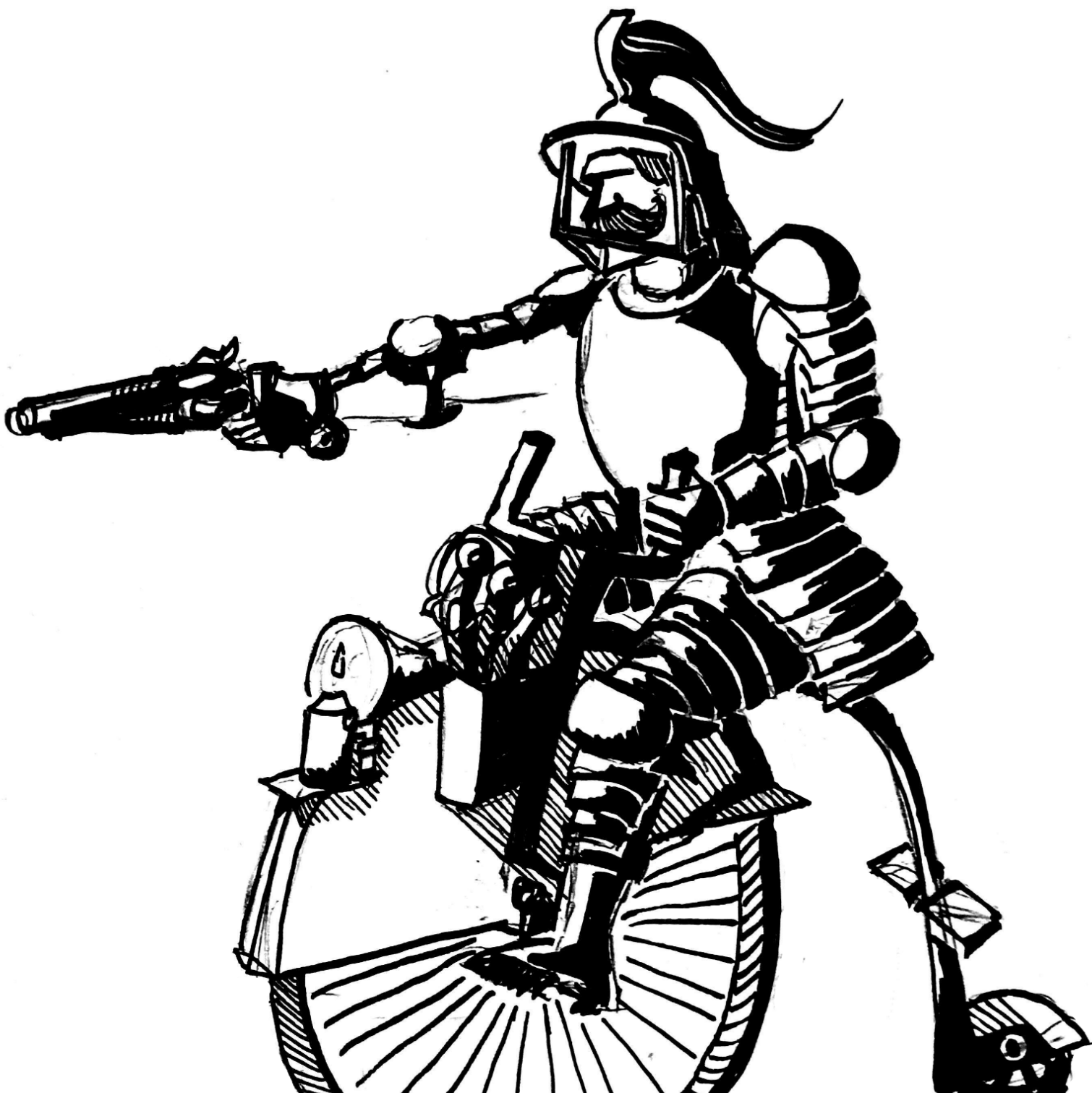


Gentlemen of War

Rulebook

Playtest Version 4.0.0



Introduction:

Napoleon's return from Elba terrified Europe. When he claimed victory at Waterloo, people thought him a god, or perhaps a devil. Desperate and hemorrhaging men, the brightest minds of the Coalition gambled on a radical, new tactic. Small, autonomous, self-sufficient squadrons snuck through the French lines, weaving through forests and mountain-passes, waiting to catch the marching French off-guard. They raided supply trains, wreaked havoc, and vanished right as the enemy steadied themselves. In no time, Napoleon's Grand Army was starving and demoralized. Losing key battle after key battle, the resurgence was over, and one day, Napoleon vanished into thin air, leaving his men no choice but to surrender. This was the birth of the Warband Doctrine, and it had just won its first war.

