

TACTICAL STRENGTH & CONDITIONING

Break into Tactical S&C

Proximity. Fluency. Exposure.

Prepared for the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA)

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01 — Briefing Up Checklist

A BLUF-based communication tool for tactical settings

BEFORE YOU BRIEF

Define the brief type

- Information brief: share facts and status
- Decision brief: you need a decision
- Staff brief: align the team and coordinate execution
- Mission brief: communicate an operational plan

Write your BLUF

BLUF = what you need, from whom, by when.

I recommend

This supports

And reduces

Know the decision you want

If it is a decision brief, state the recommended solution up front and be ready to defend it.

Pre-answer the predictable questions

- Risk: what is the risk if we do this, and if we do not
- Timeline: what happens when
- Resources: what you need and what you can do without
- Measures: how you will know it is working

Translate science into leader language

- Tie training to readiness, risk, time, and execution
- Use plain language; define technical terms once, then stop repeating jargon

BRIEF STRUCTURE TEMPLATE

Situation (what changed or what is true)

Impact (why you should care)

Options (2 to 3)

Option A

Upside

Tradeoff

Risk control

Option B

Upside

Tradeoff

Risk control

Option C (if needed)

Recommendation

Nonnegotiables vs. flex

Nonnegotiables

Flex

Decision and next step

Decision needed

Who decides

Suspense date

Next checkpoint

DURING THE BRIEF

- Lead with BLUF, then pause
- Ask one check-in question: “Do you want options, or the recommendation first?”
- Keep it short and visual if possible
- If you get challenged, return to mission, risk, and constraints. Not ego.

AFTER THE BRIEF

Send a short recap within 24 hours:

- BLUF
- Decision
- Tasks and owners
- Suspense dates
- Next checkpoint

“If it cannot be briefed in this format, it is not ready for leadership consumption.”

02 — Stakeholder Reverse Engineering Worksheet

Tactical communication alignment tool

Identify key stakeholders in a tactical organization and tailor communication to their priorities, incentives, and resistance points. This improves briefing effectiveness and program approval odds.

EXAMPLE: COMPLETED WORKSHEET

Stakeholder	Role	What they own	What “good” looks like	What they resist	What they need	How to brief
Commander or leader	Priorities, mission risk, people	Readiness and fewer problems	Anything slow, complex, or risky	Clear options, tradeoffs, risk	Decision or staff brief	Ask for decision and timeline

Stakeholder	Role	What they own	What “good” looks like	What they resist	What they need	How to brief
Senior enlisted	Standards, execution, culture	Reliable training that works	“Academic” talk	Simple guidance to enforce	Short, direct, practical	Align on nonnegotiables
Training scheduler	Calendar, coordination	No surprises, smooth flow	Last-minute changes	Times, headcount, equipment	Quick coordination	Confirm windows and backups
Medical or rehab	Return to duty, injury risk	Fewer setbacks	High risk exposures	Screening logic, progression rules	Informational brief with risk	Agree on red flags
Peer coaches / HPO staff	Delivery, consistency	Shared methods and standards	Mixed messages	Roles, processes, handoffs	Staff brief	Set weekly rhythm

YOUR TURN: FILL IN FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

1. Stakeholder identification

Commander / CO

XO / Deputy

Ops NCO / Senior Enlisted

Medical / AT / Human Performance Staff

Unit members / end users

2. What drives them (incentives)

Stakeholder	Primary drivers
Commander	
XO	

Stakeholder	Primary drivers
Senior Enlisted	
Medical / HP Staff	
End Users	

3. What they resist

Stakeholder	Likely resistance
Commander	
XO	
Senior Enlisted	
Medical / HP Staff	
End Users	

4. How to speak to them

Stakeholder	Messaging approach
Commander	
XO	
Senior Enlisted	
Medical / HP Staff	
End Users	

5. Briefing priority filter

- ☐ Does this support readiness?
- ☐ Does this reduce risk or increase capability?
- ☐ Does this align with operational demands?
- ☐ Does this respect time and constraints?

6. Final alignment check

- ☐ Mission aligned
- ☐ Constraint aware
- ☐ Decision relevant
- ☐ Non-technical where needed
- ☐ Concise enough for leadership consumption

“You brief relevance to the person in front of you.”

03 — Managing Up in a Military Context

Best practices for tactical human performance professionals

START WITH BLUF

Lead with the bottom line: what you need, from whom, and by when. State it in two sentences before anything else.

PICK THE RIGHT TYPE OF BRIEF

- Information brief: share facts and status
- Decision brief: you need a decision
- Staff brief: align the team and coordinate execution
- Mission brief: communicate an operational plan

ANCHOR EVERYTHING TO COMMANDER INTENT

Translate training into readiness and risk. Avoid “fitness for fitness sake.” If you can't connect it to mission or operational demand, it's not ready to brief.

