength, the homes of the people will be emptied of supplies, and a significant fraction of their income will be dissipated.

15. A significant portion of the army's total resources will amount from the following losses:
 - 15.1. Chariots,
 - 15.2. Horses,
 - 15.3. Armor,
 - 15.4. Spears,
 - 15.5. Bows and arrows,
 - 15.6. Shields, and
 - 15.7. Heavy wagons.
16. Hence, a wise general makes a point of commandeering food from the enemy. One cartload of food from the enemy is equivalent to twenty of one's own; likewise, one picul of their fodder is equivalent to twenty from one's own supply.

17. For the army to win, the troops must be inspired; that there may be advantage from the army winning, they must have their rewards.
18. Therefore, when a person captures a chariot—
 - 18.1. Reward the person who captured the chariot,
 - 18.2. Your army's banner should be substituted for that of the enemy,
 - 18.3. Chariots captured from the enemy should be used in conjunction with those of your army, and
 - 18.4. Soldiers captured from the enemy should be kindly treated and kept.
19. This is called using the enemy to augment one's own strength.
20. In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy operations.
21. Thus it may be known that the general of armies is the arbiter of the people's fates, and the person on whom it depends whether the army shall be in peace or in peril.

3. Attacking Strategically

The best strategy of all is to remain intact rather than allowing damage.

Use strategies dependent on the ratio of the number of troops of your army to that of the enemy to prevent your army from being overtaken by a larger one.

Generals can bring misfortune on their armies by hobbling them, causing restlessness in their officers' and troops' minds, and shaking their officers' and troops' confidence.

Victory lies in the knowledge of the Five Predictors of Victory.

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.

1. Sun Zi said: In the practical art of war, the best strategy of all is to remain intact rather than allowing damage. This applies to—
 - 1.1. Nations,
 - 1.2. Divisions,
 - 1.3. Battalions,
 - 1.4. Companies, and
 - 1.5. Squadrons.
2. Hence, to fight and win in all your battles is not Supreme Excellence; Supreme Excellence consists of achieving victory without battling.

- 3. Thus, the following are the forms of generalship:
 - 3.1. Best is to affect the enemy's plans,
 - 3.2. Second best is to prevent enemy alliances,
 - 3.3. Third is to attack the enemy's army, and
 - 3.4. Worst is to besiege a fortified city.—
 - 3.4.1. The rule is not to besiege a fortified city, if it can be avoided.
 - 3.4.2. Preparing to besiege fortified cities will take much time, and building ramps will take much more time.
 - 3.4.3. If generals, unable to control their irritations, launch their troops to the assault like swarming ants, many of their troops will be exhausted, and the city will not be conquered. Such are the disastrous effects of besieging a fortified city.

4. Therefore, skillful generals—
 - 4.1. Subdue the enemy, without any battling;
 - 4.2. Conquer cities, without besieging them;
 - 4.3. Capture enemy soldiers, without lengthy campaigns; and
 - 4.4. Contend for supremacy, with their armies intact.
5. Thus, without losing troops, skillful generals' victories will be complete. This is the art of strategic attacks.

6. The following strategies depend on the ratio of the number of troops of your army to that of the enemy (Table A4):
 - 6.1. If your army is ten to the enemy's one, surround them;
 - 6.2. If your army is five to the enemy's one, attack them;
 - 6.3. If your army is two to the enemy's one, separate them;
 - 6.4. If your army is equally balanced, you can engage the enemy;
 - 6.5. If your army is slightly inferior in numbers, you can avoid the enemy; and
 - 6.6. If your army is quite unequal to the enemy in every way, you can flee from the enemy.
7. Hence, though an obstinate effort may be made by a small army, in the end it will be overtaken by the larger army.

8. Now the general is the support of the army; if the support is complete at all points, the army will be strong; if the support is defective, the army will be weak.
9. Generals can bring misfortune on their armies by—
 - 9.1. Instructing the army to advance or retreat, being ignorant of the fact that it cannot obey—hobbling the army;
 - 9.2. Attempting to govern armies in the same way as they administer territories, being ignorant of the conditions that exist in an army—causing restlessness in the officers' and troops' minds; and
 - 9.3. Hiring the officers of their armies without discrimination, through ignorance of the military principle of adaptation to circumstances—shaking the officers' and troops' confidence.
10. When the people in the army are restless and distrustful, trouble is sure to come from the enemy. This is simply bringing anarchy into the army, and flinging victory away.

- 11. Thus, we may know there are Five Predictors of Victory:
 - 11.1. Knowing when to fight and when not to fight;
 - 11.2. Knowing how to handle both large and small forces;
 - 11.3. Animating armies by the same spirit throughout all their ranks;
 - 11.4. Prepared themselves, waiting to conquer unprepared enemies; and
 - 11.5. Being capable and not interfered with by rulers.
- 12. Victory lies in the knowledge of the Five Predictors of Victory.
- 13. Hence the saying—
 - 13.1. “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles;
 - 13.2. “If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory won you will also suffer a defeat;
 - 13.3. “If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will be defeated in every battle.”

4. Making Tactical Arrangements

One may know how to win without being able to do it.

Victories of clever warriors bring them neither reputation for wisdom nor credit for courage, because they excel in winning with ease.

In respect of Method, we have Measurement, Estimation of Quantity, Calculation, Balancing of Chances, and Victory.

1. Sun Zi said: The good warriors of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy.
2. To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity to defeat the enemy is provided by the enemy themselves.
3. Thus, good warriors are able to secure themselves against defeat, but cannot make certain of defeating the enemy.
4. Hence the saying, "One may know how to win without being able to do it."

5. Security against defeat requires defensive tactics; ability to defeat the enemy requires offensive tactics.
6. Standing on the defensive indicates insufficient strength; advancing, a superabundance of strength.
7. The generals who are skilled in defense hide in the most secret recesses of the earth; they who are skilled in offense use the least predictable tactics. Thus, not only can they protect themselves, but they can also achieve complete victory.
8. To predict victory that an average person could predict is not the acme of excellence.
9. Neither is it the acme of excellence if, after you fight and win, everyone says, "Well done!"
10. To lift a thin hair is no sign of great strength; to see the sun and moon is no sign of keen sight; to hear the noise of thunder is no sign of keen hearing.
11. What the wise call a clever warrior is one who not only wins, but excels in winning with ease.
12. Hence, the victories of clever warriors bring them neither reputation for wisdom nor credit for courage.

13. Clever warriors make no mistakes, because they use strategies that maximize the likelihood of success; they defeat their enemies, because they only fight enemies they know they can defeat.
14. Hence, skillful warriors put themselves into positions that make defeat impossible, and do not miss the opportunities for defeating the enemy.
15. Thus it is that in war the successful strategists only attack after the methods of victory have been determined, whereas they who are destined to defeat first attack and afterwards determine the methods of victory.

16. Consummate generals cultivate Moral Influence, and strictly adhere to Method; thus, it is in their power to control victory.
17. In respect of Method, we have—
 - 17.1. Firstly, Measurement;
 - 17.2. Secondly, Estimation of Quantity;
 - 17.3. Thirdly, Calculation;
 - 17.4. Fourthly, Balancing of Chances; and
 - 17.5. Fifthly, Victory.
18. Terrain leads to Measurement; Measurement to Estimation of Quantity; Estimation of Quantity to Calculation; Calculation to Balancing of Chances; and Balancing of Chances to Victory.
19. A victorious army opposed to a defeated one, is a prepared army matched against an unprepared one.
20. The onrush of an advancing army is like the bursting of pent-up waters into a deep chasm.

5. Allocating Energy

Control a large army by dividing its numbers, and operate a large army by instituting signs and signals.

The possibilities of combining direct and indirect methods are inexhaustible.

Good warriors will be ardent in their attacks, and precise in their timing and accuracy.

The enemy acts according to appearances of skillful warriors.

The energy developed by good troops is as the momentum of round stones rolled down high mountains.

1. Sun Zi said: The control of a large army is fundamentally the same as the control of a few people; it is merely a question of dividing their numbers.
2. Operating with a large army under your instruction is no different from operating with a small one; it is merely a question of instituting banners and flags.

3. To ensure that your whole army may withstand the brunt of attacks and remain unshaken: This is affected by maneuvers direct and indirect.
4. That the impact of your army may be like a stone smashed against an egg: This is affected by the science of weaknesses and strengths.
5. In all battles, direct methods may be used for engaging the enemy, but indirect methods will be needed to secure victory.
6. Indirect tactics, efficiently applied, are inexhaustible as Nature and Terrain, unending as the flow of rivers and streams; like the sun and moon, they end but to begin anew; like the four seasons, they pass away to return once more.
7. There are not more than twelve musical notes, yet the combinations of these twelve give rise to more melodies than can ever be heard.
8. There are not more than three primary colors (yellow, red, and blue), yet in combinations they produce more hues than can ever be seen.
9. There are not more than five cardinal tastes (sour, acrid, salt, sweet, bitter), yet combinations of them yield more flavors than can ever be tasted.

10. In war, there are not more than two methods of operation—the direct and the indirect—yet these two in combinations give rise to an endless series of maneuvers.
11. The direct and indirect lead on to each other in turn. It is like moving in a circle, because you never come to an end. Who can exhaust the possibilities of their combinations?

