

Matchlocks & Pikes

Free rules for battles 1618 to 1650

PLAY TEST VERSION 1.2

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INTRODUCTION

Matchlock & Pikes is principally a board wargame set in the pike and shot period, from 1618 to 1650. This covers the Thirty Years War till the Battle of Dunbar at the end of the English Civil Wars. The game pieces are wooden blocks, but single unit bases with miniatures can be just as easily used. If players are using this format, then in the rules simply replace terminology "block(s)" with the phrase "unit(s)".

A game board is laid out in a rectangle, with a grid system overlaid. This space is 12 grids wide and 9 grids deep. A player's edge is the long side, opposite to their opponent. The game focuses of manoeuvre and battle space domination. The game board is made up of A4 mini boards placed in a 3x3 arrangement.

There is a combat system to resolve conflicts in the same grid. These rules also use a system of alternative interactions by the individual players instead of the more traditional wargaming approach of "I go, you go" by turns. The game instead consisting of several mini phases which do not stop. The game flow is one fluid sequence of interactions without the detailed steps known as 'start/end of turn phase'. In Matchlock & Pikes the only interruption to the flow of the game, is resolving shooting or hand to hand combat. Additionally, players will have to manage their army's overall morale and some other game influencing resources.

PDF files are provided to allow players to print out the resources needed, except for providing six sided dice and game pieces. Blocks or miniatures as units. Printed game pieces are provided as a PDF which can be cut out and glued onto 40mm x 20mm MDF bases.

Finally, these rules are designed for casual play and are not written for match or similar competitive play. Players are welcome to use them as such but will have to make their own umpire rulings.

GAME BOARDS & TERRAIN

The game board is 12 grid squares long by 9 squares deep. Players play opposite each other using the long edge. Included in the rules are A4 boards with 4x3 grids printed on. The boards have a range of terrain densities. There are 9 boards and these are positioned in a 3x3 arrangement. The method of laying out the boards is detailed in the Setup section of the rules below.

On a major battlefield there is rarely a "billiard table", so in **Matchlock & Pikes** there is a reasonable amount of terrain on the game space. In these rules, terrain does not cripple certain units, but instead provides specific advantages in certain situations to the block. Blocks do not go down but opposing blocks may gain an advantage.

Board Types

The following details the different types of boards. The ratio of the different boards can be discarded if representing a distinct historical battle.

Open

These boards are completely free of any terrain. A game space must have a min 4 of these boards and a maximum of 6 boards. The other 3-5 boards must be made up of a combination of the Moderate and Dense board types. These are described below.

Moderate

These boards contain 3 out of the 6 grids with some form of game influencing terrain. The other 3 grids are open.

- 3-5 of these boards can be used in a game.

Dense

These boards contain 4 out of the 6 grids with some form of game influencing terrain. The other 2 grids are open.

- 2 of these boards can be used in a game.

Terrain

The following section explains the different types of terrain in the rules.

When resolving melee, the defender of the grid will have advantage of the terrain, unless for example where a block is charging from a higher level of a slope to a lower level. Then the chargers are assumed to be charging downhill. Players are expected to use common sense to resolve who has advantage.

No terrain affects movement.

Buildings

This is where a square has a sufficient buildings and habitation to enable it to be defensible. Battlefields would have several out buildings, single barns dotted around. These are not represented.

A building square would typically be a village or a suburb of a major town.

- These block line of sight unless viewing from a higher level
- These grids provide cover

Enclosed and Ploughed fields

These grids represent a significant number of enclosed field and ploughed fields. The grid will also include various tracks lined by hedgerows. The density is sufficient to affect troops operating in the grid, particularly horse.

- Dragoons are advantaged when in this type of grid.
- These grids do not block line of sight in their self, however if combined by a slope that will need to resolve separately.
- These grids provide cover

Open

This is completely blank square. It has no impact in the game.

Slope

This is where a height level takes place. The lowest level is 1 and the highest level is 5. The higher the level number the further up hill is the terrain feature.

