ALTAR of FREEDOM

GRAND TACTICAL BATTLES IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Frequently Asked Questions

1. ORDERS AND MOVEMENT

1.1   I hate paper labels/tags and don't want to spend time attaching all those little labels to my bases for each scenario. What can I do?

I use the paper base labels because it saves players time during the game--but as the GM it takes time the evening beforehand to cut them out, fold them, and tape them. There are ways to go paperless, however. The easiest way is to number each base, and then write down those matching numbers onto the OOB using pen/pencil. To number the bases, you can could permanently paint/mark the bases or affix a numerical tag that you just leave attached for multiple scenarios. When I use this method, I number my units (1, 2, 3, etc.) and letter my generals and HQ elements (A, B, C, etc.)

However you slice it, though, you need a way to discern who is who on the battlefield!

1.2   Is my die roll for Unreliable or Hesitant generals supposed to be secret?
Yes.

1.3   If a turn equals one hour, shouldn't my troops be able to move a lot farther on the table?
No, for two reasons: (1) The time scale and ground scale are only approximate abstractions. (2) A lot of events are happening in this span of time that you may not be

considering...your orders are issued, a courier relays those orders to the division commanders, those generals now re-issue the orders to the brigades, and the brigadiers have to get their men in motion, properly ordered and deployed. That's a lot of activity for a simple movement order from the corps level! This all takes time.

1.4   Why can't artillery keep up with infantry? With horse-drawn guns, they should have the same movement rate.
Remember that a "stand" of artillery in this game represents multiple batteries, and those guns need time and space to limber and unlimber, along with the all the supporting caissons and crew. This takes time, so they don't move as quickly in the field. Your artillery can keep pace while marching on the road, where all reserve troops enjoy the same 20" movement rate.

1.5   Where are the horse batteries? Those should be able to move faster.
There are no horse batteries in the rules--they were fairly uncommon and ultimately sacrificed in order to speed up game play. If you'd like to create an optional rule to represent them, please do so.

1.6   Can artillery enter the woods or other rough ground?
Yes. But with the movement penalty for rough ground, it's going to awfully slow going! Worse still, line of sight in the woods is only 2", so artillery operating in the woods is of very limited value.

1.7   Why do all the units have the same movement rate with road reserve movement? And shouldn't cavalry move a lot faster in this situation?
Think about what we're representing here--you're shuffling an entire division of troops over a dirt road. This is a major operation, with men and material strung out, sometimes for miles. In the game, the entire column moves together at the same speed. And no, Civil War cavalry did not gallop down the roads. They rode the horses at a walk, sometimes dismounting to give the horses a break on long marches.

1.8   Is there a penalty for moving sideways or backward?
No. Movement is 360 degrees with unlimited facing changes during your move.

1.9   It seems very easy for a brigade to outflank another brigade. Is this intentional?
Yes, it's intentional. I like the battles to go fast and furious. But remember that you not only have to totally avoid your opponent's zone of control, you have to also be totally behind their flat front.

1.10   I still think it's too easy for units to outflank each other. Can I make a house rule to change that?
Of course--you're free to make whatever house rules you like. During play-testing, I ran several games where it was much harder to get the flank bonus. In those games, we stipulated that you had to BEGIN and END your movement already behind the enemy's flat front to get the bonus. This makes outflanking someone much more difficult. It plays well, but I concluded that the current method is more fast-paced. If you and your usual gaming companions want to make it tougher, try playing the other way and restrict the bonus as described here.

1.11   The Turn Clock is too short for the [fill in the blank] scenario! My opponent keeps killing the clock before most of my divisions get to move. I'm frustrated!
The Turn Clock is fine--it's your strategy that might need some adjustment. If your opponent is running down the clock too quickly, you need to change your bidding pattern. Bid more to gain control of the clock yourself, or consider sacrificing some divisions to prioritize others. Don't feel too badly--first time players often struggle with Turn Clock management. More games will give you the experience you need to understand the nuances of the strategy.

1.12   My scenario OOB has some "unattached" brigades. How do those move?
As a player, you should attach those brigades to a specific division before the battle. This is something you would mark on your OOB (use pencil, pen, whatever you like) to remind yourself where you attached them. They will then operate with that parent division, moving and fighting when the division has Priority.

1.13   Is my die roll for Unreliable or Hesitant generals supposed to be secret?
Yes.

2. SHOOTING AND COMBAT

2.1   Why is shooting so ineffective in this game?
At this scale ranged fire isn't all that decisive. It disrupts troops, certainly. But when you read first-hand accounts you learn that the real carnage happened under 100 yards, even in the Civil War. Artillery was used mainly for counter-battery fire, to silence other guns. Against infantry, it is most effective at very short ranges. All those other games you've been playing, where your batteries are tearing targets apart at long ranges are distorting the historical effectiveness of ranged fire, *especially* at a grand tactical level.

