

Bucket O' Muzzleblast: A Game of Old-Fashioned Battles

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Bucket O' Muzzleblast



Quick, Simple Wargame rules
covering the American Revolution
to the American Civil War

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This is a basic set of rules for battles from the Revolutionary War era up to the Civil War era. It is intended for soldiers as small as 15mm, and as tall as 30mm. If you use larger figures and / or a larger space, double the moves. Likewise, if your space is very small, then measure in centimeters rather than inches.

The average space for a game would be 4" by 2" or smaller. Using these rules, you can even play on a coffee table. All you need are miniature soldiers, terrain pieces, measuring sticks and six-sided dice.

Scale

To recreate the battles of old, you would need thousands of miniature figures and a massive playing area. Even small skirmishes might involve a thousand or more men. Likewise, the ranges of weapons range from 100 yards for a musket to a mile or more for a large cannon. A skirmish could involve movement and firing over a mile of terrain. A larger battle would rage over anything from a square mile to several miles.

How much space would it take to recreate a mile of battle? If you used 25mm figures, it would be 65 foot by 65 foot. For HO, which is 20m scale, it would be a little over 64 foot. 15mm is close to 1/120, and that would be 44 foot. Imagine setting up and moving thousands of figures over 65 foot!

What we do is scale everything down. We scale down the movement, the range of weapons and the number of men in a unit. This allows us to recreate a battle in a much

smaller space. "Scaling down" has been used for years. It does not sacrifice the realism of the game. Scaling allows you to enjoy a full battle in minimal space, with a manageable number of pieces.

Units: The kind of warfare described in this game was very organized and formal. All troops were organized into units. These were led by a corps of officers. Men fought in regulated groups.

Our game works better if we replicate the units of old. In our scaled-down world, an infantry unit would be nine to eleven men and an officer. A cavalry unit would be four to five men and an officer. An artillery unit would be two guns and their crews.



You would also need the overall command unit. This would have a general on horseback, a standard bearer, an adjutant and an extra man.

Now comes the problem of moving all those men. The way to make it easier is a trick called "traying." We make a base out of wood, plastic or cardstock. It might be 4 inches long and 1 inch wide. To it we glue four riflemen, all in the same position. To make a unit, we could make two of these trays. Our third tray would have our officer and the remaining riflemen. Should you decide on a 12-man unit, you might make the third tray with an officer, a standard bearer, and two riflemen.

Of course, you could opt for six-man trays.

Cavalry Trays might have two or three horsemen. You could also make trays of five to six horses.

A gun might be trayed with two or three crewmen. The other crewmen could be loose. A caisson might have a separate tray.

To make consistent trays, consider what others do:

For 25mm to 30mm figures, most players tray their men at one-inch intervals so that each controls a 1" by 1" area. Cavalry controls 1" by 1 1/2"

For 15mm to 20mm, some prefer to have a 1/2 inch interval. Cavalry gets 1/2" by 1 inch. Of course, some use 3/4" and 1". Some who use 20mm might stick to 1" and 1 1/2" for cavalry.

Moving Your Army

Movement: To simulate how different soldiers move, we use a simple trick. Imagine if a man and a horse were going to race. Instead of the race being a set distance, such as 500 yards, it would be a set time. It might be a few seconds. If a man and horse both ran five seconds, the man might go 10 to 15 yards. The horse might go 20 to 30 yards. We use a similar thing in our game. A man moves half the distance of a horse, simulating how fast he goes.

Men and horses in the field go slower than if they were on a road. The speeds below are measured in numbers. Most people use inches, but for smaller spaces you might use centimeters. If you have a very large space, you might double them. (If you double movement, you must also double firing range.)

Troop type	Off road	On road
Infantry	4	6
Cavalry	8	12
Caisson or wagon	7	11
Pushed gun	3	5

Some kinds of terrain make it even harder to move. The chart below shows movement in rough terrain" going uphill, going through a swamp, or fording a river at a ford (you cannot ford a river that has no ford). (Note that with swamps, there is no "road speed." If a road goes through a swamp, it is assumed to be

above the muck and so normal road speed applies when using it. The swamp speed only applies to going through the swamp when off-road).

Troop type	Off road	On road
Infantry	3	5
Cavalry	6	9
Caisson or Wagon	4	7
Pushed gun	2	3

If a unit goes from road to open land, or vice versa, it must change its speed. For example, a cavalry unit moves 5 inches on a road, and then goes into woods. This leaves seven inches. However, since off road speed is 1/2, then the unit can only go 3 1/2 inches into the woods.

