

The Swoop

by sick

There you are, hovering about 5k over the enemy, you've selected your target, you've synched your guns, you are ready to rock and roll. Now what? Usually the response is 'dive in!', and usually that response is wrong.

Actually, I lied. Diving in is the right thing to do, but it's a question of how you dive in. Most folks simply point their nose at the target and go for it. This kind of attack has a lot of problems:

- Short firing window. You'll be going pretty damn fast when you get to the target, and the resulting high closure rate will give you a very small window of opportunity to gun the guy's brains out.
- Excessive energy loss. A dive directly on the target puts your flight vector down on an overshoot; this is a fancy way of saying that when you pass the guy, you'll be staring at green, not blue. That's not good. When you overshoot, you want all that excess speed pointed *up*, making a deposit in the energy bank (i.e. turning it into altitude).
- Low maneuverability. That collision course vector makes it very hard to compensate for any maneuvering your target may do during your approach. I don't mean defensive moves, trying to dodge you, I mean his normal course of flight, whether he's chasing someone else or just toodling around. You want to be able to constantly adjust your attack to any changes in the target's flight path.

So the real question is, how do you make an attack run on a low target that gives you a good opportunity to fire, retains your energy advantage, and lets you constantly update your attack run all the way in? The Swoop is The Way. The general idea behind the Swoop is to make sure that when you attack your opponent, you are actually climbing when you open fire. This slows your closure rate to give you more firing time, points your flight vector up to retain energy, allow you to more easily compensate for target motion, and, best of all, puts you out of sight of the target, giving you a much better chance of surprising the bastard.

The most basic Swoop is set up like this:

1. Fly directly over the target, so that he is directly underneath you. Keep the target in sight, fly inverted if you have to to always keep an eyeball on him.
2. Once you are directly over the target, head in the *opposite* direction of the soon to be corpse. For example, if he is flying south, you fly north.
3. Now, execute a gentle split-s. This will bring you diving down, not at the target, but at a point on his flight path behind him.
4. When you pull out of the split-s, you should be about 1000 feet below the target, and about d20 behind him. You should be closing pretty damn fast at this point.
5. Fly level, not directly at the target. This will keep you in his low six o'clock blind spot.
6. When you get to about d6, put your nose on the target and go in for the kill. Gun him down.

7. Whether he lives or dies, continue the zoom climb you began from d6 behind him and regain the altitude you used up in that initial split-s.

With practice, it will be easy to judge the right time to split-s, and how hard you should pull on the stick, to come up just below and behind the bad guy. The most common mistake is to pull in too close. If you pull in closer than about d20, you will be going too fast to get a nice relaxed pass on the target. If you *aren't* going that fast, you should be :)

Of course, the Swoop can be executed from all directions, not just from directly behind the target, but this is the best way to start. Once you are comfortable with it, you will find yourself starting the attack from all kinds of positions, and taking beam side shots, high deflection forward quarter shots, you name it (just no head on shots!). But in all cases, the basic principles are the same: dive on the target, leave yourself room to approach, be climbing when you open fire, and zoom away on the overshoot.