



# D20 TACTICS

**Initial Public Alpha 26.07**

**MINIATURES WARGAMING WITH THE 5E D20 RULES**

***Compatible with 2014 and 2024 Dungeons & Dragons***

# THE IDEA

**D20 Tactics** is a wargame built on a lightweight rules overlay to the familiar Dungeons and Dragons' combat system along with variant turn resolution inspired by classic strategy games such as Diplomacy.

This **Always-Free TTRPG-Flavored Miniatures Wargame** aims to be:

- Casual and Collaborative
- Driven by Narrative Scenarios
- Ideal for Team vs. Team Play (and fun one-on-one)

Additionally, these rules work as an **Augmentation to the Standard 5E Combat Rules** for larger and more strategic, miniatures-oriented gameplay in an adventure or campaign featuring:

- Pop-Up Initiative for less predictable combat flow
- Simple but consequential rules for miniatures positioned on three-dimensional terrain.
- An "In Formation" condition to accelerate running groups of simple creatures.

The spirit of D20 Tactics is team collaboration and group strategizing between rounds. Players study the facts on the ground, break off and plan the round as best they can and submit written orders for their units.

The turn order is unknown and the next creature to act isn't revealed until the previous one has been resolved by the judge. Turn-taking with perfect information gives way to uncertainty and the fog of war.

In a role-playing campaign, writing orders ahead is optional and best for setpiece battles, unpredictable initiative per round adds a lot to small combats on its own.

*Players unfamiliar with the rules for 5th Edition Dungeons and Dragons can consult the free System Reference Document found at <https://www.dndbeyond.com/srd>. That document also contains a bestiary, spell list, and instructions for creating unique heroes to join the combat: everything else you need to play this free game.*

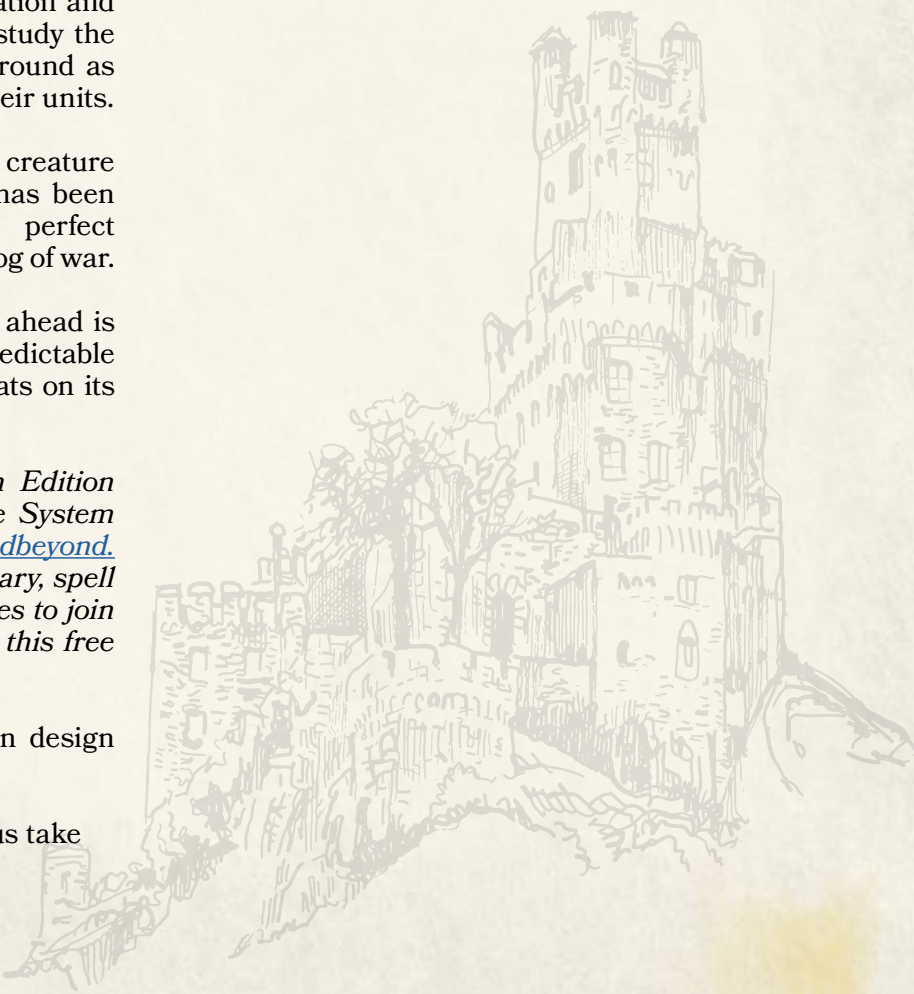
We aim for this to be a community-driven design process.

