



TABLETOP EXERCISE TEMPLATES FOR K-12
SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Ohio School Safety Center

To better assist schools, the OSSC has developed multiple scenario-based templates for K-12 schools and Higher Education to use. Each tabletop exercise is designed to be completed in two (2) hours. The report template included can be used for any tabletop scenario.

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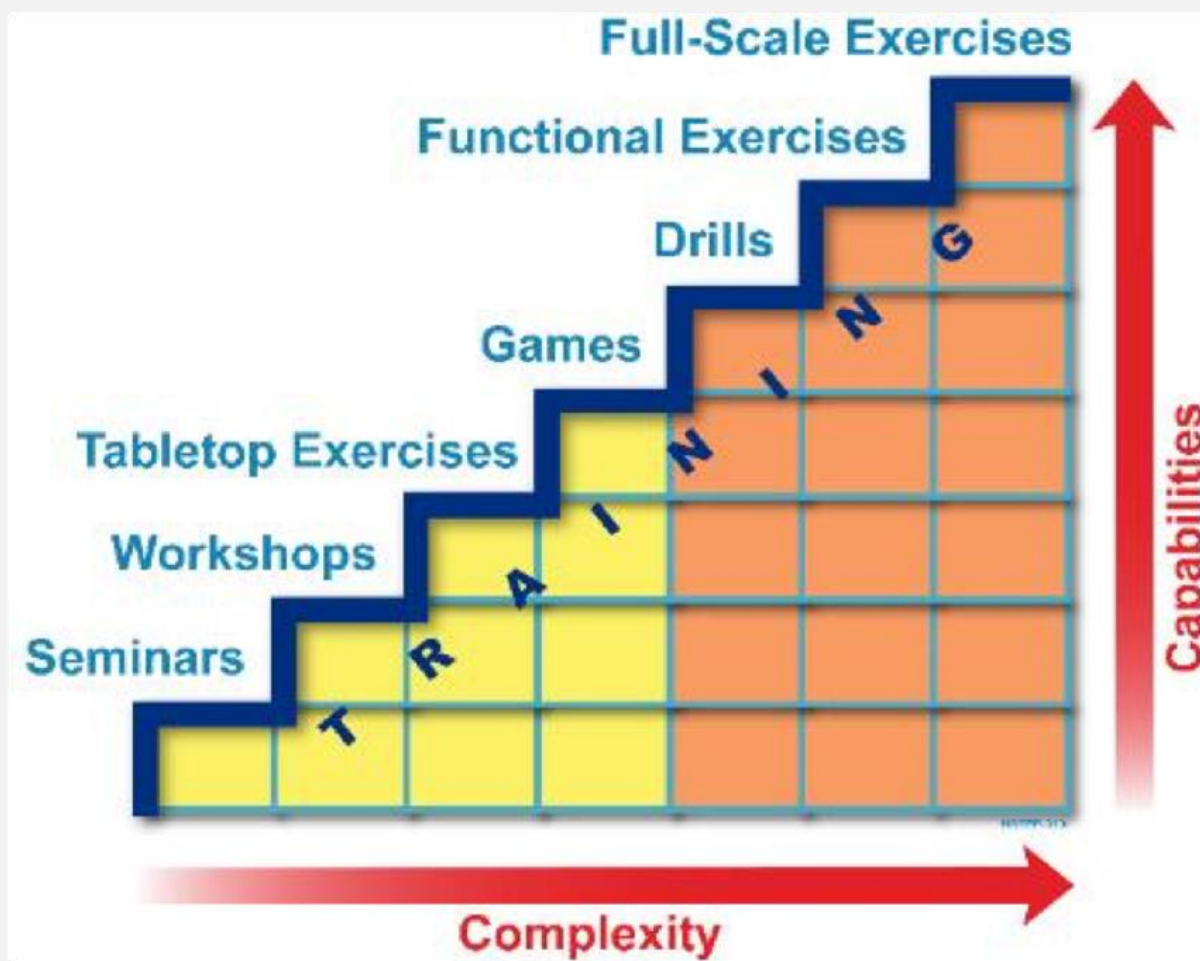
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Understanding the Differences: Tabletop, Functional, and Full-Scale Exercises

The following content was extracted from the [Homeland Security Exercise & Evaluation Program \(HSEEP\) Doctrine](#). Schools are encouraged to review this document in its entirety. For more information and resources, please visit FEMA's [Exercise and Preparedness Tools](#) webpage.

Drills and exercises can fall into one (1) of two (2) categories: **Discussion-Based** or **Operations-Based**. The diagram below illustrates which types of drills and exercises fall into each.