- These are sight blocking if higher than level for a particular block

| From | To (View relative to 'From') | | | | |
|---------|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 5 |
| Level 1 | same | higher | higher | higher | higher |
| Level 2 | lower | same | higher | higher | higher |
| Level 3 | lower | lower | same | higher | higher |
| Level 4 | lower | lower | lower | same | higher |
| Level 5 | lower | lower | lower | lower | same |

Streams and Rivers.

These run along the edge of the grid. They represent all significant streams with banks, plus a river that will impede infantry and artillery.

- They only provide defensive advantage in the first round of melee when enemy blocks move into the grid. The owner of the grid gains the advantage.
- This type of grid does not block line of sight.

Woods and Forests

These grids represent a significant number of trees, orchards, woods, or forests. Tracks are assumed to exist to allow the movement of troops, however they impeded organised formations.

- Dragoons are advantaged when in this type of grid
- These grids are sight blocking to other grids behind from the angle of view for a block
- These grids provide cover

ARMY ELAN

In **Matchlock & Pikes**, an army has a point at which it will break and disperse from field of battle. The way these rules track this point of psychological state as 'Army Elan'. This is a sliding scale with a start of game point. It then is adjusted according to loses received or inflicted. Once an army's elan reaches zero, the game immediately ends and the army has been routed.

- The elan level is adjusted as an outcome of shooting or combat
- The elan range is 1-20
- If the elan levels reaches 0. The army immediately routs
- Elan levels at the start of game are detailed below

Army elan starting levels

| Army motivation level | Starting level |
|---|----------------|
| Exceptionally well-motivated or skilfully led | 12 |
| Reasonably well motivated | 10 |
| Poorly motivated or badly led. | 8 |

CHOOSING ARMIES

Players are left to discuss amongst themselves the composition of their armies. **Matchlocks & Pikes** is principally a block board game. For a casual game then opposing armies of 24 blocks as side in total is recommended. Using 20 blocks a side will provide more manoeuvre based game. More than 24 blocks a side, players will find they will have a "front to back" game of attrition.

When creating historical battles, it is recommended that player calculate the forces on a pro-rata of 24 blocks vs the quoted numbers of men per side. Some units present may need to be abstracted.

If players want to have a more "match play" experience, then you are welcome for formulate your own points system and army lists.

Representing iconic formations

The Troop Type section below details how represent different formations and behaviours in the game, but below are two suggestions for two specific ones.

Early tercios

For the early period of these rules when the "Castle like" catholic tercios where in use, it is recommended that this is represented by 3 Foot (aggressive) blocks per grid and nations that do not use the tercio system only have 2 foot blocks per grid.

Swedish Brigades

For Swedish brigades, it is represented that these are aggressive foot.

TROOP TYPES

Matchlock & Pikes does not consider individual unit morale, training, or the minutia of how a unit is armed as part of the game. Instead, the rules consider how the individual unit types would interact. The following details the different troop types.

Artillery

This represents all types of field, mortar, or position artillery. Battalion guns are a factor in the shooting interaction. Artillery has the following rules.

All artillery

- They may only shoot if they did not move last interaction
- They may only shoot if they did not shoot last interaction
- They cannot fall back or be driven back in any circumstances.

Field or position artillery

- May shoot up to a range of 10

Mortar artillery

- May shoot at targets out of line of sight
- May shoot up to a range of 5

Dragoons

This represents all mounted infantry known as Dragoons.

- They influence the “move to battle” set up phase of the game
- May shoot up to a range 1
- Are advantaged in terrain
- They cannot be in any grid with other Foot

Foot

This covers all forms of infantry fighting as either as mixed pike and shot or all musket companies. They are assumed to adopt the right doctrine for the enemy in their vicinity.

For example, if horse is nearby then pike and shot units would prepare to receive horse. If engaging other infantry then they will be assumed to be in a push of pike.

