Chanson de Geste

Miniature Battles of the High Middle Ages: Rules and Guide to Play

Contents

Introduction

Perhaps the single most-famous poem in all of the High Midddle Ages, *The Song of Roland,* was about an event which - although distorted through the application of extreme poetic license - was based on an actual battle, Charlemagne's paladin Roland defending the pass at Roncevalles against a vast horde of the Saracen enemy. In 1250 AD, this kind of poem was the equivalent of an epic Hollywood blockbuster. The poem is a "chanson de geste" - a "song of deeds" - which extols the might and bravery of great heroes primarily through combat in service to their lord and church. The chansons de geste defined the meaning of chivalry for the era.

It is that concept of chivalry - knightly service, whether in a feudal conflict or a crusade - which best characterises the battles of the time, where the charge of mounted knights was deemed sufficient to defeat any foe, so long as God willed it. While the tactics may not have been sophisticated, the charge of the armored knight was indeed a fearsome thing in the right circumstances. Leadership was a matter of nobility and individual prowess, and such leadership was deemed essential in battle. It was only when the knight's enemies - whether crafty horse archers from the desert, Scots from the North, or urban miltias from the communes - could harness their enemies' arrogance and tempt them into an ambush or trap that they were likely to be defeated.

These rules cover the period from the end of the 11th century to the beginning of the 14th, that period when the chansons de geste were at their most popular. This era saw the Crusades, the Baron's Wars, the Wars of Scottish Independence, the "First Hundred Years War" between the French and English, the War of the Flemish Succession, the Franco-Flemish War (the Battle of the Golden Spurs!), various conflicts involving the Holy Roman Empire (notably Frederick Barbarossa's invasion of Italy), and even the Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe, along with many other conflicts. As might be guessed from the title, the focus is on those involving France (and western Europe), but the system will work for all of these conflicts and more.

The game is designed to be used with 28mm miniatures, and is intended for club and convention play. but also works well for remote games. In all of these settings, the larger figures show off this colorful period to an advantage, and make for a better spectacle. It is possible to use smaller figures by adjusting scales and distances or increasing the number of figures per base. Unlike some popular rules sets for the period, *Chanson de Geste* is designed to recreate in full the battles of the era as historical simulations, rather than small skirmishes or mythical actions. Despite this, the games play quickly, in part as a result of the use of a device or computer to speed the action. Players may choose to let the device do all the randomisation for them, or may use traditional six-sided dice. Only one device is required - used ideally by a GM - but more can be used simultaneously for large games.

Armies of the era tended to be small, and lend themselves well to tabletop recreation. There is no hard-and-fast figure representation scale, so players can adjust this to suit the battle they are refighting, but a typical army will have from 2 to 4 leaders, each

commanding 3 to 5 units. As in history, armies are organised into "battles" (wings, essentially) each of which would be lead by a knight of suitable birth and reknown. Such leaders are very important during play, as much for restraining their knights - always anxious to come to grips with any visible foe - as for leading their troops. Losing a leader in combat can, however, be devastating.

While there are many good rules sets for gaming Ancient and Medieval battles, often they require too much knowledge to play quickly or are simply too finicky to be easily used in a convention setting, or in club games where players may not know the rules well. *Chanson de Geste* aims to fill this gap by being simple to learn and play, but to give decisive, satisfying results over the course of a normal gaming session.

We hope you find the system a good one for performing your own deeds of heroism and valour on the tabletop! Deus vult! Montjoie Saint Denis!

^ **Equipment Needed for Play**

As with any miniatures game, figures and terrain are needed to represent the battlefield and combatants. This game is meant to represent entire field battles, and so is not a skirmish game in terms of tabletop representation. As with many Ancient and Medieval rules sets, exact man:figure ratios and ground scales are not specified. Miniatures may be understood to be representative, however: a couple of houses surrounded by a wall represent a village, etc. One figure is a larger number of actual combatants.

Rules and tape measures in inches are required for play. Dice are not. The game app will perform all needed randomization if you choose not to use dice. Markers are needed for Disorder and Demoralization - further losses are expressed as base losses (see below on unit basing). Small chits or other markers for showing which units and Leaders have already acted during the turn are quite useful. The use of a tablet or smart phone during play (rather than a PC) is not critical, but may prove convenient. Only one device for running the game app is required, and it is used by the game master (or whoever is appointed to act in that capacity). The game app will run on PCs, tablets, and smart phones: any device with a javascript-capable web browser may be used. If desired, more than a single device may be used during play, but the "official" one for determining outcomes must be clearly identified for any given action.

A normal wargames table is required, although for most battles a fairly small one will suffice. 4 foot x 6 foot or larger is ideal. For smaller tables, players may wish to reduce figure scale to 15mm or smaller, and to reduce all distances and ranges by half, or replace inches with centimeters.

Units, Troop Types, and Base Sizes

The following list provides all of the different troops types used in the game.

Mounted Knights: This troop type includes the heavily armored knight, often on a barded horse, who charged with couched lance. In many cases, the rear ranks of knightly formations were made up of less-heavily-armored sargeants - such units are still classed as Mounted Knights. Knights are prone to charge in an undisciplined manner at any visible enemy in open terrain, but may often be controlled by the presence of a leader. Knights are vulnerable to missile fire because of their horses, and do not fare well against close-order spearmen/pikemen, but benefit from massive initial impetus when charging an enemy in open ground.

Knights on Foot: Knights often fought dismounted during this period. They are heavily armored, and may use two-handed weapons such bastard swords or axes, or may fight with sword, mace, or single-handed axe and shield.

Medium Horsemen: This troop type includes groups of mounted sargeants deployed independent of their knightly masters, or other types of non-knightly "heavy" cavalry. This includes the heavier classes of saracen and Mongol mounted troops. Medium Horsemen benefit from charging, but not to the extent that knights do. They may be armed with missile weapons or not, which should be specified by scenario, but are always capable of fighting effectively in melee. They are generally armored, but not as heavily as knights.

Footmen: Massed formations of infantry, typically armed with a mixture of swords, axes, spears, bills, and similar weapons. They are not heavily armored, but will typically carry shields for protection. They are often viewed as second-line troops during this period, but can be effective if well-deployed. This category includes any heavy or medium infantry which fought in massed formations but did not have a high degree of discipline or drill. Unlike Levy, however, they are soldiers rather than just armed peasants.

Spearmen/Pikemen: These are massed formations of troops typically armed with long spears or pikes. They are capable of a modicum of discipline, and will present attackers with a hedge of spear points. This category includes spear-armed Scottish infantry, Flemish and "Brabançon" pikemen, Italian communal militia, elite Muslim spearmen, Byzantine heavy infantry, etc. While sometimes armored, they would not be as heavily armored as knights, but often use shields.

