

A Napoleonic naval battle on the high seas - CLASS WARGAMES

These rules have been developed from a close study of Donald Featherstone's Naval Wargaming and perusal of numerous sets of rules relating to the Napoleonic era.

You will need (a) a blue paper/plastic tablecloth tightly fixed down to the table OR a blue hex map, the bigger the better, I would say minimum size 6' x 4' (b) model ships in 1/1200 scale; (c) loads of dice, including percentage dice; (d) turning circles and rulers (e) cotton wool, some with red to indicate fires; (f) reference cards for each ship.

Admirals choose their flagship and disposition of their fleet, each side will have 6-8 ships. However, dispositions must be either (a) single line ahead, 4" (or hexes) in from side of table; or, (b) line ahead in 2 sections separated by 8" (or hexes); or (c) double line parallel, separated by 4" (or hexes). Both fleets must be facing the same way.

British fleet: 1st rates: Victory (104), Royal George (100)
3rd rates: Bellerophon (80), Achille (74), Leviathan (74), Africa (64)
4th rate: Leander (50),
5th rate: Shannon (38)

Allied fleet: 1st rates: Santissima Trinidad (Sp) (130), Commerce de Marseilles (Fr) (120)
3rd rates: Franklin (80), Hoche (76), Duguay Trouin (74), Superbe (74)
4th rates: Pomone (40)
6th rate: Mars (22)

It is normal for the fleets to be divided in 2 balanced squadrons headed by a 1st rate.

ORDERS

Admirals write orders for the fleet not individual ships. This can be changed through signalling. Spanish and French can have an Admiral each. Orders should specify any manouevres and speeds, and a general order for action against the enemy. Individual ship orders can be written from each game turn that the ship begins to engage the enemy with cannon fire, so long as these do not contradict the Admiral's orders.

A note on doctrine: British ships fleet orders for 1st, 3rd and 4th rates must be to close and fire on enemy only at close range; Spanish and French can be ordered to engage at long range. This means the game will reflect the aggressive British naval doctrine of the era.

WIND DIRECTION

The table is assumed to be N/E/S/W and the wind direction is fully behind the ships at the start of the game, ie if both fleets face East then the wind is from the West. Place WIND marker on the board.

On GT1 fleets can choose to start at any speed of 2" (or hexes) or more.

At start of each turn throw 1d10 to see if wind changes direction: 1 sudden calm, 2 shift 1 point anticlockwise, 3 shift 1 point clockwise, 4 increase to strong wind, 5 decrease to light wind, 6-10 no effect.

Ships cannot sail more than 45 degrees into the wind (1 pt either side of wind direction) on a hex map this means they cannot sometimes move directly forward but will have to turn.

MOVEMENT * can be hexes or inches

Movement should be simultaneous, but when ships are within firing range move all ships one inch (or hex) before moving again, so that you can judge raking and collisions. Ships can fire as they bear..

With the weather gauge	Inches	Hexes
1st rate	3"	2
3rd	4"	3
4th	5"	4
5th	6"	5

Wind on the beam/quarter +2" OR +2 hexes (from 30 degrees aft to 90 perpendicular on the beam)

Wind astern +1" OR 1 hex (30 degrees either side of aft)

Wind on the Bow -1" OR 1 hex (from 90 to 45 degrees only)

Unfurl or furl sails - Increase/decrease speed by 50% per turn (remember that to engage with the enemy and board you need to be slowing down to 2" or hexes or less).

Turn: use turning circle or turn 1 hexside per move forward, but remember cannot turn into the wind; loss of rudder or ship's wheel cannot turn.

Dismasted: drift with the wind astern 1" (or 1 hex) per turn. Lose -1" or 1 hex per fallen mast or bowsprit.

Collisions - both vessels become entangled and drift with the wind in the same position.

Tacking into the wind - rotate boat from the stern 120 degrees (or 2 hexides) then move on new course at 2" or hexes.

Fire ships as above but must travel with the wind astern. Boats can always go 1" including into the wind.

FIRING

Ships count guns as batteries of 6 to get Broadside firing dice - see ship card. Ships cannot be sunk easily but will take damage to masts at long and medium range, and to hull and gunnery at close and medium range. Note for medium range ships will follow orders or choose which target.

Note that if movement is simultaneous then fire as you bear. Announce and resolve.

NB. Ships must CHOOSE which shot to load. Chain shot cannot damage hull. Chain shot cannot be double loaded. Hence chain shot can only be fired as single shot at medium range.

Gunnery ranges:

Non hex: 0-3" close, 3-6" medium, 6-9" long; 4th/5th rates 2"/4"/6"

Hex range: 1-2 (close) 3-4 (medium, 5-6 (long) 1st/3rd rates. 4th/5th rates long range is 5 only; U:1/2/3

Confirm SHOT TYPE loaded: Ball or Chain; Double loaded can only be BB (not CC or BC)

* Chain shot can only be used at close/medium range; Double loaded only at close range. Note on Ship Card.