Join the Discord to find out more and help us take this forward: <https://discord.gg/hF7JQvg9Q9>

\*D20 Tactics is compatible with the 2014 and 2024 rules

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# RULES

## BASE SYSTEM

In D20 Tactics, a Base System is assumed. For the rest of this document, that will be the free 5.2 System Reference Document. It can be found at <https://www.dndbeyond.com/srd>

These rules work with the 2014 and 2024 editions of Dungeons and Dragons. However, some rules reference content only found in the 2024 rules.

### Contributions Wanted

So far the 5.2 SRD is the only well-playtested Base System for D20 Tactics. If you'd like to port your favorite d20-based system to D20 Tactics, see the Contributing section at the end of this document.

The Base System defines the rules for combat where not altered by this document. The Base System defines how distance works on the battle-grid. The Base System provides the stat blocks for creatures and the rules for creating custom hero characters.

The Base System assumes one player acts as a Game Master (or similar term). In D20 Tactics this player is known as the **Judge**.

## NEW RULES OVERVIEW

D20 Tactics replaces the Base System's rules for turn order with **Pop-Up Initiative**. **Order-Ahead** adds a new system for strategizing in advance. Together this creates a “no plan survives contact with the enemy” style of uncertainty in the game's flow of play.

D20 Tactics replaces the Base System's rules for **Cover** and adds **High Ground** and a movement cost for a **Step Up** to flesh out how miniatures interact with three-dimensional terrain.

D20 Tactics introduces the **In Formation** condition to simplify and accelerate record-keeping and Orders for groups of identical, simple creatures.

## THE JUDGE

Much like in a TTRPG, the **Judge** officiates the rules and narrates the action. In D20 Tactics, the Judge also resolves each creature's turn in the combat round after interpreting that creature's Order.

Depending on the needs of the game, the Judge may or may not participate in combat by controlling creatures directly.

Even in a two-player game, one player should wear the mantle of Judge as a final arbiter, but rulings should be a friendly consensus when the Judge is participating.

In larger team vs. team battles judging becomes more complicated and the possibilities for disagreements multiply. A dedicated player with the Judge role is suggested.

The spirit of judging in D20 Tactics is to strive for rulings that are **Fast, Fun, and Fair**. TTRPG combat

rules are complicated, and it is often better to make a best guess and apply it consistently than to bog down play with rules research. Look it up for next time.

## POP-UP INITIATIVE

Unlike in the Base System, the order of creature turns in combat changes every round. The Judge determines the turn order in secret using the Base System's rules for initiative at the outset of combat and prior to every round after that.

The Judge may wish to determine initiative more quickly and possibly keep the upcoming order of turns secret from themselves by using a digital tool\*.

Each Formation receives a shared initiative score. Roll separately for each other creature, resolving ties by the Base System's rules for initiative.

As combat progresses the Judge reveals one creature at a time. When a creature is revealed, the Judge arbitrates its written Order. Players do not know which creature will act next until after the current turn.

## ORDER-AHEAD

At the start of each round before any turns are revealed or resolved, all players simultaneously write an **Order** for each creature or Formation they control. The Judge must write Orders for their creatures as well if participating directly in combat.

Typically players study the board and then break off into teams to plan the next round's action. The Judge is encouraged to set a sensible time limit that works for the group.

These Orders should be general enough to give the creature a likely useful action. Orders may include "if" and "unless" clauses but should not read like computer code; the uncertainty is the point.