What followed was a false peace of half a century. Beneath a veneer of diplomacy were border disputes, puppet rulers, throne claimants, and incited rebellions... The great powers came to resent their former ally, as Britain's occupation on the Old Continent grew longer and longer. When the construction of Span-upon-Sea was first announced, Europe cheered. By the time it was completed, the great powers only saw it as a vile artery that supplied a malignant tumour. It seemed like the peace could be shattered any day.

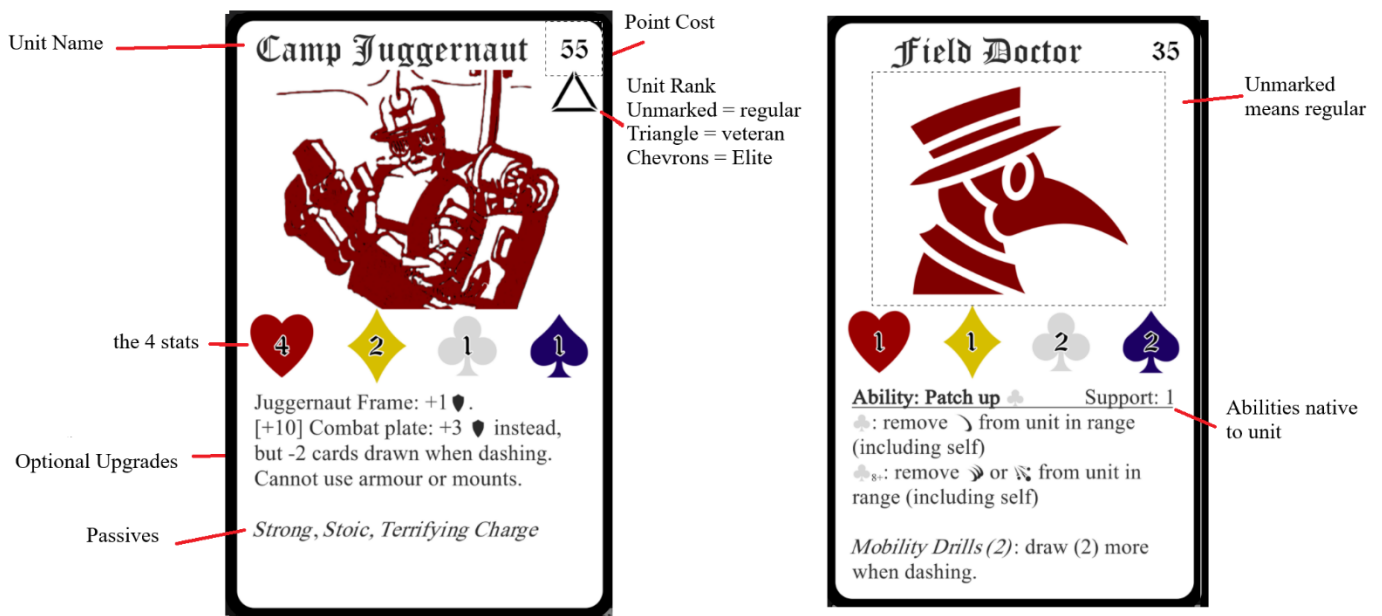
Underneath it all, the warbands were never recalled. Denied by their empires, they grew to be bands of ruthless scavengers. When they ran into each other in the dark forest, it's not a matter of if they will shoot, but rather who will shoot first. For decades, new bands were continuously dispatched to replace the old, scouting, raiding, exerting influence, and avenging forecomers. And so, a new age of privateering began, fought with boots and hooves instead of ships and sails. Across the Old Continent, those who survive their raids know them by a fearful, if not mocking, epithet: The Gentlemen of War.

