

Rules for pike & shot skirmish wargames

Escarmouche (fr. Fr: *skirmish*) is designed for small scale battles of around six single figures a side.

The man to model scale is one to one. Ground scale is probably the same as the figure scale, but since movement is unmeasured exact scaling is not specified.

Escarmouche is intended to provide a game that combines elements of traditional wargaming with role-playing. It is a top down design, modelling the results of actions and abstracting the intervening mechanical steps.

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DICE

Escarmouche uses six sided dice (d6) in two flavours: **active** and **passive**. They should be differentiated by colour so you can tell them apart during play. Ten of each colour should be sufficient.

No matter how many dice are rolled only the highest **active** dice counts. For example if a player rolls 6, 3, & 2, then the result is 6.

If more than one 6 is rolled, each additional 6 adds 1 to the score, so a roll of 6, 6, 2, & 1 is a score of 7. Three 6's is 8, and so on.

In opposed rolls, players compare their highest **active** dice to determine the outcome.

For example: player A rolls 5, & 2 and player B rolls 3, 2, & 1.

Player A wins, and the difference between the highest dice (5 - 3 = 2) determines the effect on Player B's figure.

Markers are useful to place beside figures when they are disarmed, shaken or wounded.

PLAY

Pick a figure and verbally describe what it is doing. This is called performing an action.

There are four types of actions: **Moving, Developing, Shooting, & Fighting**. They may be performed in any order, or repeated, any number of times.

For each action the figure has performed (excluding moving) in its current turn it accumulates one **active** dice.

After each action (including moving) this accumulated **active** dice pool is rolled to check the possible effects of the new action and to see if the figure retains initiative.

An important feature of Escarmouche is that a described action always takes place. You are not rolling to see if the figure can perform the action, but rather, to determine the effect of the action that has just occurred.

If a figure rolls a single 1 on any dice, either **active** or **passive**, it loses the initiative and ends its turn. You may now act with another figure that has not acted this turn.

On the roll of a second 1, or if you roll two 1's in a single roll, then your whole side has lost initiative and it becomes your opponent's turn.

A figure may continue to perform actions as long as it retains initiative.

By so doing it builds up a pool of **active** dice that can be used against the opponent's figures. **Active** dice pools do not carry-over from turn to turn – when a figure loses its initiative it loses its **active** dice.

You may voluntarily end a figure's turn and move on to another figure and perform actions with them but you may not return to an earlier figure once you have moved on to another.

Once you have acted with all your figures or lost initiative, play passes to your opponent.

Therefore, the length of your turn and what you can achieve in that turn is largely controlled by your own tolerance to risk.

Passive dice are penalty dice used to dummy out a roll and increase the chance of initiative loss without contributing to the chance of success.

Passive dice are either added to a roll when a figure is moving to indicate the passage of time, or they replace **active** dice to show tactical penalties such as being shaken, disarmed, or when their opponent has cover.

FIGURE – Ratings & Skills

Every figure has a rating. In any opposed roll, the defender rolls dice equal to its Rating.

You may decide that a figure also has as many Wounds as its rating, or for simplicity you may say that every figure has only one wound.

Ratings also break a tied roll.

Rating	Type
1	Lowest of the low or terrified noncombattants
2	Raw troops or courageous noncombattants
3	Average troops
4	Veteran characters
5	Heroic characters

Figures may also have skills. Skills range from 1 to 3 and indicate ability above the basic use of the skill.

A figure may choose to use its skill dice instead of its rating dice in defense, if appropriate.

Skills also allow the figure to substitute **active** dice for **passive** dice in a roll.

The skills are:

Shooter (handling missile weapons),

Fighter (general melee combat),

Rider (horsemanship),

Pike trailer (fighting with pole arms),

Artillierist (handling cannon),

Leader (marshaling other figures).

MOVING

Movement is unmeasured. You may move a figure any distance in a straight line through the same terrain type. When the figure reaches a change in terrain type, or an enemy’s zone of control (ZOC), it must stop.

At the end of each move the figure must roll to see if it retains initiative, using the number of **passive** dice shown in the table.

