
A & A GAME ENGINEERING PRODUCT SUPPORT

Product Support sheets come in the following types:

- Clarifications – these are more general clarifications about game play in response to questions from players.
- Corrections and Amendments – these include corrections to errors in game data, typing errors, and mistakes in game play that have come to light. These may come in two alternatives:
 - applicable to the most recent edition.
 - applicable to previous editions. These items will all have been incorporated into the latest edition on sale.
- New Rules – These rules will have been developed in response to requests from players. They may also have been developed from House Rules (see below).
- House Rules and player suggestions. House rules that are tested and work well may be incorporated into the basic rules if the author(s) approve.

FORM LINE OF BATTLE

RULE REVISION

BOARDING RULES

DATE: 14TH APRIL 2020

Preamble

One of our players has drawn our attention to some problems in the resolution of Boarding Actions. Under normal circumstances a boarding action would take place when the defending vessel had been shot about quite a bit, so that when the boarding parties went across they would meet with little resistance. Of course, on the wargames table players are tempted to carry out boarding when the target vessel may not have suffered significant (or even any) cannon fire to soften it up. In such circumstances the resolution can become quite long winded, and can also throw up some anomalies.

While we were reviewing the rules, and discussing the issue with David Manley, we also found that one feature of the original boarding rules had got missed out. This dealt with what you do when you have lost all the crew parties but then lose a round of combat and have to take a crew party loss. What was missing was the effect that in this case you reduce the Broadside Rating by the number of casualties you should be taking.

At the same time we have slightly changed the criteria applicable to the attacking ship. We now say that this ship must use all its Crew Parties in the attack. This solves a hidden problem of how you might resolve a situation where the attacker has to take more casualties than he had crew parties left in the attack.

Finally, a battle can end up with both sides having no crew parties left, but the results of the round of combat do not require either side to take a Strike Test. In this case the action is terminated and both side will try to separate in the next Command Phase. Of course this assumes that no one else decides to board either of them before the end of the current turn.

The example that appears in the rules has also been updated and expanded.

The Boarding Rules has been rewritten and forms part of this Revision document, so you can print them out and use them with your current edition of the rules.

This revised set of rules can (and should) be used in either the 4th or 5th Editions of Form Line of Battle. A new edition 5.1 is also available as a PDF to download in your library on Wargame Vault.

8 – BOARDING ACTIONS

Boarding actions, despite what you read in Bolitho, Ramage etc. were comparatively rare, and were usually conducted against an enemy ship that had been well shot up prior to boarding commencing. In that case, the first round of combat should carry the day, or leave the enemy weakened to be defeated in the next phase. If the action was not carried quickly, or if the enemy were not sufficiently softened up, then a boarding action will tend to be inconclusive. In such cases the attacker would withdraw and regroup, to avoid a long drawn out affair.

Ships must have at least one crew party available in order to initiate boarding attempts. These represent soldiers rather than gunners, though the effect of the gunners on the upper deck is partially assumed to be covered by the d6 roll during combat. No crew parties are needed to defend against an attack.

Boarding can be initiated in the following circumstances:

- The Moving player moves the ship into base-to-base contact having declared a boarding attempt. The “target” vessel may also declare **at this point** that he wishes to counter-board.
- Two vessels collide during movement and the Moving player declares an Impromptu Boarding Attempt.

Effects on Gunnery

It is probable that just before the boarding action is attempted the attacking ship may have fired its broadside. The defender may then have returned fire with an Impromptu Broadside of his own. These may well have inflicted casualties on either side, which are taken before the boarding is resolved.

Getting Entangled

There is a risk that the ships will get entangled when they are in contact. Roll 1d6 on the turn they contacted. on a roll of 4-6 they are entangled. This increases the chance of success when boarding due to fallen spars and sails assisting the movement between ships.