- Discussion-Based
- Operations-Based



Discussion-Based Exercises

Discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises (TTX), and games. These types of exercises familiarize players with plans, policies, and procedures. Discussion-based exercises focus on strategic, policy-oriented issues; while facilitators lead the discussion, keeping participants moving towards meeting the exercises objectives.

Tabletop Exercise (TTX)

A tabletop exercise is a discussion-based exercise intended to generate discussion of various issues in response to a hypothetical, simulated emergency. TTXs can be used to enhance general awareness, validate plans and procedures, rehearse concepts, and/or assess the types of systems needed to guide the prevention of, protection from, mitigation of, response to, and recovery from a defined incident. Generally, TTXs are aimed at facilitating conceptual understanding, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, and/or achieving changes in attitudes.

Schools should choose at least one (1) threat/hazard and one (1) functional content area (response measure) from their EOP to use in their simulated emergency. TTX's are discussion-based sessions where team members meet (typically in an informal setting) to discuss the simulated emergency in-depth, collaboratively examining areas of concern and solving problems.

Table 2.5, found in the [HSEEP Doctrine](#), identifies the key components of a TTX:

Tabletop Exercise (TTX): A discussion-based exercise in response to a scenario, intended to generate a dialogue of various issues to facilitate a conceptual understanding, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and/or achieve changes in perceptions about plans, policies, or procedures.	
Element	Considerations and Activities
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate discussion of various issues regarding an exercise scenario • Facilitate conceptual understanding, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and/or achieve changes in perceptions
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenario is presented to describe an event at a simulated time • Players apply their knowledge and skills to a list of problems presented by the facilitator • Problems are discussed as a group, and resolution may be reached and documented for later analysis • Plenary or breakout session(s) • Discussion led by a facilitator(s) • Presentation
Participant Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance general awareness • Enhance roles and responsibility understanding • Validate plans and procedures • Discuss concepts and/or assess types of systems in a defined incident
Conduct Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires an experienced facilitator • In-depth discussion • Problem-solving environment • All participants should be encouraged to contribute to the discussion and be reminded that they are making decisions in a no-fault environment
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended revisions to current plans, policies, and procedures • An After-Action Report (AAR)/Improvement Plan (IP)

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: High School Dating Violence, Missing Person(s), Suicidality

Initial Incident:

11th grade student Abby walks hurriedly into the office after 5th period. She informs the principal that she is concerned for her best friend, Bri, and thinks she could be in danger. According to Abby, Bri had broken up with her boyfriend Cody the night before and Cody did not take it well. Cody told Bri that he didn't want to live without her and that she would pay for hurting him.

Abby reports arriving at school that day with Bri and messaging with her all morning, but then Bri suddenly stopped reading and responding during 2nd period and Abby didn't see Bri in the hallway as she normally does on her way to 4th period class. Abby continued messaging Bri with no response. She then tried calling Bri immediately after the period ended, but it went directly to voicemail. Abby immediately ran to the office and reported her concerns. She is scared for Bri's safety and believes Cody may have followed through on his promise of payback for breaking up with him.

You know that Bri and Cody are both 11th grade students that earn good grades. They are both active in sports and clubs and have no recorded disciplinary history or documented behavioral concerns.

Initial Incident Questions:

1. What is your first concern in this situation?
2. What are your easiest first steps to determine the whereabouts of Bri and Cody?
3. What other contingencies/possibilities must you plan for?
4. What do you do with Abby as you begin investigating?

First Inject:

A review of today's attendance records indicates Bri and Cody both attended their 1st, 2nd and 3rd period class, but failed to show for 4th period. A call to Bri's 3rd period teacher reveals Bri asked and was given permission to be excused to the school nurse's office. Cody's 3rd period teacher reports a similar request. Neither student returned to their 3rd period class. A call to the school nurse confirms neither student appeared in the nurse's office.

Abby shares that she has seen messages in the past from Cody to Bri with threatened payback if she were to ever break up with him, and has heard Cody yelling at Bri, calling her names, and putting her down. While she never saw Cody actually hit Bri, Abby has seen bruises on Bri that she suspected were caused by Cody. When Abby asks Bri about those marks, Bri gets defensive of Cody and expresses how much he loves her.

A quick sweep of the hallways and bathrooms is done. Bri and Cody are not located.

First Inject Questions:

1. How does this information change your approach to the situation?
2. Does not knowing the exact whereabouts of Bri and Cody warrant initiation of other procedures/protocols?
3. What other contingencies should you plan for?
4. What do you do about Abby as you continue handling this situation?