12. The unleashing of accumulated energy enables the onrush of a gushing torrent to roll stones along its course.
13. The control of timing and accuracy enables the swoop of a bird of prey to destroy its target.
14. Therefore, good warriors will be ardent in their attacks, and precise in their timing and accuracy.
15. Their potential energy is like that of a loaded weapon; their timing and accuracy, like that of the release of the trigger.
16. Amid the turmoil and tumult of war, there may be external disorder, but no internal disorder may occur; amid confusion and chaos, the general must maintain control of the soldiers to avert defeat.

- 17. They who are skillful at controlling activity maintain simulated appearances (Table A5).—
 - 17.1. If you are superbly organized, simulate disorder.—
 - 17.1.1. Hiding order beneath the cloak of disorder is simply a question of subdivision.
 - 17.2. If you are courageous, simulate fear.—
 - 17.2.1. Concealing courage under a show of timidity presupposes a fund of potential energy.
 - 17.3. If you are strong, simulate weakness.—
 - 17.3.1. Masking strength with weakness is affected by tactical arrangements.
 - 18. Thus, the enemy acts according to appearances of skillful warriors.
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- 19. Entice the enemy by offering benefits they certainly want.
 - 20. After moving the enemy with benefits, capture the enemy with groups of picked troops.

- 21. Clever warriors—
 - 21.1. Look to the effect of combined energy and
 - 21.2. Do not require too much from individuals.
- 22. Hence, they can—
 - 22.1. Choose the right people and
 - 22.2. Use combined energy.
- 23. When clever warriors use combined energy, their troops become like rolling logs or stones.—
 - 23.1. They remain quiet when established, as logs and stones remain motionless on level ground.
 - 23.2. They move when in unstable positions, as logs and stones move on slopes.
 - 23.3. They deliberate when challenged, as logs and stones come to standstills when four-cornered.
 - 23.4. They gain momentum with progress, as logs and stones continue to roll when round-shaped.
- 24. Thus, the energy developed by good troops is as the momentum of round stones rolled down high mountains; this is how clever warriors use combined energy.

6. Using Weaknesses and Strengths

Attack places where the enemy must hasten to defend; advance swiftly to places where you are not expected.

Those generals are skillful in offense whose enemies do not know what to defend; and they are skillful in defense whose enemies do not know what to attack.

Manage the enemy's weaknesses, and move more rapidly than the enemy.

If we wish to fight, the enemy can be compelled to an engagement; if we do not wish to fight, we can prevent the enemy from engaging us.

If we are able to attack an inferior force, our opponents will be defeated.

Numerical weakness comes from having to prepare against possible attacks; numerical strength, from compelling the enemy to make these preparations against us.

If we know the place and time of battles, we can plan adequately and be ready to fight.

All people can see the tactics whereby I win, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.

Change is a constant factor.

1. Sun Zi said: Whoever is first in the battlefield, and awaits the coming of the enemy, will be fresh for battle; whoever is second in the battlefield, and must hasten to battle, will arrive exhausted.
2. Therefore, clever warriors (Table A6)—
 - 2.1. Overwhelm the enemy, instead of being overwhelmed by them;
 - 2.2. Cause the enemy to approach of their own accord, by holding out advantages to them; and
 - 2.3. Make it impossible for the enemy to come, by providing incentives for them to stay.
3. The following strategies depend on the enemy's conditions (Table A7):
 - 3.1. If the enemy is relaxing, tire them;
 - 3.2. If the enemy is well-supplied with food, starve them out; and
 - 3.3. If the enemy is comfortably encamped, force them to move.
4. Attack places where the enemy must hasten to defend; advance swiftly to places where you are not expected.

5. An army may make great progress without distress, if it advances through territory where there is no enemy.—
 - 5.1. To be sure of succeeding in your attacks, only attack enemies that are unprepared.
 - 5.2. To ensure the safety of your defense, only hold positions that cannot be attacked.
6. Hence, those generals are skillful in offense whose enemies do not know what to defend; and they are skillful in defense whose enemies do not know what to attack.
7. Through the principles of subtlety and secrecy, we learn to be invisible and inaudible; hence, we can control our fates.
8. You may advance and encounter no resistance, if you manage the enemy's weaknesses;
9. You may retire and be safe from pursuit, if your movements are more rapid than those of the enemy.

10. If we wish to fight, the enemy can be compelled to an engagement even though they are sheltered behind high barriers and deep refuges. All we need to do is attack some other place that they will be obliged to rescue.
11. If we do not wish to fight, we can prevent the enemy from engaging us even though the lines of our encampment are merely traced out. All we need to do is throw something odd and unaccountable in their way.
12. By discovering the enemy's arrangements and remaining hidden ourselves, we can keep our army concentrated, while groups of the enemy are divided.
13. We can form a single, united body, while groups of the enemy are split into fractions. Hence, there will be a whole against separate parts of a whole, which means we shall be many to the enemy's few.
14. If we are able, thus, to attack an inferior force, our opponents will be defeated.

- 15. The spot where we intend to attack must not be made known so that the enemy will have to prepare against possible attacks at several different points; with their army distributed in many directions, the numbers we shall have to face at any given point will be proportionately few.—
- 15.1. If the enemy strengthens their foremost divisions, they will weaken their rear divisions.
- 15.2. If the enemy strengthens their rear divisions, they will weaken their foremost divisions.
- 15.3. If the enemy strengthens their left sides, they will weaken their right sides.
- 15.4. If the enemy strengthens their right sides, they will weaken their left sides.
- 15.5. If the enemy sends reinforcements everywhere, they will everywhere be weak.
- 16. Numerical weakness comes from having to prepare against possible attacks; numerical strength, from compelling the enemy to make these preparations against us.

17. If we know the place and time of battles, we can plan adequately and be ready to fight.
18. If neither place nor time be known, then the left side cannot rescue the right side, the right side equally cannot rescue the left side, the front unable to relieve the rear, or the rear to support the front. This is much more problematic if the sections of the army that have made the least progress toward their goals are far behind, and communication is ineffective.
19. If the number of your troops is less than that of the enemy, that does not guarantee the enemy advantage in the matter of victory. You can create victory.

- 20. If the enemy is greater in numbers, we may prevent them from engaging us by (Table A8)—
 - 20.1. Scheming, so as to discover the enemy's plans and the likelihood of their success;
 - 20.2. Rousing the enemy, and learning the principle of their activity or inactivity;
 - 20.3. Compelling the enemy to reveal themselves, so as to learn their characteristics; and
 - 20.4. Carefully comparing the enemy's army with our own, so you may know where strength is superabundant and where it is deficient.
- 21. In making tactical arrangements, the highest level you can achieve is to conceal them; by concealing your arrangements, you will be safe from—
 - 21.1. Prying of the subtlest spies and
 - 21.2. Plots of the wisest brains.
- 22. This is what average people cannot comprehend: How victory may be produced out of the enemy's tactics.
- 23. All people can see the tactics whereby I win, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.

- 24. Do not repeat the tactics that have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances.
- 25. Military tactics are like water, for water in its natural course—
 - 25.1. Runs away from high places and
 - 25.2. Hastens downwards.
- 26. So in war, the way is to—
 - 26.1. Avoid what is strong and
 - 26.2. Strike at what is weak.
- 27. Soldiers achieve their victories in relation to the enemy they are facing, as water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows.
- 28. As water retains no constant shape, in war there are no constant conditions.
- 29. They who can modify their tactics in relation to the circumstances of the enemy and thereby succeed in winning, may be called marvelous leaders.

- 30. Thus, change is a constant factor.—
- 30.1. The elements of the universe are not always equally prominent.
- 30.2. The four seasons make way for each other in turn.
- 30.3. There are short days and long.
- 30.4. The moon has its periods of waning and waxing.

7. Maneuvering

If you started after the enemy, to reach the goal before them, take a circuitous route and entice them out of the way.

To benefit from natural advantages, we must use local guides.

Decide whether to concentrate or separate your troops, based on your circumstances.

In the art of maneuvering, they will win who have learnt the use of indirect and direct strategies.

In the art of handling large masses of people, the troops should form a single, united body, so the brave cannot advance alone, nor the cowardly retreat alone.

To effectively communicate, make much use of torches and drums, and flags and banners.

In maneuvering troops, use strategies to manage mood, psychology, strength, circumstances, and military interactions.

1. Sun Zi said: In preparation for war, generals—
 - 1.1. Receive orders from rulers;
 - 1.2. Gather troops and concentrate civilians; and
 - 1.3. Blend and harmonize the different elements of troops and civilians, by enabling connections to form between them.
 2. After that, comes tactical maneuvering. There is nothing more difficult than tactical maneuvering, because it consists of turning the indirect into the direct, and misfortune into gain.
 3. Thus, if you started after the enemy, to reach the goal before them, take a circuitous route and entice them out of the way. One who does this shows knowledge of the use of indirect and direct strategies.
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4. Maneuvering can be advantageous; it is also most dangerous.—
 - 4.1. If you set a fully equipped army to snatch an advantage, chances are that you will be too late.
 - 4.2. On the other hand, if you detach a swift and independent team of troops to snatch an advantage, its equipment and supplies will be sacrificed.

