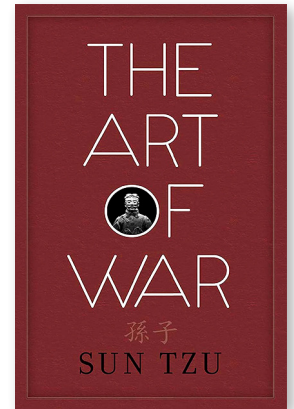




Executive Book Summaries[®]

The Art of War

by **Sun Tzu**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu describes his experiences and things he has learned in war as a Chinese general. Not only can these tactics be used in war, but also in business and everyday life. The book focuses on many themes, such as adaptability and leadership while incorporating the importance of strategy and precise planning. Furthermore, Sun Tzu emphasizes the importance of knowing yourself and how one should analyze and use their strengths and weaknesses.

The Art of War is broken into thirteen chapters, each focusing on an important part of war and victory. Sun Tzu uses his own experiences on these topics to guide people and show them how to succeed. While the book was written many years ago, the work remains timeless as it translates across time and location.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- Learn why strategy is just as important as force.
- Discover your strengths and weaknesses and learn how to use them.
- Adapt techniques on how to be flexible when plans fall through.
- Understand your fears and motivations.

Laying Plans

Sun Tzu said: The art of war is of vital importance to the State.

The art of war, then, is governed by five constant factors, to be taken into account in one's deliberations, when seeking to determine the conditions obtaining in the field:

1. The Moral Law: causes the people to be in complete accord with their ruler, so that they will follow him regardless of their lives, undismayed by any danger.
2. Heaven: night and day, cold and heat, times and seasons
3. Earth: comprises distances, great and small; danger and security; open ground and narrow passes; the chances of life and death.
4. The Commander: stands for the virtues of wisdom, sincerely, benevolence, courage and strictness.
5. Method and discipline: the marshaling of the army in its proper subdivisions, the graduations of rank among the officers, the maintenance of roads by which supplies may reach the army, and the control of military expenditure.

Therefore, in your deliberations, when seeking to determine the military conditions, let them be made the basis of a comparison, in this wise:

1. Which of the two sovereigns is imbued with the Moral law?
2. Which of the two generals has most ability?
3. With whom lie the advantages derived from Heaven and Earth?
4. On which side is discipline most rigorously enforced?
5. Which army is stronger?
6. On which side are officers and men more highly trained?
7. In which army is there the greater constancy both in reward and punishment?

Waging War

Sun Tzu said: In the operations of war, there

are in the field a thousand swift chariots, as many heavy chariots, and a hundred thousand mail-clad soldiers.

When you engage in actual fighting, if victory is long in coming, then men's weapons will grow dull and their ardor will be damped. If you lay siege to a town, you will exhaust your strength.

There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare.

Bring war material with you from home, but forage on the enemy.

Contributing to maintain an army at a distance causes the people to be impoverished.

The proximity of an army causes prices to go up; and high prices cause the people's substance to be drained away. Hence a wise general makes a point of foraging on the enemy.

Now in order to kill the enemy, our men must be roused to anger; that there may be advantages from defeating the enemy, they must have their rewards.

In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns.

Attack by Stratagem

Sun Tzu said: In the practical art of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good.

The highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.

It is the rule in war, if our forces are ten to the enemy's one, to surround him; if five to one, to attack him; if twice as numerous, to divide our army into two.

If equally matched, we can offer battle; if slightly inferior in numbers, we can avoid the enemy; if quite unequal in every way, we can flee from him.

There are three ways in which a ruler can bring misfortune upon his army:

1. By commanding the army to advance or to retreat, being ignorant of the fact that it cannot obey.

Learn to brag. You are not bragging, you are informing. You must inform your boss of the work you complete and the effort it takes when they are not present.

2. By attempting to govern an army in the same way as he administers a kingdom, being ignorant of the conditions which obtain in an army.
3. By employing the officers of his army without discrimination, through ignorance of the military principle of adaptation to circumstances.