Orders so general as to be open to interpretation and thus invite mid-play player input are against the spirit of the rule and the Judge may ignore them and treat them as a Missing Order.

Once submitted, an Order cannot be re-written and a player may not ask to change their Orders after the Judge has begun resolving the round.

Reactions are not included in Orders. Players announce reactions such as Opportunity Attacks as they are triggered.

### Examples of Orders

"Move toward nearest enemy and attack, dash if out of range."

*This is a common opening move.*

"Misty Step behind cover if in melee, then cast Fire Bolt at the knight; otherwise move behind the tree and cast Scorching Ray at the knight."

*This is a legal Order but it is risky. It will have no valid action if the only specified target has died or is out of range.*

"Approach the Ogre or nearest enemy, positioning the Formation for the most attacks, attack the enemy approached"

*This is a workable Order. Positioning leaves a little to the Judge's discretion, but it is not wide open for arbitrary interpretation.*

"Stay safe and attack the best target"

*This is too vague and the Judge would treat it as a Missing Order.*

## MISSING ORDERS

A creature with no submitted Order moves within range of the nearest enemy and attacks it if able.

## JUDGING ORDERS & TURNS

When a creature's turn comes up in the round, the Judge reveals that creature's Order to all players and then resolves the turn, moving the creature's miniature according to specified movement and deciding the effects of its actions in accordance with the Base System and these rules.

A creature's controller always rolls the dice for that creature.

While striving to be Fast, Fun, and Fair, the Judge should stick to the most straightforward reading of the Order as written without asking the player for clarification. That said, the Judge should remember that all players intend to play well and newer players will need time to adjust to something unfamiliar.

When arbitrating movement, if a creature's next step would be fatal or involve an unintended fall due to terrain, the creature stops as if it had reached a barrier and the remainder of the Order is executed if possible.

If both the movement and the action in a creature's Order are thoroughly impossible under present circumstances, the Judge treats the Order as a Missing Order.

\*One such tool is the Pop-Up Initiative Tracker at [dzotactics.com](http://dzotactics.com), and a full companion app is in development at the time of the alpha.

The normal unpredictability of combat does not allow cancelling dangerous Orders. If the Order did not specify to avoid opportunity attacks, the creature moves as specified, and if an Order leaves a peasant levy Formation adjacent to a dragon, so it goes.

## MINIS ON TERRAIN

D20 Tactics assumes a game played with scale miniatures on three-dimensional terrain. Typically this means terrain objects placed on a battle-grid where a 1 inch (25mm) square represents the five-foot square from the Base System.

The High Ground and Step Up rules care about a miniature's height in relation to other miniatures or the terrain. The Cover rule cares about the miniature's overall silhouette.

Determine a creature's height and shape by the miniature on the terrain. You may ignore raised arms, weapons, and other appendages and just consider the miniature from where it rests on the terrain to its head or the highest point on its body.

This is open to some abuse when players provide their own miniatures, and the Judge may rule that an unreasonably short or tall miniature has a height equivalent to appropriately sized miniatures in the same game.

## STEP UP PENALTY

When moving 5 feet horizontally also requires ascending a **Step Up** of at least half the creature's height but less than its full height, that movement costs an additional 5 feet.

Creatures taking a smaller vertical step and creatures with a climb speed are not affected by this rule. Vertical ascent greater than or equal to the creature's height uses the Base System's rules for climbing. There is no penalty for a step down.

A Step Up can be caused by an incline or stairs if it is sufficiently steep.

## COVER

When at least one-third of a creature is behind intervening terrain relative to an attacker, it has cover. Subtract 1d4 from the attack roll. A creature entirely behind terrain has Full Cover and cannot be targeted.

### Examples of Steps Up



The elevation tile is more than half as tall as the halfling but less tall than its full height. The halfling would spend an extra 5 feet of movement taking a Step Up onto the tile.

The same obstacle is not a Step Up for the owlbear. It is less than half the creature's height and the owlbear would take no movement penalty stepping up onto the tile.



Additionally, a creature behind cover adds 1d4 to Dexterity saving throws to resist effects originating on the other side of the cover unless the effect states that it ignores Cover.