2.2   Why is shooting so effective in this game? Am I reading the rules correctly that my units can keep conducting defensive fire every single time an enemy division has priority? Even if they don't move at all?
You are reading correctly. If you have a unit of well-positioned artillery with a clear, long range view, it's entirely possible for them to fire quite a few times in the turn. A single unit may conduct defensive fire as often as a new Priority level is reached and an enemy unit activates within your firing arc. In practice, it's quite unusual for a unit to get more than two or three defensive shots in a turn, because the arcs are so limited...but artillery on a hill with clear line of sight for a mile is pretty dangerous.

Ex: Let's say an enemy division maneuvers with a Priority rating of 5--all of your units that can fire on any brigade of the enemy division get a single attempt to do so. Then the Priority moves down to 4, and your opponent has not one, but two divisions moving at Priority 4. Here again, all of your units that can fire get a single attempt. So even if you conducted defensive fire during the previous Priority rating, you can do so again now!

2.3   I still don't understand. Let's say my opponent is maneuvering two divisions on the same Priority rating. I have a well-positioned artillery battery. Can I use defensive fire against a brigade in <u>each</u> enemy division?
No. During each Priority level, you get one firing attempt at a target of your choice. It doesn't matter if your opponent moved two divisions or five divisions at once. You get one shot. And when a lower Priority number is reached, you'll get another shot.

2.4   My artillery has been attacked from behind. Do they still get the +2 bonus for artillery defending?
Yes, artillery always receives this bonus. At this scale, we assume one of the battery captains has the initiative to spin a few guns around and unload some canister. Your artillery will always get their +2 bonus (12-18 guns is an intimidating sight), but will obviously also suffer the cumulative -3 penalty for being outflanked.

2.5   Can artillery get "Fatigued?"
Yes. Artillery can suffer from Fatigue just like infantry and cavalry. Remember that Fatigue is a broad concept, including casualties, disorder, a loss of morale, or ammunition depletion.

2.6   I hate placing markers on my battlefields, because they ruin the visual impact. How can I avoid using Fatigue markers?
If you don't want to use red chips/chits/caps/beads, you have two options. I made custom Fatigue markers by mounting Baccus casualty figures on red disks. I don't think they ruin the visual impact of the game one bit! But if you'd rather go entirely free of any tabletop markers, you can note Fatigue on your OOB with pencil (so you can erase later), or with a dry-erase marker on transparency.

2.7   Why can't my artillery fire canister at point-blank range and use "interrupt" fire to stop a charging enemy brigade?
Two reasons. First, your artillery still receives the +2 combat bonus, and that represents some close-order canister. But the main reason for not allowing interrupt fire at this range is playability--artillery would simply be too powerful as a unit and impossible to engage.

2.8   One of my brigades has been attacked in the flank. Why can't they just "turn to face" the enemy? Wouldn't they react this way naturally?
Consider the scale we're simulating. A "base" represents the footprint or area that your brigade is operating somewhere within. The entire base doesn't turn to face, but we still assume that one of your regimental colonels hastily shifted a regiment to defend your flank. The "outflanked" penalty in combat simulates the problem of an *entire brigade* unexpectedly bearing down on your flank. And remember--on your own turn, you can adjust your unit's facing however you like.

2.9   My brigade won a close combat, and the table result says "victor must advance one or two base depths." What does that mean? Is it my choice?
Yes. It means you must advance at least one base depth, but may opt for two.

2.10 After decisively winning a close combat by a margin of 6+, why can't my brigade make a breakthrough charge?
Historically, decisive combats often left the victorious unit as exhausted and disordered as the retreating unit. And as a game mechanic, this sort of combat result keeps you from being a "helicopter general," directing a brilliant attack in detail. The scope of this game tries to prevent players from being able to control too much micro-management.

2.11 Where do brigades fired upon or attacked from the rear recoil?
Great question, and one that I should have explained better in the rules. If attacked from the rear, flip your recoil arc and recoil away from the direction of the attacker. If you're attacked from a side instead of the rear, keep your standard rear arc. This is admittedly situational and should be discussed by the players when it occurs.

2.12 Generals seem too vulnerable and easy to kill in this game.
I would argue that they are actually far too protected in most other games. Have you read much Civil War history? The number of division and corps commanders wounded, captured, and killed was astonishingly high. Statistically, your chances of surviving the war were much higher as a private than as a Civil War general.

3. END OF TURN SEQUENCE

3.1   When I attempt to rally a broken brigade, there's a +1 modifier for a general being nearby. What if I have several generals nearby? Is this cumulative?
Yes and no. It is cumulative, but you can only count generals within the brigade's own chain of command. That means a corps commander, plus potentially the overall army commander. But you cannot receive a bonus from the general of a different corps.

3.2   When my reinforcements arrive from off-table at the end of the turn, how far onto the table can they move? Just to the edge?
Reinforcements may take a free, full move immediately upon arrival. This also would apply for road reserve bonus, so assuming you meet all the standard requirements, it's entirely possible you could move a division 20" onto the table! Roads are important.

