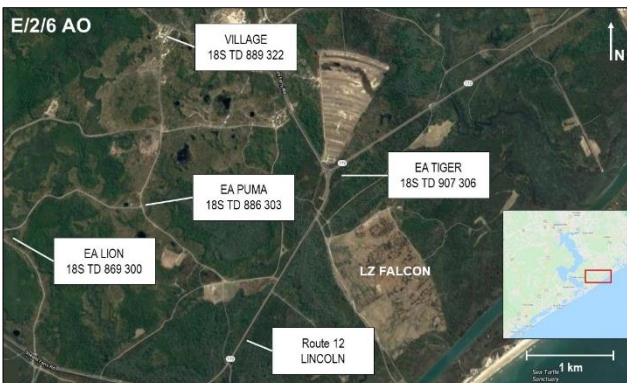**Warfighting**

How to
WRITE a 3x5 Company OPORD

USE a 3x5 index card to write a Company OPORD in 20 minutes.

```
16 Jan 2020
S: I think (2) EN recon plats will arrive in the morning.
   Bn blocks coastal roads IOT delay EN advance (S).
M: @ 2300 "E" BLOCKS (N)-(S) roads IOT delay EN
   access (S) on coastal Rte 12 (LINCOLN).
E: (3) plat blocks @ (3) EAs with ME on Rte 12.
   FS—R/W CAS O/S @ 0900. Mortars POF to ME.
   1st Plat+: BLOCK @ EA LION IOT delay EN (S).
   2nd Plat+: BLOCK @ EA PUMA IOT delay EN (S).
   3rd Plat+: ME—BLOCK @ EA TIGER IOT delay EN
   access (S) on Rte LINCOLN.
   Coord: Bn and arty will NOT arrive for 24 hours.
```

E/2/6 AO
VILLAGE 18S TD 889 322
EA TIGER 18S TD 907 306
EA PUMA 18S TD 886 303
EA LION 18S TD 869 300
LZ FALCON
Route 12 LINCOLN
1 km

Process

1 WRITE the **Situation**.

> S: I think (2) EN recon plats will arrive in the morning.
> Bn blocks coastal roads IOT delay EN advance (S).

START with "I think…" Your *assessment* (EMLCOA) provides context. Do NOT re-state the obvious. During the verbal order, add EN composition (SALUTE) and capabilities (DRAW-D). WRITE the friendly HHQ Mission. Note any critical adjacent or supporting units.

2 WRITE the **Mission**.

> M: @ 2300 "E" BLOCKS (N)-(S) roads IOT delay EN
> access (S) on coastal Rte 12 (LINCOLN).

WRITE one concise sentence—the most important sentence in the order.
START with "We"—or your unit designation. USE the IOT format to link task and intent.
CAPITALIZE the verb, the task. USE precise doctrinal terms.

3 WRITE the **Execution**.

> E: (3) plat blocks @ (3) EAs with ME on Rte 12.
> FS—R/W CAS O/S @ 0900. Mortars POF to ME.

WRITE the CONOPS—the Scheme of Maneuver and the Fire Support Plan.
During the verbal order, the FAC and FO can add target information.

4 WRITE the **Tasks**.

Warfighting

> 1st Plat+: BLOCK @ EA LION IOT delay EN (S).
> 2nd Plat+: BLOCK @ EA PUMA IOT delay EN (S).
> 3rd Plat+: ME—BLOCK @ EA TIGER IOT delay EN
> access (S) on Rte LINCOLN.

WRITE one concise sentence for each unit. USE the IOT format to link task and intent.
DESIGNATE a ME. CAPITALIZE the verb, the task. USE precise doctrinal terms.

5 WRITE **Coordinating Instructions**.

> Coord: Bn and arty will NOT arrive for 24 hours.

CLARIFY times, movements, contingencies, and other information for all units.
During the verbal order, share any manifests, schedules, or checklists.

6 WRITE any **Admin & Logistics** and **Command & Signal** notes on the back of the card.

> A: MEDEVAC—CCP @ LZ FALCON.
> C: Co CP with 3rd @ EA TIGER.

Most logistics and signals details should be SOP.

7 WRITE **Orientation** and **Task Organization** notes on the back of the card.

> O: (N). Rte LINCOLN = Rte 12. LZ FALCON.
> (W) to (E): EA LION (18S TD 869 300), EA PUMA
> (18S TD 886 303), EA TIGER (18S TD 907 306).
> Village (18S TD 869 322).
> T/O @ 2130:
> 1st Plat + (2) MGs + (2) SMAWs.
> 2nd Plat + (2) MGs + (2) SMAWs.
> 3rd Plat + (2) MGs + (2) SMAWs (+ Bn Javelins + CEB).
> Co CP, FO, FAC, Mortars.
>
> A: MEDEVAC—CCP @ LZ FALCON.
> C: Co CP with 3rd @ EA TIGER.