Any **active** dice accumulated by the figure prior to moving must be rolled along with the **passive** dice.

If it retains initiative the figure may continue performing actions, including moving again through the new terrain type, or starting a fight if at a ZOC.

Remember: a figure does not accrue an **active** dice for moving.

Passive dice	Terrain type
2	Clear or open ground
3	Broken or scrub covered ground, light woods, and moderate hills
4	Heavy ground such as swamps, dense forest, or steep hillsides
5	Difficult ground such as precipitous heights, or swift rivers. Also includes moving cumbersome items such as wagons and cannon.

Special move - marshal

A figure can marshal other figures in line-of-sight to move simultaneously.

Move the figure, adding a **passive** dice for each other figure to be moved. The figure may use its Leader skill to replace **passive** dice with **active**.

If no 1's are rolled all figures move. This ends the marshaled figures’ turns, but the marshalling figure can carry on performing actions.

On a single 1 the figures move then end their turn.

On a double 1 all the figures move and the player’s turn is over.

If a triple 1 is rolled no figure moves and the player’s turn is over.

DEVELOPING

You develop the story and bring life to the game by having your figures perform actions over and above moving, shooting, and fighting.

There is no defined list of actions to choose from: you are free to create them as roleplaying embellishments to your game.

Developing actions may be thought of as anything that adds life to the behaviour of a figure and consumes time.

Typical actions might include but are by no means limited to:

Loading and aiming a weapon; taking special care or using special materials when loading; drawing or sheathing or retrieving a weapon; hiding; communicating; lighting fires; taking cover, and so on.

For every developing action performed, the figure accumulates an **active** dice.

Special development - reserved action

A figure may decide to end its turn voluntarily in order to exploit their opponent's actions.

A reserved action ends the figure's turn and reduces the figure's dice pool to 1 **active** dice.

This **active** dice may be used to interrupt your opponent's turn at any time – for example: when an enemy figure strays into the figure's line of sight. At that time the single **active** dice is used in a single developing, shooting or fighting action.

Play then passes back to the player with initiative.

SHOOTING

A figure armed with a missile weapon who has initiative may shoot.

See *Guidelines For Measurement* on page 4 for discussion about ranges.

The shooter rolls any **active** dice pool they have accumulated, plus 1 **active** dice for the shooting action. **Passive** dice replace **active** dice on a one-for-one basis for the following factors:

- Shooter shaken (as a result of being shot at or from fighting)
- Target has cover (as a result of a taking cover in a developing action)

All missile weapons have a **passive** dice penalty which is added to the shoot roll. This models the time consumed in preparation and loading.

Weapon	Passive dice penalty
Thrown objects	1
Short bows	2
Carbines, pistols, light crossbows and longbows	3
Muskets & heavy crossbows	4
Cannon of all sorts	5

The shooter rolls the final combined **active** & **passive** dice pool; the defender rolls dice equal to his rating. If the shooter rolls higher than the defender he inflicts effects from the Shooting Effects table, otherwise there is no effect.

If no 1's were rolled by the shooter (on either **active** or **passive** dice), it may continue to perform actions, including shooting again.

Diff.	Shooting Effects
0	Shaken. Place a Shaken marker on the loser. This confers a passive dice penalty in all subsequent actions. A figure may have multiple Shaken markers. The figure may perform a developing action to remove a marker – (this action also gains an active dice).
1	Cowered. Target is forced to seek cover by going prone. Standing will require a developing action in their initiative.
2	Hit & Shaken. Subtract 1 from loser's wound score. Figure is also Shaken.
3+	Multiple Hits & Shaken. Each point over 2 is an extra hit the loser sustains. So 3 is 2 hits, 4 is 3 hits, etc.

Special shoot – volley fire

A figure may direct the fire of a group. Add one **active** dice for every shooter in line of sight of the same target. Use the **passive** dice of the slowest weapon.

The figure may use its Leader skill to replace **passive** dice with **active**.

If initiative is retained after shooting then the directing figure may go on to perform more actions but all the other shooters have used their turn.

