

WAR GAMES RULES

3000 BC TO 1485 AD



WARGAMES RESEARCH GROUP
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WARGAMES RULES FOR 3000 BC TO 1485 AD

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INTRODUCTION TO THE 7TH EDITION AS REVISED

The first edition of our original ancient rules appeared in 1969, and were adopted for the British National Wargames Championships of that year. Despite competition from many would-be rival sets, succeeding editions have been used in every important convention worldwide since then, and are used by an overwhelming majority of ancient wargamers. Their mechanisms have become a wargames standard used for every conceivable historical period, including some for which WE consider them unsuitable!

The seventh edition went to the printers in late 1985, and in the seven years since has almost completely taken over from previous editions. Feedback from play by several thousand customers has made it possible to provide free update sheets available in return for a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon. A few of the amendments blocked minor loopholes, most clarify meanings, and some incorporate good ideas for improvements suggested and justified by players. All such changes to date are incorporated into the text of this printing of the rule book as Version 7.5.

Seventh was a revolutionary, rather than evolutionary, change from previous editions. It places much more emphasis on realism, the problems of command, terrain and natural conditions, and seeks to distract players from excessive pre-occupation with weapon and armour differences important only if "all things are equal". It is the function of the general to ensure that things are NEVER equal! We also take the view that a putative difference in weapon characteristics that cannot be shown to have influenced tactics in, or the result of, at least one historical battle is likely to be spurious. The tendency among rule writers to show off their knowledge rather than produce the simplest realistic simulation is natural but unhelpful.

The unanimous conclusion of the users is that seventh is far more realistic than other sets and greatly widens the gap between good and poor tacticians. They applaud the end of the "tire work display" with units whizzing off in all directions without getting in each other's way, the increased mobility out of and the reduced manoeuvrability in proximity to the enemy, the need to take conditions, terrain and the chance of a surprise into account when planning, the way the fatigue rules force a proper use of reserves, the way rebased troops no longer fall over in the box, and not least, the discomforture of rule lawyers.

Since its introduction, seventh has been used in the great majority of tournaments around the world, and even passed the fearsome test of the Milton Keynes 36 hour sleepless marathon event. Tournaments normally use the full rules with terrain choice, weather, unusual deployments and unreliable generals without these causing any difficulty or complaint of unfairness. A public demonstration game at Northern Militaire with one player per side each using 3,600 points of 25mm figures on a 6 foot x 4 foot table with plenty of terrain finished with a decisive win in something over two hours. This implies that increased realism has not been achieved at the cost of "playability". Games now play much quicker.

The major difficulty faced by players transferring from the previous editions is one of imagination. It DOES help to plan as if you were commanding a real army, rather than trying to analyse the rules to deduce good tactics. Common mistakes are to leave cavalry at the rear of a marching column instead of scouting in front, keeping the general safe instead of in a position to see, letting an unreliable general continue disobedience instead of correcting him, ignoring terrain difficulties when deploying, with consequent traffic jams when moving out, accepting waver tests instead of avoiding them like the plague, deploying front and rear lines too close so that they become entangled, and leaving front line units to become exhausted or be overwhelmed instead of reinforcing or withdrawing them in good time. Victory with seventh edition goes to the player who has best learned the skills of real historical generals, not he with most grasp of the minutiae of the rules.

Finally, although 7th is simpler than its predecessor and much simpler than its rivals, it is necessarily complex and needs large numbers of figures, a full sized table, and two or more hours to play. For those occasions for which it will not suit, we recommend our other rule set for the period, the very successful "De Bellis Antiquitatis". DBA allows much quicker games with far fewer figures on a 24" square terrain, incorporates a campaign system and army lists, and is especially suitable for beginners, the young, jaded elders, large multi-player games and odd moments.