This replaces the Base System's rules for half and three-quarters cover.

### Examples of Cover



The tiefling is more than one-third covered from the gnoll archer's shot by the fallen tree. The gnoll would subtract 1d4 from its attack roll against the tiefling.

The owlbear is only very slightly blocked by the fence. It does not have Cover and the gnoll would make a normal attack.

The unicorn behind the cottage (out of view) has Full Cover as in the Base System and cannot be targeted.

## HIGH GROUND

A melee attack has **High Ground** on its target if the attacker's feet or mini base are above the target's feet or mini base and the attacker's head is above the target's head as well.

A ranged attack has High Ground on its target if the attacker's feet or mini base are above the target's head.

Add 1d4 to the attack roll for an attack with High Ground. An attacker that is flying or climbing does not benefit from High Ground.

### Examples of High Ground



*The halfling's feet are above the tiefling's feet and the halfling's head is above the tiefling's head. It has High Ground on its melee attack and adds 1d4 to the attack roll.*

*The halfling's head is below the ogre's. The halfling does not have High Ground.*

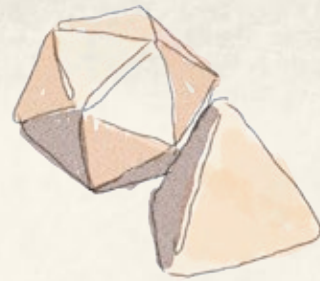


*The ogre's feet are below the halfling's. The ogre does not have High Ground either.*



*The gnoll archer's feet are above the owlbear's head. The gnoll has High Ground on its ranged attack and adds 1d4 to the attack roll.*

*The gnoll archer's feet are not above the tiefling's head. The gnoll does not have High Ground for a ranged attack.*



## ROLLING EXTRA DICE

When the same size die is both added and subtracted from a d20 roll, such as when a creature with High Ground attacks one behind cover, the dice cancel out one-for-one and are ignored.

This applies whether the dice come from these rules or from the Base System. The effects of the Bless spell on an attack would cancel out a target's Cover.

### Optional Play Style: "Rule of Cool"

Adding or subtracting 1d4 from an attack roll (or more rarely a saving throw or ability check) is a good way to reward creative play that the rules do not cover, if the Judge desires a game with a looser and more improvisational style.

Creative tricks will probably only work once. Once foes have seen a creature surf a shield down a staircase or throw a pocket full of sand into their faces, they will expect the move the next time.

## "IN FORMATION" CONDITION

The **In Formation** condition is a shared restrictive status that binds a number of identical, simple creatures into a group for unified turns, Orders, and record-keeping during combat.

Creatures in a Formation are still individual game entities. Except where noted, they follow all normal rules for creatures in combat.

Creatures in a Formation occupy their individual spaces and when using a movement tray, empty

### Golden Rule of Formations

Never track specific information about an individual creature in a Formation that cannot be tracked by positioning its miniature on the terrain.

The creatures share all statuses, conditions, initiative, HP, etc. at all times. Formations are only for groups of simple creatures. Run unique characters and complicated monsters as individual creatures.

squares on the tray remain open spaces on the battle-grid. The tray has no game substance of its own and the Formation is a condition and not its own entity.

The scenario or the Judge determines which creatures are In Formation at the outset of combat. Creatures sharing a Formation must always have identical stat blocks. Only a Judge decision or the end of combat can break apart a Formation.

The mechanics governing the In Formation condition are described in the following sections.

## SHARED FORMATION TURN

The creatures in a Formation are controlled by the same player, and act in the same turn on a shared initiative. The creatures in a Formation receive a single shared Order in Order-Ahead.

## FORMATION HP POOL

The creatures in a Formation pool their HP. The Formation begins combat with an HP Pool equal to the combined maximum HP of the individual identical creatures.

Whenever the HP Pool drops to or below a multiple of the individual maximum HP, a creature dies, one for each such threshold crossed. When possible, creatures damaged that turn are the ones to die, otherwise it is the Judge's choice.