ORIENT your Marines on the actual terrain or a terrain model ***before*** you issue your order.
USE a map, sketch, or imagery only if a terrain model is not available.

Warfighting

ORGANIZE your unit before the order. SPECIFY the time the task organization is effective.

Notes on Orders

Do NOT write everything. Provide more information when you issue your verbal order.

Do NOT write a redundant commander's intent paragraph. Your mission Purpose = Intent = End State. Good intent focuses on the enemy, lesser intent on friendly. Poor intent focuses on terrain. AVOID multiple intents: There should be no "and" in your intent clause.

The acid test for intent is, "Can you replace the task and still maintain the intent?"
Do [whatever it takes] IOT prevent EN interference with Route LINCOLN.

AVOID phases at the company level. "ESTABLISH base of fire" is NOT a phase. Movement phases should NOT require an OPORD. If HHQ defines three phases, write three OPORDS.

Any lists are *reference material*, separate from the order: landing plans, load plans, helicopter manifests, schedules, and checklists.

Brevity

Each **word** in the order is critical. In the disorder of combat, simplicity is strength. An order must be understood, but extra words and extra tasks *reduce* understanding. Well-trained units and SOPs are a pre-requisite for brevity. Leaders share implicit understanding. *Excessive detail in an order indicates unreliable subordinates and a lack of training.*

There are three types of sentences in an OPORD: (1) Mission-specific: "H-Hour is 0900," (2) Micromanagement: "ROs should carry extra rope," and (3) More of the obvious: "Avoid casualties." *Every sentence in the order should be mission-specific.*

Develop an orders shorthand: BPT, CATK, EN, FIT, HHQ, IOT, ME, NLT, O/O, RES, SBF, WTH. Use "+" for "attach." "(E)" is "east." The "@" is "at place," or "at time." Kill all adjectives and adverbs.

Related Processes

ISSUE a Verbal Company OPORD is the next task, followed by REHEARSE an Operation. WRITE a 3x5 Platoon OPORD and WRITE a 3x5 Squad OPORD follow the same process as above. Neither MCIP 3-10A.3i *Marine Infantry Platoon*, 10 Jun 2019, or MCIP 3-10A.4i *Marine Rifle Squad*, 10 Jun 2019, contain any valuable guidance on orders.

16 Jan 2020
S: I think EN recon will be 4-6 BTRs, moving quickly.
"E" BLOCKS (3) (N)-(S) roads IOT delay EN recon.
M: 2nd Plat BLOCKS EA PUMA (18S TD 886 303) IOT delay EN access (S) to Route 12 (LINCOLN).
E: Sq (S) stops EN in PUMA, Sq (W) destroys.
FS— Co mortars, if available, fire @ rear of column.
1st Sq + MGs: ABF IOT STOP command veh in EA.
2nd Sq + SMAWs: ME—DESTROY EN vehs in EA IOT delay EN access (S).
3rd Sq: (1) OP (N), (1) OP (W) IOT prevent surprise.
Coord: O/O WTH to ORP @ (W) OP.

Time and Materials: 20 minutes

After making a commander's assessment and a decision, the company commander should WRITE a 3x5 Company OPORD in less than 20 minutes. If 24 hours are available, the process does not change. When an immediate order is needed in combat, nothing is written, and the company commander's order is **three sentences, in thirty seconds, while under fire**.

The company commander, three days after being inserted, cannot assume computer, printer, paper, or imagery support. A multi-page order, even if written by hand, encourages wordiness and imprecision, and is difficult for subordinates to copy.

Training

Train to write concise, effective OPORDs. During battalion PME, exercises, wargames, and tactical decision games, all decisions—all orders—should be recorded on a 3x5 index card. Cards can be collected, distributed, and edited, so leaders can learn from each other and share best practices.

References

1. MCWP 5-10 *Marine Corps Planning Process*, 2 May 2016, specifies the format for Operation Orders in Appendix K. Although the manual states that the template applies "at all levels," the published format is unrealistic below the battalion level.

2. MCRP 3-10A.2 *Infantry Company Operations*, 4 Apr 2018, does NOT specify how the Company OPORD is produced. Multiple sections, including some that discuss the distribution of the "OPORD and associated products," imply that a published OPORD with appendices is expected at the Company level. This is unrealistic.

Warfighting

How to
ISSUE a Verbal Company OPORD

The company commander issues a verbal company OPORD on a terrain model, using a written 3x5 company OPORD for notes, to his company orders group, in 30 minutes.

The best location for issuing an OPORD is on a terrain model overlooking the actual battlefield. Issuing an OPORD on a sketch, map, or imagery is often necessary, but not ideal.

Each subordinate who attends the OPORD creates their own graphic—a hand-drawn sketch.

Issuing an OPORD aboard *USS Ashland* (LSD-48).

Process

1 TASK ORGANIZE your unit before the order.

ORGANIZE simply, one unit for each part of the plan, as few units as possible. SPECIFY the time the task organization is effective. STAND subordinates together. ORGANIZE clearly. SAY "attach" to clarify command relationships. AVOID DS and GS. Imprecise statements, "XO will supervise," or "Move with 3rd Plat," will cause confusion.