Archers: Archers represent bow-armed foot troops operating in mass formations, firing volleys of arrows. They are not yet using the longbow, so do not have the devastating impact of archers in the Hundred Years' War, but are often found on the battlefields of the era. They are not very good in melee. Skirmishing troops with bows are classed as Irregulars.

Crossbowmen: The crossbows of the era were powerful, but very slow to load. Crossbowmen operated in fairly dense units, sometimes protected by pavises (specify by scenario). Crossbowmen are not very good in melee. Skirmishing troops armed with crossbows count as Irregulars.

Levy: Militia infantry operating in dense formations, unarmored and equipped with a variety of hand weapons including swords, clubs, spears, staffs, bills, and so on. Such troops lack discipline and were of questionable value on the battlefield.

Light Horsemen: Mounted crossbowmen, jinetes, saracen light cavalry, Cuman auxiliaries, and similar skirmishing light horsemen. These troops may engage with missile weapons or the lance, and if armed with bows, javelins, or crossbows they will be capable of fire. In no case are they line-of-battle troops, however: they are useful to harrass the enemy, and may often run when charged. This was a fairly common troop type in some armies of the period, but generally in very small proportion to the other types.

Irregulars: Lighter infantry types capable of skirmishing or operating in rough terrain. These troops may be armed with crossbows, bows, slings, javelins, or any combination of these, and will also carry hand weapons. They often wore some degree of armor. They operated in loose formations on foot. Unlike the classical image of light infantry, they were not averse to close combat, so long as it as in terrain which gave them a decent chance. Knights in heavy armor who have bogged down in the mud, for example, could easily become the targets of Irregulars! They will generally avoid close combat in the open.

Transport: Wagons, mule trains, and similar slow-moving conveyances. Typically used as an accessory to scenario goals, as they are not combat-capable. Transport will tempt attacking troops to break ranks and plunder, so camps may be represented as non-moving Transport units if they are an objective in a scenario.

Units will consist of 1 to 6 bases, all of the same type (a normal size unit will be 3 or 4 bases). Any troop type may come in any size unit, but some units such as Irregulars and Light Horsemen tend to be only a base or two in size. The following chart defines base sizes for game purposes. Note that these bases may need to be composed of two single-rank physical bases, depending on how troops are mounted (e.g., if your forces are based for DBA, etc.).

All units are based on a 60mm (2.5-inch) frontage.

Type	Base Depth	Number of Figures Per Base
Leaders	60mm (square or round)	1-3
Mounted Knights	40mm	3
Dismounted Knights	40mm	5 or 6
Footmen/Billmen	40mm-60mm	5 or 6
Archers	60mm	3-6
Crossbowmen	60mm	3-6
Levy	40mm-60mm	3-5
Spearmen/Pikemen	40mm-60mm	6-8 (may optionally be 12 figures on 90mm deep base for consistency with other rules' basing)
Light and Medium Horsemen	40mm	3 (Medium) or 2 (Light)
Irregulars	30-40mm	2-3
Transport	60mm	As per model(s)

For representation purposes, a base of mounted troops will represent 200-250 men, and an infantry base twice that number, For smaller actions this can be reduced by half, so that each mounted base is 100 men, and each foot base 200. Number of figures recommends representation in 28mm, but this is actually unimportant: casualties are by bases, not by figures. It is only important that different troop types can be easily distinguished on the table, and that the figures "look the part." Larger numbers of smaller figures can also be placed on bases of the sizes suggested, or dimensions can be reduced to fit the figures (along with all other game distancces).

Note that the size of a unit at the start of play is significant. When a full half or more of the bases in a unit are destroyed, the unit is immediately removed from play. Units in this game represent the body of that troop type within a "battle," so a typical army will have three or four units in each of three or four battles, with each one commanded by a Leader. (Because this is not intended as a tournament rules set, point values and army

lists are not provided: these can be taken from the usual sources to provide a sense of proportions and relative values of different troops types).

Knights on foot assault a unit of crossbowmen.

[^](#) Turn Sequence

The game is played as a sequence of turns, during which each unit notionally makes a single action (there are exceptions). During each turn, each Leader on the tabletop will be given a single initiative, and will have a set number of activations which can be used to act with the units under his or her command.

One side is designated the Attacker, and the other the Defender (the terms are only meaningful by scenario). The turn sequence is:

1. Mounted Knights which have a valid target within line of sight and charge range (12 inches) must test to see if they perform an uncontrolled charge. Such charges are performed in the order preferred by the commanding player, with the Initiative button used to determine which side will go first if both sides have uncontrolled charges, and with subsequent uncontrolled charges alternating

between sides until all are completed. Further uncontrolled charges may be triggered during the course of play (see below).

2. Click the Initiative button. A side will be identified. That side may choose to go first, or to have their opponent do so.

3. The side acting first will now select a Leader to give the Initiative to. Click the "Command" button, to be given a number of activations (from 1 to 3). To this number Exceptional Leaders will add 1. Up to that number of activations may be taken by the units commanded by the Leader who is given the Initiative. Each Leader may only be given the Initiative once per turn (that is, they may only "act" once per turn).

4. For each activation, one unit may make an action such as moving, firing, charging, fighting an ongoing melee, rallying, etc. (see below). During this phase, the Leader my move at any single point, to bring them into contact with one of their units, or to bring units into their command radius. Leader movement does not require an activation.

5. When the Leader is done moving and activating their units, the Initiative passes to the opposing player, who then clicks the "Command" button and uses their activations, as above. The Initiative will pass back and forth, one Leader per side, until all the Leaders on the table have been given an Initiative, and have activated their units. If one side has more Leaders than the other, the side with fewer Leaders may "pass" on an Initiative once for each extra leader possessed by the other side.

6. Any units which can fire, even those which have already acted for the turn, may now do so. This fire is simultaneous.

7. Any units which are involved in on-going melee, but which have not yet acted this turn, will now fight the ongoing melee. The order of activation for all of these cases is performed by clicking the initiative button, and the Attacker or Defender will select any one of their units to fight, as indicated. This activation passes back and forth between the players for each activation, until all required units have fought.

8. Check to see if either side has lost their camp or baggage train. Count the number of destroyed and demoralized units, and the number of killed or captured Leaders, to determine if either army has broken. If not, repeat the turn sequence.

Note that using markers to indicate which units and Leaders have acted can be a good idea (small colored chits work well for this).

