

Gaggle Tactics

by sick

Flying in a gaggle, that is, a group of pilots that all take off at the same time and head to the same place, is the most basic form of wing tactics. It requires very little communication (only a briefing as to take off time and field and target), and does not make any special demands on a pilot, such as keeping track of a wingman's six. Nevertheless, there are a few things a gaggle needs to do in order to be effective.

1. Everybody take off at the same time. This is simple to accomplish, but no less important because of it. Simultaneous take off means everybody will fly together to the target, and everyone will hit the target at the same time. If someone does take off early, they can circle the take off field until its time to roll, but even so they will be higher and faster than their gaggle, and will have to be careful not to lose them.
2. Everybody needs to know what altitude the gaggle will cruise at on the way to the target. In the Pacific arena, 10k is usually enough, and 12k is better. In the Mediterranean, 12k is usually enough, and 15k is better. In the new 2.0 terrain, I cruise at 15k to 20k.
3. **Only two friendlies per bandit!** This means that if an enemy already has two friendlies engaged with him, don't add yourself into the mix. There are other bandits out there, and if you don't keep a look out for them, who will? Two should be enough to bring down any bad guy.
4. Recover after an engagement. That means, after you kill somebody, don't get right back into the fight. Rely on your gaggle to protect you while you recover altitude and prepare to re-enter the fray from a position of advantage. Jumping right back in won't do anybody any good.
5. Prefer protecting a teammate to scoring a kill. If you can break off from your current engagement to save a friend without danger to yourself, do it. Its simple math. If you kill one, and your friend dies, you're no better off. Actually, worse off if you are on the attack, since the bad will just 'click and fly', whereas your friend has to make the journey from home. If you save your friend, you wound or kill the bandit on him, with no loss to your own team.

Gaggle tactics communications are pretty much limited to the basics. In fact, you may be forced to communicate on a squad frequency instead of directly to a specific wingman. Worse yet, it may be a free for all, with only your country frequency to communicate on. If this is the case, try to organize a tactical frequency for your battle area. For example, have all Purples who are attacking field 4 to tune their radios to Channel 04. This will allow information to be much more specific to your operating environment, and even allow general 'Check 6' calls and bandit location calls that everyone in the area may be interested in.