Basic Rules:

In Gentlemen of War, players each control a **warband**, consisting of many **units**. They **activate** their units in alternating order. A **turn** concludes when every single unit has been activated once. Player 1 activates a unit, acts with it, then player 2 does the same, alternating, until all units have acted once. If one player has no remaining units to activate, the other player activates all their remaining units in any order. The player with less units decides who activates first each turn. If equal, the turn order continues.

At the beginning of each activation, the current player will have, by default, action points equal to their **Clubs** stat. **Actions** points are used for **Abilities**. **Unspent action points are wasted upon end of activation**. Best to use all of them!

Every unit has 4 stats: **Hearts**, **Diamonds**, **Clubs**, and **Spades**¹. Hearts and Diamonds are **Martial** humours, representing strength and skill respectively, Clubs and Spades are **Vigorous** humours, representing tactical-mindedness and resolve respectively. The martial skills are often used in attack **skillchecks**, Clubs grants action points, and Spades is used for surviving damage.



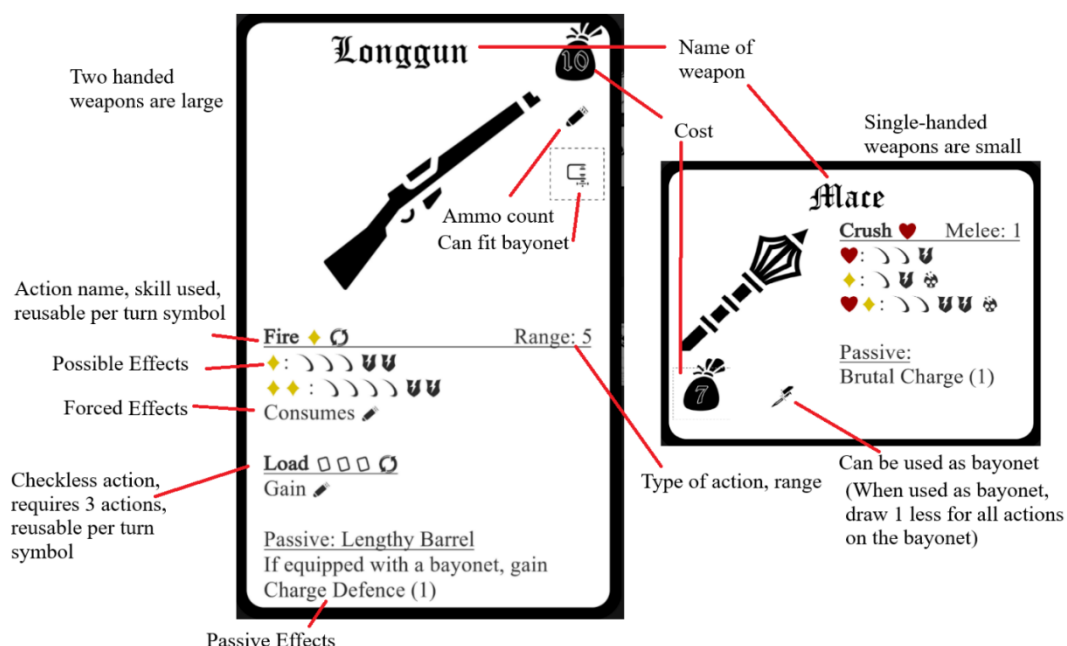
Each player has a **deck** of 54 playing cards. These are used during skillchecks. Used cards are placed into a **discard deck**. At the end of an entire turn, **shuffle** the discard deck

¹ Each of these represents one of the four humours of the body (Rubedo (Blood), Citrinitas (Yellow Bile), Albedo (Phlegm), and Nigredo (Black Bile), respectively).

back into the draw deck. If you run out of cards to draw in the middle of your turn, shuffle your discard back into your draw deck and keep on drawing.

After activating a unit, you have action points equal to your clubs stat. These points can be used for **Abilities**. An ability is either marked with one of the four suites, or with a **card icon** ♣. The card icon indicates a **Checkless Action**: Spend action points equal to the number of card ♣ icons, and the action succeeds automatically, granting you the effect. Checkless actions can be achieved across multiple turns. For example, you may have 1 action point left, spend them to load a longgun, which requires 2 points. Next activation, you can finish the load with just 1 action point. **Note that checkless abilities (along with ranged and support abilities) may not be used if in melee.** You don't have time!