8.1 – Initiating the Action

For the reasons outlines above, initiating a boarding action was not as easy as some fiction suggests. This is especially true of ships of the line, with few historical examples of them being carried by boarding - Nelson at St. Vincent seems to be a major exception, rather than the rule. Boarding does seem to be a lot more common the smaller the ships get. To this end, use the following rule:

To initiate the action successfully, the moving ship rolls 1d6, the score being modified as follows. A final score of 4 or more is required. The ships are marked with a Boarding marker showing direction of attack, and a Grappled marker.

Situation	Modifier	Comment
Attacking Captain Superior Inspired Inept	+2 +1 -1	
Defending Captain Superior Inspired Inept	-2 -1 +1	Defending ship must be mobile/ manoeuvrable (i.e. not dismasted, not lost wheel, not drifting, not “in irons”)
Defending ship not manoeuvrable* or declared counterboard	+1	*Dismasted, lost wheel, drifting, or “in irons”
Courses Parallel Opposite	+1 -1	Course is within 45° of same or opposite heading
Impromptu attempt	-1	i.e. due to collision
Difference in rate Unrated counts as 7	larger – smaller	i.e. 1st boarding 3rd is at –2 Unrated boarding 4th is at –3
Ships entangled	+1	

8.2 – Resolving the Action

At the start of a Boarding Action, once the roll to initiate the action has been made, each side may attempt to shoot the captain of their opponent's vessel with musket fire, needing a score of 10 or 11 to wound and 12 on 2d6 to kill. If the captain is killed or wounded, the ship suffers a -2 modifier (if killed) or -1 (if wounded) during the first phase of the action because of lowered morale. The action now begins in earnest. All the Crew Parties on the ships involved take part in the combat.

A boarding action consists of a number of rounds, all of which are fought immediately, one after the other, until a result is achieved. The boarding action is fought to its conclusion in the Action Phase in which it started. At the start of each round, roll as shown below:

1d6 + crew quality + no. of crew parties (-2/-1 on first round if Captain killed or wounded)

Modifiers: Elite +2, Veteran +1, Poor -1

The highest score wins that round of the melee, and the difference between scores is used to determine the effects, as follows:

A) Drawn result

If the difference is 0, this is a draw. Both sides lose **ONE** Crew Party and the fight continues. *Please refer to Section E 2 below.*

B) Attacker vs Counter-Boarder

If the combat is between an Attacker and Counter-boarder the fight is actually taking place “between” the two vessels on the gunwales. This situation lasts until one side or the other is pushed onto their own vessel.

1. If the difference is less than 6, the loser is pushed back onto his own deck and loses **ONE** Crew Party.
2. If the difference is 6 or more, the loser is pushed back onto his own deck and loses **TWO** Crew Parties.

The combat continues on that ship, which is now regarded as the Defender.

C) Attacker vs Defender

1. If the difference is less than 6, the losing side loses **ONE** crew party.
2. If Attacker wins with a difference of 6 or more the Defender strikes.
3. If Defender wins with a difference of 6 or more the Attacker is repulsed to his own decks, losing **TWO** crew parties.

The Defender can follow up to the other ship **if he had declared a counter-board and has Crew Parties left**. The roles of Attacker and Defender are now reversed.

D) Breaking off combat

1. The Attacker may break off combat (perhaps due to losses) and voluntarily return to his own ship at any time.
2. The Defender can follow up **if he had originally declared a Counter-board and has Crew Parties left**. He now becomes the Attacker in subsequent combat rounds.
3. If the Defender does not follow up the melee ends. Attempts may be made to cut grapples and clear entangled masts in the next Command Phase.

E) Crew Party reduced to 0

1. If, after losing a round of combat, a ship has Crew Parties = 0 it must take a Strike Test. This is ignored in the case of a draw. If it passes the fight continues.
It may also have to reduce its Broadside Rating (*Please refer to Section F below*).
2. If both ships are reduced to a Crew Parties = 0 then the fight ends. Attempts may be made to cut grapples and clear entangled masts in the next Command Phase.