- May shoot up to a range of 1
- Are advantaged vs horse

The rules do represent the doctrine of a nation's army. A player's army can only adopt one doctrine. An army must have one of the two doctrines.

Aggressive

This represents where an army's doctrine is to close into melee or due to a high pike to shot ratio the preference is too close to a push of pike. Examples would be Swedish Brigade Foot during the Thirty Years War or Royalist Cornish foot.

- If in the adjacent grid from enemy Foot, they must charge into a grid containing an enemy block unless into terrain other than open.
- They are never forced to charge a grid only containing Dragoons.

Musketry

This represents an army's doctrine of using the shot elements to exchange fire with the enemy and the pike element is there to protect the shot as needed.

- If enemy of any type are in an adjacent grid and the owning player does not do any other interaction this grid, then the Foote must shoot at that grid.

Horse

This represents all mounted troops who are not dragoons. These rules do not distinguish in melee between aggressive doctrines, Cavaliers or Swedish Horse and others that use integrated commanded shot tactics. However, we do distinguish between behaviours. These are detailed below and a player's army can only represent one doctrine and must have one of the following two doctrines.

- Horse is never forced to charge a grid only containing Dragoons or foot

Controlled

This represents horse which are more controlled either through training and experience or have elements of commanded shot attached. In a player's army all or none of the horse have commanded shot attached. They would charge at the trot and use pistols just prior and during contact. Examples would be Parliament horse with commanded shot or Cromwell's Ironside horse.

Controlled horse has the following properties.

- They do not have to charge enemy in an adjacent grid
- If considered to have commanded shot attached, they may shoot at a range of 1, but the same grid cannot shoot consecutively
- If they capture an enemy grid in melee, then the owning player may elect to pursue one block, 1 grid towards the opponent's long edge. Other horse blocks in the same grid may not pursue.

Cuirassiers

This represents horse which are still heavily armoured. They are close combat cavalry. They would charge at the trot.

- They cannot have command shot attachments.
- If enemy horse is in an adjacent base, they must charge into a grid containing an enemy block unless into terrain other than open.
- If they capture an enemy grid in melee, then the owning player may elect to pursue one block, 1 grid towards the opponent's long edge. Other horse blocks in the same grid may not pursue.

Impetuous

This represents horse which are impetuous or very keen to close to melee. They would typically charge at a gallop with sword and pistols drawn. Typically, they would not have commanded shot attached, Example would be Finnish Horse or Royalist Cavaliers Impetuous horse have the following properties.

- If enemy horse is in an adjacent base, they must charge into a grid containing an enemy block unless into terrain other than open.
- If they capture an enemy grid in melee, then atleast one block must pursue 1 grid towards the opponent's long edge. Other horse blocks may be held or allowed to pursue as per the owner players wishes.

BLOCKS IN GRIDS

Up to any 3 friendly blocks can occupy a given square, within the follow constraints.

- Only one block of friendly Artillery can occupy any single grid
- Only one block of friendly Dragoons can occupy any single grid
- Blocks can only enter a grid occupied by enemy block(s) using a charge action. In that situation a grid can contain a total of 6 blocks from all players, but never more than 3 from any one player's army.
- This is known as a contested grid.
- An artillery block can never enter a contested grid.
- If a player has blocks already in a contested, then they can feed any number of blocks into the grid up to the limit of 3 friendly blocks in a grid, but still not exceeding the 6 block limit for all players and not exceeding the limit for artillery and dragoons.

INTERACTIONS

The rules use a system of interactions actionable in a single grid.

- When a player selects a specific grid, this called activating the grid
- The player completes an interaction on all blocks in a grid.
- The following details the different interactions allowed on a grid
- The same grid can be activated any number of times in a game
- A given block can only have 1 interaction applied, however multiple blocks in a grid can have different interactions applied to them
- A grid cannot be activated if the blocks are more than 2 grids away from another friendly block. Except artillery

Break off

This is where blocks disengage from combat in the same grid.