USE PLAIN LANGUAGE

Define technical terms once in simple words, then stop. The goal is shared understanding, not demonstrated expertise.

OFFER OPTIONS AND TRADEOFFS

Present two to three feasible options, each with cost, benefit, and risk. Then recommend one. Leaders make decisions. Give them something to decide.

BE EXPLICIT ABOUT CONSTRAINTS

Time, equipment, facilities, schedule volatility, and fatigue are real. Say what you can do inside those constraints and what becomes unlikely outside them.

PRE-ANSWER THE PREDICTABLE QUESTIONS

- What is the risk if we do this, and if we don't?
- What is the payoff?
- What is the timeline?
- Who owns it?
- How will we know it worked?

PROTECT NONNEGOTIABLES. FLEX EVERYTHING ELSE.

Name what must stay true for safety and effectiveness. Then show where you can adapt. This is how plans survive command prerogative.

CLOSE WITH A DECISION, NOT A DISCUSSION

End with the exact decision you need, who needs to decide, and the next checkpoint. Don't leave the room without a clear next step.

FOLLOW UP IN WRITING

Send a short recap within 24 hours:

- BLUF
- Decision
- Tasks and owners
- Suspense dates
- Next checkpoint

“If it cannot be briefed in this format, it is not ready for leadership consumption.”

04 — Resources List

Building tactical fluency on your own time

STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS

- [NSCA's Essentials of Tactical Strength and Conditioning](#) (book, 2nd ed.)
- [Army FM 7-22: Holistic Health and Fitness](#) (Army doctrine for Soldier readiness training)
- [AFMAN 36-2919: Air Force Special Warfare Operator Fitness Test](#) (AFSPEWAR occupational fitness standards)
- [Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System \(NOFFS\)](#) (Navy fitness and nutrition program for Sailors)
- [IAFF-IAFC Wellness-Fitness Initiative \(WFI\) Manual](#) (2022)
- [IACP Fitness Considerations Guide](#) (law enforcement)
- [NFPA 1583](#) (fire fitness program standard)

BOOKS AND GUIDES

- [Strength and Conditioning for the Human Weapon System](#) — Myers, C., & French, C. (Eds.) (2025). Springer. Military and law enforcement S&C methodology from practitioners in the field.
- [Warfighter Nutrition Guide](#) — HPRC. Comprehensive nutrition reference built for military populations and operational demands.
- [Sleep Habits Leader Guide](#) — HPRC/CHAMP. Practical one-pager for leaders on building better sleep habits across their units.
- [Rx3 — Rehab, Refit, Return to Duty](#) — USUHS. Self-guided tool for service members managing musculoskeletal injuries and return-to-duty progressions.

PODCASTS AND LONG-FORM LEARNING

- [MOPs and MOEs](#) — tactical performance
- [Building the Elite](#) — special operations human performance
- [Coaches' AAR](#) — tactical coaching, practitioner perspective
- [Any Given Day](#) — Nate Palin, former Army Ranger and Special Operations S&C coach; reality-based health and performance for the military professional
- [Fire Rescue Wellness Podcast](#) — fire service performance
- [The Art of Coaching Podcast](#) — managing up and communication

RESEARCH

- [Tactical Research Unit \(TRU\), Bond University](#) — Rob Orr and team; peer-reviewed research on tactical population fitness, occupational performance, and injury risk
- [Dr. Denise Smith](#) — FSRI (firefighter physiology research)
- [OSU Tactical Fitness and Nutrition Lab](#) — Jay Dawes and Jill Joyce; research on health, fitness, and occupational performance for tactical athletes and first responders

SMES TO FOLLOW ON LINKEDIN

- [Chris Meyers, PhD, CSCS, CISSN](#) — Air Force human performance
- [Nick Barringer, PhD, RDN, CSCS, CSSD](#) — tactical nutrition, Army Ranger program
- [Guy Leahy, MEd, CSCS](#) — tactical fitness research, NSCA Tactical Professional of the Year 2023
- [Mark E. Jones, PhD\(c\), ACSM-EP, TSAC-F, CPT](#) — tactical performance
- [JD Mata, MS, CSCS*D, TSAC-F*D, RSCC](#) — Air Force veteran, tactical S&C coach and researcher; AFSPECWAR
- [Annette Zapp](#) — firefighter wellness and performance
- [Austin Womack](#) — wildland fire performance