2 ORIENT your Marines to the terrain.

ORIENT the terrain model to the Marines' maps so they can visualize the battlefield. BRIEF the natural terrain features and how they will affect the operation. IDENTIFY control measures.

3 EXPLAIN the **Situation**.

START with "I think…" Your *assessment* (EMLCOA) provides context. BRIEF EN composition (SALUTE) and capabilities (DRAW-D). TASK a CLIC Marine to brief additional Battalion intelligence assessments. BRIEF the friendly HHQ Mission. If critical, note any adjacent or supporting units.

4 STATE the **Mission**—twice.

POINT out key units and important actions, and repeat key locations on the terrain model.

5 EXPLAIN the **Execution**.

EXPLAIN the CONOPS—the Scheme of Maneuver and the Fire Support Plan—by walking through the terrain model and describing the steps of the plan chronologically. POINT out key units and important actions, and repeat key locations on the terrain model. INVITE the FAC/JTAC and FOs to brief additional target information.

6 TASK your subordinates.

LOOK each unit leader in the eye. ISSUE one task to each unit. EMPHASIZE the ME.
POINT out key units and important actions, and repeat key locations on the terrain model.

7 EXPLAIN **Coordinating Instructions**.

EXPLAIN times, movements, contingencies, and other information for all units.
SHARE any manifests, schedules, or checklists.

8 ADD any **Admin & Logistics** and **Command & Signal** instructions.

EMPHASIZE the location of the CCP and the company CP.
Most logistics and signals details should be SOP.

9 CONDUCT a brief-back IOT insure your Marines understand the OPORD.

ASK "What are your questions?" ANSWER the questions.
SELECT a specific Marine from a specific unit. ASK a question about a key action:
"Harris. MGs. From checkpoint 31A, how does 2nd Platoon signal you to shift fire?"
ASK about key events where two units need to coordinate.
ASK about unit actions at control measures

Notes on Verbal Orders

As far as possible, issue verbal orders face-to-face. A leader communicates by looking into the eyes of his Marines, displaying confidence and avoiding any doubts.

The company commander issues the order and decides on who else will talk. More is NOT better, but a CLIC Marine, FAC/JTAC, FO, CoGySgt, or attachment can often add important information.

When issued over the radio, a verbal order is less likely to be misunderstood it if is well-constructed, succinct and unambiguous. But even an excellent radio order is missing the graphic.

Remember that issuing the order is only one step of the commander's responsibility. Supervising—pushing the plan vigorously to success—is the true role of the commander.

Terrain Model

The company CO needs one Marine trained to build terrain models. A terrain model kit should include cards, markers, tape, and twine. The rule of thumb for terrain models is, "the bigger, the better." The ideal terrain model is NOT the size of a table, but the size of a room. Multiple Marines should be able to walk across and brief from the terrain model.

If a terrain model cannot be built, a sketch, map, or imagery must be used to issue the OPORD.

Company Orders Group

The company SOP defines the orders group. All key leaders should be part of the orders group: CO, XO, 1stSgt, CoGySgt, FAC/JTAC, Arty FO, 81 FO, CLIC, drivers, ROs, corpsmen, platoon commanders, platoon sergeants, weapons leaders (mortars, MG, and assault), STA and reconnaissance elements, and all other attachment leaders.

More is better. When the situation permits, issue the order to *all* your Marines. The entire unit benefits from hearing and seeing the order directly from the commander.

Require your subordinates to take notes. Do not permit talking or eating, or other distractions.

Language

Use inclusive language: "You are moving with me." Avoid exclusive language: "You are not staying here." Avoid qualified statements: "Try to hold," or "As far as possible." These lessen responsibility. Avoid conditional statements: "If you can cross the bridge." Use precise tactical terms. Mission and task statements, especially, need to be clear and accurate in order to be understood.

Time and Materials: 30 minutes

The company commander issues a verbal company OPORD on a terrain model, using a written 3x5 company OPORD for notes, to his company orders group, in 30 minutes. If 24 hours are available, the process does not change. When an immediate decision is needed in combat, the company commander's order is **three sentences, in thirty seconds, while under fire**.

Related Processes

WRITE a 3x5 Company OPORD and BUILD a Terrain Model are the previous tasks.
REHEARSE an Operation is the next task.
ISSUE a 3x5 Platoon OPORD and ISSUE a 3x5 Squad OPORD follow the same process as above. Neither MCIP 3-10A.3i *Marine Infantry Platoon*, 10 Jun 2019, or MCIP 3-10A.4i *Marine Rifle Squad*, 10 Jun 2019, contain any valuable guidance on issuing orders.

References

1. MCRP 3-10A.2 *Infantry Company Operations*, 4 Apr 2018, includes no guidance on how to issue a Company OPORD.