- 5. Thus, you may order your troops to prepare to attack and make forced progress without halting day or night, covering double the usual distance at a stretch, but there will be strategic tradeoffs.—
- 5.1. If the troops do an excessive amount to wrest an advantage, all the generals will likely fall into the enemy's hands.—
- 5.1.1. All the generals will likely fall into the enemy's hands, because the stronger people will be in front, the jaded ones will fall behind, and on this plan only a small portion of your army will reach its goal.
- 5.2. If the troops advance at full capacity to outmaneuver the enemy, you will lose the general of your foremost division, and only half your army will reach the goal.
- 5.3. If the troops advance at three-fifths capacity to outmaneuver the enemy, two-thirds of your army will reach the goal.

6. Thus, we may take it that an army is lost without—
 - 6.1. Equipment and supplies,
 - 6.2. Food, and
 - 6.3. Reserves.
7. We cannot enter into alliances with neighboring armies until we are acquainted with their plans.
8. We are not fit to lead an army unless we are familiar with the features of the field: Its mountains and forests, its swamps and marshes, its difficult paths and roads.
9. To benefit from natural advantages, we must use local guides.
10. In war, practice deception and you will win.
11. Decide whether to concentrate or separate your troops, based on your circumstances.

12. If progressing, let your rapidity be that of the wind.
 13. If no immediate goal, let your steadfastness be that of the forest.
 15. If halted, be immovable as a mountain.
 16. If concealed, let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night.
 17. If fighting, overwhelm like thunder and lightning.
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18. If you commandeer food from the enemy, let the food be divided among your troops; if you capture new territory, cut it up into allotments for the benefit of the army.
 19. Deliberate before you make a move.
 20. They will win who have learnt the use of indirect and direct strategies. Such is the art of maneuvering.

- 21. It is often said about the practice of leadership that—
 - 21.1. Spoken words do not carry far enough—hence the institution of gongs and drums; and
 - 21.2. Ordinary objects cannot be seen clearly enough—hence the institution of banners and flags.
 - 22. Gongs and drums, banners and flags, are means whereby the ears and eyes of the troops may be focused on one particular point.
 - 23. Thus, the troops will form a single, united body, so the brave cannot advance alone, nor the cowardly retreat alone. This is the art of handling large masses of people.
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- 24. To effectively communicate, make much use of—
 - 24.1. Torches and drums, if battling during the night; and
 - 24.2. Flags and banners, if battling during the day.

25. A whole army may be robbed of its spirit; generals may be robbed of their presence of mind.
26. Soldiers' spirits are keenest at the beginning of a military campaign; as the campaign progresses, they begin to diminish; and towards the end of the campaign, soldiers' minds are bent only on returning home.
27. Therefore, the following are strategies to manage mood (Table A9):
 - 27.1. If the enemy's spirits are keen, avoid them; and
 - 27.2. If the enemy is sluggish and inclined to return home, attack them.
28. The following are strategies to manage psychology (Table A9):
 - 28.1. If the enemy is organized, disorganize them; and
 - 28.2. If the enemy is calm, irritate them.
29. The following are strategies to manage strength (Table A9):
 - 29.1. If the enemy is far from their goals, be near your goals;
 - 29.2. If the enemy is toiling and struggling, rest; and
 - 29.3. If the enemy lacks skills, use your skills.

- 30. The following are strategies to manage circumstances (Table A9):
 - 30.1. If the enemy's banners and flags are orderly, do not approach them; and
 - 30.2. If the enemy is gathered in calm and confident arrays, do not attack them.
- 31. The following are strategies to manage military interactions (Table A10):
 - 31.1. If the enemy is encamped on high ground, do not advance against them;
 - 31.2. If the enemy is superior, do not oppose them;
 - 31.3. If the enemy simulates flight, do not pursue them;
 - 31.4. If the enemy's temper is keen, do not attack them;
 - 31.5. If the enemy offers benefits, do not accept their gifts;
 - 31.6. If the enemy is returning home, do not interfere with them;
 - 31.7. If you surround the enemy, do not close all their outlets; and
 - 31.8. If the enemy is desperate, do not press them too hard.
- 32. Such are the strategies for maneuvering armies.

8. Varying Tactics

Students of war who are unversed in the art of varying their plans, even though they are acquainted with the Five Strategic Considerations, will fail to make the best use of their people.

The art of war teaches us to rely on our readiness to receive the enemy, and the fact that we have made our position unassailable.

When an army is defeated and its general killed, the cause will surely be found among the Five Dangerous Faults.

1. Sun Zi said: In war, generals—
 - 1.1. Receive orders from rulers,
 - 1.2. Gather troops, and
 - 1.3. Concentrate people.
2. The following are strategies for five terrains (Table A11):
 - 2.1. In Difficult terrain, do not settle;
 - 2.2. In Central terrain—that in which important paths intersect—join your allies;
 - 2.3. In Dangerously Isolated terrain, do not linger;
 - 2.4. In Constricted terrain, you must strategize; and
 - 2.5. In Desperate terrain, you must fight.

3. Five Strategic Considerations are—
 - 3.1. Paths to follow,
 - 3.2. Armies to attack,
 - 3.3. Enemies to capture,
 - 3.4. Positions to contest, and
 - 3.5. Orders of rulers to follow.
4. Generals who thoroughly understand the advantages that accompany variation of tactics know how to handle their troops.
5. Generals who do not understand the advantages that accompany variation of tactics may be well acquainted with the configuration of the field, yet they will not be able to benefit from their knowledge.
6. So, students of war who are unversed in the art of varying their plans, even though they are acquainted with the Five Strategic Considerations, will fail to make the best use of their people.

- 7. Hence, in a wise general's plans, considerations of advantage and disadvantage will be blended (Table A12).—
 - 7.1. If our expectation of advantage is tempered by blending considerations of advantage and disadvantage, we may succeed in accomplishing the essential part of our plans.
 - 7.2. If we are always ready to seize an advantage when amid difficulties, we may protect ourselves from misfortune.
- 8. The following strategies apply to the enemy (Table A13):
 - 8.1. If you intimidate them, they will succumb;
 - 8.2. If you harass them, they will be kept engaged; and
 - 8.3. If you hold out deceptive allurements, they will rush to any given point.

9. The art of war teaches us to—
 - 9.1. Rely on our readiness to receive the enemy, not on the chance of the enemy not coming; and
 - 9.2. Rely on the fact that we have made our position unassailable, not on the chance of the enemy not attacking.
10. The Five Dangerous Faults that may affect generals are—
 - 10.1. *Recklessness*, which leads to destruction;
 - 10.2. *Cowardice*, which leads to capture;
 - 10.3. *A hasty temper* that can be provoked by insults;
 - 10.4. *A delicacy of honor* that is sensitive to shame; and
 - 10.5. *Excessive attentiveness to their people*, which exposes them to worry and trouble.
11. These Five Dangerous Faults of generals are ruinous to the conduct of war.
12. When an army is defeated and its general killed, the cause will surely be found among these Five Dangerous Faults. Let them be a subject of investigation.

9. Preparing the Army

The Four Branches of Military Knowledge enable armies to conquer.

If you nourish your troops, and occupy positions where supplies are abundant, the army will be free from disease of every kind; this will result in victory.

If there is rain upstream of a river that you wish to ford, causing the river to swell and foam, wait for the water to subside before trying to ford the river.

The Six Dangerous Configurations of Terrain should be left with all possible speed, and not approached.

The Four Ambush Configurations of Terrain must be carefully found and examined.

If you have no plans and underestimate the enemy, you are sure to be captured.

To ensure victory, troops must be treated with humanity, and united through training.

1. Sun Zi said: We come now to the question of readying the army, and observing signs of the enemy.
2. The Four Branches of Military Knowledge enable armies to conquer.—
 - 2.1. In *Mountain warfare*—
 - 2.1.1. Pass quickly over mountains, and keep in the neighborhood of valleys;
 - 2.1.2. Observe changes, and occupy high positions; and
 - 2.1.3. If the enemy is in high positions, do not attack them.
 - 2.2. In *River warfare*—
 - 2.2.1. After crossing a river, you should get far away from it;
 - 2.2.2. If an invading enemy is crossing a river, let half of its force cross the river, and then attack;
 - 2.2.3. If you are anxious to attack an invading enemy, do not attack them near rivers that they must cross;
 - 2.2.4. Observe changes, and occupy high positions; and
 - 2.2.5. If the enemy is in high positions, do not attack them.

- 2.3. *For operations on Difficult Paths and Roads—*
 - 2.3.1. In crossing swamps and marshes, your sole concern should be to get over them quickly without delay; and
 - 2.3.2. If forced to fight in a swamp or marsh, you should have lush grass near you, and have your rear to the forest.
- 2.4. *For operations on Level Terrain—*
 - 2.4.1. Occupy positions that enable fast maneuvers; and
 - 2.4.2. Place your right and rear in high positions, so danger may be handled by your front, and your rear is safe.
- 3. All armies prefer high positions to low, and bright positions to dark.
- 4. If you nourish your troops, and occupy positions where supplies are abundant, the army will be free from disease of every kind; this will result in victory.

- 5. If you come to a hilly area—
 - 5.1. Occupy the bright side and
 - 5.2. Place your right and rear in high positions.
- 6. Thus, you will at once—
 - 6.1. Act for the benefit of your troops and
 - 6.2. Use natural advantages of the terrain.
- 7. If there is rain upstream of a river that you wish to ford, causing the river to swell and foam, wait for the water to subside before trying to ford the river.

