

Battleground v4.0 Rules

Final Draft

design notes

The reaction we got for the 4.0 rules is beyond what we ever expected. We were thrilled that people were happy with the new format, but also that several of them took the time to compose detailed feedback and send it to us.

The difficulty in writing rules is I Know What I Meant. A rulebook that makes perfect sense to me could read like cuneiform to others. Having extra sets of eyes questioning everything was a major help and we are very grateful to our proofreaders!

The Biggest Change: Indirect Path & Nearest Open Side

The Movement rules saw the largest revision. Mostly this was a reorganization. For example, the details of how to physically move a unit card, how to turn or maneuver them, and how Movement Category worked, were all moved from the end to the front of the Movement section. Previously these had been tucked at the end, after explaining how Standing Orders affected movement.

However the biggest change was integrating the Open Path rule into the Movement Procedure, and tying it with Indirect Path. In theory this added an extra step in the Movement Procedure, but in practice that step had always been there. We were simply breaking it out to make it more understandable. Check out page 38 in the 4.0 Rules to follow along.

Previously, if the line drawn between the center-point of your unit and the enemy unit's went through an obstacle (i.e. another unit or impassible terrain), the Indirect Path rule was used. This created two issues.

First, there were cases where the line could go between two obstacles but there not be enough room for the unit to move into the space. Since the line went through an open space, the Indirect Path rule wasn't invoked. So what did the unit do?

Second, what happened if the unit could never get to the enemy's Facing Side because it was blocked? If the enemy was Engaged on the front side (i.e. the Facing Side), even if a unit used the Indirect Path, it could never get to that side. What would the unit do?

These were issues that we did foresee when a unit was on Close and in that section we tried to address these issues with the unit moving



towards the Nearest Open Side. However, these issues could easily occur in situations for units on Range or unit with Objective Modifiers.

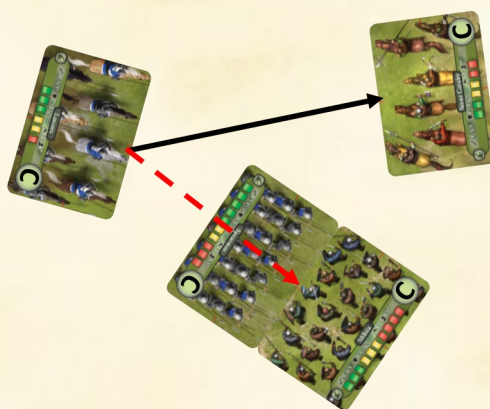
The solution to the first issue was easy: change “line” to “path” and add a step in the Movement Procedure that there be an Open Path to the enemy’s Facing Side. If there was, then the unit moves towards that side no problem.

If there wasn’t, that’s where the solution to the second issue came in. We dragged the Nearest Open Path rule from being in the ‘Moving while on Close’ section to the general section. If there wasn’t an Open Path, the unit re-measured to the find Nearest Open Side.

In essence, the unit figured out the Nearest Enemy again but ignored the obstructed side of the enemy unit. Instead it measured to the nearest side it could move towards. Like so:



But the unit also measured to see if there were other enemy units that were closer than that open side. In this situation, the unit might move towards a new enemy, like so:



This is how we always intended the rule to operate: the unit will always move along the path of least resistance. It will attempt to do the simplest thing possible because in the stress of a battlefield it will try to move straight towards the nearest enemy as opposed to doing parade ground maneuvers.

Of course, sometimes it has to do these maneuvers. For example, what happens when the flank of the nearest enemy is the Nearest Open Side? Or worse, what happens if the front (i.e. Facing Side) of the enemy is open and is the nearest, but there’s something in the way?

This is where Indirect Path comes in. If there's not an Open Path to the Nearest Side, then the unit can maneuver to get an Open Path. Like so:



Similarly if the facing side is the Nearest Open Side, but there's no Open Path? Then the unit can maneuver around the intervening unit. Of course, that's only part of the Indirect Path rule. If the obstruction is a friendly unit, the controlling player has the option to simply move forward until it touches the friendly unit:



In this way we preserve the option for players to have their units form deep ranks with their army without having to expend Command Actions.

It looks simple now, but it took us a week of debating and moving around cards. Because the issue is never in the solution. It's making sure the solution achieves all the intended results while minimizing the unintended ones.

We do feel this better explains how we always intended the rules to operate, and it has the upside of closely following how Final Rushes work. Because although Final Rushes do work slightly differently than regular movement, we always wanted it to be a variant on the existing rules as opposed to an entirely different set of movement rules.

Other Changes: Odds & Ends

In addition to adjusting the Movement section, we made a few other tweaks throughout the rulebook. Mostly this was formatting for ease of reading. For example, we heard your feedback about the examples not being differentiated enough from the regular text. We put every example on a darker background to help with this (as you can see on the example on the previous page).

