

Chapter 7

Applied Fundamentals

Proper aiming, breathing, and trigger control techniques must be instinctive. In a combat environment, a Marine will not know when or where targets will appear or the duration of target exposure. A Marine must apply proper aiming, breathing, and trigger control techniques without hesitation.

During combat, the fundamentals of marksmanship must be applied in the shortest time possible while still achieving accurate target engagement. The time required to engage a target is unique to each individual. The goal of combat target engagement is to achieve sight alignment and sight picture simultaneously, and to fire the shot once sight alignment and sight picture are achieved.

Executing shots at a rapid but effective rate is achieved through practice and experience. A Marine must know his firing strengths and weaknesses and fire at a rate in which he can maintain accuracy.

7001. Aiming

Sight alignment is critical to the aiming process and must remain constant from shot to shot. There are three critical factors required to obtain and maintain sight alignment: stock weld, eye relief, and the relationship of the front and rear sight to the aiming eye. Sight picture is the placement of the tip of the front sight post in relation to the target while maintaining sight alignment. In field firing, a Marine applies the fundamentals of sight alignment and sight picture simultaneously in such a compressed time that sight alignment and sight picture are achieved as the shot is fired. Although a Marine must engage the target rapidly, sight alignment is still his first priority. See FMFM 0-8 for detailed information on sight alignment and sight picture.

a. **Achieving Sight Alignment/Sight Picture** . Once a Marine identifies the target, he quickly aims the rifle toward the target. The head should be as erect as possible to allow the aiming eye to see directly through the sights.

Proper presentation of the rifle aids in establishing sight alignment quickly. Practice during rifle presentation drills will help a Marine become proficient in achieving sight alignment and sight picture. Paragraph 11002 discusses rifle presentation.

Note

It is important to remember that changing the placement of the head from a normal stock-weld may affect a Marine's zero.

If the butt of the rifle is placed in the shoulder correctly and the stock weld is correct, a Marine looks through the rear sight as the rifle is presented. As the rifle becomes level with the aiming eye, a Marine visually locates the front sight through the rear sight aperture and establishes sight alignment. With practice, this becomes so automatic that it requires minimal effort to align the sights.

During combat, a Marine will look at the target as the rifle is presented. As the rifle settles, a Marine's focus shifts back to the sights to place the tip of the front sight post on the target and obtain sight picture. With practice, sight alignment and sight picture will come together simultaneously.

b. **Sight Picture and Natural Point of Aim** . Time may not allow a Marine to adjust his firing position to achieve his precise natural point of aim on a target center. Therefore, a Marine may have to physically place the aligned sights on the target to create an acceptable sight picture as the trigger is moved to the rear. Distant targets may require a Marine to

shift his position to establish an effective natural point of aim in order to hit the target.

c. Sight Alignment/Sight Picture and Distance to the Target. An acceptable sight alignment and sight picture is one that results in hits on the target. As the distance to the target increases, the front sight post covers more of the target making it difficult to establish a center of mass hold. There is a tendency to look at the target by lowering the tip of the front sight post. This causes shots to impact low or miss the target completely. A Marine must consciously aim at the center of mass and attempt to maintain a center mass sight picture.

d. Sight Alignment During Low Light. During low light conditions or periods of darkness, there is usually enough ambient light (from the moon and stars) for a Marine to perceive targets as far away as 50 meters. A Marine should use the large rear sight aperture during low light conditions. This aperture allows more light to enter the eye and increases a Marine's ability to acquire the target.

However, when the sights are placed on a dark object, a Marine's ability to acquire and align the sights may be reduced. A Marine may have to rely entirely on presentation and stance to place the sight on target. To check sight alignment or acquire the sights, a Marine points his rifle toward an area that provides contrast (e.g., the skyline), then brings the sights back on line with the target. As soon as the sight picture is correct, the Marine should engage the target.

Artificial illumination, particularly air illumination, may make the target appear to move. This can disrupt a Marine's ability to obtain proper sight picture. If attempting to obtain sight picture under artificial illumination, a Marine focuses his sights on the lower portion of the target. This area is least affected by the shadows created from artificial illumination and provides a more stable aiming point. Once a Marine establishes sight alignment, he raises the sights to center mass.

7002. Breath Control

Proper breath control is critical to the aiming process. Breathing causes the body to move. This movement transfers to the rifle making it impossible to maintain proper sight picture. In known-distance firing, a Marine is trained to interrupt his breathing at a point of natural respiratory pause before firing a shot. A Marine in a combat environment may not be able to fire a shot during the natural respiratory pause. His breathing and heart rate increase due to physical exertion or the stress of battle. Therefore, he must interrupt his breathing cycle to create a pause that is long enough to fire a shot. However, a Marine should not make a conscious effort to perform breath control. In a combat environment, a Marine can achieve breath control by taking a deep breath and exhaling just before he levels the sights on the target, holding his breath, and pulling the trigger to the rear. Another method of breath control requires a Marine to take a single deep breath that fills the lungs with oxygen before he fires the shot, this creates a pause in which to fire.

7003. Trigger Control

Trigger control is the skillful manipulation of the trigger that causes the rifle to fire without disturbing either sight alignment or sight picture. Once a target is identified, a Marine should move his trigger finger to the trigger as the rifle is presented and trigger control begins as soon as a sight picture is acquired. A Marine should strive to use uninterrupted trigger control in a combat environment. A Marine performs the following steps to obtain uninterrupted trigger control in a combat environment:

- Maintain a firm grip on the rifle to increase stability and counter the effects of recoil when firing multiple shots.

Note

The grip should not prevent the trigger finger from operating independently of the hand, prevent the trigger finger from moving the trigger straight to the rear, or disturb sight alignment.

- Disengage the safety and move the trigger finger toward the trigger as the rifle is presented to the target.
- Apply slight pressure to the trigger once the trigger finger contacts the trigger. There should be no rearward movement of the trigger.
- Move the trigger to the rear in one continuous movement while maintaining sight alignment. This step is performed as soon as sight picture is acquired.
- Release the pressure on the trigger slightly to reset the trigger after the first shot is delivered (indicated

by an audible click). This places the trigger in in position to fire the next shot without having to reestablish trigger finger placement.

7004. Follow-Through/Recovery

Follow-through is the ability to complete trigger control without disturbing sight alignment or sight picture. In field firing, follow-through is important to avoid altering the impact of the round by keeping the rifle as still as possible until the round exits the barrel.

Equally as important as follow-through is getting the rifle sights back on the target for another shot. This is known as recovery. Shot recovery starts immediately after the round leaves the barrel. Rather than allow the recoil of the rifle to take its normal course, a Marine must physically bring the sights back on the target. Applying recovery techniques ensures the sights are on target as quickly as possible to fire another shot.