

## Sun Tzu's Three Rules of Warfare

Note: *This note was pieced together by Thomas Jerry Scott from several Internet articles that discussed and paraphrased an ancient Chinese work on warfare. It is intended to provide a good background to begin working toward better security at your worksite.*

An ancient Chinese book, "*The Art of War by Sun Tzu*" received much popular press and coverage in the high tech world of the late 1990's. The "Art of War" was written many centuries ago. Sun Tzu was employed to help his sovereign in warfare.

His techniques proved to be successful, and his writings have stood the test of time and are now studied in War colleges all around the world. "*The Art of War*" has been popularized and rephrased in business terms during the 1990's. We are concerned with computer security and electronic warfare, so the ancient Chinese advice is good for modern times.

### Excerpts from Chapter 3 of the "Art of War"

The "*Art of War*" is so old that many translations exist and are freely available on the Internet. To find one, just go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and search for "ART of WAR". This section starts with Sun's maxims and then ends with his famous three rules, often called the "*know thyself and thine enemy*" today.

Generally, in war the best policy is to take a state intact; to ruin it is inferior to this. To capture the enemy's entire army is better than to destroy it; to take intact a regiment, a company, or a squad is better than to destroy them. For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence.

Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy. Next best is to disrupt his alliances by diplomacy. The next best is to attack his army. And the worst policy is to attack cities. Attack cities only when there is no alternative because to prepare big shields and wagons and make ready the necessary arms and equipment require at least three months, and to pile up earthen ramps against the walls requires an additional three months. The general, unable to control his impatience, will order his troops to swarm up the wall like ants, with the result that one-third of them will be killed without taking the city. Such is the calamity of attacking cities.

Thus, those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without battle. They capture the enemy's cities without assaulting them and overthrow his state without protracted operations. Their aim is to take all under heaven intact by strategic considerations. Thus, their troops are not worn out and their gains will be complete. This is the art of offensive strategy.

Consequently, the art of using troops is this: When ten to the enemy's one, surround him. When five times his strength, attack him. If double his strength, divide him. If equally matched, you may engage him with some good plan. If weaker numerically, be capable of withdrawing. And if in all respects unequal, be capable of eluding him, for a small force is but booty for one more powerful if it fights recklessly.

Now, the general is the assistant to the sovereign of the state. If this assistance is all-embracing, the state will surely be strong; if defective, the state will certainly be weak.

*Now, there are three ways in which a sovereign can bring misfortune upon his army:*

1. When ignorant that the army should not advance, to order an advance; or when ignorant that it should not retire, to order a retirement. This is described as "hobbling the army."
2. When ignorant of military affairs, to interfere in their administration. This causes the officers to be perplexed.
3. When ignorant of command problems, to interfere with the direction of the fighting. This engenders doubts in the minds of the officers.
4. If the army is confused and suspicious, neighboring rulers will take advantage of this and cause trouble. This is what is meant by: "A confused army leads to another's victory."

### Sun Tsu's five points for Victory

1. He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot will be victorious.
2. He who understands how to fight in accordance with the strength of antagonistic forces will be victorious.
3. He whose ranks are united in purpose will be victorious.
4. He who is well prepared and lies in wait for an enemy who is not well prepared will be victorious.

5. He whose generals are able and not interfered with by the sovereign will be victorious.

It is in these five matters that the way to victory is known.

### Sun Tzu's Famous "Know Thine Enemy Rules"

1. Therefore, I say: Know your enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles, you will never be defeated.
2. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal.
3. If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are sure to be defeated in every battle.