We also added more examples where we could, especially with Combat Modifiers. The feedback we received was how the dice are calculated for Charging units, especially for units with Spears. Normally this would be a FAQ, but some of these questions occur often enough that we felt it was worth devoting space on the page to answering these questions.

One Last Design Note: Routing

How units Rout is actually something we changed in the original draft of the V4.0 rules. There wasn't space to explore it in the previous design notes, but we really wanted to point out the revisions we made. The previous version of routing rules could be confusing and sometimes contradictory:

If the unit is engaged during the phase it must make a rout move, the unit moves to maximize the space between it and the enemy unit(s) with which it was engaged. Otherwise, the unit moves towards its owner's table edge at full movement. You can't invoke the Indirect Path rule or other voluntary movement rules for this move, so your unit will not avoid units or difficult

What happened if a unit was engaged on it's flank? Moving away from the enemy could have it moving in parallel to its table edge.

What about if the unit was engaged on the rear, with the enemy between the unit and its table edge? Did the unit run away on the initial rout, then turn around and run right back the way it came?

What happened if a unit was pinched on the front & side? Which enemy had priority when moving to "maximize space" between it and enemy units? Or what happened if the enemies were on the front & rear? Did the unit slide out sideways and then try to run home?

Our first impulse was not to change the Rout movement rules, but to rewrite in a way that followed the original rule. That's always our intent, because the Battleground system is really solid and usually only needs to revision and editing.

This was not the case with routing. Whatever revision we came up with still had units running around like Benny Hill as they first ran from the enemy, then circled back. And what to do about running into enemies? The rules said they didn't avoid them, but also didn't say what happened when they reached them. Did they skirt around them? That was something that seemed odd.

The solution we came up with was this: Units Run Away.

In the chaos of battle and the panic of a rout, units are not going to search for home base. Their first priority will be to get away from danger. If they are never rallied, they'll keep heading for the hills until they were sure they were safe. Only then would they make their way back to camp.

We revised the rule to be that the unit turns around and moves in a straight line. They keep moving in that straight line until you spend a Command Action to rally them.

So what happens if they run into something? Well, that depends on what they run into. If it's an enemy unit, they are destroyed. This means that if your unit is engaged on the rear and routs, they will be destroyed.

Our feeling was that if a unit is pinched on the front & rear (i.e. surrounded) when it routs, it should just be picked up. Similarly if a unit is charged on the rear and fails a rout check, then it is also destroyed. Battleground is a game of maneuver and it should be a very bad thing for you to let your units get attacked from behind.

Now, we hear you saying: "Okay, Battleground is a game of maneuver, but what if my unit runs away and there's an enemy .000001mm in its path? Should the unit be destroyed because a tiny fraction of its frontage touches an enemy?"

Okay, no. We gave routing units a free 1.75" (i.e. half its frontage) sideways slide once during their rout move, to represent the fact that the unit is somewhat formless and could flow around some enemies. If your unit can't clear the enemy, then the enemy is sufficiently trapping your unit and your unit is destroyed.

Routing into an Impassible Object: The Bowmen have failed a Rout Check and this is their Initial Rout move. They do an About Face and move Straight forward 2.5" until they contact friendly Spearmen.



The Bowmen move 1.75" sideways for free. This clears the Spearmen and now the Bowmen move straight forward their remaining move (1").

We decided that this sideways move would be applied to if the unit hit any obstacle: enemy units, friendly units, impassible terrain, or the table edge. This way, the rules are the same through that stage: the unit turns and runs away, if it hits an obstacle it can slide sideways, if it still touches then what happens depends on the obstacle.

So if the unit was still touching an enemy it was destroyed, but what about a friendly unit? In this case we decided the unit would rout through the friend unit:



Of course, this meant that the friendly unit would take a Rout Check. If the friendly unit was Engaged, this could set off cascading routs. If the unit wasn't Engaged, then it would become Disrupted.

And if the unit contact the table edge or impassible terrain? In this case we had the effect depend on whether this was the first rout move. If it was the first rout move, the unit would pause for the turn. This would allow you the player to rally them instead of losing the unit before you had a chance to do anything.

If this was a later rout move, the unit would be destroyed. The unit either fled the field of battle, or trapped by something impassible (like sheer mountain rock or a lake) they would disperse. Certainly there would still be men alive, but they would have scattered to the winds (or jumped in the water and swam for it) and no longer be a unit in any meaningful sense.

We also addressed combination situations like if a unit moved through a friendly unit and contacted other units (friendly or enemy) or the table edge. The solutions were built on the same principles as above, to make it easier to follow. It's our hope that these revised rules are clearer and convey the feeling of a unit fleeing for their lives, while further rewarding players who outmaneuver their opponent.

We hope that these revised rules are even better than our first draft, and thank you to all of our proofreaders who took the time to help us improve them!

Till the Next Missive. . .

The Outlaw Alchemist