Throw 1d6 per battery - check Ship Card for number of dice to be thrown then apply modifiers

Gunnery modifier factors - ship batteries + extra dice as below:

Raking through stern +2. Bow rake +1.

First broadside +1.

Elite crew +1. Raw crew -1.

Double shot close range only +2 (ballshot).

Carronades with grape loaded at close range only +1 dice (use different colour) hits on 4, 5, 6 to crew only.

THROW ALL DICE

ROUNDSHOT (Ball): Close: 5, 6. Medium: 6. Long: 6. (Damage to Hull and DP counts)

Assess damage from hits, throw 1d4: 1,2 = hull, 3= Battery, 4= Crew. Record 1 Damage Point (DP) per hit.

CHAINSHOT: Close and Medium: 5 or 6 on rigging. (No DP effect).

Assess damage, throw 1d4: 1 =bowsprit, 2 = foremast, 3 = main mast, 4 = mizzen, any doubles = rudder.

RECORD HITS on Ship Card. Once fired place smoke (white wool). Do not remove until reloading complete.

Reloading takes 1 turn (hence can only fire one broadside on alternate turns - or 2 turns if double shot is loaded * nb if already loaded with single shot can make double in 1 turn).

NB broadsides must be fired within 30 degree angle of the bow/stern of the ship.

If three 6s are thrown at close range a fire has started (place orange/grey cotton wool)

If six 6s are thrown at close range the magazine has been hit and the ship explodes and sinks.

A ship can sink if it has taken sufficient damage to reach its DP. See Ship Card. Throw 1d6 each turn - 4, 5, 6 begins sinking. Takes 3 turns.

BOARDING

Ships must either have collided and become entangled or either one is stationary or both are moving at 1" or hex.

Grapple: each ship throws 1d6 - winner can board. Elite crew +1 to die roll, Raw crew -1.

Choose boarding party eg mix crew and marines. 3 blocks each.

Defensive fire by Marines/Carronades (not yet fired) loaded with grape - throw 1d6 per block to kill on 4, 5, 6. (Max +3). Advantage being that you can direct fire to enemy Marines/crew boarding.

Max size of boarding party is 3 crew blocks per side BUT Marines who used defensive fire cannot be used again (assumed they are shooting from rigging and need clear line of sight).

Attacker and Defender then roll 1d6 for each crew boarding party block.

+ 1d6 for a single block of marines used (roll different colour dice, max one).

+ 1d6 for Admiral or Captain if leading boarding party or defending.

+ 1d6 for each deck taken so far in melee

+ 1 for Elite crew

-1 for Raw crew

Hits on 6 but Marines in melee hit on 5, 6. Side with most hits are the winners. IF 4 sixes thrown kills the enemy Captain or Admiral.

Capture ship deck by deck - 3 for 1st and 3rd rate, 2 for 4th and 1 for 5th rates. Capture leads to surrender.

SURRENDER

Ships must strike their colours if dismasted AND within close range of enemy rake astern.

Ships must surrender if boarded AND fail morale test.

MORALE TEST

Any ship where a friendly ship within 9" or hexes within LINE OF SIGHT has struck their colours.

Any ship of defenders who lost in melee. * NB this does not apply to boarders repelled

Throw 1d10

-1 dismasted

-1 on fire

-1 Admiral or Captain dead

-1 smaller ship vs bigger within close gunnery range or boarded

-1 each friendly ship within 9" and line of sight that has surrendered

-1 each lost melee round (cumulative)

Morale pass on 5-10

Fail on 1, 2, 3, 4 - flee if not boarded, surrender if boarded

PUT OUT FIRES

Roll at end of turn - 1,2,3 fire burns on, add orange flames. 4,5,6 - fire is put out

Fire that has burned for 3 turns may explode ship - on turn 4 roll 1d6 each turn - 6 = explodes.

DISENGAGE

Ship that repelled boarders may cut grapple lines - each ship rolls 1d6, winner can disengage.

SIGNALS

A small ship can act as a relay if in line of sight to transmit simple orders from flagship to other ship(s). Orders that can be given are: (1) Close, (2) Board, (3) Disengage, (4) Surrender, (5) Flee, (6) Take prizes, (7) Burn enemy ships, (8) Pursue, (9) Fire at rigging, (10) Form line ahead.

BOATS

Can be used to transmit orders, transfer an Admiral, take crew off a fire ship or tow a vessel.

WINNING

Each ship has a points value. 1st rates 20P each, 3rd rates 15P, others 10P.

Count up VPs as follows:

Value of each ship surrendered, captured or sunk.

+10VP for Flagship

+10VP for death of an enemy Admiral

All other enemy ships still at sea +5 if dismasted/rudderless, or on fire, or 50% damaged