

Fieldcraft Academy

Planning Method



When planning to venture to the outdoors, you need to develop a plan that allows for flexibility as situations change, and for variables that cannot be controlled and are often unforeseen. The method used in planning that provides the framework that can help you to best prepare for any situation is the PACE planning method.

The PACE planning method is used by military special operations planners as a means to develop and provide a plan that is flexible and proactive in any situation.

Sound planning guidelines are developed using a four phase process known as the **PACE Planning** method:

- **Primary**
- **Alternate**
- **Contingency**
- **Emergency**

The *Primary Plan* is the first course of action and the best plan that provides for the best chances of success. If everything goes as planned, the Primary Plan works and has facets built into the plan that account for every course of action. But the Primary Plan doesn't always work. In that case, the Alternate Plan is activated.

The *Alternate Plan* is activated when the situation changes, or a different set of circumstance arises. The Alternate Plan is similar to the Primary Plan, but it has steps built in that can offset a different set of circumstances and allow you to continue on your intended course of action without a significant deviation from your original or Primary Plan. But in some cases, there may be multiple circumstances that cannot be addressed as part of your Alternate Plan. In this situation, you must activate your Contingency Plan.

The *Contingency Plan* is the last phase of your plan that still allows for you to continue on your intended course of action in the face of significant obstacles and difficulties. The Contingency Plan is intended to allow for at least partial success of your original intent, but to a lesser degree, and in some cases, only partial completion of the Primary Plan objectives.

When the situation is completely unpredictable, and there is little chance of completing the Primary Plan, there are times when the *Emergency Plan* must be activated. The Emergency Plan is intended to allow you to fall back and regroup, often seen as the exit plan which prevents injuries and loss to your group. The Emergency Plan often calls for a rapid exit from an area, and falling back to a pre-designated rally point with each member of your group making their own way to the rally point, preparing to address any injuries or medical concerns, and preparing to call for help in getting out of the chaotic uncontrolled situation.

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In planning outdoor adventures, the PACE Planning method can be used to consider all possible situations that you may face, and helps you to develop a flexible and adaptable plan which can facilitate greater success and can help you to have more successful and enjoyable outdoor adventures.