8. The Six Dangerous Configurations of Terrain should be left with all possible speed, and not approached:
 - 8.1. Steep barriers,
 - 8.2. Naturally deep voids,
 - 8.3. Naturally confined places,
 - 8.4. Natural nets,
 - 8.5. Natural traps, and
 - 8.6. Natural crevices.
9. While we keep away from the Six Dangerous Configurations of Terrain, we should get the enemy to approach them; while we face them, we should get the enemy to ignore them.

10. If you encounter any of the Four Ambush Configurations of Terrain, people in ambush or insidious opponents are likely lurking near them:
 - 10.1. Dangerous paths,
 - 10.2. Ponds covered with grass and reeds,
 - 10.3. Marshlands, or
 - 10.4. Forested mountains with thick undergrowth.
11. The Four Ambush Configurations of Terrain must be carefully found and examined.

- 12. Strategies for preliminary analysis (Tables A14.1-4).—
 - 12.1. Terrain (Table A14.1).—
 - 12.1.1. If the enemy is near and remains quiet, they are relying on natural strengths of their positions.
 - 12.2. Cunning (Table A14.1).—
 - 12.2.1. If the enemy keeps aloof and tries to provoke battle, they are anxious for you to attack.
 - 12.3. Encampment (Table A14.1).—
 - 12.3.1. If the enemy's encampment is easy for you to access, they must have reasons for staying in it.
 - 12.4. Surroundings (Table A14.1).—
 - 12.4.1. If there is movement around you, the enemy is approaching.
 - 12.4.2. If many obstacles of bundled grass appear along paths, the enemy wants to make us suspicious.
 - 12.5. Animal behavior (Table A14.1).—
 - 12.5.1. If birds suddenly rise in flight, an ambush is likely near.
 - 12.5.2. If animals are startled, an enormous attack is near.
 - 12.5.3. If birds gather around an area, it is vacant.

- 12.6. Dust (Table A14.2).—
 - 12.6.1. If dust rises high and is concentrated, it indicates the arrival of the enemy chariots.
 - 12.6.2. If dust rises low and over a wide area, it indicates the approach of the enemy infantry.
 - 12.6.3. If dust branches out in different directions, it indicates that the enemy is gathering firewood.
 - 12.6.4. If a few clusters of dust rise and settle, it indicates that the enemy is encamping.
- 12.7. The enemy's messages (Table A14.2).—
 - 12.7.1. If the enemy speaks humbly while increasing their preparations, it indicates they will soon approach.
 - 12.7.2. If the enemy speaks ardently while driving forward as if approaching, it indicates they will soon retreat.
 - 12.7.3. If the enemy proposes a truce without negotiating conditions, it indicates a plot.
 - 12.7.4. If the enemy gives compliments and gifts, it indicates they wish for a truce.

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| 12.8. | Movement (Table A14.3).— |
| 12.8.1. | If the light chariots are first to take positions on the flanks, it indicates they are forming for battle. |
| 12.8.2. | If soldiers and chariots quickly take positions, it means their reinforcements have arrived. |
| 12.8.3. | If half the enemy troops are seen advancing while half retreating, it is a lure. |
| 12.8.4. | If the enemy's banners and flags are often shifted, they are in disarray. |
| 12.8.5. | If the enemy approaches angrily and maintains their position for a long time without either advancing or retreating, the situation demands vigilant investigation. |

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| 12.9. | Enemy Behavior (Table A14.4).— |
| 12.9.1. | If enemy soldiers display laziness, they are hungry and short of food. |
| 12.9.2. | If enemy soldiers who are sent to gather water begin by drinking themselves, they are suffering from thirst. |
| 12.9.3. | If the enemy sees potential advantages and does not attempt to secure them, they are exhausted. |
| 12.9.4. | If enemy soldiers clamor at night, it indicates they are afraid. |
| 12.9.5. | If enemy officers are angry, it means they are weary. |
| 12.9.6. | If the enemy kills their horses for food, they have no provisions. |
| 12.9.7. | If the enemy puts away their cooking tools, showing that they will not return to their camp, they are in a desperate situation. |

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| 12.10. | Generals (Table A14.5).— |
| 12.10.1. | If an army is disorderly, its general's authority is weak. |
| 12.10.2. | If officers and troops are whispering together in small groups and speaking in subdued tones, it indicates the general has lost their trust. |
| 12.10.3. | If generals give rewards too frequently, it indicates they are out of ideas. |
| 12.10.4. | If generals give too many punishments, it indicates they are in dire distress. |
| 12.10.5. | If generals begin boastfully, and then become afraid, it shows their supreme lack of intelligence. |
| 13. | If the number of our troops is no more than that of the enemy, we can still have the advantage. To capture the enemy, we should not rely solely on our size; we should use technique with sufficient strength and continually evaluate them. |
| 14. | If you have no plans and underestimate the enemy, you are sure to be captured. |

15. If troops are reprimanded before they have grown attached to you, they will not be receptive; and, unless receptive, they will be practically useless. If, when troops have become attached to you, reprimands are not used, troops will still be useless.
16. Therefore, to ensure victory, troops must be treated with humanity, and united through training.
17. If in training soldiers, instructions are habitually used, the army will be well-disciplined; if not, its discipline will be bad.
18. If instructions are consistently followed, it indicates the instructions are mutually beneficial for generals and troops.

10. Evaluating Terrains

Generals who have attained responsible posts must be careful to study the Six Types of Terrain.

The Six Distinct Calamities are ways of courting defeat that must be carefully noted by generals who have attained responsible posts.

They who know the Responsibilities for Victory, and put their knowledge into practice, will win their battles.

If you treat your troops with care, they will follow you through the most threatening dangers.

If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will be undoubtable; if you know the weather and know the terrain, your victory will be limitless.

1. Sun Zi said: We may distinguish Six Types of Terrain (Tables A15.1,2).—
 - 1.1. *Accessible terrain* is that which everyone can freely traverse. In Accessible terrain, to have advantage, be first to occupy positions that enable you to (Table A15.1)—
 - 1.1.1. Observe changes and
 - 1.1.2. Manage supply routes.
 - 1.2. *Entangling terrain* is that which can be entered but is difficult to leave (Table A15.1).—
 - 1.2.1. If the enemy is unprepared, you may rush forth and capture them.
 - 1.2.2. If the enemy is prepared, and you fail to capture them, withdrawal will be difficult, and your position disadvantageous.

- 1.3. *Equitable terrain* is that which is not advantageous for anyone to occupy. In *Equitable terrain*, to have advantage, it will be advisable to use the following strategy (Table A15.1):
 - 1.3.1. If the enemy offers us attractive baits, do not rush forth; and
 - 1.3.2. Entice the enemy by retreating, and attack after half the enemy troops have been drawn out.
- 1.4. *Constricted terrain* is that which is reached through narrow gaps, and from which we can only retire by tortuous paths, so that a small number of enemy soldiers would suffice to crush a large group of our people (Table A15.2).—
 - 1.4.1. If you occupy *Constricted terrain* before the enemy, let the gaps be strongly protected and await the arrival of the enemy.
 - 1.4.2. If the enemy fully protects *Constricted terrain* they control before you, do not follow them.
 - 1.4.3. If the enemy weakly protects *Constricted terrain* they control before you, follow them.

- 1.5. *Key terrain* is that which gives advantage to the side in control of it (Table A15.2).—
 - 1.5.1. If you control Key terrain before the enemy, occupy positions that enable you to observe changes and manage supply routes, and there wait for the enemy to arrive.
 - 1.5.2. If the enemy controls Key terrain before you, retreat and lure them away; do not follow them.
- 1.6. *Distant terrain* is that which is far from support (Table A15.2).—
 - 1.6.1. If your strength is equal to that of the enemy, it is difficult to provoke enemy engagement, because moving is not advantageous.
- 2. Generals who have attained responsible posts must be careful to study these Six Types of Terrain.

- 3. An army is exposed to Six Distinct Calamities, not arising from natural causes, but from faults for which the general is responsible.—
 - 3.1. *Flight* of the army results from being hurled against another ten times its size, with other conditions being equal.
 - 3.2. *Disobedience* results if troops are strong and their officers are weak.
 - 3.3. *Collapse* results if officers are strong and their troops are weak.
 - 3.4. *Ruin* results if senior officers are angry and disobedient because the general overlooked their capabilities, and they fight resentfully.
 - 3.5. *Disorganization* results from—
 - 3.5.1. Generals who are weak and without authority;
 - 3.5.2. Generals whose orders are not clear and distinct;
 - 3.5.3. No fixed duties assigned to officers and troops; and
 - 3.5.4. Groups that are formed in a slovenly, haphazard manner.

- 3.6. *Defeat* results from generals who, unable to estimate abilities, engage armies to whom theirs are inferior, open their weaknesses to others' strengths, and neglect to give their best troops the most important roles.
- 4. These Six Distinct Calamities are ways of courting defeat that must be carefully noted by generals who have attained responsible posts.