^ Using the Game App

The tabletop game is run in basically the same fashion as a traditional paper-and-dice game, but instead of looking modifiers and results up on charts, you simply consult the app. If desired, the app can generate combat results directly, or can provide modifiers for players to use when dicing. (In this game, both fire and combat are competitive rolls using single, six-sided dice.) The sequence of events is still driven by players, following the steps listed above. For non-combat activities, the app will determine the outcomes directly, and no dice are needed (rallying, temptation to charge, etc.)

The app interface is shown below:
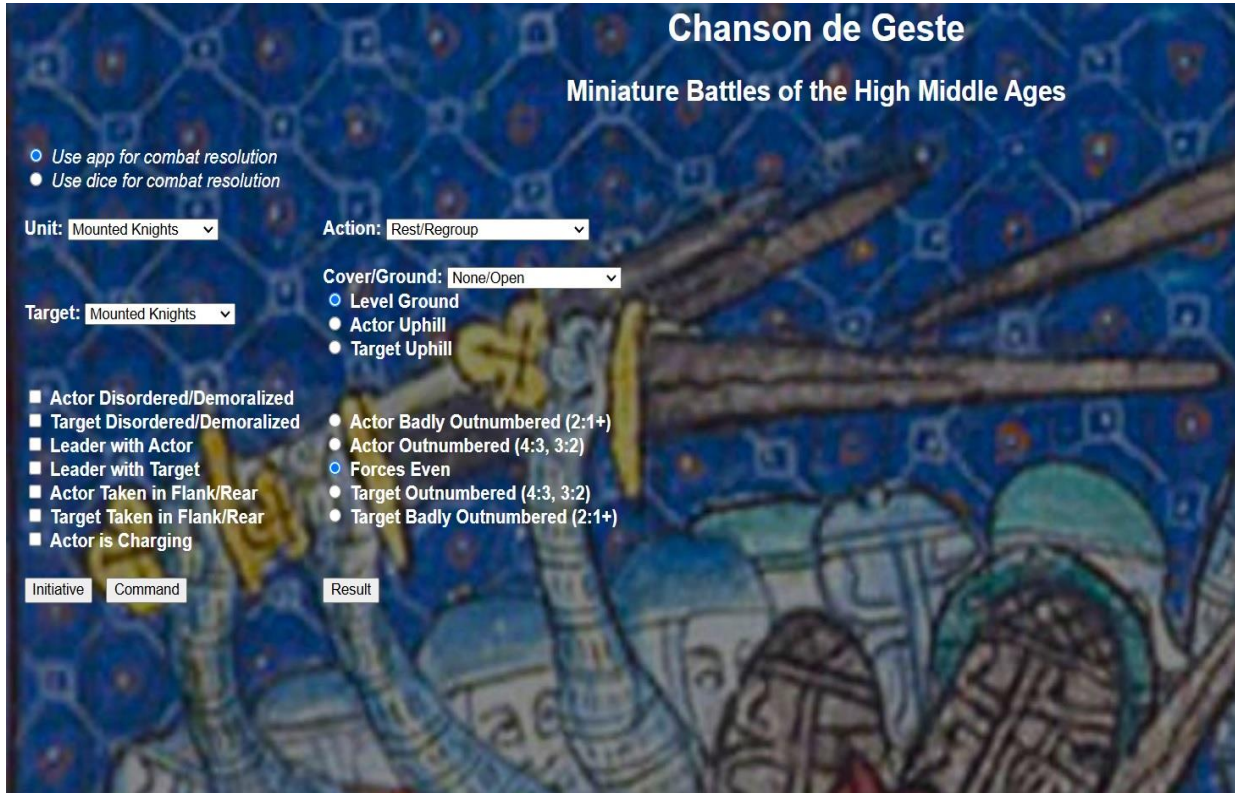
On the upper left-hand side of the screen is a check box which lets you indicate whether dice will be used to decide combat outcomes, or whether the app will do so. This can be changed at any time during play without negatively impacting the game.

The Initiative and Command buttons are in the lower left-hand corner. Using these buttons requires no other fields to be set - you simply click, and a result box pops up, telling you which side has the initiative, or how many activations the Leader who is given the Initiative may use.

All other actions require that at least two of the app's controls be used: the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list. Other fields may also need to be set, as described in the Actions section, below. Once all needed fields have been set, the Result button in the lower right-hand corner is clicked, and a result box will pop up, explaining the results of the action, or asking a question.

When asked a question, "OK" always means "yes" and "Cancel" always means "no." Once any questions have been answered, a result box will appear. Click "OK" when you have read the result, to dismiss the box.

The screen below shows a result - a unit of knights has made a Melee action after charging into an enemy group of knights. The two units are the same size, and they are fighting in the open, but the attacker has charged downhill. The defender has gotten

lucky - despite the advantages of the charging unit (height and impact), the result is a tie, throwing both units into disorder and continuing the fight (they each take 1 status level of damage, which equals disorder since neither were disordered or demoralized at the start of the combat - see below).
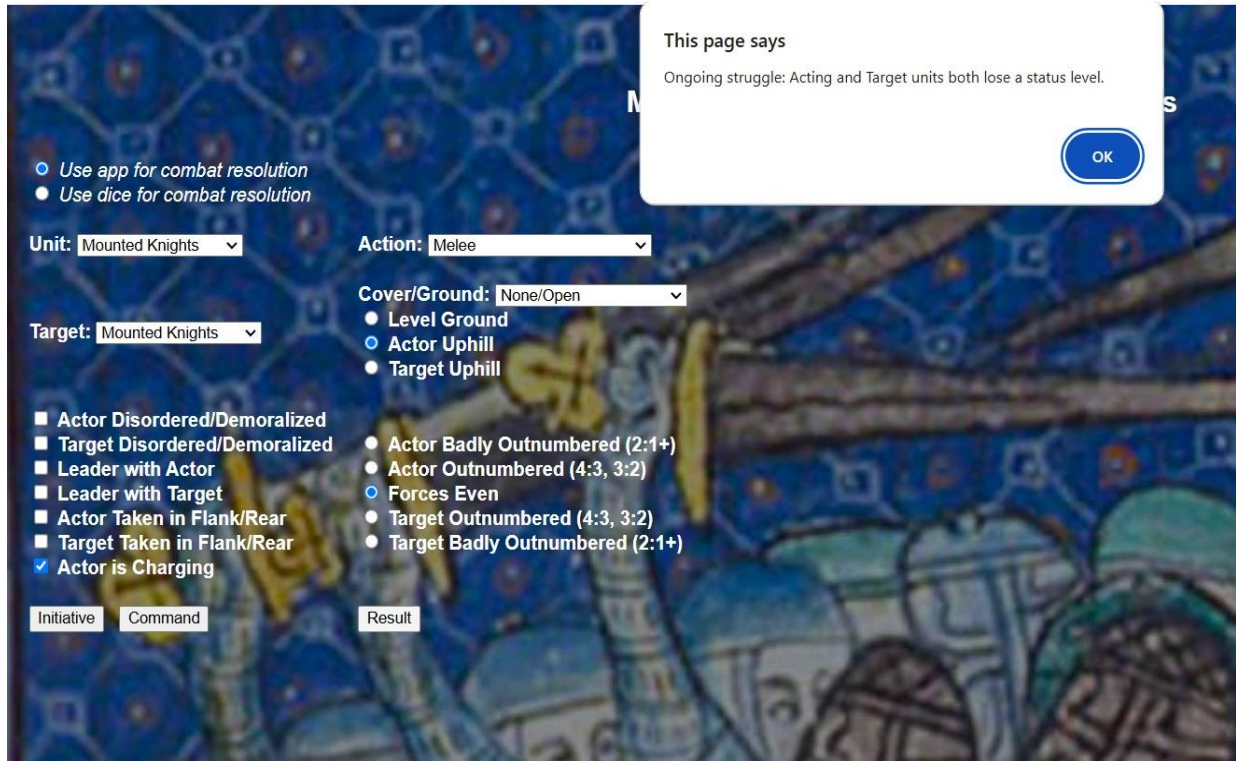
If at any point if you put the wrong values into the app fields, you may simply ignore the result, correct the settings, and click again. (You will need to "click through" any questions just by answering anything to make them go away.) Each click of the Result button is effectively a roll of the dice, but you can never keep a roll if you calculate the modifiers wrong! Think of the app interface as a checklist, which will help you remember all of the modifiers. As you learn the interface, you will find that it becomes easier to use, and that you will understand which actions use which fields. (Each field is essentially a dice modifier.)