3.3   Since HQs are not allowed to move, what happens when a new general arrives at the end of a turn, as part of my reinforcements?
HQs are allowed to move up to 12" onto the table from their point of arrival. This also happens to be the normal movement rate for a general. But after deploying, HQs can no longer move until nighttime (if applicable in the scenario).

3.3   How did you come up with the various army break points? Why do armies "break" at 20%, 25% or 30%?
Those percentages are based on historical results. Most Civil War battles did not end in decisive victory for either side, but I compiled a spreadsheet of 14 large battles that did--seven decisive Union victories, and seven decisive Confederate victories. The spreadsheet compared the overall casualty rates sustained by both sides and led me to determine at what point a defeated army would be forced to quit the field.

4. SCENARIOS

4.1   Some of the historical scenarios seem really lop-sided and unbalanced. It's hard for [fill in the blank] to win.
An astute observation. But alas, historical engagements are often not "fair" or "balanced." This is part of the fun, comparing your own performance to your historical counter-parts. If you're looking for historical battles fought on relatively even terms, try Shiloh, Stones River, or Seven Pines.

4.2   I really disagree with the personality trait(s) your scenario assigned to General [fill in the blank] at that battle. Can I change the traits or add some new traits?
Assigning these traits is highly subjective. The traits I picked are the product of much research, play-testing, and pure opinion. Feel free to do what you will. My only advice is to avoid designing "super traits" that are overly powerful and distort game play.

4.3   When designing the scenarios, how do you calculate the number of Priority Points for each side? Is there some formula or trick for this?
It's part art, part science. I start with a formula to figure out how many total points each army should have, based on the number of divisions they have and the overall scenario size. That's the science, because it's objectively done for each side. The subjective part is dividing those points among the various generals. I try to do this based on the command styles of the armies. So at Gettysburg, Lee has very few Priority Points, because he left most of the decisions to his corps commanders. The opposite is true for McClellan at Antietam, where he concentrated the decision-making in his own hands; hence, McClellan has lots of Priority Points and his generals have very little ability to act on their own initiative.

4.4   I think I found a mistake in [fill in the blank] scenario. What should I do?
Let me know, of course! Send an email, because there are bound to be typos and mistakes in a 156-page PDF...followed by another 140-page PDF! That's a lot of data. We've already identified mistakes in several scenarios, which are tracked in a separate scenario errata available on our website.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

5.1   I'm new to the game, so I'd like some tactical tips from someone who has played the rules a lot. What's the basic primer?
Four quick observations for new players who are just learning the rules:
(1) Resist your natural war-gamer impulse to commit everything right away. If you don't leave a reserve to plug a hole in your line, things will fall apart quickly.
(2) Pay attention to the roads, which are a lot more important in this game than most. He who controls the road network can shuffle troops around very quickly.
(3) Don't let your bidding pattern become too static or predictable. Keep your opponent off-guard by regularly changing the way you prioritize divisions and spend points.
(4) Always, always, always protect your generals and HQ elements. *Always*.

5.2   I prefer 15mm miniatures, but the range conversion is only 3" for rifles, which looks ridiculous. Can I adopt new measurements so it feels "right" for 15mm?

You know what else looks ridiculous? Using twelve 15mm miniatures to represent a 1,500+ man brigade! Point being, all war games are mere representations of reality, using quite a bit of abstraction. So if you're able to suspend your disbelief for a dozen 15mm figures to represent several thousand men, ground scales shouldn't be too hard to accept.

But of course you're welcome to adjust the ranges however you like, bearing in mind that the game was not designed for 15mm scale, so it will be difficult to get the ground scale to look "right" while still covering a 25 square mile battlefield. The main reason for designing the game in 6mm was to be able to encompass large battlefields on a reasonable 6'x4' table.

5.3   Can I play this game solo?

Not really. The secret Priority Point bidding process makes solo play nearly impossible, unless you come up with some method for randomizing one side's bidding.

6. ERRATA (also known as mistakes/oversights)

6.1   When a general is removed, his replacement has half as many Priority Points, rounded up...but what if the general was 'Hesitant?'

Great question, and one that did not crop up in almost two years of play-testing. There are two ways you could consider handling this: (1) The new general is also 'Hesitant;' or (2) The new general rolls a D6 once, and that is his new permanent Priority rating. Feel free to tinker with your own ideas here.

6.2   What if a replacement general is killed? Does the replacement to the replacement also halve his Priority Points?

What are you people doing to get so many generals killed? I've never seen this happen, but if a replacement general is killed, do not halve the Priority Points a second point. Keep the rating of the first replacement.

6.3   Where can I find the scenario errata for mistakes in the PDF supplements?

Visit our Free Downloads page on the website, and you'll find the scenario errata available for free. There are mistakes and corrections for several battles.