Second Inject:

Video surveillance footage captured just prior to the end of 3rd period shows a male and female matching the appearance of Bri and Cody walking through the student parking lot. The pair can be seen arguing and Cody appears to be pulling and dragging Bri by the arm. As they get to the vehicle, Cody opens the passenger door and Bri enters under her own control. Cody then enters the driver's side and quickly pulls out of the student lot.

A search of the school grounds finds Cody's vehicle in the corner of an isolated parking area. As staff approach, Cody exits and runs off into a wooded area that runs alongside the school. Bri also exits the vehicle and runs toward staff. She begs them not to hurt Cody and swears he is just scared. She is unsure if he has a weapon, but tells staff that she knows he has access to guns and knives at home.

Within the next few minutes, the 5th period class will end and roughly 100 students will exit the school to head towards their afternoon tech center programs (*if not already in lockdown*).

Due to the landscape, it is unclear if Cody has remained in the woods, or exited back towards the school buildings.

Second Inject Questions:

1. How does this information change your approach to the situation?
2. What notifications, if any, are you making to:
 - a. Teachers and staff?
 - b. Students?
 - c. Parents?
 - d. Law Enforcement?
 - e. Media?
3. What short-term and long-term supports are you putting in place for those affected by this traumatic experience?

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: Concern About a Student with Disabilities

Initial Incident:

During the second nine week period, a middle school student on an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) in a resource ELA (English Language Arts) class was beginning to make comments and exhibit disruptive behaviors during instruction. These behaviors included being vocal about refusing to work on assigned classwork, laying on tables and the floor, verbally degrading the teacher, arguing with another student in the class on almost a daily basis, ripping off his shirt, and making comments about bringing weapons into school. This student was identified as SLD (specific learning disabilities) for math, reading, and writing as well as diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). When the teacher would first attempt to manage these behaviors, this would fuel the student to engage in additional disruptive behavior. Without classroom management skills working, the teacher turned to assigning detentions in order to stop the behaviors from occurring. The detentions made the behaviors worse to the point where the teacher was not able to teach in the classroom and the SRO, Assistant Principal, and Principal has to pull the student out on three separate occasions. This lead to the student being suspended. Additionally, the student stated that it was the teachers fault he was acting out and getting in trouble. Since the teacher observed and experienced all of these behaviors, they passed this documentation onto the head of the threat assessment team.

Initial Incident Questions:

- 1.) What is the first action you would take?
- 2.) Based on the information provided, who would be included on the threat assessment team?
- 3.) Are there any threatening behaviors shown?
- 4.) Do the exhibited behaviors warrant a threat assessment? If so, why?
- 5.) How would you handle this situation since the student is on an IEP?

First Inject:

When speaking with other teachers about this student's behavior, they all stated that the student did not cause any problems the previous year and was not disruptive in classes. The student also was not acting out in any of their other current classes.

When the student returned from his suspension, he still was refusing to complete daily work in his resource ELA class. At first, the teacher purposely refrained from nagging him about not completing the work in order to avoid power struggles, but later on started to try and get him to complete some work to avoid a very low grade. Trying to get the student to complete work led back to the disruptive behaviors. The behaviors escalated and led to more comments of threatening to bring weapons into the school to harm the student he regularly argued in class with.

The disruptive behaviors were now spreading into other areas of the school. The student made a vulgar remark to the Assistant Principal which led to a second suspension. Once the student returned, he ended up defecating in the sink in the restroom.

Second Inject:

The students' parents are divorced and dad is the only parent involved with the students IEP and ETR (Evaluation Team Report) meetings. When meeting with dad for parent-teacher conferences as well as at the students ETR and IEP meetings, he stated that it is very difficult to manage the student at home, and he was getting emotional saying this. Sometimes, the mother will call the father and say he needs to come pick the student up because she is unable to manage him. The student has received behavioral counseling in the past, but was not currently receiving any.

Results of the testing conducted by the School Psychologist that was discussed at the ETR meeting did not warrant an ED (Emotionally Disturbed) identification for the upcoming IEP, however, the student still had an SLD identification which allowed him to remain on an IEP if the team all agreed with that identification.

The parents of the other student, who this student argued with and threatened to harm with a weapon, have pulled him out of school. They said that they are going to the police about the matter and will make sure everyone in the community knows this is going on.

Second Inject Questions:

- 1) Which staff members would be the best ones to speak with regarding these behaviors? Why?

- 2) After receiving the additional information, does that change how you would handle this situation?

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: Half-time Entertainment

Initial Incident:

Scooter Mugsby is being bullied by other 8th graders. Scooter has reported all the acts to numerous teachers and discipline was given to the three bullies who are on the basketball team. Scooter shows up at the evening ball game and sits alone.