^ Leaders and Command Control

Leaders are the commanders of the "battles" of a Medieval army, one of whom will generally be the overall commander of the entire host. Any given Leader will have a set of units which they may activate - the units in their battle, or, for the overall commander, any unit in the army.

Leaders may be rated "Exceptional" by scenario, which gives them greater influence on troops when leading in person - being "attached" in game terms - and also gives them an additional activation when they are given the Initiative.

Leaders have a command radius of 12 inches: any unit under their command within 12 inches of their base - measured between any part of the Leader's base, and any part of any base in the unit - may be given an activation once per turn. When activated, that unit will immediately make whatever valid action the player chooses (see Actions, below). The Leader may give as many activations as they have for that Initiative: the number granted by the app, plus their Exceptional Leader bonus if they have one.

Leaders always also have a 24 inch base move each turn, which they may make before, between, or after any activations are given to units (or even in the case that they give no activations to units). They may activate closer units, then move, and then activate units which they have brought within command range while moving. They may only move once during the turn, however, and may not activate units during the course of their move.

Leaders may take personal command of a single unit at any point, by placing themselves into contact with any base in that unit. This can help with some actions (such as Melee and Regrouping. and resisting Temptation to Charge). When attached to a unit, however, it is possible for a Leader to be killed or captured in Melee. Leaders who have fallen are not replaced, and count heavily against the army's morale. An attached Leader may still give activations to units to which they are not attached, and is not required to activate the unit they are with. Attached Leaders may detach from a unit at any time, unless the unit they are with is in an ongoing combat: once a Leader has been involved in a Melee action (with either the Acting unit or the Target), they may no longer move in that turn, unless they spend an activation on their own Initiative to do so.

Leaders may not be targeted for fire or charges, and are only involved in melees with the units to which they are attached. If "run over," they simply make an immediate free move to take them out of the way. They may use this move to attach to a nearby friendly unit.

A Leader who is not using an Initiative, and who is involved in a Melee as a result of an enemy Melee Action, will *not* be considered to have acted for the turn, and may still be given the Initiative during that turn. They may not move away from the combat without using an activation to do so, however - they are deemed to have been "caught up in the struggle"!

An army will have the ability to command all of its units as long as it still has a Leader on the table. When killed or captured, the command responsibility for that Leader is immediately assigned to any single surviving Leader at the player's discretion. When all Leaders have been killed or captured, the affected side may no longer make activations, although its units may still make uncontrolled charges, defend themselves in combat, and fire on available targets at the end of each turn. With no Leaders, proactive charges and maneuvering are no longer possible.

Note that a Leader who is attached to a unit will move with that unit at the player's discretion, even if the Leader has already used its movement for the turn. Similarly,

Leaders may always move with the units they are attached to for any reason, in addition to their own independent move for the turn. Thus, a unit making a Retire action with an attached Leader would bring that Leader with it, and the Leader could then use his own movement to go elsewhere during the turn.

^ Actions

The following is a list of the actions which may be taken in the game, as listed in the app "Action" list:

Rest/Regroup: This is the action taken if a unit chooses to do nothing (which does not actually require the app to perform), but is also used to Regroup (also called "rallying"). You must select the unit which will make the action, using the "Unit" list, and indicate if they have a Leader with them by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant. A Regroup action - if successful - will raise the Status Level of a unit by one (from Disordered to OK or Demoralized to Disordered) or by two (Demoralized or Disordered to OK). Regroup actions may be made by units involved in ongoing combats, but only if they have a Leader with them. In this case, the Melee action is immediately resolved (see below).

Advance: This is the most common move action, allowing a unit to move and wheel in a forward direction, as well as perform facing changes, etc. (see below). It requires only that the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant.

Retire: This action is performed by a unit which wishes to retire out of an ongoing combat (see below). If the retire fails, a Melee action is immediately performed. It requires only that the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant.

March: This action causes units to form a column one base wide, and to move further than with a typical Advance action. It requires only that the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant.

Charge: Charges start with a move into contact by the charging unit. If contact is made, a sequence of other actions is taken, which may include a Fire action by the target of the charge, an evasion if the target is Irregulars or Horsemen, and a Melee action. It requires that the "Unit" list, the "Target" list, the "Cover/Ground" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box. No other fields are relevant for the Charge action itself - other subsequent needed actions will use other fields.

Resist Temptation to Charge: This is not an "action" as such, but a test. Mounted Knights will be tempted to charge in different circumstances (see below) and will need to take this test in order to avoid making an immediate uncontrolled charge. Taking the test does not use their action for the turn, but making the charge will (see below for details). The test requires only that the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box.

Charge through Traps: This is not an "action" but a test made when Mounted Knights or Medium Horsemen charge an opponent over ground which has been booby-trapped by the defender (see below). It happens as part of the charge sequence, but does not itself use the action of the charging unit (they will still melee if they contact the enemy). It requires only that the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box.

