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Sample file



## Introduction

The Napoleonic period is one of the most studied, researched and played periods in wargaming. It's an era of heroic actions, unique personalities, flamboyant uniforms, big battles and countless small engagements. *Song of Drums and Shakos* takes you to the middle of these unnamed, forgotten by History rear-guard clashes, focussing on the common soldier and giving him the Glory he deserves.

To play this game, you will need 3 six-sided dice (d6), a few miniatures in any consistent scale, three measuring sticks (50mm, 80mm and 120mm for 15mm) and a play surface of 60cm x 60cm. You will also need scenic material to represent hills, trees, fences and buildings. You can just use some paper outlines laid out on the battlefield if you do not have well crafted terrain.

## Game length

Once you know the rules, a game requires about 45 minutes.

## Scale and conventions

SDS recreates the battles of small groups of soldiers in the Napoleonic Era (1796-1815). In this period, French Armies and their enemies were usually organized in Corps of 2-3 Divisions, each made of two or more Brigades. Several Battalions composed a Brigade, and each French Battalion comprised six Companies. SDS focuses on actions of what we'll call a Squad, i.e. a unit of about a dozen men. The authors play with 15mm miniatures mounted on round bases although the game can be easily played with larger scales. The rules are written for two players but it's possible to play with more using a card driven initiative system. Write each player's name on a card, shuffle the cards, and then draw the top card to determine whose turn it is. Once all cards have been drawn and all players have acted, the turn ends, the cards are reshuffled and a new turn begins.

The nominal ground scale with 15mm models is 10mm=1 yard. One model represents one soldier. All distances and ranges are measured with three measurement sticks labeled Short (50mm), Medium (80mm) or Long (120mm). Pre-measuring (checking a range before declaring an attack or a movement) is allowed. Players may measure distances at any time. If you play with 20/25/28mm models, the playing

surface should be 90x90cm and measurement sticks should be 75mm, 120mm and 180mm. For 40mm or larger models, the playing surface should be 120x120cm and the measurement sticks should be 100mm, 160mm and 240mm.



## Profiles

Every model is described in game terms by a profile. Here is a sample profile:

### French Line Infantryman

Points 26                      Quality 4+                      Combat 2  
Weapons: Musket                      Special rules: none

**Points:** this is the cost of the soldier. Better soldiers cost more points.

**Quality:** this is an overall representation of the soldier's willingness to fight, reaction speed, initiative, drill and morale. It is the minimum number that can be rolled on a die to activate the soldier, so the lower the number, the better. In other words, a model with a Quality of 4+ will activate (act) on the die roll of a 4 or better.

When it is your turn, you nominate a soldier that you are trying to activate. You can roll one, two or three activation dice – you choose how many dice to roll. Every roll that is equal to or better than the model's Quality is a success. Every roll that is lower is a failure. A roll of 1 is always a failure and a roll of 6 is always a success when attempting a Quality roll.

You get to perform one action for every success. *If you roll two or more failures, the turn passes to your opponent (after the soldier acts on its one success, if it had one), who gets to nominate one of his soldiers and try to activate it.* It is generally wise to start acting with the soldiers with the best (lowest) Quality target numbers. Deciding who to activate, and how many dice to roll, will often be important tactical choices.

**Combat:** this is a measure of how well the soldier fights: the higher the number the better. In hand-to-hand combat, this value is added to the result of a die roll and is compared to the opponent's Combat plus the result of a die roll. In ranged combat, the weapon modifier of the shooting model is also added. Special rules and situational modifiers may influence combat. *For example, it is harder to fire against an enemy crouching behind a hedge. Anyone firing at him will have a -1 Cover modifier, representing the difficulty of hitting an enemy who is only partially visible.*

**Weapons:** the hand-to-hand weapon and firearm (if any) the model is armed with.

**Special rules:** this catchall category includes all the extra abilities of a soldier. Every special rule describes something that the soldier can do in addition to its basic profile. Some special rules are detrimental (for example, *Slow* soldiers move less frequently than other) and decrease the soldier's point value.



# Basic Rules

*For Players of Song of Blades and Heroes*

This game is based on the "Song of Blades" rules engine. The activation, Morale and Combat mechanics will be familiar to Players of SBH, while other concepts – designed to give the Napoleonic flavor – will be new. Group moves, for example, are handled slightly differently in SDS. A Leader can give multiple group orders and the group activation can take place between the Leader's actions. A SBH player will have to learn a few new rules but will gain back hours of fun and maybe a new favorite period for wargaming. Starting with a skirmish set lets you start with minimal investment in terms of models, painting time and terrain. The authors are working on an army-level version of these rules for simulating the bigger conflicts of the Napoleonic era.