When half-time begins, Scooter goes to the center court and sits. As the team comes out of the locker room, the bullies begin pointing and yelling at Scooter. Scooter reaches into his backpack and pulls out a nail gun. He begins aiming at the kids who bullied him.

First Inject:

The school is rural and only one police officer is assigned to the basketball game. Officer Belmont is currently outside smoking in his patrol car. Cell service is non-existent in this rural area.

Scooter knows his nail gun which holds 3-inch nails will fire 300 rounds up to 20 feet on one cartridge.

Second Inject:

Scooter posted on his Facebook page that “a construction accident was about to happen.”

Scooter’s nail gun is powered by replaceable fuel cartridges and is stronger than battery power.

Scooter holds the nail gun up to his own head after hitting all three bullies in various places of their bodies.

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: Convict on Rampage

Initial Incident:

Harlan "Harley" Wade was released early this morning from LCI after completing a 15-year sentence. As he was completing his discharge paperwork, Harley made a comment about his desire to harm his former paramour and their biological son because "they put him there."

The prison was short-staffed and failed to notify, in a timely manner, the female and son. Therefore, Harley went to find his son Hunter Van White at his school, The Woody Harrelson Alternative High School.

First Inject:

Mother was finally contacted by LCI she and called the school to give them the details:

- Harley has a history of violence against police
- He was convicted of felonious assault and kidnapping

He has a history of using weapons.

Second Inject:

As another student was leaving the High School, Harley gained illegal entry “tailgating” into the building. Harley has a gallon gas container filled with a liquid and a cloth rag coming out of it. Every time Harley is approached by faculty, he activates his lighter and threatens to ignite the cloth.

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: The Jealous Half

Initial Incident:

The local trade school has adult and high school courses that are offered throughout the day. The setting is in a very rural area with offsite locations for labs/training. The farm location is where they do veterinary and constructional equipment course work. It is early in evening on the farm location when car drives up at high-rate of speed barely missing the vet building before stopping. A man jumps Kevin (20yr) out of the car waiving a gun and yelling out for his ex-girlfriend Kelly (19yrs) and her current boyfriend Steven (19yr). Kelly was in the class inside when the incident started, and states that is her EX whom she has a restraining order filed.

First Inject:

Lockdown is difficult due to setting:

- There are two pull barns, a large garage, one building with 4 class rooms along 3 exam rooms
- Cell service is only obtained in certain areas of the Farm. There are landlines inside the classroom/exam building (3), garage, and both barns
- The sheriff station is 24 minutes ways.

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: Recess Chaos

Initial Incident: During recess on a windy Wednesday afternoon recess is occurring at the elementary school. The school which is located directly beside the main state route where almost all traffic in the area travels through. Suddenly there is a loud noise, a large semitruck truck is seen crashing into the tree line that borders the road approximately 100 feet from the playground. Suddenly the wind carries a white powder that can be visible in the air. The powder begins to land onto students and staff with several students begin to scream out in pain from a burning sensation.

First Inject:

Most of the students and staff are reporting watery eyes, skin irritation and some are also showing signs of burns on their skin.

Second Inject:

The semitruck driver who appears to be dazed, comes stumbling towards the playground. Staff members are told that the truck was hauling hydrated lime. The driver stated he fell asleep and ran off the road and he was fully loaded hauling to a local business.

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: Critical Corrections

Initial Incident:

A local correctional facility goes into Critical Incident Command due to riots and security breaches. There is a possibility of the riots there may have been an escape. Due to location of the school district having schools near the facility they are within the perimeter set by the Correction Facility and Critical Incident Command. Since, these incidents happened during school hours. This security issue has created need for the school district to be placed in lock down.

First Inject:

The school district has been in lock down for hours up until early afternoon:

- Lunch was unable to be served as the cafeteria staff being unable to come within perimeter set
- Students with medicine and medical needs
- Students have stated having anxiety and mental health needs

Second Inject:

School has been cleared and allowed to release:

- Perimeter is still set with no outside traffic
- Bus garage is on the same grounds as the school buildings
- Drivers need to be allowed to come get busses and transport
- High school students drive themselves
- Some students are dropped off

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: Sextortion Incident at the Local High School

Initial Incident:

Jimmy and Susie began communicating on social media during summer break. After a period of over a month communicating back and forth, Jimmy convinced Susie to send him photos of her in various stages of undress. She sent the photos because she thought that they were in an exclusive relationship and thought she could trust him with the photos. Once school resumed, Susie noticed that Jimmy was spending time with other girls at school. She began to question whether Jimmy really liked her. On Tuesday, Susie told Jimmy that she was going to be moving on from him and requested he delete the photos she had sent him. Jimmy told Susie that he would be the one deciding whether or not they split up. He also told her that he wanted more explicit photos of her or he would post the other photos she had previously sent him over various social media outlets.