F) Excess Casualties

If a ship has to lose Crew Parties, and either has no Crew Parties left, or this would reduce their number to below 0, the vessel's Broadside Rating is reduced by the excess casualties.

Example

The example shows the relevant section of the Boarding rules **[in parenthesis]**

A Spanish 5th rate frigate (Broadside 8, 2 Experienced Crew, Average captain), comes along side and gets entangled with a smaller British 6th rate frigate (Broadside 7, 1 Elite Crew, Average captain). This is an impromptu attempt (-1) and there is a difference in rates (-1) but this is cancelled by the courses and being entangled.

We assume firstly that neither side had received any damage from gunnery before the boarding action started, and that the Spanish player is successful in getting his men motivated to attack the British.

The British declare a counter-board so both sides meet on the gunwales.

The Spaniards manage to wound the British Captain with musket fire, rolling 2d6 and scoring 5 and 5. The British musketry is unsuccessful, rolling 3 and 4.

In the first round of combat the Spanish score 2 for the crew, and roll a 6 for a total of 8. The British score 1 for the crew, +2 for being Elite, suffer a penalty in the first round of combat of -1 for the captain being wounded and roll 3 for a total of 5.

The difference in scores is 3 (8 minus 5), so the British lose **[B.1.]**. They lose 1 crew party (reducing the number to 0) and the next round is subsequently fought on their deck. They are now the Defenders. They must also now take a Strike Test **[E.1.]**. They require a final score of at least 7. The dice score is modified by +2 (Elite) and +1 for the Captain being wounded. They roll 9 on the dice and the modifiers bring the final score to 12, so the fight goes on.

In the second round, the Spaniards still have 2 Crew Parties. They roll 1, for a total of 3. The British have no Crew Parties but roll 6 and add +2 for being Elite: a total of 8. The difference in scores is 5, so the British win **[C.1.]**, and the Spaniards lose 1 Crew Party. They are left with 1 Crew Party, and they are still fighting on the British deck.

In the third round, the British roll a 3 (total 5) and the Spaniards a 5 (total 6) so the British lose. They must reduce their Broadside Rating by 1 (down to 6) **[F.]**, and must take a Strike Test **[E.1.]**.

Note that if the Broadside Rating had been reduced to 0 then the Strike Test would have been be at an additional -1 due to multiple causes for the Strike Test for the following reasons:

1. Boarded, lost a round of combat and reduced to Crew Parties of 0.

2. Broadside Rating reduced to 0.

They have the same modifiers as in the previous test. This time the dice score is 8 and the modifiers bring the final score to 11, so the fight goes on.

In the fourth round the British roll another 6 (total 8) and the Spanish a 1 (total 2). This is a score difference of 6 so the Spanish are repulsed **[C.3.]**. They have to lose 2 Crew Parties. As they only have 1, they are reduced to no Crew Parties and their Broadside Rating is also reduced by 1 (the excess casualty) **[F.]**. They must now take a Strike Test (having lost a melee and their Crew Parties are 0) **[E.1.]**.

They roll 6 on 2d6, which is not enough to pass, they require a 7, therefore they Strike.

If they had not struck and the British still had Crew Parties themselves they could follow up and Counter-board, having declared that at the start **[C.3.]**.

As it is, the British have no Crew Parties to put on board the Spanish vessel. If the British had another vessel in the vicinity with Crew Parties available, then it might be taken as a Prize.

In the Command Phase of next turn they will attempt to separate **[E.2.]**. Neither ship will be able to instigate any boarding action in future, and both will be vulnerable if another ship decided to board.

9.3 – Multiple Boarding Actions

If two vessels are involved in a fight against one enemy vessel, combine the number of crew parties involved and their Crew Quality modifiers. If multiple ships on both sides are involved, pair off ships for individual combats by proximity.

The "owning" player decides where crew casualties will be taken from.

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