## *Choose Nationality and Models*

Both players select which side they wish to play (France or Austria, Prussia, Russia, Great Britain) and then "design" their squad, buying soldiers from a roster of profiles for their chosen nationality. Players must agree beforehand who will play the "French" but once this is done, soldiers should be selected secretly. In a standard game, the total point value of all models in each squad must not exceed 400. Experienced players may opt to play with higher point totals.

## *Determine Attacker and Defender*

Both players roll a die adding +1 to the result for each model with the Scout special rule in their Squad. The player with the highest total decides if he wants to attack or defend. Re-roll ties.

## *Lay out the Terrain*

The defender lays out the terrain, setting up the tabletop and adding scenic features according to the following rules and tables or the scenario rules. The defender decides if he will place all features on the table immediately as they are generated or all at once after all of the features are generated. Both methods are legal.

There are several different terrain features that are generated by these tables: area terrain features, linear obstacles, buildings, trees, and so on.

Area Terrain Features can be from 1 Short (min.) x 1 Short (min.) to 1 Long (max.) x 1 Long (max.). Area features do not have to be square. Linear obstacles (such as fences, hedges and low walls) are all 1 Short maximum.

Buildings should all be 1 Medium x 1 Medium maximum.

A tree is just that: a single tree. It generally is large enough to provide cover for one model only.

“d3” means roll a six-sided die (d6) and halve the result (1 and 2 = 1, 3 and 4 = 2, 5 and 6 = 3).

Divide the playing surface in four quarters. For the first (upper left) quarter, roll a die:

1	woods	Roll again: on 1-3 add that number of trees, on 4-6 a wooded Area.
2	1 building	Add 1 Building.
3	rough	Add a rough Area.
4-6	none	

Then, going clockwise, roll twice for the second (upper right) quarter:

1	woods	Roll again: on 1-3 add that number of trees, on 4-6 a wooded Area.
2	1 building	Add 1 Building.
3	rough	Add a rough Area.
4	fences	Add d3 fences (Linear)
5-6	none	

Again, going clockwise, roll twice for the third quarter:

1	woods	Roll again: on 1-3 add that number of trees, on 4-6 a wooded Area.
2	1 building	Add 1 Building.
3	rough	Add a rough Area.
4	fences	Add d3 fences (Linear)
5	low walls	Add d3 low walls (Linear)
6	none	

Finally, roll 3 times for the last quarter:

1	Woods	Roll again: on 1-3 add the number of trees, on 4-6 a wooded Area.
2	Rough	Add a rough Area
3	Building	Add 1 Building
4	Fences	Add d3 fences (Linear)
5	Low walls	Add d3 low walls (Linear)
6	Small hill	Add a small hill Area.

The third (and last) terrain feature can be placed in the first quarter instead (defender's choice). All terrain features must be placed at least 1 Short from any other terrain feature.

If playing a scenario, the defender must abide by the scenario's rules on terrain placement.

### *Deploy Models*

The attacker decides which side of the table he will be entering from. Unless otherwise required by the scenario, the defender deploys his troops on the opposite side. Unless otherwise instructed by the scenario, models are deployed within a Medium distance from the table edge. After the defender has deployed, the attacker does the same.



## Initiative

Both players roll a die. The highest die roll gets the Initiative. Re-roll ties. Note that **Initiative is rolled only in the first turn of play**. After the first turn, players alternate activating their Squads as described below in the Activation procedure.

## Activation

The player with the Initiative nominates one of his models, and rolls one, two or three dice to activate it. The player chooses how many dice to roll. The roll(s) is/are made against the model's Quality. The model can act according to the number of successes rolled:

Successes rolled	Possible actions
1 failure	Model performs no action; player may nominate another model and try to activate it
1 success	Model performs one action, then player nominates another model and rolls to activate it
1 success, 1 failure	Model performs one action, then player nominates another model and rolls to activate it
1 success, 2 failures	Model performs one action, then play passes to the opponent
2 or 3 failures	Model performs no actions, play passes to the opponent
2 successes	Model performs 2 actions, then player nominates another model and rolls to activate it
2 successes, 1 failure	Model performs 2 actions, then player nominates another model and rolls to activate it
3 successes	Model performs 3 actions, after that the player nominates another model and rolls to activate it

The table is easier than it looks. Regardless of the number of dice you roll, you are entitled to one action per success rolled. But if at any point you roll two failures, play passes to the opponent. In all other cases, you can nominate another model and try to activate it (unless all your models have already been activated!).

