



The Six S's - Giveaways of Concealment

By Fred Behnken

In the 1990s I had an instructor working for me who had served in the British Special Boat Services or SBS. The SBS are marines on steroids. He had a survival concept that I want to share with you. These six mistakes have resulted in the death of many. This concept ties into "The Four Principles of Tactical Movement" I use in our basic training reviewed at the end of this article. Train with these concerns in your tactics. At times, a person concealing a weapon may want to conceal themselves. A soldier must move carefully down the street in a combat zone. A security officer will need to avoid detection while on surveillance. You must know the giveaways that can kill you.

Six S's - Giveaways of Concealment

Shadow

Shape

Shine

Noise

Seen Movement

Smell

What can be seen can be hit. What can be hit will be killed.

Shadows

Casting a giant shadow will give you away like a big road sign. Assess the lighting in your movement path before you move. Move slow enough so you can see your shadow and others who you moving are with. Control the light you emit from flashlights and electronics like mobile phones.

So what do you do if exposed yourself with a shadow? Move to a deceptive position and or change your movement path is one response. Freezing in place and moving later is another response.

Shape

Silhouetting yourself by providing an easily contrasting shape is another killer. Raising your head over the top of cover is a classic mistake. When observing always look around the side of your concealment maintaining an obscuring backdrop to avoid being seen.

On a large scale, cresting while walking on the top of a ridge will cause you to be exposed for miles to observation. Plan your movement to include maintaining a background that will obscure. In the military we were taught to move low to midway over the operation area to minimize exposure to observation. This path and effect is called the military crest.



Sun Tzu, a famous Chinese general, mandated moving "like water upon the land" to avoid detection.

Color differences are included with shape because they effect outline contrast. Clothing is a good example of an item that should be controlled. Blending into the crowd is a valid tactic, as is standing out wearing a uniform. The important thing is getting the right result.

Shine

Check your appearance for shiny objects and remove them.

Mobile phones have little blinking lights that finger you. When the call comes in you could just as well light up a Christmas tree to mark your location. Mobile phones blink and buzz even after your dead. Read your instructions and keep your phone in silence and dark mode. Once the situation happens you won't have time or remember to fix your mobile phone.

When moving through the area be careful what you touch. If it has a shiny characteristic it is another give away. Opening a door with a glass window could glint at the wrong time.

If you are bald wear a hat, because you're a target.

Remember the dead soldier in the world war one trenches who liked smoking more than living. Hopefully, this sheds some light on the subject, just a little. Don't light up.



Noise

Noise is a common sense give away. Normal hearing has an incredible alarm response. A suspicious noise registers rapidly in the brain.

Check out yourself for noisy things and remove them. Polyester clothes sound and feel like sand paper. Listen to your shoes when you walk. Car keys play jingle bells at your funeral. Secure solid objects to eliminate noise.

Mobile phones and radios can save you and kill you. Control these electronics by having them silenced.

Plan your movement to avoid noise. Train to be silent.

Have a few hand signals to avoid whispering. Keep a little note book with a legible pen to write a quick note or instructions in an emergency when silence is needed.

Seen Movement

Peripheral vision has an amazing ability to pick up the smallest movements.

Practice remaining still for as long as you can in your training with physical skills, eliminate extra movement.

Plan your movement routes to have as much cover and concealment as possible to reduce being seen. Moving slowly might help, but remember it does not take much to be seen.

"Chicken Walking" is a common mistake. "Chicken Walking" is when danger is known individuals stay exposed. The untrained will randomly move exposed in the open. When danger is known move to the position of advantage as soon as possible. Control your route for minimum exposure and maximum safety. Pick a position and route that offers the best deceptive options. Don't stay in the open.

Your opponent does not need to see you visually to visualize that you are there. Use "The Principles of Tactical(Safe) Movement" at all times when danger is suspected. Remember war is deception, if your opponent knows where you are he can kill you. Seek the unexpected position of advantage at every opportunity.

Smell

This is an additional item I added to the Special Boat Services training concept. There are many smells that can give you away. Perfume or cologne can travel down wind. Scented shampoo and soap can be sensed. Cigarette smoke can travel. Dogs can pick up your scent and start barking or track you. If you eat the wrong things ominous odors can do you in.

Training Tips for Staying Concealed

Basic conditioning for silence can be developed through foot placement exercises doing the two step exercise you learned in our basic class. To stay concealed requires endurance. Practice staying low, keeping your balance and moving silently using the two step exercise.

Stalking exercises are another excellent training. Pick any area where there are lots of places to hide. Practice moving on your own first using cover and concealment. Next have a partner walk through the area casually and see if they can spot you. As your partner moves you will have to move your position to avoid detection. Trade places with your partner and they become the quarry. Parking lots with no moving cars are a good location with lots of cover and concealment. Train at different times of the day and light conditions.

When training, make sure the area is safe and that you will not scare bystanders. Go slow avoid "The Six Giveaways" and be safe.

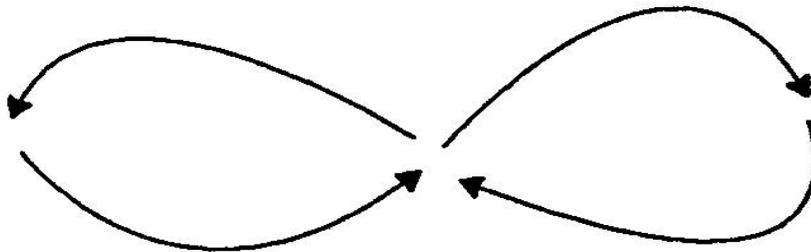
Review of the Four Principals of Tactical Movement

In conjunction with controlling your concealment we use the Four Principals of Tactical Movement. They are:

1. Always be moving to the unexpected position of advantage. Use surprise and deception in your positioning.
2. Always move in a serpentine or nonlinear manner.
3. Always vary your speed.
4. Always keep 360 degree(spherical) awareness as you move.

Always moving to the "Unexpected Position of Advantage(POA)" is the first goal. Know your enemy their motives and course of action. From the POA you will win.

Highly skilled individuals know to continuously move to stay safe. The less your opponent sees or knows where you are the more you are in control.



A simple method of getting better at tactical movement is to practice walking and turning in a figure eight pattern. Superimpose that movement to the size of the area you are in. Speed up slow down. Add in the concealment methods given. Add in moving to the unexpected position of advantage and you are good. Remember you are twenty to four hundred times safer by using tactical movement.

In Conclusion

These giveaways act in combination. It is a detailed and rewarding learning process to avoid and exploit them. After going through "The Six Giveaways" you have been thinking about your exposure. Now turn the table, and think about the opponent. Your opponent will make a mistake. Can you detect the mistake? How can you set your opponent up to give it away?