Fire: Missile fire is explained below. Needed fields include "Unit", "Target", "Cover/Ground", and "Action" lists, as well as the "Actor is Disordered/Demoralized" check box, if relevant. Additionally, a selection from the force ratios must be made ("Actor Badly Outnumbered", "Actor Outnumbered", "Force Even", etc.). Other fields are not relevant.

Melee: Melee actions are described below. Melee requires that all fields in the app interface be correctly filled out.

Ridden Down: This is not an "action" but a test. It is used when Mounted Knights break and flee through a friendly unit (see below). The unit which is ridden through by the knights must make the test to see if there are any consequences. It does not use the testing unit's action for the turn. It requires only that the "Unit" list, and the "Action" list be filled out. If a Leader is with the unit, this should also be indicated by checking the "Leader with Actor" box.

Generally speaking, a unit may make any single action of their choice in a turn, when activated by a Leader who has command of that unit (their battle or army commander). There are some restrictions to choice of actions, however, depending on whether a unit is locked in combat, and the formation it is currently in. Further, actions may be used before the unit is activated, because of the actions of enemy units who force them to fight a melee, respond to a charge, or perform other actions. Each unit may only act once during a turn, unless the rules specify otherwise. Note that taking "tests" (Resist Temptation to Charge, Charge through Traps, and Ridden Down") do not use the action of the testing unit.

Units in an ongoing combat - that is, those units which start their action in contact with one or more enemy units - may only perform a Melee action, a Retire action (to pull out of combat, which may be followed by a Melee action if it fails), or a Regroup action followed immediately by a Melee action.

^ Formations and Movement

Units have two formations: "battle" formation is always at least two bases wide (except for single-base units), and may be as wide as the number of bases (e.g., a single rank); "march" formation is one base wide. In both types of formations, bases must share a facing and be touching along at least one full edge of the base, and arranged in regular rows. The front ranks of the formation never have fewer bases than the back ranks. Single-base units also always have a formation, even if this cannot be easily seen on the tabletop (formation should be noted as "march" when the unit has made a March action, and until it changes formation or moves again using Advance or Retire - otherwise it will be in "battle" formation, like any other unit).

Movement as provided by the app is in base inches: the number of inches which may be moved in open terrain. This base number is modified by terrain and by changes of formation and facing. The following movement options are possible, in any combination which does not exceed total base movement:

> **Forward Movement:** Unit moves straight forward, or frontally up to 45 degrees to either flank, or any combination of these. Unit may change depth and frontage, but no base may move more than the full distance used for unit movement, measured from the center of the base';s starting point, to the center of the base where it ends up. Units are thus free to extend into a 1-base-depth line from a 2-base depth formation as part of normal forward movement.

> **Wheels:** The unit may move one front corner, while keeping the other in place, paying for the movement made by the moving corner.

> **Facing Changes:** Unit may change unit facing by rotating around the unit center point, or around the center or end of their frontage. Unit may also change facing with each individual base within a unit.

Note that formations will be dictated by how the bases end up on the table. The only restriction is that any forward movement or wheeling in a March action must be made in a 1-base-wide "march" (this allows a march column to form line to flank, assuming a "battle" formation, at the end of a march move by paying for a facing change).

Movement made with a Retire action is a special case: the unit will move directly backward, up to 45 degrees to either side, paying normal terrain costs. Wheels are not allowed in a retire movement.

Note that you may not move within 1 inch of the front of an enemy unit except to make a Charge action to bring a unit into contact with that enemy.

Units may freely interpenetrate friendly Irregulars and Horsemen in any direction, and move directly through Archers or Crossbowmen who are in a formation 1 base deep

from the front or rear. No other voluntary interpenetration is allowed. Mounted Knights may subject friendly units to involuntary interpenetration - see "Ridden Down", below.

The table below shows the effects of terrain and facing changes ("factors") on base movement:

Factor	Cost	Notes
Facing Change	3 inches	First facing change free for Irregulars and Light Horsemen; all facing changes free for Leaders.
Rough Terrain	2 inches/inch moved	Full speed for Irregulars.
Very Rough Terrain	3 inches/inch moved	2 inches/inch moved for Irregulars, 4 inches/inch moved for Knights, impassable for Transport.
Linear Obstacles	2 inches to cross	Fences, hedges, walls, ditches, etc.
Choke Point	3 inches plus distance moved	Bridges, gates, etc. Does not apply to Leaders. Requires a full move for transport, regardless of cost in inches.
Roads	1 inch for every 1.5 inches moved	Only in "march" formation

All types of terrain should be fully described by the scenario, or agreed by players before play begins. Some terrain (water-logged fields) will be rough for movement purposes, and combat, but will not provide cover from fire. Most rough terrain (open woods) would also provide cover.

A hapless Levy unit about to be crushed by Mounted Knights.

^ Being "Ridden Down"

When a unit of Mounted Knights is broken and must be removed fron play, they will first conduct a flight movement of 12 inches directly away from the enemy. If they move through any friendly units during this movement, those units must immediately test for being "Ridden Down". After all needed tests are taken, the broken Knight unit is removed from play. Being ridden down does not use the affected unit's action for the turn.

Similarly, Mounted Knights may be tempted to charge through their social inferiors (any infantry other than Knights on Foot). Unless the unit can be legally interpenetrated (Light Horsemen and Irregulars) the unit charged through must take a "Ridden Down" test as above, with any consequences immediately implemented. (The charge itself should be resolved, with the Ridden Down test taken afterwards, to allow the app to perform these actions.) Note that Mounted Knights will not charge through friendly units which are already engaged in melee. Any Ridden Down unit will be "pushed aside" to allow the Mounted Knights to contact their target, if there is not room for them to otherwise fit.

Note that such charges may not be made intentionally - they may only be caused by uncontrolled charges consequent to a failure of a Resist Temptation to Charge rest.

^ Fire

Archers, Crossbowmen, and Irregulars may always fire, as they are by definition equipped with missile weapons. Horsemen equipped with missile weapons (e.g.,

crossbows, bows, or javelins) may also fire (specify by scenario). Other troop types may not fire. Units with javelins can fire at any target within 6 inches. All other fire has a range of 12 inches. The range is the shortest line of fire between the firing base and any base in the target unit.

Fire may only be conducted from the front of any base in the unit, and up to 45 degrees to either side of facing outward, measured from the edge of the base. Only the front rank of bases may fire. The exception to this is Light Horsemen, who may treat any side(s) of the unit as the front for the purposes of fire.