If a unit goes from regular to rough terrain, he must adjust accordingly. For instance, a caisson going on a road five inches comes to a ford. That would leave 6 inches. Since the rough terrain speed is about 2/3 of the regular road speed, and the ford in one the road, he would go 4 more inches. For determining speed when moving from regular to rough terrain, we use a "rough guess-timate" that rough terrain speed is 2/3 of normal movement.

Other movement rules:

Men & horses can leap a wall that is chest high or lower. They have to go around higher walls. Wagons and caissons and guns must be pushed around walls.

Men can enter a house. Cavalry, wagons and guns cannot enter.



Shooting

In our game, the two ways to fight the enemy are to shoot him or melee. Shooting is very simple. You roll one die for every six shooters. Only the front rank can fire. To the number that comes up on the dice, you add or subtract as follows:

- Target is at long range: -1
- Target is behind soft cover (bushes): -1
- Target is behind hard cover (wall, in house): -2
- For rifles, muskets and carbines only: target is 2 inches or closer: +1
- Target unit has his back to you: +2
- Cavalry firing from horseback: -2

Weapon range: the chart below shows short and long range. Anything further than long range cannot be shot.

Weapon Type	Close Range	Long Range
Musket	0 – 4	4 – 8
Carbine	0-3	3-6
Pistol	N/A	0-2
Rifle	0-6	6-12

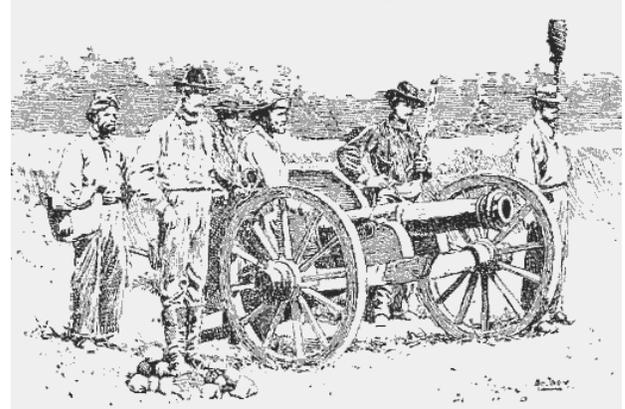
If less than 6 men are firing, subtract their number from 6. The sum is the amount to deduct from the dice when you roll for them to shoot. For example, if four men are shooting: 6 minus 4 = 2. Deduct 2 from the dice roll.

Artillery

Cannons and mortars are a specialty all their own. The first thing you need make are firing sticks. One should be 20 inches, the other 16 inches. Mark 1 inch increments on the first six inches. On the other end, affix a circle. The circle should be 3 inches for the 20 inch stick, and 2 inches for the 16 inch stick. Make the circle of wire, and affix its center to the end of the stick, as shown on Page 5.

Your guns will need crews. Each medium gun should have a crew of 6 to 8 men. Each light

gun and mortar needs a crew of 4 to 6 men. 2 men must always be at the gun, and the others must stay within one infantry move of the gun. If your light gun crew is reduced to 2 men, they fire at half rate, i.e. every other turn. If your medium crew is reduced to 3, it fires at half rate. Any less than that, and the gun cannot operate until you send up more artillerymen. Infantry and cavalry cannot operate guns.



Guns can either move or fire in one move . They cannot do both

It takes 1 move to remove a gun from a limber and prepare it to fire. Likewise, it takes 1 move to hook up to a limber.

To fire at a target, place the stick so that the back end passes over the cannon, and the circle is over the target. Roll a die

- 1 means the cannon fell 1 inch short – move the stick back one inch
- 2 means the gun fell 2 inches short – move the stick back 2 inches
- 3 means the stick overshot 1 inch – move the stick forward 1 inch*
- 4 means the gun overshot 2 inches – move the stick forward 2 inches*
- 5 and 6 means it hit right on target.

If you roll a 3 or 4, and it puts your circle past its full range (more the 16 for more than 20, depending on gun size) then the gun is considered to have misfired, causing no casualties. A gun cannot fire past its range

Whatever number you get, everyone in the circle can be hit. Roll 1 die for each man in the

circle. Add or subtract to the number as explained below:

- Target area is in woods - +1
- Target was on other side of wall from impact (center of circle): +2
- Target was in first floor of house: +2
- Target was on same side of wall as impact: -1

When you add or subtract, you get the final number. Here is what the final number means: If the final number is 1, 2, 3 or 4 he is removed. If it is 5 or 6 means he is saved.