5. Generals' Responsibilities for Victory are to—
 - 5.1. Use natural advantages of terrain;
 - 5.2. Evaluate the enemy; and
 - 5.3. Shrewdly calculate difficulties, dangers, and distances.
6. They who know the Responsibilities for Victory, and put their knowledge into practice, will win their battles. They who do not know the Responsibilities for Victory, nor practice them, will surely lose.
7. If fighting is sure to result in victory, then you must fight even though the rulers ordered that fighting should be avoided; if fighting will not result in victory, then you must not fight even though the rulers ordered you to do so.
8. Generals are precious to their armies, if they—
 - 8.1. Advance without coveting fame,
 - 8.2. Retreat without fearing punishment,
 - 8.3. Protect their people, and
 - 8.4. Do good service for their rulers.

9. If you treat your troops with care, they will follow you through the most threatening dangers; if you regard them as your beloved children, they will support you until death.
10. However, your troops will be like spoilt children, because they will be useless for any practical purpose, if you are—
 - 10.1. Indulgent, but unable to make your authority felt;
 - 10.2. Kind-hearted, but unable to enforce your instructions; and
 - 10.3. Incapable of quelling disorder.

11. If we know our people are in a condition to win, but are unaware that the enemy cannot be defeated, we have gone only halfway toward victory.
12. If we know that the enemy can be defeated, but are unaware that our people are not in a condition to win, we have gone only halfway toward victory.
13. If we know that the enemy can be defeated, and also know that our people are in a condition to win, but are unaware that the nature of the terrain makes victory impracticable, we have still gone only halfway toward victory.
14. Thus, skilled warriors always—
 - 14.1. Choose rationally, if moving; and
 - 14.2. Have strategies, if maneuvering.
15. Hence the saying—
 - 15.1. “If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will be undoubtable;
 - 15.2. “If you know the weather and know the terrain, your victory will be limitless.”

11. Evaluating Battlegrounds

Skillful generals use strategies depending on the battleground.

If it is to your advantage, make a forward move; if otherwise, stop still.

Rapidity is the essence of war; use the enemy's unreadiness; make your way by unexpected routes, and attack unguarded spots.

If you place armies in positions with no escape, they must confront death, so officers and troops will apply maximum effort to win battles.

The principle on which to lead an army is to establish one standard of courage that all must reach.

To muster their troops and bring them into danger: This may be termed the responsibility of generals.

If invading enemy territory, penetrating deeply causes cohesion, whereas penetrating shallowly causes dispersion.

Excellent generals should not ignore any of the many varieties of battleground.

If instructing officers and troops to accomplish tasks, do not let them know the intentions; instruct them to gain advantages, but tell them nothing of the dangers involved.

1. Sun Zi said: The art of war recognizes many varieties of battleground (Tables A16.1,2).—
 - 1.1. *Dispersive battleground* is when warlords are fighting in their own territory (Table A16.1).
 - 1.2. *Easy battleground* is when warlords have penetrated into enemy territory, but to no great extent (Table A16.1).
 - 1.3. *Key battleground* is that which gives advantage to the army in control of it (Table A16.1).
 - 1.4. *Accessible battleground* is that which can be freely traversed by everyone (Table A16.1).
 - 1.5. *Central battleground* is that in which important paths intersect, so it gives supremacy to the army that controls it (Table A16.1).
 - 1.6. *Serious battleground* is when armies have penetrated into the heart of enemy territory, leaving several fortified cities and towns in their rears (Table A16.2).

- 1.7. *Difficult battleground* is an area that is hard to traverse, such as (Table A16.2)—
 - 1.7.1. Forested mountains,
 - 1.7.2. Dangerous mountain passes,
 - 1.7.3. Swamps and marshes, and
 - 1.7.4. Difficult paths and roads.
- 1.8. *Constricted battleground* is that reached through narrow gaps, and from which we can only retire by tortuous paths, so that a small number of enemy soldiers would suffice to defeat a large group of our people (Table A16.2).
- 1.9. *Desperate battleground* is when we can only be saved from death by fighting without delay (Table A16.2).

2. Therefore, the following strategies should generally be used by generals, depending on the battleground (Tables A16.1,2):
 - 2.1. In Dispersive battleground, do not engage in battle (Table A16.1);
 - 2.2. In Easy battleground, do not halt (Table A16.1);
 - 2.3. In Key battleground, do not attack (Table A16.1);
 - 2.4. In Accessible battleground, do not try to block the enemy's path (Table A16.1);
 - 2.5. In Central battleground, join your allies (Table A16.1);
 - 2.6. In Serious battleground, gather the enemy's resources (Table A16.2);
 - 2.7. In Difficult battleground, keep steadily advancing (Table A16.2);
 - 2.8. In Constricted battleground, strategize (Table A16.2); and
 - 2.9. In Desperate battleground, fight (Table A16.2).

3. Those who were called skillful generals of old knew how to—
 - 3.1. Drive wedges between the enemy's front and rear,
 - 3.2. Prevent cooperation between the enemy's large and small divisions,
 - 3.3. Hinder enemy troops from rescuing each other, and
 - 3.4. Hinder enemy officers from rallying their troops.
 4. When enemy troops were scattered, the skillful generals of old managed to keep them disorganized.
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5. If it is to your advantage, make a forward move; if otherwise, stop still.
 6. If asked how to cope with an approaching enemy that is larger and organized, I should say, "Begin by seizing something the enemy values, so they will accede to your demands."

7. Rapidity is the essence of war; use the enemy's unreadiness; make your way by unexpected routes; and attack unguarded spots.
8. An invading army should observe the following principles:
 - 8.1. If you go far into enemy territory, your army must have great unity, so defenders cannot prevent your victory;
 - 8.2. Get food from the enemy and use their resources, so your army has enough supplies and food;
 - 8.3. Carefully study the well-being of your people, and do not overtax them;
 - 8.4. Concentrate your energy and hoard your strength;
 - 8.5. Keep your army continually maneuvering; and
 - 8.6. Devise unfathomable plans.

- 9. If you place armies in positions with no escape, they must confront death, so officers and troops will apply maximum effort to win battles.—
 - 9.1. If people are trapped in dangerous situations, they lose their sense of fear.
 - 9.2. If people have no place of refuge, they will advance firmly.
 - 9.3. If people are deep in enemy territory, they will advance cautiously.
 - 9.4. If people have no alternative, they will confront defeat.
- 10. Thus, if well-trained troops are deep in enemy territory, they will motivate themselves.—
 - 10.1. Without waiting to be instructed, troops will be vigilant.
 - 10.2. Without waiting to be asked, troops will do your will.
 - 10.3. Without being restricted, troops will support you.
 - 10.4. Without being directed, troops will be reliable.
- 11. Prohibit the taking of omens, and do away with superstitious doubts. Then, until death itself comes, no calamity need be feared.

12. If our soldiers are not overburdened with wealth, it is not because they detest money; if they do not fear for their lives, it is not because they do not desire longevity.
13. On the day your troops are ordered out to battle, they may object. Some may be standing up expressing their opinions, and some may be sitting down letting the thoughts run through their minds, but let them be cornered, and they will display tremendous courage.

14. The skillful tactician may be likened to the type of snake, found in the Chung mountains, called Shuai Ran. Strike at its head, and you will be attacked by its tail; strike at its tail, and you will be attacked by its head; strike at its middle, and you will be attacked by head and tail both. Asked if an army can be made to imitate the Shuai Ran, I should answer, "Yes."
15. Two people may be enemies; yet, if they are both crossing a river in the same boat and are caught by a storm, they will assist each other as one hand helps another.
16. Hence, it is insufficient to rely on tethering horses, and burying chariot wheels, for the purpose of controlling your troops.
17. The principle on which to lead an army is to establish one standard of courage that all must reach.
18. Determining how to make the best of strong and weak is a process involving proper use of terrain.
19. Thus, skillful warriors lead their armies as if they were leading a single person, so all parts must coordinate.

- 20. Essential Characteristics of Generals are—
 - 20.1. Calm, if thinking;
 - 20.2. Mysterious, if strategizing; and
 - 20.3. Just, if maintaining order.
- 21. Generals must be able to withhold strategic information from their officers and troops, so secrecy is ensured.
- 22. By changing their arrangements and plans, generals keep others from understanding them. By shifting their campsites and taking indirect paths, generals keep others from anticipating them.
- 23. Skillful warriors lead armies—
 - 23.1. Up great heights and, at the critical moment, remove the ladder that led them up;
 - 23.2. Deep into enemy territory and then, after capturing the enemy and commandeering food, reveal their intentions; and
 - 23.3. Like shepherds driving flocks of sheep, because they change troops' instructions without their underlying goals being understood.
- 24. To muster their troops and bring them into danger: This may be termed the responsibility of generals.

- 25. The following aspects of war must be studied:
 - 25.1. Different measures suited to the many varieties of battleground,
 - 25.2. Advisability of offensive or defensive tactics, and
 - 25.3. Fundamental laws of human nature.

26. If invading enemy territory, penetrating deeply causes cohesion, whereas penetrating shallowly causes dispersion.—
- 26.1. *Critical battleground* is when you leave your territory, and lead your army through borders of enemy territory.
- 26.2. *Easy battleground* is when you penetrate shallowly into enemy territory.
- 26.3. *Serious battleground* is when you penetrate deeply into enemy territory.
- 26.4. *Central battleground* is when you are at the intersections of important paths.
- 26.5. *Constricted battleground* is when you have risky areas behind you, and narrow gaps ahead.
- 26.6. *Desperate battleground* is when you have no place of refuge.