There are five essentials for victory:

1. He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight.
2. He will win who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces.
3. He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks.
4. He will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the enemy unprepared.
5. He will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign.

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

Tactical Dispositions

Sun Tzu said: The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy.

The good fighter is able to secure himself against defeat, but cannot make certain of defeating the enemy.

He wins his battles by making no mistakes. Military method to control success:

1. Measurement owes its existence to Earth;

2. Estimation of quantity to Measurement;
3. Calculation to Estimation of quantity;
4. Balancing of chances to Calculation; and
5. Victory to Balancing of chances.

Energy

Sun Tzu said: The control of a large force is the same principle as the control of a few men: it is merely a question of dividing up their numbers.

Fighting with a large army under your command is no different from fighting with a small one: it is merely a question of instituting signs and signals.

In battle, there are not more than two methods of attack—the direct and the indirect; Simulated disorder postulates perfect discipline, simulated fear postulates courage; simulated weakness postulates strength.

Hiding order beneath the cloak of disorder is simply a question of subdivision; One who is skillful at keeping the enemy on the move maintains deceitful appearances, according to which the enemy will act.

Weak Points and Strong

Sun Tzu said: Whoever is first in the field and awaits the coming of the enemy, will be fresh for the fight; whoever is second in the field and has to hasten to battle will arrive exhausted.

Therefore the clever combatant imposes his will on the enemy, but does not allow the enemy's will to be imposed on him. You can be sure of succeeding in your attacks if you only attack places which are undefended.

Hence that general is skillful in attack whose opponent does not know what to defend; and he is skillful in defense whose opponent does not know what to attack.

If we do not wish to fight, we can prevent the enemy from

engaging us even though the lines of our encampment be merely traced out on the ground.

We can form a single united body, while the enemy must split up into fractions. The spot where we intend to fight must not be made known. If the enemy sends reinforcements everywhere, he will everywhere be weak.

Knowing the place and the time of the coming battle, we may concentrate from the greatest distances in order to fight. Carefully compare the opposing army with your own, so that you may know where strength is superabundant and where it is deficient.

Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances.

Maneuvering

Sun Tzu said: In war, the general receives his commands from the sovereign.

Having collected an army and concentrated his forces, he must blend and harmonize the different elements thereof before pitching his camp. After that, comes tactical maneuvering, than which there is nothing more difficult. Maneuvering with an army is advantageous; with an undisciplined multitude, most dangerous.

We are not fit to lead an army on the march unless we are familiar with the face of the country—its mountains and forests, its pitfalls and precipices, its marshes and swamps. In war, practice dissimulation, and you will succeed.

When you plunder a countryside, let the spoil be divided amongst your men; when you capture new territory, cut it up into allotments for the benefit of the soldiery.

Now a soldier's spirit is keenest in the morning; by noonday it has begun to flag; and in the evening, his mind is bent only on returning to camp. This is the art of studying moods.

Disciplined and calm, to await the appearance of disorder and hubbub amongst the enemy:—this is the art of retaining self-possession.

To be near the goal while the enemy is still far from it, to wait at ease while the enemy is toiling and struggling, to be well-fed while the enemy is famished:—this is the art of husbanding one's strength.

To refrain from intercepting an enemy whose banners are

in perfect order, to refrain from attacking an army drawn up in calm and confident array:—this is the art of studying circumstances.

It is a military axiom not to advance uphill against the enemy, nor to oppose him when he comes downhill. Do not pursue an enemy who simulates flight; do not attack soldiers whose temper is keen.

Do not swallow bait offered by the enemy. Do not interfere with an army that is returning home. When you surround an army, leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard.

Variation in Tactics

Sun Tzu said: In war, the general receives his commands from the sovereign, collects his army and concentrates his forces.

When in difficult country, do not encamp. In country where high roads intersect, join hands with your allies. Do not linger in dangerously isolated positions.