Targets for fire must be within range and arc, as well as visible to the firing unit (within line of sight). Line of sight is determined by having a clear line between both front corners of the firing base and any point on a base in the target unit. Line of sight extends 3 inches into, out of, or through woods or similar concealing terrain unless stated otherwise by scenario. All units block line of sight - you cannot shoot through friendly or enemy units (although you can fire over the heads of units one or more terrain levels below the firer, as these do not block line of sight unless within 1 inch of the target, and on the same terrain level).

Units engaged in melee are not valid targets for Fire.

Only bases within range, arc of fire, and with a clear line of sight may fire, but not all bases in a firing unit are required to fire on the same target. Some bases may be unable to fire, but the action may still be taken by those which are. Fire for each target in a single Fire action will be conducted separately with the app. However, all fire on a single target in a single Fire action (for the Initiative) must be performed with one calculation in the app. (If a Fire action by a multi-base unit has two target units, then two calculations are performed with the app to determine the results - one for each target unit; if two units are firing on the same target, their fire is combined in a single calculation with the app).

For any fire, closer targets must be preferred to those which are further away. If equidistant, the player may decide which to fire on. It is always permitted to concentrate all of a unit's fire on the closest target unit, measured as the shortest distance between the firer and target. Split fire on a target which is closer only to some of the bases in a firing unit is always optional, and performed according to the player's choice. The type of the firing unit is always calculated based on the majority type firing, counted in bases. If there is a choice between two sets of equal numbers of bases, it is made by the firing player.

When calculating strength rations for setting modifiers in the app, the number of firing bases (for the Actor) is compared to the total number of bases in the Target unit. "Outnumbered" is any difference in size which is more than exactly equal in bases, but which is less than fully twice ("Badly Outnumbered").

Units equipped with pavises will be given soft cover against missiles when they are in the open. This does not translate to hard cover when they are also in soft cover however - it only provides a benefit when they are otherwise unprotected.

^ Combat (Charges and Melee)

^ Charges

Charges are a mechanism for initiating a combat using a friendly unit which is not already engaged in a melee. To make a Charge, a unit must be able to wheel and then move directly forward until some part of its front is in contact with some part of the target unit. This movement may not cross the frontage of another enemy unit within 1 inch. Transport and units in "march" formation may not Charge, nor may Irregulars at targets in the open except against other Irregulars or Transport.

Frontal charges against Archers and Crossbowmen may involve taking fire during the Charge action. This is done exactly as for normal Fire actions. If a "devastating fire" results (the loss of 2 Status Levels) then the charging unit will fail to contact its target, and end its move an inch short of contact. No Melee action will follow. Archers and Crossbowmen who have already acted for the turn will not be able to perform a Fire action at a charging unit. Units which are already engaged in melee may not fire at units charging into a continuing combat.

Knights and Medium Horsemen may counter-charge when charged frontally (through the frontal arc, 45 degrees outward from facing to either side). Knights will *always* counter-charge - Medium Horsemen nay do so if desired (or if not banned from doing so by scenario rules). The app will indicate when this is an option, and the Target unit must move an equal distance to the charging unit. Counter-cgharging has the benefit of denying the charging unit the benefit of impact (the mutual impact cancels out.) A counter-charge will use theTarget's action for the turn even if contact is not made.

When Charged, Irregulars and Light and Medium Horsemen may attempt to evade the Charge. Once the target unit has made its evade movement - which is performed like any other movement, any movement remaining to the charging unit may be taken, in an attempt to contact the target. Other target units may not be contacted, even if they are exposed by the evade move. This charge movement in pursuit of an evading target may not cross the front of a any non-target enemy unit within 1 inch.

Note that evade moves will use the evading unit';s action for the turn, but eligible units may still evade even if they have already used their action during the turn. Units already engaged in melee may never evade.

Whether contact (and a melee) results from a Charge action or not, any unit which Charged, evaded, or made a Fire action is considered to have acted for the turn.

Charges may not involve a change of formation of any type on the part of the charging unit. Unit depth and frontage must remain the same as at the start of the move. Only a wheel, followed by movement directly forward is allowed. If contact is made, the front of the charging unit will wheel to either left or right in order to maximize the amount of contact between the two units.

When a unit makes a Charge action resulting in contact, and a Melee action is made, the "Actor is Charging" box must be checked. This box is not important for conducting the Charge action itself - only the immediate Melee action occurring as part of that charge.

Note that it is not possible to Charge two units at a time, even if the Charge movement will bring the charging unit into contact with more than one enemy unit. The first enemy unit which would be contacted must be declared as the target of the Charge. If there is a choice of targets, it is the charging player's decision. Note that it *is* allowed for more than one enemy unit to be contacted by the move, and that both of the contacted enemy units may be involved in the combat, but the one designated the target *must* be involved in the combat. The other may become a Supporting unit (see below). Supporting units may never fire or evade in response to a charge.

[^](#) Melee

Whenever an activated unit is in contact with an enemy unit, there may be a combat. This is the case if any part of the front of either unit is in contact with the enemy. This situation may result from a Charge action, in which case a Melee action is immediately made. This may result from two units being in combat at the start of the turn, which is termed an "ongoing combat."

Combat involves at least two units - an Actor and a Target - but may also involve others. Any unit involved in a combat which is neither the Actor nor the Target is termed a "Supporting" unit. The Actor is always the activated unit which triggered the combat - the unit which has just made a Charge action, or the unit selected by a player to be activated. The Target unit is either the one designated in the Charge which was just conducted, causing the melee, or is one of the enemy units (if more than one) in contact with the front edge of the acting unit, in a case where no Charge action has taken place immediately before the Melee. The acting unit's player may select which enemy unit is the Target under circumstances where there is more than one possibility.

Supporting units do not change the modifiers entered in the game app, except for the determination of force ratios, and whether the Acting or Target units are taken in flank or rear. Supporting units include:

- Any enemy unit (that is, the enemy of the acting unit) which is in frontal contact with the acting unit, whether it has already acted during the turn or not.
- Any unit friendly to the Actor which is in frontal contact with the Target unit, whether it has already acted during the turn or not.

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- Any unit friendly to the Actor which is in side-to-side contact with it and shares a facing, but which is not otherwise in contact with the enemy, and which has not already acted during the turn. There may be up to two such units - one on each side (left flank and right flank). Involvement of such units as Supporting units is always optional, and is not allowed if a friendly unit is in non-rear-corner contact with the Target unit on the nearest enemy flank.
- Any unit friendly to the Target unit which is in side-to-side contact with it and shares a facing, but which is not otherwise in contact with the enemy, and which has not already acted during the turn. There may be up to two such units - one on each side (left flank and right flank). Involvement of such units as Supporting units is always optional, and is not allowed if a friendly unit is in non-rear-corner contact with the Acting unit on the nearest enemy flank.