- All friendly blocks in a grid must disengage
- Block's disengaging can only move towards the owning player's long edge
- Blocks can finish in different grids to each other
- Blocks move 1 grid when disengaging
- 1 block is automatically removed from play. See removing blocks from play rule

Charge/Feed into Combat

This is where a block or blocks are moved into a square or squares, already containing the opponents blocks.

- Resolve combat for all grids which have had a block added to it this interaction. See the reference sheet below to resolve
- Example: If the active player moves 2 blocks from 1 grid into two different grids, then two combats need to be resolved.
- All charges for all troop types are 1 grid and can only be into an adjacent grid
- Artillery can never action this interaction
- A charge or purse can finish more than 2 grids away from another friendly block

Move

This is where blocks are moved into another grid and not occupied by an enemy block.

- All movement for all troop types is 1 grid
- Any combination of blocks can move as single interaction.
- Any combination of blocks from an activated can finish in different adjacent grids
- No block can start a move more than 2 grids away from another friendly block
- No block can finish a move more than 2 grids away from another friendly block
- A move can be away from an enemy grid, except were occupying the same grid as the enemy

Shooting

This is where blocks who are eligible to shoot can do so. Not all blocks have to be able to shoot enable this interaction for other blocks in the same grid.

- The target grid must be in line of sight unless mortar artillery
- The target grid must be in range
- See the reference sheet below to resolve shooting

Stand/Pass

This is where a player does not wish to active any grid. If this is done constantly this can led to a stale game, Participants are asked not to fall into this cycle and have a gentlemanly game. Also, participants are asked not to swap the same block across two grids in a repetitive way to avoid making a specific play elsewhere.

- If two consecutive Stand/Passes are played by a single given player, then reduce the army's Elan level by 1

REMOVING BLOCKS FROM PLAY

Removing blocks from play represents that being destroyed. This is an amalgamation of casualties and loss of willingness to fight. Once a block is removed from play, it will not return to the game.

When the rules instruct the removal of a block, the following sequence is applied in order

Caused by combat

- Remove one block of the type that is the same as the majority types of the enemy in the same grid
- If there is not the same block type, then remove a block type that is the majority type for owning the player
- If there is not a majority for the grid then remove a block of the owning players choosing

Caused by shooting from muskets

- Remove a block that could have shot
- If not able to, remove a block of the player's choice

Caused by shooting from artillery

- Remove a block of the players choice

Common to all

- The player who had the block destroyed, decreases their army's Elan by 1. If the army elan is now zero. The game ends with the opposing army as the winner
- The player's army which destroyed the block, increases their army's elan by 1

RESOLVING COMBAT

Combat is when a grid contains blocks from opposing armies.

- A block has moved from an active grid into a contested grid
- Or when a contested grid is selected by the active player.

To resolve combat, complete the following sequence:

1. Players calculating their situation score
2. Players calculate the D6 to hit value from the netted out scores
3. Inactive player rolls relative to the active players D6 value
4. Not the difference in successes. The player with the most hits is the winner. The other player is the loser
5. If a draw, both players re-roll
6. Apply outcome to the loser

| Situation | Score per block |
|--|-----------------|
| Each block fighting same type | +2 |
| Each foot block fighting a horse block | |
| Each Impetuous Horse block charged | |
| Each Aggressive Foot block | |
| Each block surplus not matched | +1 |
| Each Cuirassier block | |
| Each Dragoon not in terrain | -2 |
| Each Artillery block | |

| Score difference active player | <=2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | >=6 |
|--|-----|----|----|----|-----|
| D6 value active player | 6 | 5+ | 4+ | 3+ | 2+ |
| D6 Value needed against active player D6 | | | | | |
| D6 value for inactive player | 2+ | 3+ | 4+ | 5+ | 6 |

| Resolution |
|---|
| Loser removes 1 block. See removing block from play rule. |

RESOLVING SHOOTING

Shooting is resolved when the current player activates a grid with atleast 1 block which is eligible to shoot. Not all blocks need to be able to shoot, but all eligible blocks must shoot. If any enemy blocks in the target grid can shoot, they must return fire. This is resolved as part of the shooting roll