For actions marked with a skill suite, draw cards equal to the skill level the unit has for that suite. You may additionally spend more of your action points for these actions to draw more cards. Using the drawn cards, you may “purchase” effects under the ability. Sometimes the suite has a small number next to it. This means you need a card of that suite, AND a value higher or equal to this number.²



For example, a unit with 3 Diamonds using the “Fire” ability of the Longgun would, by default, draw 3 cards for their skill level. If you have unused action points, you may spend them to draw additional cards. **Declare this before drawing.** If you draw 3 Diamonds, 1

² In these rules, you may find some example images that may have outdated stats. Please disregard them for now and refer to the roster sheets for the most up-to-date stats.

Club, you may select either of the possible effects, **but not both**. Abilities only allow for 1 choice, except if it says **Multichoice** (Allowing multiple choices) or **Repeatable** (Allowing the same choice multiple times). Each ability may also only be used once per turn, unless it has the ♻️ symbol, allowing repeated uses, should the conditions allow it³. These repeated uses in one turn get weaker each time, drawing 1, 2, 3... less, or requiring 1, 2, 3... draws Amore for checkless abilities. It resets upon next activation. If no result is chosen for an ability, it is considered to have **failed**.

Units have access to any abilities on their weapons, their own native abilities, and the **universal abilities**. Units each have 2 hands (usually), which allows either a single 2-handed weapon or a pair of 1-handed weapons (bayonets, if slotted properly, do not take up hands). They may carry only as many weapons as they can hold. Some weapons are considered heavy. Non-strong units carrying heavy weapons cannot stow them, neither can they dash with one equipped.

Universal Abilities

Available unless stated otherwise

Move ♻️

Move 2 hexes.

Dash ❤️

❤️ or ♦️: Move 1 hex.

Repeatable

If dashed next to an enemy, it counts as a charge. Gain charge bonus (+1 card drawn for the next melee attack, increased by Brutal Charge and reduced by enemy Charge Defence. Note that charge bonus can become negative.)

Punch ❤️

Melee: 1

❤️₈₊: 🤪

Each empty hand has this ability.

Battlefield Calculus ♣️

♣️: 🤪 1.

Repeatable, cannot use while in melee.

You may then choose to shuffle the draw deck.

Recuperate ♠️

Support: Self

♠️₈₊: Heal 🤪, cannot use while in melee.

Ability types:

“**Ranged: x**” can used to target any unit, but if they are more than x hexes away, you draw 1 less card per tile beyond x. x is the **Optimal Range**.

“**Melee: x**” can only be used to target units within x hexes (usually 1 or 2). If the enemy is hit by your melee attack, both your unit and your target are considered to be “in melee”. This means no checkless, support, or ranged abilities are possible until **both** of you move out of each other’s melee range.

“**Support: x**” can only be used to target units within x hexes. Nothing else to note.

³ Most of the time, said condition is ammo count. For single shot weapons, you still must reload each time you fire, even if it is reusable. It will however allow for multiple uses in a turn if you are speedy with the reload, or if your weapon has multiple shots.

Some abilities don't have a type assigned. This usually means it is self explanatory. This includes most movement abilities. The game takes place upon a hex-grid. Your unit may move to any adjacent, empty tile for each hex of movement they have. If you intend to charge a unit, you must declare this before you draw to dash. Your maximum declaration range is equal to the total amount of cards you will draw. Once you draw and begin movement, move your unit one hex at a time. If the enemy has units with **guard**, they may act now **only if the enemy moves within their guard range**. If guard is activated, the enemy stops on a hex within the guard range (decided by the defender) and the guard may move to any tile in their guard range to enter melee. Your activation then continues. Your charger counts as having charged the interceptor. If multiple units have guard and they can all intercept, the defender chooses one to intercept first. Once the charger connects with the interceptor, the other units with guard may choose to move in and join the melee, but only if their guard movement is sufficient. The charge succeeds if the charging unit ends the movement **adjacent** to the target, no matter the range on their melee weapon.

To win, one must eventually deal damage. When a unit is damaged, they suffer **Wounds**. Wounds persist on units unless healed⁴. Once a unit has wounds equal to their Spades stat, the unit is on **Death's Door**, at which point any new wound would take them **Out of Action**, and should be immediately removed from the battlefield. A unit cannot have more wounds than their Spades stat. If a unit at death's door is healed, they would no longer be at death's door.