While light and medium guns can shoot grapeshot at short range, they cannot shoot regular ammunition. Neither can mortars. Guns cannot fire at targets within short range, except when firing grapeshot. Mortars cannot fire grapeshot.

Gun Type	Regular range	Short Range	Grapeshot
Mortar	16	0-8	N/A
Medium Gun	20	0-4	8
Light Gun	16	0-3	6

Grapeshot cones must be made for light and medium guns. The medium gun's shot triangle is 8 inches long and 3 inches wide. The light gun's triangle is 6 inches long and 2 inches wide. You fire grapeshot at troops and cavalry who get close enough. Place the tip of the cone on the front of the gun, and extend the triangle and its wide end over the targets. Roll 1 die. A 1 means the gun misfires. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 mean the gun fired.

Now there is a die roll for each man within the cone who is hit. You must add or subtract from the number as follows

- Target is behind wall away from the blast: +1
- Target is in house away from the blast +1
- Target has back turned on the gun -1
- Target is against a wall or house facing blast - 1

If the final number is 1, 2, 3 or 4 means he is removed. If it is 5 or 6 means he is saved.



Melee

When enemy soldiers come within ½ inch of each other, they can melee. This is hand-to-hand combat. First, a 4" diameter circle is placed so that its center is over the first two fighters. Everyone within the circle is considered involved in the melee. Each side adds up the points value of men in the circle.

Each player rolls one die, and multiplies it by the number of points he has in the circle. The one with the higher number wins. The loser loses half of his men. The winner loses one half as many casualties as the loser. Thus, if the loser had lost ten men, then the winner loses five. The winner holds the ground, and the loser retreats ½ move.

If both sides get the same number, making it a draw, then both lose half their men as casualties. In that case, victory will depend upon who brings up reinforcements fastest

For the American Civil War, Crimean War, Franco Prussian War and conflicts after 1855, the points values are these:

- Infantrymen and artillerymen: 2
- Cavalrymen: 3

For playing American Revolutionary War, Seven Years War, Napoleonic and other Musket Era games, the values are different.

- Riflemen: 1 point
- Musketeers and Artillerymen: 2 Points
- Cavalry: 3 points.

In the musket era, artillerymen had short swords for close fighting, but riflemen only had tomahawks and knives.

Morale

The difference between victory and defeat was often a matter of the state of morale. For this reason, we need to look at morale to determine if a unit stays and fights, or retreats.

When to check morale:

Loss of 25% of men: unit halts one turn and checks morale

Loss of 50% of men: unit halts one turn and rolls for morale

Getting hit from behind by equal or larger force: unit rolls for morale.

Getting beat in a melee or musket volleys: roll for morale.

Loss of command unit: all units within two moves of command unit must check morale

Factors which adjust more dice roll:

Losing 25% of one's unit: -1

Losing 50% of one's unit: -2

Command unit within sight: +1

Command unit within 1 move: +2

Losing of officer -1

Losing of command unit (for units within 2 moves of command unit) -2

Unit separated from other units more than 1 move away from allies units) -1

Elite Unit (Grenadiers, etc) +1

Unit has defeated an enemy unit within the three previous moves: +2

Unit was defeated by enemy unit within three previous moves: -2

Unit is unharmed: +1

New officer joins unit: +1

Morale results:

Roll dice add and subtract factors listed above.

5, 6 Unit follows orders and fights

4 Unit holds for one move

3 Unit retreats one move

2 Unit retreats for two moves.

1 Unit routs: retreats until it leaves battle or until checked

Checking a routed unit

To stop a routed unit, an officer must confront it. He rolls a dice. 5 and 6 mean the unit is rallied, and returns to battle. 3, 4 means the unit halts and must check morale on the next turn. 1, 2 means the unit continues to rout. The officer can remain with the unit and try to rally it again the next move

Any unit that Loses its officer automatically halts 2 moves.

Terrain

We know how certain kinds of terrain affect movement. Hills slow troops. Rivers block them. Woods over some cover from artillery.

Rivers can only be crossed at fords and bridges. Hills slow troops.

Houses can provide cover. Up to four men can be in a small house, and six in a large house.

