



LEVELS OF DOCTRINE

Last Reviewed: 27 Feb 2015

As implemented in the Air Force, [doctrine](#) affects operations at three levels: basic, operational, and tactical. These levels speak to the intellectual content of the doctrinal concepts, not to the architectural structure of doctrine publications.

- ★ **Basic doctrine** states the most fundamental and enduring beliefs that describe and guide the proper use, presentation, and organization of forces in military action. It describes the “elemental properties” of [airpower](#) and provides the [Airman’s perspective](#). Because of its fundamental and enduring character, basic doctrine provides broad and continuing guidance on how Air Force forces are organized, employed, equipped, and sustained. Because it expresses broad, enduring fundamentals, basic doctrine changes relatively slowly compared to the other levels of doctrine. As the foundation of all doctrine, basic doctrine also sets the tone and vision for doctrine development for the future. Air Force Doctrine Volume 1 is the Air Force’s basic doctrine publication.
- ★ **Operational doctrine** contained in doctrine annexes describe more detailed organization of forces and applies the principles of basic doctrine to military actions. Operational doctrine guides the proper organization and employment of air, space, and [cyberspace](#) forces in the context of distinct objectives, force capabilities, broad functional areas, and operational environments. Operational doctrine provides the focus for developing the missions and tasks to be executed through tactical doctrine. Doctrine at this level changes a bit more rapidly than basic doctrine, but usually only after deliberate internal Service debate.
- ★ **Tactical doctrine** describes the proper employment of specific Air Force assets, individually or in concert with other assets, to accomplish detailed objectives. Tactical doctrine considers particular objectives (stopping the advance of an armored column) and conditions (threats, weather, and terrain) and describes how Air Force assets are employed to accomplish the tactical objective (B-1 bombers dropping anti-armor cluster munitions). Air Force tactical doctrine is codified as tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) in Air Force TTP (AFTTP) -3 series manuals. Because tactical doctrine is closely associated with the employment of technology and emerging tactics, change will likely occur more rapidly than other levels of doctrine. Also, due to their sensitive nature, many TTPs are classified.