Creatures in a Formation can share a pool of temporary HP as well. When one or more of them gains Temporary HP, the current Temporary HP Pool may be replaced with a new pool equal to the total Temporary HP gained by the creatures from one effect.

## HEALING FORMATIONS

Creatures in a Formation die instantly when removed due to HP loss. The HP Pool may not be healed to the next higher HP threshold, and thus creatures in a Formation cannot be returned to combat after being downed. (But see notes for Campaign Play on page 11.)



## Formation Play Example



A Formation of eight goblins with 7 max HP each (for a shared HP Pool of 56) is fighting a wizard and his gnoll archer ally.

The Order for the goblins is **"Attack adjacent wizard"**

The Order for the wizard is **"Move to goblins, cast burning hands on them, then retreat if no attacks of opportunity"**

The Order for the gnoll is **"Attack nearest enemy"**



The wizard rolls the highest initiative and acts first. He casts Burning Hands, overlapping 4 of the goblins in the Formation.

They fail their save and the wizard rolls 11 fire damage for the spell. Since this is over the goblins' individual max HP, the four affected goblins receive 7 damage each and the shared HP Pool drops to 28, exactly killing the four damaged goblins.

Two goblins threaten the wizard's space, so he cannot retreat without an Opportunity Attack. His turn ends.



The Judge reveals the gnoll has the next turn. She fires her shot and strikes the nearest goblin.

The longbow deals 9 damage, again exceeding the maximum HP of the individual goblin so the Formation HP Pool drops by 7. The HP Pool stands at 21, exactly one threshold lower, so a goblin dies. The Judge removes the one attacked by the gnoll.

The goblins are a Standard Formation and now occupy less than half of their tray and they do not occupy anything like a tight square or rectangle within the larger tray.

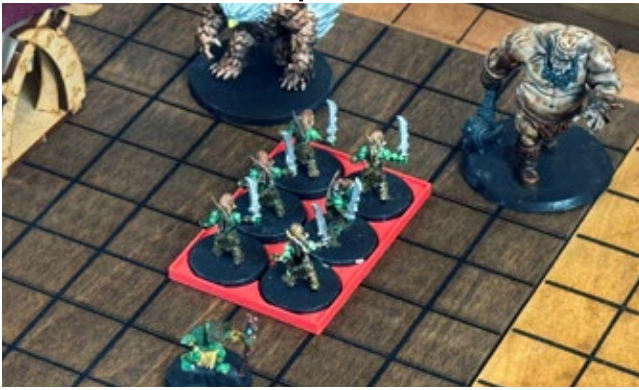


The goblins take the next turn. The goblins are out of Cohesion. Following the rules, the Judge has them move to a smaller tray before acting. This happens automatically even though the goblins unwisely neglected to order contingent movement.

Since the Judge arbitrates Orders understanding that players wish to play well, the Judge has the goblins move into a smaller valid tray that is also adjacent to the intended target of their ordered attacks.

The goblins attack the wizard, making three attack rolls and separate damage rolls for each attack that hits.

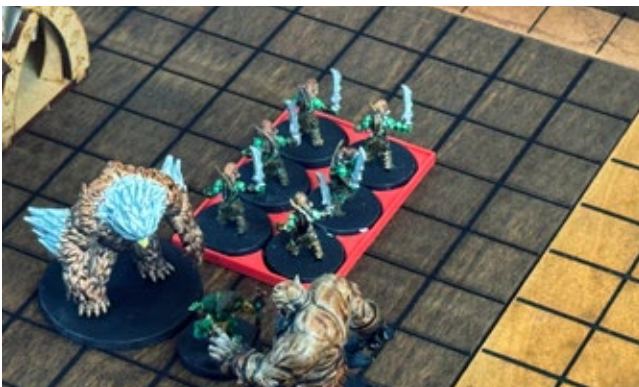
### Shared Reaction Example



The goblin Formation is ordered to split its attacks between the owlbear and the ogre. It acts first this turn and the Judge has the front two make melee attacks and the back four make ranged attacks, with 3 attacks for each target. The goblins make 6 attack rolls split evenly between two targets.