Before the battle begins, nominate one of your elite units as the **Commander**. If half or more units or the commander of one side are out of action, they must make a **Rout Check** at the beginning of each turn. To make one, draw 3 cards, plus 1 if the commander is still alive. Any Clubs will pass the check. If the check is failed, the team flees and loses! Otherwise, continue making morale checks each turn, drawing 1 less each time another unit is taken out of action.⁵

⁴ You may (if you wish) use dice to denote wounds. For example, use the 3-pip face to indicate 3 wounds.

⁵ Temporary morale rules, subject to change.

Armour Checks

Armour checks happen when a unit suffers a hit while they have un-pierced armour.

To make an armour check, immediately execute the following action at no action cost:

Hold Fast (Draw equal to effective ♥ points)

♥: Ignore all the wounds. Note that you still suffer any other effects the attack may apply.

♥♥: The armour deflected the attack! Ignore the wounds *and* the effects.

Each un-pierced armour point allows you to draw 1 card each time the unit is hit.

Jokers and Queens still trigger their effects if drawn.

Units may also have **Armour**, denoted by ♥. When you have unnegated armour, you may make an **Armour Check** when damaged. Draw 1 card per unnegated armour point. Abilities may have **Armour Piercing**, denoted by ♠. Each point of armour piercing negates 1 point of the defender's armour.

Abilities may also have other symbols and keywords, listed below. Effects that say "1 turn" disappear at the end of activation. If cleared before then, their effect ends.

Extra Notes: In Melee Combat

Melee combat begins as soon as a unit attacks another unit with a melee attack. In addition to not being able to use checkless actions, units in melee cannot use the Battlefield Calculus or the Recuperate action. Melee combat ends as soon as both units are outside of each other's melee range. While in melee combat, a unit can dash out and then back into the same combat, but the unit will not gain charge bonus for this. Note that if it leaves combat via any other method (such as with free movement from mounts), it can charge back there to gain charge bonus as usual.

Reaction Moves:

Finally, there are **Reaction Moves**, which can be performed once you are out of units, and the enemy still has activations. Each time they activate two units in a row, you gain 1 **Reaction**. Stored reactions reset once the next turn begins.

Relocate: Move a unit (that is NOT engaged in melee) by 1 hex per Reaction used.

Reload: Spend 2 Reaction to use as an action to Load a weapon by 1 action.

Symbol and Keyword Glossary:

	Armour Piercing	Ignore 1 armour per symbol
	Concussion	Target loses 1 action per symbol. 1 turn.
	Immobilize	Target may not dash. 1 turn.
	Suppressed	Target may not activate next, unless they are the only option.
	Knockback	Target knocked 1 hex directly away from attacker.
	Reveal	Look at the top cards of your deck, then put them back.
	Ammo	Ammunition in the weapon. If an attack consumes ammo, it can only be used when a weapon has ammo. Some actions gain ammo, which loads the weapon for future use.
	Bayonet Lug	Allows a bayonet weapon to be equipped without requiring the hands to take them.
	Bayonet	If used as a bayonet, -1 card drawn for all bayonet actions.
	Multichoice	You may choose multiple options for this action. Resolve each hit separately i.e. the enemy makes an armour check for each hit.
	Repeatable	You may choose the same option multiple times for this action. Resolve each hit separately i.e. the enemy makes an armour check for each hit.
	Multitarget	You may choose different targets for each option of this action. Ranged multitarget skills may only target those within range.
	Reuseable	You may use this action multiple times each turn, with 1 less draw each time you reuse it. Refreshes after the end of activation.
	Commanded (x)	Target will gain (x) actions if activated at the next available opportunity. Otherwise, this does nothing.
	Heavy	Unless user is Strong, they cannot move and use this weapon or its bayonet in the same turn.
	Scatter (x)	The enemy may move the target tile by (x) hexes in any direction.
	Lethal	If target is brought to death's door by this attack, they are immediately taken out of action.
	Recoil (x)	User suffers (x) effects. This is unblockable by armour.
	Blast (x)	ALL units adjacent to target suffers (x) effects.
	Impact (x)	After a successful charge, the charge target suffers (x) effects.