Special shoot – artillery

Cannons may be fired using the standard shoot rules. To model the devastating nature of their fire, add **active** dice equal to the shooter's Artillerist skill to the figure's **active** dice pool.

FIGHTING

A figure may start a hand to hand fight with an enemy at its ZOC – within one base width. Move the attacker into base contact as a free action (no dice roll needed).

Additional figures on the attacking side may be drawn into the fight for free if they are already at the defender's ZOC – *even if they have already used up their initiative.*

This may have the effect of drawing more defenders into a melee, so read on.

Fighting can only occur between single figures, multiple against single or single against multiple, but not multiple against multiple. If there are multiple figures in base contact, rearrange them so it becomes clear.

Once in base contact the attacker rolls any **active** dice pool it has accumulated, plus 1 **active** dice for the fight action itself.

If one side outnumbered the other, they gain an outnumbering bonus of 1 **active** dice for each other friendly figure in the fight.

Passive dice replace the attacker's **active** dice on a one-for-one basis for the following factors:

- Defender uphill of attacker
- Defender has cover
- Attacker is weaponless
- Attacker is shaken

The attacker rolls the final combined **active** & **passive** dice pool; the defender rolls dice equal to his rating (or fight skill if better) and any outnumbering bonus.

Whoever wins the roll inflicts effects on the loser from the Fighting Effects table.

Diff.	Fighting Effects
0	Pushed back. Higher rated figure wins, pushing loser a base-width away.
1	Shaken. Place a Shaken marker on the loser. This confers a passive dice penalty in all subsequent actions. A figure may have multiple Shaken markers. The figure may perform a developing action to remove a marker – (this action also gains an active dice). Loser pushed back.
2	Disarmed. Place a disarmed marker on the loser. This confers a passive dice penalty in subsequent fight actions. A figure may only have one Disarmed marker. The figure may perform a developing action to acquire a weapon – this action eliminates the marker (and gains an active dice). Loser pushed back.
3	Hit & Shaken. Subtract 1 from loser's wound score. Figure is also Shaken. Loser pushed back.
4+	Multiple Hits & Shaken. Each point over 3 is an extra hit the loser sustains. So 4 is 2 hits, 5 is 3 hits, etc. Loser pushed back.

All combatants are separated by their ZOC (a base width) at the end of the fight.

If no 1's were rolled during the fight, the figure may continue to perform actions, including crossing the defender's ZOC and fighting again.

Special fight - pike vs cavalry

A Pikeman always gets first strike, even if the horseman initiated the combat.

This means that for the first round of fighting only, a win scored by the pike counts; if the horseman wins the round, his effects are ignored. If the horseman wins the combat AND has initiative, the next round of fighting is treated as normal.

If the horseman loses the fight, whether in attack or defense, he is kept away by the pike and will suffer the same penalty if he approaches again on the next turn.

In defense, pikemen may use either their rating or pike skill, whichever is higher.

Special fight - massed pike vs cavalry

Pikemen supporting each other may combine their actions to ward off a horseman.

Choose one pikeman to act. Then add an **active** dice for every pikeman in base contact with him.

If attacking, the supporting pikemen have all used their turn by this combined action. The figure who coordinated their actions may continue to act if it retains initiative.

Special fight - horse vs foot

Horsemen gain first strike against any infantry that are not armed with pikes. This operates in the same way as 'pike vs horseman' special fight with the horseman having the option of using their horseman skill in defense if they choose.

Special fight - pike fencing

Pike against pike is just like regular fighting. If the winner has initiative he may cross the loser's ZOC and fight again without pikes, if he chooses.

GUIDELINES FOR MEASURING

Since there is no hard and fast measurement in these rules, situations will arise such as "How far can a figure leap" or, "How far can a dagger be thrown?"

Here are some rough guidelines:

- Projectile weapons range the board.
- A figure may leap down or horizontally its own model height.
- A figure may jump vertically up to half its own model height.
- A figure may pick up and throw any object up to scale chair or small barrel size.
- A small object (eg dagger or rock) may be thrown four times the figure's model height.