All units involved in the combat will be considered to have acted, whether they are the Acting unit, the Target unit, or a Supporting unit. Any Leaders attached to any unit involved in the combat will also be considered to have acted for the current turn, and may not be subsequently given an Initiative. Leaders attached to any unit directly involved in combat or acting as a supporting unit will be indicated on the app interface by checking the appropriate "Leader with Actor" or "Leader with Target" box, so long as the unit is involved in the combat. Likewise, they will be vulnerable to be killed or captured of involved. (If more than one Leader is involved on a given side, and one of them is killed/captured, it will be the Target or Acting unit's leader; if neither have Leaders, but only Supporting units, dice for it.)

A unit is considered to be "Taken in Flank/Rear" for game purposes if any enemy unit has contacted them on the side with any part of its front.

After a Melee has been conducted, any unit which is contacted on the flank, but which is not contacted on the front, may choose to change facing to face any contacted flank. This is always optional, and may only be done once per turn by any given unit. Note that flank contact does not include front-corner contact with an enemy unit: contact must be made along the side of the unit, on the rear of the unit, or on a rear corner. Front corners are only considered to be a part of the unit's front facing.

For determining force ratios in a Melee action, all bases in the involved units are counted, regardless of whether they are in contact or not, or have already been engaged in a Melee action during the turn. (In Medieval combat, soldiers would press forward into the action [or shirk], unconstrained by the training which was common in later periods!)

The levy has been called up, and they are ready for battle!

<u>^</u> Ongoing Combats

When a Melee action is taken, but does not result in the destruction of one side or the other, the units will remain in contact after acting. This is considered to be an ongoing combat. Whenever either unit is activated, a new Melee action will be taken. There are some special cases which occur when an ongoing combat is involved.

One of these is when an activated unit attempts to perform a Retire action. If successful, the retiring unit will pull out of the combat and a Melee will not be fought if contact is broken. If unsuccessful, an immediate Melee action will be made.

If a Regroup action is made by a unit in an ongoing combat -- something which requires the activating Leader to be attached to the unit - there will be an immediate Melee action, regardless of whether the Regroup action was a success or failure. The activating unit (the one attempting to Regroup) will trigger the Melee action, and its Leader will be involved in this Melee. Note that units which are contacted on more than one face at once (to front and flank, to rear and flank, etc.) may not perform Retire actions.

It is possible to charge into an ongoing combat, so long as the Charge action would involve no interpenetration of units involved in the melee (even Supporting units), even if otherwise allowed (this is important: *no* interpenetration of units!). In such cases, neither evasion nor defensive Fire are allowed by the unit which is the target of the Charge. Units in the Melee on both sides which have already acted may influence it as

Supporting units (see above). The Target will engage in the Melee regardless of whether it has already acted or not.

[^](#) Temptation to Charge

The arrogance of the knightly classes during this period had an effect on battlefield tactics: knights were socially superior to other types of combatants, and often felt that they were supposed to be given the opportunity to win glory by immediately charging at any enemy, even in defiance of direct orders to the contrary, and even if this involved trampling friendly units under their destriers' hooves.

At the start of the turn, any Mounted Knight unit which has a clear line of sight to an enemy unit to its front (up to 45 degrees to either side of facing), blocked only by friendly infantry or Light Horsemen not currently engaged in melee, and within the 12 inch charge distance, will be tempted to charge, and an immediate test for "Resist Temptation to Charge" must be made. This may involve a "Ridden Down" test on the part of the intervening unit if it is interpenetrated by the charge.

If at any point during play, an enemy unit enters the frontal zone of a Mounted Knight unit, as described above, then an immediate test for "Resist Temptation to Charge" must be made if the Mounted Knight unit in question has not yet used its action for the turn. They may be forced to make an immediate charge. Any single unit may only tempt an enemy Mouned Knight unit once during any given turn.

Note that Mounted Knights are never tempted to charge by targets in or across rough terrain or fortifications.

[^](#) Charging through Traps

During this period, it was a fairly common tactic for infantry forces to try to lure knights into traps. Perhaps the most famous example of this is at Bannockburn in 1314, where the Scots had dug a series of pits and trenches in the ground over which the English knights would charge. Other examples certainly exist: the Battle of the Golden Spurs in 1302 featured similar traps laid for the charging knights, and proved to be devastating to the French nobility.

To reflect this, scenarios may permit specific units to lay traps for charging Mounted Knights or Medium Horsemen. The traps should be indicated on a map of the tabletop, and not revealed to the opposing side until their mounted troops charge across them. When this happens, the position of the traps should be revealed. Once the charge begins, the charging unit must make a "Charge through Traps" test to see what happens. The test is conducted after any defensive fire or evade movement is made. Melee is only fought if the charging unit contacts its target, even if the distances involved would otherwise indicate that a melee will take place.

These types of traps should be used with some restraint by scenario designers: they were an occasional feature of battles in this period, but would typically be confined to those areas immediately to the front of vulnerable foot units. They would not be spread over the terrain like land mines in the the Second World War!

Here is the sequence which should be followed:

1. Mounted troops make Charge Action
2. Target unit conducts defensive fire or evasion, if allowed
3. Charging unit moves, and declares contact if this is made
4. Existence of traps is revealed
5. Test "Charge through Traps" is conducted, and effects are immediately implemented
6. If contact is made, a regular melee is fought, as per the normal rules

Note that attached Leaders will help charging units avoid traps.

^ Combat Effects and Rallying

Unit Status is a measure of how a unit is currently functioning, in terms of morale and losses. Combat outcomes are expressed as a change in Unit Status. All units begin the game with their full strength known (the number of bases in the unit), and all have a Unit Status of "OK". Unit Statuses are:

OK: The unit is good condition. The loss of bases does not stop a unit from having this status.

Disordered: The unit is in disarray. This situation is very common, and can be corrected by having the unit make successful Regroup action.

Demoralized: The unit is in a state of disarray bordering on panic: this is almost *"sauve qui peut"* territory. The situation can also be recovered from by Regrouping, but it may take more than one action.

Destroyed: The unit's soldiers have panicked, surrendered, become casualties, died, etc., and it is removed from play. Any time a unit has lost a full half or more of its starting number of bases, it is immediately destroyed and removed from play. Note that Mounted Knights are subject to a special flight move, which may cause friendly units to be Ridden Down.

Gaining a Status Level means going upward in the list above, and losing a Status Level is movement further toward the bottom of it. For example, an unit with an OK Status Level which goes down two levels will have a new Status Level of "Demoralized". Note that the Status Level does not correspond to the number of bases lost until the unit is destroyed. A unit with no losses can be Disordered or Demoralized, and a unit which has taken losses can be OK or have any other Status.