The ogre has an Order to approach and attack the goblin shaman. While it moves it leaves the reach of two goblins. The goblin Formation's controller announces that they will use their shared reaction for this round to take two Opportunity Attacks against the ogre. The goblins make two attacks.



Finally the owlbear has the same Order as the ogre, approach and attack the goblin shaman. It also leaves the reach of two other goblins, but they cannot make Opportunity Attacks.

They have already spent their shared reaction and once that turn ends the Formation does not track which creatures did and did not react.

## DAMAGE TO FORMATIONS

A damaged creature can only take as much damage as its individual maximum HP after any shared Temporary HP is gone. Damage to any creature in the Formation reduces the Formation HP Pool instead of any individual creature's HP score, which is never tracked.

If multiple creatures in a Formation take damage from the same source, such as a Burning Hands spell, total the damage and reduce the HP Pool by that amount, removing a number of them from among those who were damaged if one or more HP thresholds are crossed.

## FORMATION AS TARGETS

Creatures in a Formation are targeted as individuals by attacks. Creatures in a Formation individually benefit (or suffer) from terrain effects such as Cover or High Ground.

While it is true that an attack must technically target a specific creature in a Formation, Orders are allowed to specify a Formation as a target for simplicity. The Judge will pick the most advantageously positioned creature in the Formation for the attacker to attack.

When ordering multiple attacks against a Formation, the attacker may be assumed to spread the attacks across multiple creatures in reach or range to deal damage effectively.

## SHARED ACTION CHOICE

During the shared turn creatures in a Formation take actions and bonus actions individually, resolving them one at a time. However, if the creatures take actions, they must each take the same action that turn or decline to act.

The same is true for bonus actions.

Attack rolls are always made individually. When the actions taken by creatures in a Formation require them to make an ability check or saving throw, roll once and share the result for each check or save.

## ATTACKS BY FORMATIONS

If a Formation is ordered to attack, the Orders may specify different targets for some attacks and may choose different attack modes. Attack modes could be a weapon choice or different attacks from a monster stat block.

The Judge should pick a ranged attack when available

for creatures out of reach of a target, even if this was not specified.

## SHARED REACTION CHOICE

To avoid tracking individual reactions, if a creature in a Formation takes a reaction, the other creatures in that Formation may take the same reaction that same turn if able. After that turn, no other creatures in the Formation may take reactions for the remainder of the combat round.

## FORMATION COHESION

Creatures in most Formations (called **Standard Formations**) must be confined to a rectangular movement tray (or an equivalent rectangle if not using trays) to have Cohesion.

The Judge may declare some Formations to be **Skirmish Formations** at the beginning of combat. Creatures in a Skirmish Formation may position freely but must all remain within a square with sides equal to their speed.

Creatures in Formation that are out of Cohesion cannot take actions or bonus actions other than Dash or Disengage. When executing Orders, the Judge should first move creatures out of Cohesion back into Cohesion before further following the Order.

### What is a Legal Tray?

What size tray a Formation may legally use is left unspecified because algorithms for packing squares into rectangles are only fun when playing *Cathedral*.

If a Standard Formation is arranged loosely in a half empty tray, the Formation is out of Cohesion. The decision of the Judge is final.

## FORMATION MOVEMENT

Each creature in a Formation moves individually up to its speed on its shared turn.

Skirmish Formation movement will often involve Judge interpretation, even for well-specified Orders. The Judge should interpret movement with the understanding that the controller wishes to play well.

Movement for Standard Formations in movement trays is simpler. Unless navigating complicated obstacles and narrow paths, movement trays “Just Work.”

A movement tray can generally move as far as the creatures placed in the tray, minus penalties for difficult terrain or Steps Up the tray encounters.

When in doubt the Judge should trace a few of the creatures individual movements to see how far they can move.

## FORMATION SAVES & CHECKS

When one or more creatures in a Formation would make a saving throw for the same reason, make a shared saving throw.

The same is true for ability checks but not attack rolls.

## ALL-OR-NOTHING STATUSES

Because an individual creature in a Formation's game state other than its position on the battle-grid is never tracked, conditions and other game-altering statuses are all-or-nothing. If every creature in a Formation would gain a condition or status, they all do. Otherwise, none do.