27. Therefore, depending on the battleground, generals of an invading army should use the following strategies (Table A17):
- 27.1. In Dispersive battleground, inspire your people with unity of purpose;
- 27.2. In Easy battleground, see that there are close connections between all parts of your army;
- 27.3. In Key battleground, hurry forward;
- 27.4. In Accessible battleground, keep vigilant eyes on your defenses;
- 27.5. In Central battleground, consolidate your alliances;
- 27.6. In Serious battleground, ensure continuous supplies of food;
- 27.7. In Difficult battleground, keep pushing on along the path;
- 27.8. In Constricted battleground, block any way of retreat; and
- 27.9. In Desperate battleground, fight as if retreat is hopeless.—
- 27.9.1. It is troops' inclination to offer stubborn resistances, if surrounded; to work hard, if they cannot help themselves; and to comply promptly, if they have fallen into danger.

28. We cannot enter into alliances with neighboring armies until we are acquainted with their plans.
29. We are not fit to lead an army unless we are familiar with the features of the field: Its mountains and forests, its swamps and marshes, its difficult paths and roads.
30. We shall be unable to benefit from natural advantages unless we use local guides.

31. Excellent generals should not ignore any of the many varieties of battleground.
32. If excellent generals attack a powerful enemy, they prevent concentrations of the enemy's troops.
33. Excellent generals are impressive to enemies, and enemies are afraid to ally against them.
34. Hence excellent generals do not strive to ally themselves with enemies, nor do they foster the power of enemies. Instead, they accomplish their plans by keeping enemies impressed. Thus, they are able to conquer cities and win.
35. Bestow rewards without regard to norms; issue orders without regard to usual rules.
36. Direct an army as if instructing one person.
37. If instructing officers and troops to accomplish tasks, do not let them know the intentions; instruct them to gain advantages, but tell them nothing of the dangers involved.

- 38. If an army is placed in vital danger, it is capable of averting death, and creating victory. Therefore, if you place your army in—
 - 38.1. Dangerous situations, it can remain safe; and
 - 38.2. Desperate battleground, it can survive.
- 39. Victory in war is gained by carefully accommodating ourselves to the enemy's purposes.
- 40. By concentrating our army on one position, we will reach our goal, even if we began far from it. This is referred to as skillful accomplishment.
- 41. Thus, if your initial military plan is established—
 - 41.1. Close border gates,
 - 41.2. Cancel travel permits, and
 - 41.3. Stop the passage of emissaries from other armies.
- 42. Intently finalize military preparations in a safe place.
- 43. Anticipate the enemy by seizing something they value, and keep secret the time of your attacks.
- 44. Walk in the path defined by leadership, and accommodate yourself to the enemy until you can execute a decisive action.

- 45. Thus, at first, be coy as an unmarried person, so the enemy gives you openings. If the enemy gives you openings, you must use them.
- 46. After using openings, be fast as an escaping rabbit, and it will be too late for the enemy to catch you.

12. Attacking with Fire

If the conditions are met to launch an attack with fire, use the Five Ways of Attacking with Fire.

The army must know the Seven Strategies for Attacking with Fire.

Enlightened rulers lay their plans well ahead; good generals cultivate their resources.

1. Sun Zi said: There are Five Ways of Attacking with Fire:
 - 1.1. First is to burn enemy *soldiers*,
 - 1.2. Second is to burn enemy *stockpiles*,
 - 1.3. Third is to burn enemy *equipment*,
 - 1.4. Fourth is to burn enemy *armories*, and
 - 1.5. Fifth is to burn *paths by which resources can reach the enemy*.
2. To launch an attack with fire, the following conditions must be met:
 - 2.1. *Equipment and materials for attacking with fire* should always be ready;
 - 2.2. *Proper time for attacking with fire* is when the weather is dry; and
 - 2.3. *Proper days for starting attacks with fire* must be carefully evaluated, to ensure wind.

3. In attacking with fire, one should properly use the Seven Strategies for Attacking with Fire (Table A18):
 - 3.1. If fire appears inside the enemy's encampment, prepare quickly to attack;
 - 3.2. If fire appears inside the enemy's encampment, but the enemy soldiers remain quiet, wait patiently and do not attack;
 - 3.3. If the effect of the fire brings practicable opportunities, quickly attack;
 - 3.4. If the effect of the fire brings no practicable opportunities, quickly stop attacking;
 - 3.5. If means are available for attacking with fire, begin attacking at a favorable moment—do not wait for fire to appear in the enemy's encampment;
 - 3.6. If you start an attack with fire, be on the side of the fire from which the wind is blowing—do not attack the side of the fire that is in the direction in which the wind is blowing; and
 - 3.7. If wind rises and lasts during the day, it will likely fall during the night.

4. The army must know the Seven Strategies for Attacking with Fire, and vigilantly calculate the conditions for their use.
5. Thus, those who use fire to aid attacks are intelligent, and those who use water to aid attacks are powerful.
6. Using water, the enemy can be isolated, but their equipment and supplies cannot be destroyed.

7. Unhappy are the fates of those who try to win battles and secure land without cultivating the spirit of enterprise, for the result is waste of time and general stagnation.
8. Hence the saying, “Enlightened rulers lay their plans well ahead; good generals cultivate their resources.”—
 - 8.1. Do not move unless you see an advantage.
 - 8.2. Do not use your troops unless there is something to gain.
 - 8.3. Do not fight unless the position is critical.
9. If it is advantageous, move; if moving is disadvantageous, stay where you are.—
 - 9.1. No rulers should order simply out of anger, because anger may in time change to gladness, but an army that has once been destroyed can never come again into being.
 - 9.2. No generals should enter into war simply out of resentment, because vexation may be followed by content, but time can never be returned.
10. Thus, enlightened rulers are prudent, and good generals are cautious. This is the way to keep a state secure and an army intact.

13. Using Intelligence

Given that victory can be decided in a day, to remain ignorant of conditions simply because one grudges spending a small portion of daily expense as compensation for services, is the height of negligence.

What enables wise rulers and good generals to achieve victories beyond the reach of average people, is foreknowledge.

When the Five Kinds of Spy are used together, none can discover the system; it is a supreme system and is generals' most precious asset.

One cannot make certain the truth of information without subtle ingenuity.

The end and aim of the Five Kinds of Spy is knowledge of conditions; this knowledge can only be derived, in the first instance, from Converted spies.

Intelligence is an extraordinarily important resource, because on it depends an army's ability to make decisions.

1. Sun Zi said: Developing an army of many people and dispatching them great distances entails—
 - 1.1. Heavy cost on the people and a drain on the army's resources,
 - 1.2. Daily expense amounting to a significant value,
 - 1.3. Commotion internally and externally making people exhausted, and
 - 1.4. Many families impeded in their productivity.
2. Opposing armies may face each other for years, striving for victory that is decided in a day.
3. Given that victory can be decided in a day, to remain ignorant of conditions simply because one grudges spending a small portion of daily expense as compensation for services, is the height of negligence.
4. Those who remain ignorant of conditions cannot—
 - 4.1. Lead people,
 - 4.2. Help their rulers, nor
 - 4.3. Master victory.

5. Thus, what enables wise rulers and good generals to achieve victories beyond the reach of average people, is foreknowledge.
 6. The foreknowledge that enables extraordinary achievements cannot be obtained by—
 - 6.1. Spirits and gods;
 - 6.2. Experience, inductively; nor
 - 6.3. Deductive calculation.
 7. Knowledge of conditions can only be obtained from investigation.
-
8. Hence the use of Five Kinds of Spy:
 - 8.1. *Local spies*—inhabitants of the enemy's homeland;
 - 8.2. *Inward spies*—enemy officials employed by us;
 - 8.3. *Converted spies*—enemy spies employed by us;
 - 8.4. *Doomed spies*—traitorous spies deliberately given false information; and
 - 8.5. *Surviving spies*—spies who have returned from enemy territory with information.

9. When these Five Kinds of Spy are used together, none can discover the system; it is a supreme system, and is generals' most precious asset.
10. Thus, no relationships in the whole army are more intimate than those maintained with people who discover useful information.
11. No rewards should be more generous than those given for discovering useful information.

12. In the matter of information, the greatest secrecy should be preserved.
13. Information cannot be used beneficially without wisdom.
14. Information cannot be properly managed without benevolence and straightforwardness.
15. One cannot make certain of the truth of intelligence without subtle ingenuity.
16. Be extremely subtle, and use your people to discover information for every kind of war.
17. If a secret piece of information is prematurely revealed by your spies who discovered it, they must be put to death together with the people to whom the secret was told.

18. Whether the object is to capture an army, conquer a city, or assassinate an individual, it is always necessary to begin by learning about the target's—
 - 18.1. Commanders,
 - 18.2. Supporting officers,
 - 18.3. Consultants, and
 - 18.4. Guards.
19. Our people must be commissioned to ascertain this information.