When an OK unit loses a Status Level, it becomes Disordered. When a Disordered unit loses a Status Level, it becomes Demoralized. When a Demoralized unit loses a Status Level, it loses a base. When a Demoralized unit loses two Status Levels, it loses two bases, and so on.

Any outcomes from Fire or Melee actions are implemented immediately. The exception to this is missile fire occurring at the end of the turn, which is simultaneous: any firing unit will make their Fire action before suffering from fire taken during the same portion of the turn.

When status losses are awarded to a side with Supporting units in a melee, the first Status level lost must be assigned to the Target or Acting unit. Others may be evenly distributed between all the involved units, but no unit may be awarded more Status level losses than the Target or Acting unit.

Note that Disorder and Demoralization do not stop a unit from being activated. In many cases, however, it will reduce their effectiveness. These units may still move, charge, fire, and fight. (A certain degree of disorder is basically inherent in all Medieval military formations!)

When a unit charges into a combat and destroys its enemy, it must move forward to occupy the space vacated by the target of the Melee. In any other circumstance, such a move on the part of the Actor in the Melee is optional. In both cases, the occupying move is only permitted if no other enemy units are in contact with the Actor of the Melee.

Enemy camps and baggage trains are classed as Transport in this game, and may be attacked like other units. This will result in the destruction or capture of the Transport in question, but may also result in loss of Status to the attacking unit as they break ranks to plunder. Attached leaders can help maintain discipline. Note that camps are immobile Transport, and so are not allowed to move - this should be specified by scenario.

^ Calculating Fire and Combat Outcomes Using Dice

When dice are used to calculate combat outcomes, the following system is employed:

Fire: If the firer and the target have modified rolls which are equal, or if the target's roll is greater, the fire has no effect. A difference of 3 or less in the firer's favor inflicts 1 Status Level of damage; a difference of 4 or 5 inflicts 2 Status Levels; a difference of 6 or 7 inflicts 3 Status Levels; and a difference of 8 or more results in automatic destruction of the target unit. Any fire result which inflicts a loss of 2 or more status levels is termed "devastating fire" (this will halt a charging enemy).

Melee: If the attacker and the target have modified rolls which are equal, both sides suffer a single Status Level of damage. A difference of 3 or less inflicts 1 Status Level of damage on the side which scored lower; a difference of 4 or 5 inflicts 2 Status Levels; a

difference of 6 or 7 inflicts 3 Status Levels; and a difference of 8 or more results in automatic destruction of the losing unit.

A Leader attached to a unit on the side which suffers a loss of one or more Status levels in a melee may be killed, wounded, or captured. This will happen on a die roll on a single die, equal to or less than the number of Status Levels lost in that combat. The affected Leader is removed from play and not replaced (see above). When using dice to determine Leader casualties, any time 6 or more Status levels have been lost, the leader will escape by rolling a 1 on a single die (nothing is certain - Deus Vult!)

Mounted Knights - they might be pretty but they can cause all kinds of trouble with their self-entitled attitude! Figures by Old Glory and Crusader.

^ Army Morale

Each army in a battle is given a Break Point. This is the total number of bases in the army, also counting the baggage or camp if there is one. Each base adds one to the total, and Leaders are not counted. As the battle progresses, each side will keep track of how many points it has lost toward breaking. The status of each army is checked at the end of each turn. Once the total of points toward breaking equals or exceeds the Break Point, the army is broken, and has lost the battle. It is possible for both sides to lose in the same turn, resulting in a draw.

The points counted toward breaking are calculated by adding the following:

> *For each Irregular, Light Horsemen, Levy, Archer, or Crossbow base destroyed:* 2 points
>
> *For each Medium Horseman, Spear/Pikemen, or Footmen base destroyed:* 3 points
>
> *For each Knight or Foot Knight base destroyed:* 4 points
>
> *For each unbroken unit currently Demoralized:* 1 point
>
> *For a killed/captured enemy Leader who is an Army Commander:* 3 points
>
> *For a killed/captured enemy Leader who is a Battle Commander:* 2 points
>
> *For a killed/captured Exceptional Leader (additional):* 2 points
>
> *For a sacked camp/baggage train:* 3 points

Note that a broken unit counts all of its bases against the army Break Point, and not just bases lost in combat.

Army Break Points ay be adjusted by scenario to reflect the quality or character of a specific historical force. So, for example, Crusaders might be given a bonus of 5 to their Break Point to reflect their fanaticism, etc. This is really a mechanism for creating balanced scenarios. The recommended system here aims at producing shorter, more decisive games.

^ Design Notes

This game was created to provide an easy-to-learn system for convention and club play, and to allow for use in remote games over Zoom or Skype. To facilitate these goals, it avoids the approach taken by many systems for Medievals and Ancients where armies are made up of large numbers of individual single-base "elements", and where the relative positioning of these is paramount. Despite this, systems such as *Art de la Guerre* have been used in many ways as a basis for the basic structure of play: clear victory conditions based on a points system, and games which play to conclusion in a single, reasonable-length gaming session of 2-3 hours.

For all of these intended scenarios, 28mm figures are preferred: they are easier to see in a convention setting or over an Internet camera, and they show off this colorful period to great advantage. Using smaller figures on the base sizes recommended for 28mm could also give a very impressive "birds-eye" effect.

The idea of having a game system dedicated to the High Middle Ages was to allow for some of the very specific tactics and problems encountered during that era to be worked into the game. Armies made up of loosely organized bands of knights were difficult to control, and that fact could be taken advantage of by a wily enemy. The role played by leaders was huge: the reputation of a particular knight could have a massive impact on combat. Other, less remarkable factors were also in play during this era: the longbow had yet to become the decisive factor it was later to be, and pike formations - while effective against mounted troops - were not yet the well-drilled formations capable of both offense and defense against all enemies which they would later become. Infantry are often underrated during this period - they could be very effective on the battlefield, even if their societies did not value their contribution as much as it did their lords' - but they are far better on the defense than on the offense. They will always do best when supported by mounted troops. Knights - whether mounted or on foot - reign dominant, and are capable of defeating large numbers of their inferior foes. (While not uniformly practiced throughout the period, dismounting knights was already a common tactic at the start of the period, and was seen off-and-on throughout.)

Ultimately, the goal of these rules is to provide a quick-playing game which is both realistic and easy to learn, but which provides sufficient period feel. We hope we have achieved this, and we hope you find great pleasure in creating your own "chansons de geste" on the tabletop!