

The troop leading procedures (TLP) are defined as a sequence of activities used by small unit leaders to plan and prepare for operations. The troop leading procedures are consistent with the military decision-making process (MDMP) but the two are not identical. The steps of the MDMP are designed and intended to help coordinate staff and commander responsibilities in units with formal staff positions such as a battalion staff.

The TLP are not a hard and fast set of rules. Rather, they provide a guide that the company commanders, platoon leaders, or squad leaders applies in ways that are consistent with the situation, their experience, and the experience of their subordinate leaders. The following outline of the TLP assumes that the small unit leader will plan in a time-constrained environment.

Receive the mission: This step addresses the actions a small unit leader (company, platoon, or squad) takes as they receive their mission. “Receiving” the mission may occur in one of several ways. It may begin with the receipt of a warning order from the higher headquarters, or it may begin when they actually receive the higher headquarters operation order (OPORD). In the most challenging situation, it may come as a result of a change in the overall situation during the execution of a mission. Besides receiving the mission during the first step of the TLP, the small unit leader must also assess the time they have available to prepare for and execute the mission.

Issue a warning order: After the small unit leaders have determined their unit’s mission and assessed the time available for planning, preparing for, and executing the mission, they should immediately issue a warning order to their subordinates. In addition to telling their subordinates of the unit’s new mission, the warning order also gives them the planning timeline. They may also communicate any other instructions or information that they think will help them prepare for the new mission. The most important thing is not to waste any time in issuing the initial warning order.

Make a tentative plan: In a time-constrained environment, the small unit leaders typically will develop only one course of action (COA). However, as time permits, they may develop as many COAs as possible to allow for comparison between possible COAs. They will begin this step of the TLP after they issue their warning order and typically after they have received additional guidance from their higher headquarters in the form of additional warning orders. They do not need to wait for a complete OPORD before beginning their own course of action development.

Initiate movement: The small unit leaders, typically the company commander or platoon leader initiates any movement necessary to continue mission preparation or to posture the unit for the start of the mission. This step of the TLP can be executed at any time throughout the sequence of the TLP. This may include movement to an assembly area, a battle position, a new area of operation, or the movement of guides or quartering parties.

Conduct reconnaissance: In order to exploit the principles of speed and surprise, the small unit leaders should weight the advantage gained by personal reconnaissance versus the combat multiplier received in the form of supplied information. They may have the ability to plan their operation based on the unprecedented amount of information provided by other information collection sources. However, if time permits, they should verify higher headquarters intelligence with a visual reconnaissance.

Complete the plan: During this step, the small unit leaders, take their selected course of action (COA) and expands it into a complete operations order (OPORD). They prepare overlays, refines the indirect fire support list, completes all combat service support (CSS) and command and control (C2) requirements, and, of course, updates the tentative plan based on the latest reconnaissance or information. They prepare a briefing site and other briefing materials they may need to present the OPORD directly to their subordinates. The five-paragraph OPORD format assists the small unit leaders in addressing all of the relevant details of the operation. It provides subordinates with a smooth flow of information from beginning to end.

Issue the order: The OPORD should precisely and concisely explain both the small unit leader's intent (applies to company commander only) and their concept of how they envision their unit accomplishing the mission. The order should not contain unnecessary information. Nice-to-know information clouds what is essential and important and often causes confusion and uncertainty.

Supervise and refine: The final step of the TLP is crucial. After issuing the OPORD, the small unit leaders and their subordinate leaders must ensure that the required activities and tasks are completed in a timely manner prior to mission execution. Supervision is the primary responsibility of all leaders. It is imperative that both officers and NCOs check everything that is important for successful mission accomplishment.