Hence in the wise leader's plans, considerations of advantage and of disadvantage will be blended together.

Reduce the hostile chiefs by inflicting damage on them; and make trouble for them, and keep them constantly engaged. There are five dangerous faults which may affect a general:

1. Recklessness, which leads to destruction;
2. cowardice, which leads to capture;
3. a hasty temper, which can be provoked by insults;
4. a delicacy of honor which is sensitive to shame;
5. over-solicitude for his men, which exposes him to worry and trouble.

The Army on the March

Sun Tzu said: We come now to the question of encamping the army, and observing signs of the enemy. Pass quickly over mountains, and keep in the neighborhood of valleys.

Camp in high places. When an invading force crosses a river in its onward march, do not advance to meet it in mid-stream.

All armies prefer high ground to low. When the enemy is

Manage the patterns, not the person. As a manager, you need to be able to identify patterns in behavior rather than merely symptoms.

close at hand and remains quiet, he is relying on the natural strength of his position. When he keeps aloof and tries to provoke a battle, he is anxious for the other side to advance.

If his place of encampment is easy of access, he is tendering a bait. Movement amongst the trees of a forest shows that the enemy is advancing.

Humble words and increased preparations are signs that the enemy is about to advance. When the light chariots come out first and take up a position on the wings, it is a sign that the enemy is forming for battle. Peace proposals unaccompanied by a sworn covenant indicate a plot.

When some are seen advancing and some retreating, it is a lure. When the soldiers stand leaning on their spears, they are faint from want of food.

If those who are sent to draw water begin by drinking themselves, the army is suffering from thirst. If the enemy sees an advantage to be gained and makes no effort to secure it, the soldiers are exhausted.

When an army feeds its horses with grain and kills its cattle for food, and when the men do not hang their cooking-pots over the camp-fires, showing that they will not return to their tents, you may know that they are determined to fight to the death.

Terrain

Sun Tzu said: We may distinguish six kinds of terrain, to wit:

1. Accessible ground: Ground which can be freely traversed by both sides
2. Entangling ground: Ground which can be abandoned but is hard to re-occupy
3. TempORIZING ground: When the position is such that neither side will gain by making the first move
4. Narrow Passes: if you can occupy them first, let them be strongly garrisoned and await the advent of the enemy.

5. Precipitous heights: if you are beforehand with your adversary, you should occupy the raised and sunny spots
6. Far from the enemy: If you are situated at a great distance from the enemy, and the strength of the two armies is equal, it is not easy to provoke a battle.

Now an army is exposed to six several calamities, not arising from natural causes, but from faults for which the general is responsible. These are:

1. Flight: Other conditions being equal, if one force is hurled against another ten times its size, the result will be the flight of the former.
2. Insubordination: When the common soldiers are too strong and their officers too weak,
3. Collapse: When the officers are too strong and the common soldiers too weak,
4. Ruin: When the higher officers are angry and insubordinate,
5. Disorganization: When the general is weak and without authority,
6. Rout: When a general allows an inferior force to engage a larger one, or hurls a weak detachment against a powerful one.

If fighting is sure to result in victory, then you must fight, even though the ruler forbid it; if fighting will not result in victory, then you must not fight even at the ruler's bidding.

Regard your soldiers as your children, and they will follow you into the deepest valleys.

The Nine Situations

Sun Tzu said: The art of war recognizes nine varieties of ground:

1. Dispersive ground: When a chieftain is fighting in his own territory. Fight not.

2. Facile ground: when he penetrated into hostile territory but to no great distance. Halt not.
3. Contentious ground: Ground the possession of which imports great advantage to either side. Attack not.
4. Open ground: Ground on which each side has liberty of movement. Do not try to block the enemy's way.
5. Ground of intersecting highways: Ground which forms the key to three contiguous states, so that he who occupies it first has most of the Empire at his command. Join hands with your allies.
6. Serious ground: When an army has penetrated into the heart of a hostile country, leaving a number of fortified cities in its rear. Gather in plunder.
7. Difficult ground: all country that is hard to traverse. Keep steadily on the march.
8. Hemmed-in ground: Ground which is reached through narrow gorges, and from which you can only retire by tortuous paths. Resort to stratagem.
9. Desperate ground: Ground on which you can only be saved from destruction by fighting without delay. Fight.

