

Free OODA Loop Decision-Making Worksheet

Observe. Orient. Decide. Act. — Life Is a Special Operation

Use this worksheet the next time you need to make a decision under pressure. Fill in each section in order. Don't skip Orient, it's the step that determines whether the rest of the loop gets you the right answer.

Worked Example: Downed Pilot Rescue

Here's what a completed worksheet looks like, using the Special Operations rescue example from the OODA Loop article.

Situation <i>What decision am I facing?</i>	A fighter pilot ejected and broke his leg. He is down behind enemy lines.
Mission <i>What am I actually trying to accomplish?</i>	Recover the pilot safely without exposing the team or the pilot to unnecessary risk.
Observe <i>What facts do I know right now?</i>	The pilot's leg is broken. Darkness is falling. The enemy is close by.
Orient <i>What do these facts mean? (mission, experience, training, values, bias, time, risk)</i>	A helicopter extraction with a winch would be too loud and too slow given how close the enemy is. Terrain is thick and mountainous.
Assumptions <i>What might I be wrong about?</i>	We assumed the enemy hasn't located the exact position yet. We need to verify that as we move.
Options <i>What are my realistic choices?</i>	Call for immediate helicopter extraction, or evade on foot to the alternate extraction point.
Decide <i>What will I do?</i>	Evade the enemy overnight and move quietly to the alternate extraction point.
Act <i>What is the first concrete action?</i>	Stabilize the pilot's leg and begin moving toward the alternate extraction point.
Feedback <i>What will tell me if I need to adjust?</i>	Real-time intel updates as the team moves, adjusting the plan to stay undetected.

Your Worksheet

Fill this out for a decision you're facing right now.

Situation <i>What decision am I facing?</i>	
Mission <i>What am I actually trying to accomplish?</i>	
Observe <i>What facts do I know right now?</i>	
Orient <i>What do these facts mean? (mission, experience, training, values, bias, time, risk)</i>	
Assumptions <i>What might I be wrong about?</i>	
Options <i>What are my realistic choices?</i>	
Decide <i>What will I do?</i>	
Act <i>What is the first concrete action?</i>	
Feedback <i>What will tell me if I need to adjust?</i>	

Loop 2 (If You Need to Reassess)

The OODA loop is recursive. If new information changes the picture, run a condensed second pass below.

Observe	Orient	Decide	Act

*If you want to learn more planning tools like this one, take our **Military Planning Course** at Special Operations University (<https://specialoperationsuniversity.com/courses/military-planning/>) so you can learn to plan like your life depends on it.*

Life is a Special Operation. Are you ready for it?