If a condition or status on the creatures in a Formation would end for any of them, it ends for them all.

This applies to both beneficial conditions and statuses as well as penalizing ones. A large Formation of creatures is as immune to level 1 Bane as it is to Bless.

## SPECIAL INDIVIDUAL STATUSES

Certain status effects, such as the Vex and Sap weapon masteries, affect only the next attack or the next attack roll by an individual creature. These effects do work on Formations.

If a status such as Sap affects the next attack or individual attack roll by a creature in a Formation, it applies to the first such attack or attack roll by any creature in the Formation.

Similarly, if a status such as Vex affects the next attack or individual attack roll against a creature in a Formation, it applies to the next such attack or attack roll against any creature in the Formation.

The same effect cannot “stack” multiple times to affect more than one attack or roll this way.

Effects that affect a single ability check or saving throw have no effect on a roll shared by more than one creature. Guidance cannot help a Formation of more

than one creature make an ability check.

Up to one effect that reduces an individual's speed can apply to the first movement taken on the Formation's next turn. This effectively reduces the speed of the entire movement tray.

## PRONE & GRAPPLED

Creatures in a Formation may be individually prone or grappled, as these conditions may be tracked by positioning the creature's miniature on the terrain.

# AT THE TABLE

## ARMY COMPOSITION

Army composition rules are still in flux at this point in the alpha. We set a minimum CR and a maximum CR for both sides and use an XP budget. Heroes with class levels have a CR equal to their class level for the purposes of the minimum and maximum, but cost only 1/2 the XP of an equivalent creature.

A good starting game is CR 1/8 to CR 3 and an XP budget of 3000.

## GAME BALANCE

A TTRPG bestiary makes for a wildly unbalanced wargaming codex. Few tabletop games are as broken out of the box as D20 Tactics with Dungeons and Dragons as its Base System. We're still having fun with it though.

A free-for-all where players can field any creature from a core rulebook that they can procure a miniature for will be fun, but degenerate strategies will appear almost instantly.

For this reason, we suggest that the Judge prepare a balanced scenario ahead of play. The next section gives an example.

### Contributions Wanted

We suspect that the correct lever for tweaking game balance will be unlinking XP from its fixed value for a given CR and allow creatures to be given greater or lower XP values for a given CR.

A Harpy will still be a CR 1 foe, but come on.

This project, along with dividing core rule book monsters into factions will be a large undertaking & would be a great way for early independent playtesters to contribute.

## CAMPAIGN PLAY

Order-Ahead is the spirit of D20 Tactics when played as a wargame. It is what makes this system something other than a genre exercise with non-genre rules.

When using D20 Tactics as the combat rules for a running TTRPG campaign, Order-Ahead can be cumbersome for routine fights and small skirmishes.

We suggest using Pop-Up Initiative in all combat when playing D20 Tactics as a TTRPG combat system, but saving Order-Ahead only for larger more cinematic battles that can afford to take up more session time than normal.

## HEALING HEROIC FORMATIONS

When hirelings, militia, or other Formations are fighting alongside the player characters in an ongoing campaign, the players are unlikely to accept that their allies simply die instantly when an HP threshold is reached.

Track dying creatures from player Formations and make death saving throws as normal. You may wish to use markers to keep track of death saving throw counts if there is a large number of creatures.

If a dying creature from a player Formation is stabilized or healed, do not return it to battle but note that it lived to fight another day.

# SCENARIO PLAY



## HOLD THE HILL

2-6 Players in two teams.

A great battle looms. Both sides have identified a strategic chokepoint upon which the fate of the larger battle, and indeed the war, may turn. Advance units from the two sides aim to hold the high ground for as long as they can.

On a medium (2 foot by 3 foot, assuming a 1" grid) battle grid, place a hill or raised area in each corner, place a taller hill in the center.

Arrange obstacles such as water and walls and tall non-goal area blocks symmetrically around the map. The goal is to encourage difficult choices about the division of forces and to funnel opposing sides into direct conflict.

The teams' forces start in opposite corners. They may arrange prior to combat in a limited area that contains one of the hills.