Common Passive Glossary:

Brutal Charge (x)	Increase charge bonus by (x).
Charge Defence (x)	When charged and not in melee, reduce enemy charge bonus by (x).
Large	This unit does not benefit from soft cover.
Goliath Killer (x)	+(x) cards drawn when striking large units.
Mobility Drills (x):	+(x) cards drawn when dashing.
Mobile Loading (x):	After loading a ranged weapon, this unit may move (x) hexes for free.
Longgun Training (x):	-(x) cards required to load two-handed ranged weapons.
Guard (x)	When an enemy charges, you may move (x) hexes to intercept.
Parry (x)	When defending against 1 enemy, their melee attacks draw (x) less.
Block (x)	All enemy attacks targeting you draw (x) less.
Strong	Ignore Heavy penalties. Additionally, a Strong unit is considered to have the Knuckleduster item equipped for free.
Mounted Training	Ignore Mounted penalties.
+x Martial Skills	You may allocate up to (x) stat points in either Hearts or Diamonds.
+x Vigour Skills	You may allocate up to (x) stat points in either Clubs or Spades.
Arsenal (x)	This unit can take (x) points worth of equipment for free.
Stalk (x)	When using ranged attacks, if benefitting from cover from the perspective of the target, draw (x) extra cards.
Skirmisher	Ignore movement penalties of terrain .
Hefty (x)	-(x) card drawn when dashing on foot.

Equipment Notes:

Every unit **has 2 hands**, so either 2 1-handed weapons, or a 2-handed weapon.

Bayonets, attached on weapons that can take them, do not take up a hand. **However, all actions made with them draw 1 less.** Also, you read that right, instruments may take bayonets.

Hands can also be empty. An empty hand may throw a punch. A unit without any melee attacks may still punch even if both hands are occupied. Punches like these are desperate and improvised, so they suffer the bayonet penalty of -1 card drawn. Two empty hands can punch twice, not that that's recommended.

Units may only wear 1 piece of armour and 1 headgear.

Units may only have 1 mount. They must ride it upon deployment, though they can dismount by spending 1 action. They can't remount. The horse runs away and the velocipedes fall over. Without the Mounted Training skill, mounted units suffer -1 in both Hearts and Diamonds.

Units may carry any number of miscellaneous items.

Units may modify their guns. They may double, triple, or quadruple the maximum and starting ammunition count. This doubles, triples, or quadruples the price.⁶

List Building:

There are near infinite ways to assemble your fighting force! Follow the guidelines and roster rules on the companion document, titled Units and Gear! For a small skirmish, use 600 points total. For a normal game, use 800, and for a grand battle, consider 1000 or even 1200! *Each player may also start with some prestige, to spice up the battle. The default amount is 1 prestige per 100 points, but you may change the value if both sides agree.* It is recommended that you write down your units and key abilities on a sheet before each game, to keep track of everything. Players are encouraged to name and theme their units and army, to write lore and to design emblems. It's more fun when everyone is invested!

⁶ In-universe, you may consider these as multiple guns in a brace, or an underbarrel, a pepperbox mechanism, or a revolving mechanism, depending on the number of bullets added.

Terrain, Cover, and Deployment Rules:

To begin, players deploy their units. The one with less models may decide: They may deploy first and activate second, or deploy second and activate first.

Agree on deployment zones. The game is designed to have a wide front, so deploy near the long edges. Rigorous deployment rules will come soon.

There are also a few types of terrain. Most terrain is **Flat Ground** that has no effects. There's also soft and hard **cover**. **Soft Cover** can be stood on, though it requires 2 hexes of movement. It can also be charged over, though this charge will be a disrupted charge, providing the defender with Charge Defence (2). If you don't have enough, you can't cross it. **Hard Cover** is impassable. To determine if an attack is influenced by cover, draw a straight line between the target and the attacker. If that line touches a piece of cover, it will affect the attack. The attacker isn't affected by cover within 2 hexes. That's close enough that it doesn't obscure you. **Other units on the battlefield offer the same effects as soft cover, except they can't be walked over.**

If the line touches soft cover, the attack draws 1 less card when resolving. If it touches hard cover, it draws 2 less. There's also a possibility that you don't have **line-of-sight**! If there's doubt, draw 2 parallel lines between the target hex and the attacker's hex, maximizing the distance between these 2 lines. If hard cover takes up more than 3 quarters of the space between these lines, line of sight is blocked! Don't ignore any cover for this check. You can't see through walls.⁷

There is also **Water**! [Entering water is normal, but to exit water, you must expend 2 movement.](#) Water also provides no cover, and the border of the water counts as a defended obstacle! Try to get your enemy stuck in some.

