

BLOCK WARS

A WWI infantry skirmish game by Caius, Silvan, and Jack Mitchell

Happy Birthday to Grandpa, 14 August 2020

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Equipment

To play the game, you need a set of Block Wars counters, a chessboard, and a pack of cards.

Board

The game is played on a chessboard. The Germans set up in rows 8, 7, and 6, while the Canadians set up in rows 3, 2, and 1. The only terrain feature is **barbed wire in front of each side's forward trench**, that is extending across the board between rows 6 and 5 and between rows 4 and 3. Rows 4 and 5 are No Man's Land.



Setup

1. The Germans place 4 infantry anywhere in Row 8 and 4 infantry anywhere in Row 7. In Row 6 they place 2 machine guns and 6 infantry. They set aside 6 infantry (as future reinforcements), along with two fighter planes. Note that each fighter plane token has a damaged and an undamaged side.
2. The Canadians place 4 infantry anywhere in Row 1 and 4 infantry anywhere in Row 2. In Row 3 they place 1 machine gun and 7 infantry. They set aside 6 infantry and 1 tank (as future reinforcements), along with two fighter planes. Note that both the tank token and each fighter plane token has a damaged and an undamaged side.
3. The deck of cards is shuffled and divided evenly into two facedown decks of 26 cards, one for each side.

Actions

Play alternates between a German turn and a Canadian turn. On each side's turn, it can perform two of the following actions:

- a) Move an infantry unit one space (any direction, including diagonally).
- b) Move an infantry unit **and** perform an attack with it. If doing this takes up the first action, resolve the attack first before doing your second action. The attack can be in any direction, including diagonally. An infantry unit cannot move-and-attack if it has already moved or moved-and-attacked.

IMPORTANT: An infantry unit can't move or move-and-attack if it has already either moved or moved-and-attacked.

- c) Fire a machine gun. The target must be within two spaces, not behind another unit, and within a firing arc of 45 degrees of straight ahead. Each firing of a machine gun is one action, so if both actions are spent firing the same machine gun it can fire twice in one turn, whether at different targets or at the same target. Machine guns cannot move. Machine guns cannot fire at the tank.
- d) Move the tank (if Canadian – the Germans don't have a tank). **This costs both actions.** The tank occupies four squares. It can only move straight ahead or straight back. When moving, it advances **only one row**. The tank cannot turn.
- e) Fire the tank's machine gun (if Canadian – the Germans don't have a tank). The machine gun on the tank operates exactly like an ordinary machine gun except that it can fire in any direction, calculating range from any square the tank occupies. Note that because moving the tank costs both actions, you can't move and fire the tank on the same turn.
- f) Move on a reinforcement. **This costs both actions.** The reinforcement appears on your back row and cannot attack that turn. The tank appears on four squares (which must be empty beforehand) in Row 1 and 2.

Attacks

Basic attacks.

The basic attack is by an infantry unit. The attacker turns over the top card of his deck, the defender the top card of his deck. If the attacker has a higher card (counting Ace as highest), the defender is removed; if the defender has a higher card, the attacker is removed. If it's a tie, nothing happens.

Machine guns.

The procedure is the same for machine gun attacks except that an attacking machine gun is not removed if it loses. (A machine gun is removed if loses while defending.)

Barbed wire.

An infantry unit (not a tank) attacking from No Man's Land into the enemy side of the board, i.e. **from Row 5 into Row 6** if attacking the Germans or **from Row 4 into Row 3** if attacking the Canadians, must beat the defender by two (e.g. must beat a card draw of 6 with an 8 or higher). Beating the defender by only 1 is treated as a tie, i.e. it has no effect.

Tanks.

To beat a tank, you have to beat it by two (as for barbed wire).

Special cards.

Three cards have special effects, whether they are drawn by the defender or the attacker. The effects are immediate and should be resolved as soon as the combat in which they were drawn is resolved.

- a) **King.** A player who draws a King fires an artillery barrage. To do this, pick a square on the board. For every unit on or next to that square (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally), the bombarding player draws a card. On a draw of 2 or 3 that unit is eliminated (if infantry or machine gun) or damaged (if the tank). Cards drawn when bombarding do not have special effects. If both players drew a King, both perform artillery barrages, starting with the player who was the attacker in the initial attack.
- b) **Ace.** A player who draws an ace immediately adds a reinforcement to his back row. If there are no more reinforcements in his pile of reinforcements, casualties can be reused, except for the tank, which can't be brought back on once destroyed. If both players draw an Ace, both reinforce.

- c) **Jack.** A player who draws a Jack must initiate an **air battle**. He picks one of his aircraft and announces he is going to try to strafe the enemy ground forces. His opponent can choose to try and engage him in a dogfight (but is not obliged to). A dogfight is fought exactly like a ground combat, attacker and defender each drawing a card. If it's a tie, nothing happens; otherwise, the aircraft with the lower card is damaged or, if already damaged from a previous dogfight, destroyed. If the attacker succeeded, or if there was a tie, he can proceed to strafe enemy ground forces. To strafe, he picks an enemy unit and attacks it in the normal way (without any effect of barbed wire). The tank cannot be strafed. Cards drawn during dogfights or strafing do not have special effects. If each player drew a Jack in the initial conflict, only the attacker in that conflict can attempt to strafe / initiate a dogfight. If you do not have any fighter planes left, you cannot attempt to strafe or initiate a dogfight.

Reshuffling

When either side comes to the end of its card deck, collect all the cards, shuffle them together, and divide them again into two fresh decks of 26 cards each.

The Tank

The tank can take two points of damage; after the second point of damage, it is destroyed. It does not operate any differently when it has only one point of damage.

Winning the game

A player wins the game by having two of his units simultaneously occupying the enemy's back row at any time.

Poison Gas

Because the Germans do not have a tank, they start with two machine guns instead of one. They can also, only once per game, use poison gas in a bombardment. If you want to use poison gas, you must announce you are doing so before you start the bombardment. The bombardment happens in the normal way, but units are killed (or the tank is damaged) on a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 instead of just a 2, 3, or 4.

Optional Rule: Victoria Cross / Iron Cross

Once per game, the Canadian player can convert the defeat of one of his infantry units (whether attacking or defending) into a victory: the soldier has won the Victoria Cross through some gallant action. Likewise, the German player can do the same thing once per game, the soldier winning the Iron Cross.

Optional Rule: Fighter Aces & Damaged Aircraft

Each player designates one of his fighter planes as that of an Ace (like Billy Bishop, William Barker, von Richthofen, et al.). The ace adds one to the cards he draws, i.e. if he draws a 6 it's treated as a 7, a Jack is treated as a Queen, etc. A damaged aircraft (the Ace's or the other one's) subtracts one, i.e. treats a 6 as a 5. These could cancel out, so that an Ace in a damaged aircraft treats a 6 as a 7 (because he's an Ace) and the 7 as a 6 again (because his plane is damaged).