Artillery can do direct fire against houses. Roll a die. 1, 2 and 3 means nothing happened. 4, 5 and 6 mean damage was done. 4 hits by artillery can destroy a small house. 7 hits can destroy large house. When a house is destroyed, all occupants are removed from the game. For light guns, subtract 1 from the die roll. For mortars, add 1 to the die roll.

Direct artillery fire can attack walls and fences. On a 5 or 6, the shell punches out a 1 inch wide gap. 1, 2, and 3 do nothing. 4 reduces a 1 – inch wide section to half its previous height.



This is a drawing of the artillery stick with "blast" circle.



Capturing Guns and Equipment

It is possible to capture guns and equipment. So long as no enemy soldier is within two inches of the item, you can seize it. You need to have two men touch the item. The next move, your men can move it away. You can capture guns, mortars, caissons and wagons. However, only artillerymen can operate a gun. If you capture a gun, you cannot use it unless it is manned by your artillerymen.

Sequence of Play

Both sides move simultaneously, each starting from his left and moving to the right. Players have five minutes to complete movement. After moving, combat is resolved in this sequence.

- 1) Fire artillery
- 2) Shoot Archery and hand guns
- 3) Settle Melees
- 4) Check Morale

Supplies

Along with dice, you will need several items to play Bucket o' Muzzleblast. These include:

Miniature soldiers and their equipment
Miniature trees
Miniature lakes
Miniature bridges
Miniature walls and fences
Miniature houses



Several companies manufacture small soldiers that fit our game. You can easily find infantry, artillery and cavalry for the American Revolution, Seven Years War, Napoleonic Wars and American Civil War. These range from inexpensive 25mm plastic figures to various metal castings ranging from 15mm to 30mm.

Houses can be found at hobby shops that sell trains. Though trains are modern, most makers offer older-style houses that would fit our period. Here is how to pick the best houses:

Use N or TT Scale for 15mm figures
Use HO for 20 and 25mm figures

Use S Scale for big 25mm to 30mm figures

For this era, it is wise to get homes, farm buildings, stables, a church, town hall and shops.

You can buy miniature walls and fences in several scales where they sell trains.

Most hobby shops carry miniature trees. They also have lichen, which can be used to simulate bushes.

Miniature bridges can be gotten in hobby shops.

Another source of bridges and structures is aquarium decorations.

Rivers, lakes and roads can be cut from the appropriately- colored paper.

Miniature hills and mountains can be found at shops that sell trains.

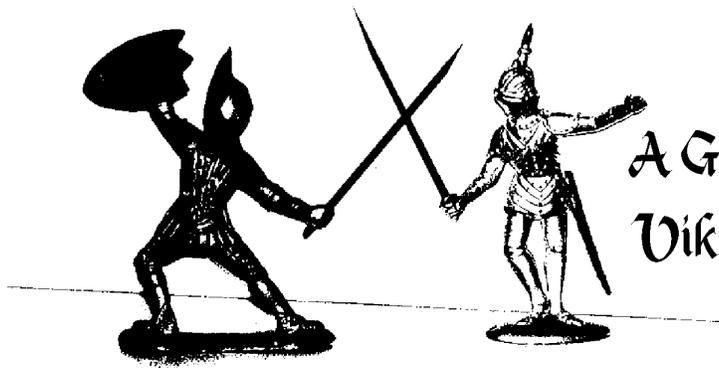
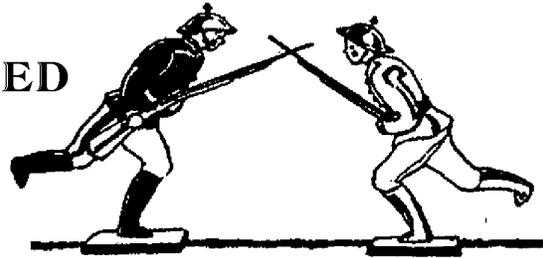
Learn More

Historical wargaming is all the more enjoyable when you know the history behind it. By learning the tactics, weapons, and equipment, you can wargame more successfully. It also makes the game a lot more fun when you know the history behind the scenes. You might be lucky enough to live near historical sites related to your wargames. You can visit museums and battlefields to get a greater appreciation of the soldiers who fought valiantly. (By the way, this set of rules was written a mile away from the site of the Battle of Monmouth.)

*This set of wargame rules has been prepared for you by **Milihistriot Quarterly, the Journal for Military Miniature Enthusiasts**. If you enjoy military miniatures, toy soldiers and miniature wargaming, you will enjoy visiting our website at www.milihistriot.com*

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