First Inject:

On Wednesday, Jimmy asked Susie why she hadn't sent him more explicit photos of her. She told him that she would not be sending any more photos and once again requested he delete the photos he already had. Later that day, during lunch period, Jimmy stayed true to his word and posted the original photos he had of Susie on social media. Not long after that, Susie's friend Tracy told her that their classmates were talking about explicit photos Jimmy posted of Susie. The word spread so fast that school administrators were made aware of the photos before the end of the school day.

Second Inject:

The following week, Susie's parents met with school administrators to ask if there will be a safety plan put in place if/when Jimmy returns to school. Susie's parents also ask about resources to help them get the explicit photos off social media.

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: Special Needs Population: Bullying & Suicidal Ideation

Initial Incident:

It is a typical Wednesday morning and you are present in the junior high hallway during classroom change when you observe a select group of peers lounging around. Upon further observation you find Mark, an autistic 7th grader, the focus of the large group. Mark is a relatively new student to the school. You approach the group of students as they quickly disperse. You observe Mark to be visibly upset and angry. You attempt to talk with him but he refuses to speak with you, indicating that he is alright, and walks away from you. He returns to his assigned class.

First Inject:

Later in the week, on Friday, you are present in the cafeteria, you observe Mark in the area again upset with food and liquid laying on the floor. In the distance you observe a couple students, James and Ben, laughing and pointing as they begin to high five one another. Again, when asked Mark states nothing is wrong and refuses to speak to you.

Second Inject:

On Monday, Mark's mother has contacted the school, concerned about Mark. She advises that she has noticed that his behaviors at home have changed. She reports he has become withdrawn from the family and no longer shows an interest in going to school and seeing his friends, including James and Ben, who he had recently reported to his mother that he had new friends at school. She has also noted that she has noticed small bruises and cuts on his arms and legs, when asked he states that he fell or cut himself in class. She further asks about his school, but he only indicates that he no longer likes the school. She is concerned as he is not normally highly agitated or accident prone.

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: Higher Education Scenario: Hit List

Initial Incident:

On Thursday afternoon around 14:00, you receive a call from the Residence Life Coordinator about an incident that occurred at Wilson Residence Hall. The incident involved multiple male student hazing a freshman student, Christopher Jansen. They cornered him in the communal showers and were threatening to steal his clothes. After breaking up the incident, the Resident Assistant heard Christopher mumble "You guys just made my hit list," as he gathered his clothes and left.

First Inject:

On Friday morning, an upset student tells you about concerning posts on Christopher's social media. He posted pictures of himself with a weapon and ominous emojis.

Second Inject:

You report the concerns which prompts an investigation.

Friday afternoon you assemble a team to visit Christopher's dorm. When you arrive Christopher is confrontational but agrees to let everyone in. After a conversation about the events on Thursday and Friday you notice a paper tacked to his cork board that reads "HIT LIST" in bold red marker...

Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises

Title: Higher Ed and Hallucinating

Initial Incident:

Joy Bangor is new on campus. She is pledging to become a sorority member of Phi Pho Phooey. She was asked to attend a dinner at the sorority house.

After eating dinner, Joy began to hallucinate, visually and auditorily, and feeling odd. She made her way up to the third floor of the house and went out on the balcony. Joy climbed over the railing.

First Inject:

The University is located in a suburban area of Dayton and a strong storm just passed through. All electric has been lost, cell towers are down, and current attendees are not too familiar with Joy or her past behavior.

Some of the dinner guests believe Joy is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. They also feel she is suicidal.

Second Inject:

Joy's roommate, Sunny, comes late to the dinner. She discloses Joy has recently been prescribed antibiotics for a UTI (urine tract infection).

Joy is a non-traditional student, age 30, with no family to contact.

Report Template

After-Action Report Template

Exercise Details:

Exercise Name:

Type of Exercise:

Date:

Duration:

Location:

Scenario Type:

Number of Participants:

- Players:
- Facilitators:
- Observers:
- Evaluators:

**Exercise
Objectives:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Strengths: List the major strengths of the threat assessment plan, processes, and policies that were identified during the exercise.

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Areas for Improvement: List the areas for improvement in the threat assessment plan, processes, and policies that were identified during the exercise.

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Recommendations and Corrective Actions: For each area of improvement, list recommendations for improvements. Include updates and changes to the school emergency operations plan, policies, and procedures, as well as training opportunities and follow-on exercises.

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