Rapidity is the essence of war. Make forays in fertile country in order to supply your army with food. Carefully study the well-being of your men.

Throw your soldiers into positions whence there is no escape, and they will prefer death to flight. If they will face death, there is nothing they may not achieve.

Confront your soldiers with the deed itself; never let them know your design.

Place your army in deadly peril, and it will survive; plunge it into desperate straits, and it will come off in safety.

The Attack by Fire

Sun Tzu said: There are five ways of attacking with fire:

1. Burn the soldiers in their camps
2. Burn stores
3. Burn baggage
4. Burn arsenals and magazines
5. Drop fire on the enemy

In order to carry out an attack, we must have means available. The proper season is when the weather is very dry. In attacking with fire, one should be prepared to meet five possible developments:

1. When fire breaks out inside to enemy's camp, respond at once with an attack from without.
2. If there is an outbreak of fire, but the enemy's soldiers remain quiet, bide your time and do not attack.
3. When the force of the flames has reached its height, follow it up with an attack, if that is practicable; if not, stay where you are.
4. If it is possible to make an assault with fire from without, do not wait for it to break out within, but deliver your attack at a favorable moment.
5. When you start a fire, be to windward of it. Do not attack from the leeward.

No ruler should put troops into the field merely to gratify his own spleen; no general should fight a battle simply out of pique.

If it is to your advantage, make a forward move; if not, stay where you are.

The Use of Spies

Sun Tzu said: Raising a host of a hundred thousand men and marching them great distances entails heavy loss on the people and a drain on the resources of the State.

Knowledge of the enemy's dispositions can only be obtained from other men. Hence the use of spies, of whom there are five classes:

1. Local spies: inhabitants of a district
2. Inward spies: officials of the enemy
3. Converted spies: getting hold of the enemy's spies and using them for our own purposes.
4. Doomed spies: doing certain things openly for purposes of deception, and allowing our spies to know of them and report them to the enemy.
5. Surviving spies: those who bring back news from the enemy's camp.

Hence it is that which none in the whole army are more intimate relations to be maintained than with spies.

If a secret piece of news is divulged by a spy before the time is ripe, he must be put to death together with the man to whom the secret was told.

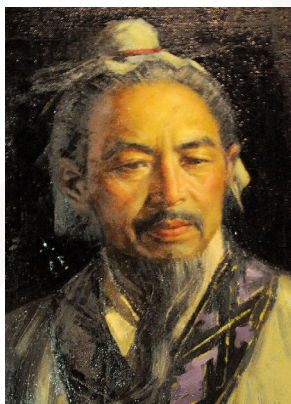
The enemy's spies who have come to spy on us must be sought out, tempted with bribes, led away and comfortably housed.

The end and aim of spying in all its five varieties is knowledge of the enemy; and this knowledge can only be derived, in the first instance, from the converted spy. Hence it is essential that the converted spy be treated with the utmost liberality.

Spies are a most important element in war, because on them depends an army's ability to move.

Conclusion

The Art of War remains a classic that can assist people in various parts of their lives. Sun Tzu is able to offer a guide to show others how to be strong leaders and how to consider different strategies. This results in learning the skills for conflict resolution and knowing when and how to confront one's enemies. These tools can be used in everyday life and challenges people to think through various tactics to win without fighting.



Sun Tzu, a military general and strategist who lived in ancient China, is one of East Asia's most important historical figures. Traditional historians believe that he lived between 544–496 B.C. Sun Tzu's birth name was Sun Wu; the name he is well known with is an honorific that means "Master Sun." He is most famous for writing *The Art of War*, a timeless classic and one of the most important works of Eastern literature.

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