WRITTEN

- [Walking the Ridgeline](#) — Mike Kloepper (team building and leader development)
- [mTOR Strength Sciences](#) — G. Gregory Haff (strength training insights for coaches and performance professionals)
- [Nick DiMarco](#) — Assistant Athletic Director for Peak Performance, Elon University
- [Times Like These](#) — Jon Willey (sports, burnout, and leading creative teams)
- [HPRC Blog](#) — practitioner-focused posts on current topics in military human performance

FOLLOW

- [@BlastingThrough](#) — SGM Mike Vining, Delta Force veteran; elite ops leadership, mountaineering, and moral injury
- [NSCA TSAC Special Interest Group](#) — connect with tactical S&C practitioners, access resources, and track the professional community

IMMERSION TACTICS

- Volunteer with military-adjacent and public safety organizations ([Wounded Warrior Project](#), [Boot Campaign](#))
- Show up in person at clinics, job fairs, and conferences, then follow up fast with one clear next step

LinkedIn is the most underused tool in this space. Follow the people above, engage with their content, and let the algorithm work for you.

05 — Proof Kit

A ready-to-send application package for tactical S&C

The Proof Kit is a ready-to-send folder that removes friction at the moment of opportunity. When someone asks for something after a conference, a clinic, or a cold introduction, you send it that night. That responsiveness is itself a signal of professionalism.

Goal: if someone asks “send me something,” you respond in two minutes.

WHAT GOES IN IT

1. Tactical resume (required)

- Leading with credentials relevant to military, law enforcement, or fire (TSAC-F, CSCS, relevant experience)
- Framing past roles in terms of readiness, population served, and constraints managed
- Removing sport-specific language that won’t land in a tactical context
- One page if possible

If you come from sport, translate. If you come from the military, formalize.

2. Training considerations one-pager (required)

- How you assess population needs and job demands
- How you approach constraints (time, equipment, schedule disruption)
- How you prioritize when you can’t do everything
- How you define and measure success

This is the document that shows a hiring manager you understand the tactical environment before you walk in the door.

3. Sample microcycle or assessment plan (required)

- A sample week of programming for a general military population
- An assessment framework you use to establish baselines
- A return-to-duty progression for an injured service member

You’re demonstrating that your work is functional inside real constraints.

4. Briefing up one-pager (optional but recommended)

- A filled-in version of the Briefing Up Checklist applied to a real or hypothetical scenario
- A one-paragraph summary of how you translate science into leader language
- A sample BLUF statement for a training recommendation

This is the document that separates candidates who understand the environment from those who only understand the science.

HOW TO MAINTAIN IT

- Keep all four documents in a single folder, cloud-based so you can access it anywhere
- Update after every significant role, project, or credential
- Review before every conference, clinic, or networking event

- When you send it, send the whole folder, not individual attachments one at a time

PROOF KIT READINESS CHECK

- ☐ Tactical resume is current and one page
- ☐ Training considerations one-pager reflects your current thinking
- ☐ Sample work is clean, labeled, and readable by a non-coach
- ☐ Optional briefing up page is included or in progress
- ☐ Everything lives in one folder you can access in under two minutes

“The Proof Kit is what you can send tonight.”

06 — Target Kit

A proactive opportunity tracking system for tactical S&C

Most people apply reactively. A job posts, they apply, they wait. The Target Kit flips that. You build a structured list of organizations and roles you are actively watching before opportunities exist, so that when they do, you are already positioned.

STEP 1: BUILD YOUR TARGET LIST

Aim for 25–40 targets split across three buckets:

- Contractor roles: performance coach, TSAC coach, H2F contractor, human performance staff
- GS/NH roles: readiness, wellness, performance, strength coach equivalents, program support roles
- Adjacent roles: internships, part-time, assistant roles, wellness coordinator, performance analyst

STEP 2: TRACK SIX FIELDS PER TARGET

- Organization / unit / location: who and where
- Role types you would take: 2–3 max, be specific
- Why you fit: one sentence connecting your background to their mission
- Where jobs show up: USAJobs, contractor site, org page, LinkedIn
- Point of contact path: recruiter, program manager, or unknown
- Status: Watching / Applied / Interview / Dead

STEP 3: KEEP IT LIVE

This is not a one-time exercise. Review and update your list monthly. Move targets between status columns. Add new organizations as you build proximity and learn the landscape.

TARGET TRACKER

#	Organization / Unit / Location	Role Types	Why You Fit	Where Jobs Show Up	POC Path	Status
1						
2						
3						
4						

STATUS KEY

- Watching: on your radar, not yet applied
- Applied: submission in, awaiting response
- Interview: active conversation or selection process
- Dead: closed, withdrawn, or no longer a fit



“You build the system that puts you in front of it.”