20. Enemies who have come to spy on us must be sought out, tempted with compensation, guided, and treated well. Thus, we will gain Converted spies.
21. It is through Converted spies that we can—
 - 21.1. Know the situations of the enemy,
 - 21.2. Acquire and use Local and Inward spies,
 - 21.3. Use Doomed spies to mislead the enemy, and
 - 21.4. Use Surviving spies on appointed occasions.
22. The end and aim of the Five Kinds of Spy is knowledge of conditions; this knowledge can only be derived, in the first instance, from Converted spies. Hence, it is essential that Converted spies be treated with maximum generosity.
23. In general, the rise of dynasty *b* is due to a person who had served under *a*. Likewise, the rise of dynasty *c* is generally due to a person who had served under *b*.
24. Hence, only enlightened rulers and wise generals will use the highest intelligence of the army for purposes of investigation, and thereby achieve great results.
25. Intelligence is an extraordinarily important resource, because on it depends an army's ability to make decisions.

Appendix

Origin of *Sun Zi's Art of War*

Sun Zi's Art of War is the compiled teachings of military strategist, Sun Zi. "Zi" (pronounced "Tzu") means "Master," which is the title used by students to refer to their teacher. "Sun" is a family name. In Chinese, the family's name is presented before the individual's name or title; so, in English, his students would have referred to him as Master Sun. The direct translation of the original version of *Sun Zi's Art of War* is *Master Sun's Military Methods*. It is possible that Master Sun's students compiled his teachings into a treatise, and called it *Master Sun's Military Methods*, which later became popular in English under the title *the Art of War*.

Who was Sun Zi? He appears to have been a military theorist and advisor during the final years of the Spring and Autumn Period of the Zhou (pronounced "Joe") Dynasty (c. 771-476 B.C.E.). Sun Zi could be someone named Sun Wu (someone with the family name of Sun, from the territory of Wu), but the experience and accomplishments he would have needed to write *Sun Zi's Art of War* are not recorded.

Sun Bin, seemingly Sun Zi's grandson, wrote a different military treatise, known as *Sun Bin's Art of War*, which appears to expand on *Sun Zi's Art of War*. Sun Bin gets into more details specific to situations at his time period, whereas Sun Zi derives more universal principles. Sun Bin would have been able to create his own philosophy or continue Sun Zi's philosophy, because it is recorded that he was crippled for a large part of his life, so he had sufficient time to write.¹²

Sun Zi probably acted as a military theorist and strategic consultant who tested strategies throughout years of war. He was likely not a general because, although he is often mentioned in military philosophy, he is not mentioned in the main military record of ancient China. After strategizing his way through the calamities of war, emerging victorious, and securing his people's future, he lived simply and wrote *Sun Zi's Art of War* based on his experimentation with real war. After his death, it appears that others expanded on his philosophy, because *Sun Zi's Art of War* references devices that had not been invented by his time.⁷

If Sun Wu was a real military theorist, *Sun Zi's Art of War* likely started with him, and his relatives and associates would have built on his philosophy; however, Sun Bin may have created the character of "Sun Wu" to embody the quintessential leader.^{5,7,9,10}

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Table A1: Strategies dependent on your condition

Your Actual Condition	Strategy
Capable	Seem incapable
Able to advance	Seem unable to advance
Near your goal	Seem far from your goal
Far from your goal	Seem near your goal

Table A2: Strategies dependent on disadvantages of the enemy

Concluded Disadvantage of the Enemy	Strategy
Greedy	Hold out baits to entice the enemy
Disordered	Capture the enemy
Irritable	Irritate the enemy
Underestimating	Encourage the enemy's arrogance

Table A3: Strategies dependent on advantages of the enemy

Concluded Advantage of the Enemy	Strategy
Poised	Be prepared for the enemy
Strong	Avoid the enemy
Relaxed	Tire the enemy
United	Separate the enemy

Table A4: Strategies dependent on the ratio of the number of troops of your army to that of the enemy

Ratio of Your Army to the Enemy	Strategy
10:1	Surround the enemy
5:1	Challenge the enemy
2:1	Separate the enemy
1:1	You can engage the enemy
~0.7:1	You can avoid the enemy
~0.3:1	You can flee from the enemy

Table A5: How skillful warriors simulate appearances

Actual Condition	Simulated Appearance	Dependency
Superbly organized	Disordered	Organization
Courageous	Fearful	Fund of potential energy
Strong	Weak	Tactical arrangements

Table A6: Outcomes resulting from actions

Outcome	Action
Overwhelm the enemy	Avoid being overwhelmed by the enemy
Cause the enemy to approach of their own accord	Hold out advantages to the enemy
Make it impossible for the enemy to come	Provide incentives for the enemy to stay

Table A7: Strategies dependent on the enemy's conditions

The Enemy's Condition	Strategy
Relaxing	Tire the enemy
Well-supplied with food	Starve the enemy out
Comfortably encamped	Force the enemy to move

Table A8: How to prevent the enemy from engaging us

Desired Outcome	Strategy
Discover the enemy's plans and the likelihood of their success	Scheme
Learn the principle of the enemy's activity or inactivity	Rouse the enemy
Learn the enemy's characteristics	Compel the enemy to reveal themselves
Know where strength is superabundant and where it is deficient	Carefully compare the enemy's army with our own

Table A9: Strategies to manage the enemy's conditions

Control Factor	Concluded Condition of the Enemy	Strategy
Mood	Keen spirits	Engage the enemy
Mood	Sluggish and inclined to return home	Attack the enemy
Psychology	Organized	Disorganize the enemy
Psychology	Calm	Irritate the enemy
Strength	Far from goals	Be near your goals
Strength	Toiling and struggling	Rest
Strength	Lacks skills	Use your skills
Circumstances	Banners and flags are orderly	Do not approach the enemy
Circumstances	Gathered in calm and confident arrays	Do not attack the enemy

Table A10: Strategies to manage military interactions

Enemy Condition	Strategy
Encamped on high ground	Do not advance against the enemy
Superior	Do not oppose the enemy
Simulates flight	Do not pursue the enemy
Keen temper	Do not attack the enemy
Offers benefits	Do not accept the enemy's gifts
Returning home	Do not interfere with the enemy
Surrounded	Do not close all the enemy's outlets
Desperate	Do not press the enemy too hard

Table A11: Strategies for five terrains

Terrain	Strategy
Difficult	Do not settle
Central	Join your allies
Dangerously Isolated	Do not linger
Constricted	You must strategize
Desperate	You must fight

Table A12: Strategies with the best chances of achieving desired outcomes

Desired Outcome	Strategy
Succeed in accomplishing the essential part of our plans	Temper our expectation of advantage by blending considerations of advantage and disadvantage
Protect ourselves from misfortune	Always be ready to seize an advantage when amid difficulties

Table A13: Strategies that apply to the enemy

Desired Outcome	Strategy
Make the enemy succumb	Intimidate the enemy
Keep the enemy engaged	Harass the enemy
Make the enemy rush to any given point	Hold out deceptive allurements to the enemy

Table A14.1: Strategies for preliminary analysis

Subject of Analysis	Observed Condition	Conclusion
Terrain	The enemy is near and remains quiet	The enemy is relying on natural strengths of their positions
Cunning	The enemy keeps aloof and tries to provoke battle	The enemy is anxious for you to attack
Encampment	The enemy's encampment is easy for you to access	The enemy must have a reason for staying
Surroundings	There is movement around you	The enemy is approaching
Surroundings	Many obstacles of bundled grass appear along paths	The enemy wants to make us suspicious
Animal Behavior	Birds suddenly rise in flight	An ambush is likely near
Animal Behavior	Animals are startled	An enormous attack is near
Animal Behavior	Birds gather around an area	The area is vacant

Table A14.2: Strategies for preliminary analysis

Subject of Analysis	Observed Condition	Conclusion
Dust	Dust rises high and is concentrated	Enemy chariots are arriving
Dust	Dust rises low and over a wide area	Enemy infantry is approaching
Dust	Dust branches out in different directions	The enemy is gathering firewood
Dust	A few clusters of dust rise and settle	The enemy is encamping
Enemy Messages	The enemy speaks humbly while increasing their preparations	The enemy will soon approach
Enemy Messages	The enemy speaks ardently while driving forward as if approaching	The enemy will soon retreat
Enemy Messages	The enemy proposes a truce without negotiating conditions	There is a plot
Enemy Messages	The enemy gives compliments and gifts	The enemy wishes for a truce

Table A14.3: Strategies for preliminary analysis

Subject of Analysis	Observed Condition	Conclusion
Movement	Enemy, light chariots are first to take positions on the flanks	The enemy is forming for battle
Movement	Enemy soldiers and chariots quickly take positions	Enemy reinforcements have arrived
Movement	Half the enemy troops are seen advancing while half retreating	The enemy is luring you
Movement	The enemy's banners and flags are often shifted	The enemy is in disarray
Movement	The enemy approaches angrily and maintains their position for a long time without either advancing or retreating	The situation demands vigilant investigation

Table A14.4: Strategies for preliminary analysis

Subject of Analysis	Observed Condition	Conclusion
Enemy Behavior	Enemy soldiers display laziness	The enemy is hungry and short of food
Enemy Behavior	Enemy soldiers who are sent to gather water begin by drinking themselves	The enemy is suffering from thirst
Enemy Behavior	The enemy sees potential advantages and does not attempt to secure them	The enemy is exhausted
Enemy Behavior	Enemy soldiers clamor at night	The enemy is afraid
Enemy Behavior	Enemy officers are angry	The enemy is weary
Enemy Behavior	The enemy kills their horses for food	The enemy has no provisions
Enemy Behavior	The enemy puts away their cooking tools, showing that they will not return to their camp	The enemy is in a desperate situation