The home hills may optionally have fortifications that provide cover or High Ground relative to other hills. The other hills should be open.

The game lasts a preset number of rounds (try 5 for your first game with Order-Ahead).

At the end of each round, a team gains one victory point for each hill they control a creature on with no enemy creatures present. The hill at the center of the map is worth 2 points instead of 1 and points are doubled on the final round.

At the end of the game, the team with the most victory points wins. Break ties with the XP count of surviving creatures.

In this scenario the Judge should remind players about the Dash action, and select a limited number of creatures with increased speed or climbing or flying abilities for both sides.

Suggested army composition is CR 1/8 to CR 3, 3000 XP max. Limit to 10 creatures or formations per team.

### Contributions Wanted

Playtesters are encouraged to design and share their own scenarios. It's a lot of effort to design one and run it with real playgroups enough times to be confident that it works well enough to hand off to other playgroups and we'd love the help.

# CONTRIBUTING

This is intended to be a collaborative game design and development effort. Anyone interested in the process should get in touch.

Join the Discord to find out more:

<https://discord.gg/hF7JQvg9Q9>

We'd love to hear about your ideas for the game!



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**This notice is in alpha like everything else here. If the game goes somewhere, we'll get proper legal language drafted. Until then, please honor the spirit as well as the letter.**

## THE AFTERWORD FROM "LITTLE WARS" BY H.G. WELLS, 1913:

I could go on now and tell of battles, copiously. In the memory of the one skirmish I have given I do but taste blood. I would like to go on, to a large, thick book. It would be an agreeable task. Since I am the chief inventor and practiser (so far) of Little Wars, there has fallen to me a disproportionate share of victories. But let me not boast. For the present, I have done all that I meant to do in this matter. It is for you, dear reader, now to get a floor, a friend, some soldiers and some guns, and show by a grovelling devotion your appreciation of this noble and beautiful gift of a limitless game that I have given you.

And if I might for a moment trumpet! How much better is this amiable miniature than the Real Thing! Here is a homeopathic remedy for the imaginative strategist. Here is the premeditation, the thrill, the strain of accumulating victory or disaster—and no smashed nor sanguinary bodies, no shattered fine buildings nor devastated country sides, no petty cruelties, none of that awful universal boredom and embitterment, that tiresome delay or stoppage or embarrassment of every gracious, bold, sweet, and charming thing, that we who are old enough to remember a real modern war know to be the reality of belligerence. This world is for ample living; we want security and freedom; all of us in every country, except a few dull-witted, energetic bores, want to see the manhood of the world at something better than apeing the little lead toys our children buy in boxes. We want fine things made for mankind—splendid cities, open ways, more knowledge and power, and more and more and more—and so I offer my game, for a particular as well as a general end; and let us put this prancing monarch and that silly scare-monger, and these excitable "patriots," and those adventurers, and all the practitioners of Welt Politik, into one vast Temple of War, with cork carpets everywhere, and plenty of little trees and little houses to knock down, and cities and fortresses, and unlimited soldiers—tons, cellars-full—and let them lead their own lives there away from us.

My game is just as good as their game, and saner by reason of its size. Here is War, done down to rational proportions, and yet out of the way of mankind, even as our fathers turned human sacrifices into the eating of little images and symbolic mouthfuls. For my own part, I am prepared. I have nearly five hundred men, more than a score of guns, and I twirl my moustache and hurl defiance eastward from my home in Essex across the narrow seas. Not only eastward. I would conclude this little discourse with one other disconcerting and exasperating sentence for the admirers and practitioners of Big War. I have never yet met in little battle any military gentleman, any captain, major, colonel, general, or eminent commander, who did not presently get into difficulties and confusions among even the elementary rules of the Battle. You have only to play at Little Wars three or four times to realise just what a blundering thing Great War must be.

Great War is at present, I am convinced, not only the most expensive game in the universe, but it is a game out of all proportion. Not only are the masses of men and material and suffering and inconvenience too monstrously big for reason, but—the available heads we have for it, are too small. That, I think, is the most pacific realisation conceivable, and Little War brings you to it as nothing else but Great War can do.