**When rolling for activation, a roll of 1 is always a failure, and a roll of 6 is always a success.**

When all of a player's models have been activated, or whenever the acting player rolls 2 or 3 failures in the same dice roll, play passes to the opponent. Note that Initiative is not rolled again -- players simply alternate activating their models until they roll a double failure or until all of their models have been activated.

## Ending the Game

Play continues until one side breaks, a player decides to withdraw or specific scenario victory conditions are met.

A Squad breaks in the following circumstances:

- If a Squad commander (Officer or NCO) is still present, when only one model remains with him, and the opponent has more models on the table;
- If the Squad commander (Officer or NCO) has been killed, wounded or run off the table, when there are two or less models remaining, regardless of the number of the opponent's models.

In one off games, a Player can simply declare his withdrawal, thus ending the game.

## Activated Models

An activated model can perform one, two or three actions. Actions can be used to move, reload or attack, but no model can make more than one attack (hand-to-hand or ranged) per turn. Models may spend one extra action on an attack (hand-to-hand or ranged) to decrease their opponent's Combat value by 1 (performing a carefully aimed shot with a ranged weapon or striking a powerful blow with a hand-to-hand weapon).

## Group Actions

A Leader (and only a Leader) may give an order to 2-6 models to move as a group. The models must be in base to base contact with each other and be within Long distance of the Leader. The Leader must be activated before a group can move. The Leader spends one action to give the group move order. When giving Group orders, the Leader's actions can be done in any order the Player wishes. It is possible to give an order to a Group, dice for the Group activation(s) and perform them, and then use a second action of the Leader to follow up. This is the only exception to the rule stating that you have to complete all actions with a model before

activating another model. The Group action is therefore interrupting the normal chain of events; if activating for the Group causes a turnover, the Leader cannot act again that turn.

The grouped models may move and act in any way the player wants. The group makes only one activation roll (on one, two or three dice as normal) but uses the worst Quality in the group. *So if you have a group of three Veteran Infantrymen with Q3+ and a Conscript with Q4+, you must roll against a 4+.* If the roll(s) is/are successful, all the models in the group are entitled to move, reload, or attack, as normal. It is NOT mandatory that all models in a group perform the same action. A Leader can give more than 1 Group Order in a turn.

### *Group Action: Regroup*

The leader can give a Regroup order to any number of models within Long distance from him. Giving the Regroup order costs one action to the Leader. There's no need for the models to be adjacent. All models that are part of the regroup order act as a group move (thus they are activated on a single roll using the worst Quality in the group) and must end their move in base to base contact with at least another member of the group. During a Regroup order, models cannot attack or shoot, but they can reload, if they have enough actions.



### *Group Action: Volley Fire*

A group of soldiers may concentrate fire against a target to increase their chances of bringing him down (firing a Volley). A Leader must spend an Action to give the Volley fire order. The shooters must be within the Leader's command radius (Long) and in base to base contact with each other. Up to six models may participate in a Volley. Instead of making a combat roll for every shooter, make a single die roll, using the worst firing weapon/combat modifier in the group of shooters. No aimed fire is allowed, and if the fire causes Ammo depletion, it will affect just 1 model – the owner chooses which one.

The target receives -1 on its Combat score for every shooter beyond the first. All models firing a Volley end up with discharged weapons.

*Example: an Officer orders a group of three French Infantrymen (Combat 2, Musket +2) to shoot at an Austrian Officer (Combat 2) at short range. Assuming the Officer makes its Activation roll and the French soldiers make theirs, they will roll 1d6 +2 (their Combat score) +2 (for the musket), and the Austrian Officer will roll 1d6 +2 (Combat) -2 (2 infantrymen firing beyond the first). In the same case above, if one model of the firing group is over 1 Long range, the whole group will fire with just +1 for the Musket double range (Combat 2, Musket +1).*

All other modifiers are applied as normal. If a modifier applies to anyone in the group, it applies to Volley Fire as well. For example, if the target counts as under cover for one of the shooters, it counts as under cover for Volley Fire too.

### *Group Action: Shoot and Reload*

Another special group action, "Shoot and Reload" can be done only by even groups of soldiers (2, 4 or 6) arranged in a front and a second line. All soldiers must have a loaded weapon at the start of the turn. Shoot and Reload allows the player to have his front line models fire, and then exchange their weapons with the second line. This action will result in the front line having loaded weapons immediately after it fired and a second line with discharged weapons. It takes 2 actions to perform a Shoot and Reload. No aimed shots are allowed as this is a special case of the Volley Fire group action. Remember that in any case no model can attack more than once in a single turn.