⁷ If this sounds convoluted, that's because it is. Sometimes common sense is better for line-of-sight stuff. If you have a better way to do this, please let me know.

Objective Rules:

No objectives set in stone yet, but feel free to create your own. Here're some ideas:

On the Sussex countryside map, let one team be the defenders of the river. The attackers want to ford the river. Once all of them make it to the other side, they win. If 5 turns pass and they don't, they lose.

On the Span-upon-Sea City Streets map, defenders must hold the bottom left building. They can only deploy in there. Each time an attacking unit activates in there with draws available, they gain one point. Win at 3? If defenders hold for 5 turns, they win.

Alternatively, defenders gotta stop the attackers from swimming in the fountain. 3 swimmers = win for attackers.⁸

On the little hut map, hold the hut. Activating unit inside grants 1 point. First to have 3 more points than opponent wins.

Special Card Rules

Not all cards are a simple success or failure! Manage your deck well to make the best use of all of your resources.

- Aces: Numerical value 10. This represents a critical hit! For each Ace drawn for an attack, that attack will ignore 1 armour, even if the Ace wasn't used for any results. It may also be discarded to nullify Big Joker's effect.

- Jacks: Numerical value 2, but it can count as any suite! Jack of all trades, master of none.

- Queens: Numerical value 10. You may discard Queens in order to draw 2 more cards.

- Kings: Numerical value 10. Also counts as any suite. Hit the road, Jack!

- Little Joker: Whiffed! This card can't be used in a result, and has a numerical value of 0.

- Big Joker: Drawing this fails your action! Be mindful of it!

⁸ I'm losing it.

Critical Failures

Want to spice up a game? Consider using these optional rules for critical failures!

A critical failure occurs when you fail certain types of actions, and the numerical values of all drawn cards add up to less than 8. Depending on what action you failed at and what number they add up to, you get a different result. Consult the table below.

	Melee Weapon Critical Failure
7	Swoosh! A miss, but the momentum carries the weapon! You can attack again!
6	Clang! The enemy deftly parries you. You can't melee attack again this activation.
5	Arrgh! Pulled a muscle! Suffer 2 unblockable wounds.
4	AUGHH!! You hit yourself! Suffer 2 unblockable wounds and end your activation.
3 or lower	Confound it!! It shattered in my hands! Suffer 2 unblockable wounds. The weapon is permanently destroyed!

	Ranged Weapon Critical Failure
7	Click. The percussion cap didn't trigger. No ammo is consumed.
6	Clack! Weapon jammed. You have to clear it so you can't reload this turn.
5	Boom! Far too much powder! Suffer 2 unblockable wounds.
4	BOOM! Doubleloaded! Suffer 2 unblockable wounds. You may not fire with this weapon for the rest of this battle.
3 or lower	BOOOM!! Critical structural failure! Suffer 2 unblockable wounds. The weapon is permanently destroyed, along with any attached bayonets!

	Support Action Critical Failure
7	Huh? A lapse in concentration, but you can try that again!
6	Zwounds! It's impossible to focus! No more support moves for this activation.
5	What did you say? You are a distraction! The target suffers concussed (1).
4	Uh oh, that confused them. The target suffers concussed (1) and suppressed.
3 or lower	Blast! My allies are useless! Must I do everything?! For the rest of the battle, this unit may no longer use supporting moves.

Non-Hexgrid Rules

Perhaps you are used to traditional wargames with measuring tape and environmental terrain? You can do that in Gentlemen of War! Replace all mentions of hexes with 2 inches. A Pistol would have 6 inches of optimal range, a longgun with rifling would have 12 inches, etc. Accuracy reduces once per 2 inches, so at 10 inches, a pistol fires with a -2 penalty.

This may result in some strangeness, but it should be overall compatible with the base game!