Resolving shooting in the following sequence:

1. Players calculating their situation score. Min 1
2. Players calculate the D6 to hit value from the netted out scores
3. Inactive player rolls relative to the active players D6 value

| Situation | Score per block |
|--|-----------------|
| Artillery block shooting | +3 |
| Active player Musketry Foot shooting | |
| Active player Aggressive Foot shooting | +2 |
| Dragoon shooting | +1 |
| Horse with commanded shot | |
| Inactive player foot shooting | |
| Target is in cover | -1 |

| Score difference active player | <=2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | >=6 |
|--|-----|----|----|----|-----|
| D6 value active player | 6 | 5+ | 4+ | 3+ | 2+ |
| D6 Value needed against active player D6 | | | | | |
| D6 value for inactive player | 2+ | 3+ | 4+ | 5+ | 6 |

| Resolution |
|--|
| For a hit, player falls back 1 block of their choice towards their long edge. If unable to fall back removes 1 block. See removing block from game rule. If an enemy block falls back then increase the friendly army's elan by 1 |

GAME PHASE: MOVING TO ENGAGEMENT

To start the game the players, need to simulate the 'move to contact' of an engagement. In **Matchlock and Pikes**, we represent this with the players setting up the game space. If playing a historic battle then this stage can be by passed.

Deciding who is the attacker or defender

Firstly, the players need to resolve who will be the attacker and who will be the defender. This is done as follows.

1. Both players roll 1D6 and add the number dragoon blocks in their armies
2. If a draw, re-roll
3. The winning player has the choice of being the attacker or the defender

Advantages for the attacker

- Adds 1 to their army's elan level
- The attacker starts deployment after the defender has placed 50% of their army.
- They are the first active player once the battle phase begins

Advantages for the defender

- They choose 3 of the board types.
- They place the first board and dictate its start position in the game board layout.

Layout of the game boards

- Divide the game area into a 3x3 grid and numbered 1-9
- Stack the 4 open boards to the side. These are accessible to both players at any point
- The defender decides on 3 of the terrain type boards and stacks to their side. These can only be positioned by the defender
- The attacker decides on the other 2 terrain type boards and stacks to their side. These boards can only be positioned by the attacker
- Once all 9 boards are selected, place 1 open board in position 5 of the diagram below
- Starting with the defender, the player selects one of the boards, either open or their specific 3 and places it in one of the positions 1-4 or 6-9
- Once a board is positioned it cannot be moved
- The attacker then selects one of remaining boards. Either an open board or one of theirs and positions it on a long edge or short edge position next to an already placed board
- Boards cannot be placed by a player corner to corner
- Players now alternate positioning a single board until the boards have been positioned

The game board is now ready for deployment.

Game board setup grid

| | | |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 (start) | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 |

Deployment

Unless playing a historical battle, the deployment zone for each player is shown below. If playing a historical battle, then deploy as per the battle and skip this step, moving straight to "Game phase: Battle".

Deployment zones

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | PLAYER 1 Deployment Zone | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | PLAYER 2 Deployment Zone | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

Deployment is done in the following sequence

1. The defender deploys 50% (rounded up) of their total blocks and must include all artillery blocks
2. The attacker deploys 50% (rounded up) of their total blocks and must include all artillery blocks
3. The defender deploys 25% (rounded up) of their total blocks
4. The attacker deploys 25% (rounded up) of their total blocks
5. Defender deploys all their remaining blocks
6. Attacker deploys all their remaining blocks

"LET BATTLE BEGIN"

GAME PHASE: BATTLE

A battle after setup is the sequence is very simple. Alternative interactions are repeated until one army's elan level reaches zero or the players decide there is an outcome.

1. Starting with the attacker, complete all interactions from activating a given grid of the attacker's choice.
2. The defender now completes all interactions on a grid of their choice.
3. The players now alternate until one army is routed.