Table A14.5: Strategies for preliminary analysis

Subject of Analysis	Observed Condition	Conclusion
Generals	An army is disorderly	Authority of the general is weak
Generals	Officers and troops are whispering together in small groups and speaking in subdued tones	Officers and troops have lost trust in their general
Generals	Generals give rewards too frequently	Generals are out of ideas
Generals	Generals give too many punishments	Generals are in dire distress
Generals	Generals begin boastfully, and then become afraid	Generals have a supreme lack of intelligence

Table A15.1: Strategies dependent on the type of terrain

Terrain	Observed Condition	Conclusion
Accessible	All	Be first to occupy positions that enable you to observe changes and manage supply routes
Entangling	The enemy is unprepared	You may rush forth and capture the enemy
Entangling	The enemy is prepared, and you fail to capture them	Withdrawal will be difficult, and your position disadvantageous
Equitable	The enemy offers us attractive baits	Do not rush forth
Equitable	All	Entice the enemy by retreating, and attack after half the enemy troops have been drawn out

Table A15.2: Strategies dependent on the type of terrain

Terrain	Observed Condition	Conclusion
Constricted	You occupy the terrain before the enemy	Let the gaps be strongly protected and await the arrival of the enemy
Constricted	The enemy fully protects the terrain they control before you	Do not follow the enemy
Constricted	The enemy weakly protects the terrain they control before you	Follow the enemy
Key	You control the terrain before the enemy	Occupy positions that enable you to observe changes and manage supply routes, and there wait for the enemy to arrive
Key	The enemy controls the terrain before you	Retreat and lure the enemy away; do not follow them
Distant	Your strength is equal to that of the enemy	It is difficult to provoke enemy engagement, because moving is not advantageous

Table A16.1: Strategies dependent on the battleground

Battleground	Description	Strategy
Dispersive	When you are fighting in your own territory	Do not engage in battle
Easy	When you have penetrated shallowly into enemy territory	Do not halt
Key	Battleground the control of which gives great advantage to an army	Do not attack
Accessible	Battleground that everyone can freely traverse	Do not try to block the enemy's paths
Central	Intersection of important paths, so it gives supremacy to the army that controls it	Join your allies

Table A16.2: Strategies dependent on the battleground

Battleground	Description	Strategy
Serious	When your army has penetrated into the heart of enemy territory, leaving several fortified cities and towns in its rear	Gather the enemy's resources
Difficult	Area that is hard to traverse	Keep steadily advancing
Constricted	Battleground reached through narrow gaps, and from which we can only retreat by tortuous paths, so that a small number of enemy soldiers would suffice to defeat a large group of our people	Strategize
Desperate	When we can only be saved from death by fighting without delay	Fight

Table A17: Strategies dependent on the battleground, if your army is invading

Battleground	Description	Strategy
Dispersive	When you are fighting in your own territory	Inspire your people with unity of purpose
Easy	When you penetrate shallowly into enemy territory	See that there are close connections between all parts of your army
Key	Control of it gives great advantage to an army	Hurry forward
Accessible	Everyone can freely traverse it	Keep vigilant eyes on your defenses
Central	Intersections of important paths	Consolidate your alliances
Serious	When you penetrate deeply into enemy territory	Ensure continuous supplies of food
Difficult	Area that is hard to traverse	Keep pushing on along the path
Constricted	When you have risky areas behind you, and narrow gaps ahead	Block any way of retreat
Desperate	When you have no place of refuge	Fight as if retreat is hopeless

Table A18: Strategies to attack with fire

Belief	Conclusion
Fire appears inside the enemy's encampment	Prepare quickly to attack
Fire appears inside the enemy's encampment, but the enemy soldiers remain quiet	Wait patiently and do not attack
Effect of fire brings practicable opportunities	Quickly attack
Effect of fire does not bring practicable opportunities	Quickly stop attacking
Means are available for attacking with fire	Begin attacking at a favorable moment—do not wait for fire to appear in the enemy's encampment
You start an attack with fire	Be on the side of the fire from which the wind is blowing—do not attack the side of the fire that is in the direction in which the wind is blowing
Wind rises and lasts during the day	Wind will likely fall during the night

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Acknowledgements

The Art of War is the result of amazing contributors forming a superb support system. There is a personal gratitude for everyone acknowledged here because they gave some of themselves directly for the creation of this book. This acknowledgement serves to publicly credit contributors to *The Art of War's* development.

The Art of War is published by Game of Business at gameofbusiness.net. Thanks to the engineers who invented the powerful tools that directly enable *The Art of War's* distribution, such as electronic computers, computer networks, and automatic information-sharing software.

Philologist Alexios Kritas validated the meaning of *The Art of War's* principles, and showed that they can be re-adapted to lead and advise groups of students. Thank you for improving the precision and clarity of *The Art of War's* vocabulary and structure.

Thanks to Chief Editor Brian Hurowitz for your consistent, wise guidance. Your feedback greatly improved *The Art of War*.

Thanks to Chief Contextual Editor Jerry Novick for reading and reacting to early drafts of *The Art of War*. Your professional insights enabled the creation of *The Art of War*.

Thanks to Chief Conceptual Editor Richard Feller for your phenomenal suggestions and edits. Your patience and faith in the creation of this book was astounding.

Thanks to Chief Contextual Advisor Rufino Ferreira for skillfully nurturing this book along a difficult path.

Thanks to Chief Conceptual Advisor Anthony Spitaliere for engaging in constructive discussions, and going way beyond the call of duty.

Thanks to Editor 1 Edmund Connor for clarifying *The Art of War's* principles, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, and describing ways they can be used in practice. It is fortunate to have your help making the sub-principles flow, and arranging the strategies into tables in the Appendix.

Thanks to Editor 2 Daniel Hsu for helping systematize the concept of mentorship, so the power of Sun Zi's mentorship could be harnessed in this translation of *The Art of War*. Game of Business is immensely in debt to you for helping make *The Art of War* possible by working on top of your regular role. Your editorial insights, ideas for the format and chapter synopses are quite simply brilliant.

Thanks to Editor 3 Jeff Lai, *The Art of War's* strategies can be learned individually and applied together fluidly. Your help with *The Art of War's* framework is deeply appreciated.

Thanks to Advisor 1 Carolyn Smalls for bringing your perspective as an incredible learner and teacher to *The Art of War*. Your well-balanced sensibility is appreciated.

Thanks to Advisor 2 Ashley Galati for relating *The Art of War's* principles to practical applications. Your enthusiasm is contagious.

Thanks to Marketing Director Samantha Feller for sharing her knowledge of consumer behavior. Your ability to convey a clear message in a smooth format is truly amazing.

Thanks to Marketing Specialist Greg Weiss for making yourself available as a trusted resource. *The Art of War* admits its debt to you for your marketing brilliance, and genuine willingness to do whatever it takes to support the company.

Thanks to Draft Supervisor Marco Spitaliere for being a sounding board for *The Art of War*, looking after its creation, and your determination to see it succeed.

Thanks to Health Trainer Ra Scope for taking the time to teach methods of maintaining health. Your contributions are instrumental in the creation of *The Art of War*.

Thanks to Sun Zi's *The Art of War* Specialist 1 Chow Hou Lee for thoroughly describing the methods for translating Sun Zi's *The Art of War* from classical Chinese to English. Your inclusion of the original Chinese text, and your in-depth knowledge and understanding of Chinese language and culture resolved many of the discrepancies in other translated works. Thanks for assisting the recognition and pronunciation of each Chinese character, explaining the more difficult and confusing Chinese words and their possible usage, illustrating how Chinese words can be combined and used in fascinating ways, clarifying confusing concepts and other principles behind the sayings of Sun Zi, allowing a clearer and deeper understanding of the writing and philosophies of Sun Zi, summarizing salient points, and providing interesting insight into some of the concepts and ideas propounded by Sun Zi.

Thanks to Sun Zi's *The Art of War* Specialist 2 Ralph D. Sawyer for providing thorough background of Sun Zi's *The Art of War*, before translating it, and commenting on it.

Thanks to the translators and commentators of Sun Zi's *The Art of War*, specifically: Lionel Giles, Samuel B. Griffith, R. L. Wing, Thomas Cleary, Roger T. Ames, C. C. Low and Associates, John Minford, and Victor Mair.

Thanks to *The Art of War*'s author, Sun Zi, for inspiring the creation of this translation. Thanks to Sun Zi's alleged grandson, Sun Bin, and other students of Sun Zi's *The Art of War* for continuing the development of its knowledge base.

Thanks to Herb Rubin and Irwin Schenker for their mentorship.

To those unknown, it is hoped that *The Art of War* falls into your hands, because it offers the unpretentious encouragement of an older wisdom.



The Art of War

Created by Sun Zi.

Design and Typesetting created by Game of Business, LLC.

Game of Business logo created by Game of Business, LLC.

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Published in 2018 by
Game of Business, LLC
<https://www.gameofbusiness.net>
sunzi@gameofbusiness.net

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN-X: 978-0-9999999-0-5