

Play By Internet (PBI) Guidelines for Charge The Guns (CTG) Napoleon In Europe (NIE)

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Overview

CTG NIE can be played, with a few changes, via the Internet. It can seem slow paced, even if all the players are participating regularly, because the game is interactive and players often need to make decisions during other player's turns. It also takes much more effort and is more error prone than playing face-to-face. On the plus side though, players may enjoy the more careful and considered approach PBI allows, and being able to bring together up to seven people from across the world for a "complete" game.

While Vassal or MapView or some other method may be developed eventually, for now, players will use both email and a Yahoo group to communicate the progress of the game, as well as ask questions, etc. An example of a Yahoo group used for a PBI CTG NIE game is "Magdeburg" at <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/magdeburgctgnie/>. All actions and moves, including battles, will be recorded in the Messages section of the Yahoo group. Players can discuss plans, ask questions about the game, etc. via email, or other ways as needed. Game Status Files will be posted approximately after each production phase in the files section of the Yahoo group, and Tactical Battle Status Files will be posted there as needed.

All dice rolling will be done using the dice server at http://www.wargalley.com/die_login.php. Some of the advantages of this dice server are that all rolls are recorded (so there is a persistent history that can be checked), it does not clutter up your inbox with emails, it has a simple interface, it defaults to 6-sided rolls, and it keeps rolls separated by game. As described below, players will need to write in some words to adequately describe the purpose of each roll.

Much of the attraction of NIE comes from using the large map and 3D figures, so players should find a place to leave the map, pieces, and charts setup during the game, if at all possible. Detailed status files provided during the game should help ensure that everyone's setup remains in sync.

It is easy enough (easier than I ever dreamed, actually) for players to get confused about the rules to CTG NIE. It seems especially difficult when played via Internet, and it's easier to make all kinds of mistakes. Also players have different schedules, etc., so it's common for the games to progress slowly, and to have to back up to correct things fairly regularly. Therefore, patience, a spirit of cooperation, and good sportsmanship are most helpful in getting through a long PBI game.

PBI Specific Rules - the "active player"

A key point to understand about playing PBI CTG NIE is that there is supposed to be only one "active player" at any time. All games start with France as the first active player during Setup. When it is time for another player to make a decision, the active player posts a message starting with that person's name on the first line, as in *** Curtis ***. That player then becomes the active player, and all others wait on him to send messages expressing his decision and/or series of actions. That player *remains* the active player until another player must make a *decision*, i.e. the active player need not change if another player would "normally" roll dice, or take an action that does not require that player to make a choice. Players can exchange plans, intrigue, and discuss strategy among themselves via email at all times, but only the active player may *act* to move the game forward. Waiting players may post general announcements (such as "Can't everyone see France is about to invade Spain?") or ask rules related questions, etc., but cannot act until they

become the active player. It will seem like the active player is sometimes playing “the other side”; this is intended to speed up the game, among other things.

The French player starts as the first active player and begins the game messages with **Setup Pieces**. Some of the cases when the active player may change are listed below:

- ✓ When another player must setup their pieces
- ✓ At the start of the turn (movement or production) of a nation controlled by another player, even if no pieces may move during that turn
- ✓ When a player must make a decision during a political action
- ✓ When a player has a chance to intercept during naval or amphibious movement, or at the end of **Sea Movement and Naval Battles**
- ✓ To ask for consent to move between the Black and Aegean Seas
- ✓ When a player must choose between sea areas on **Leaving Closed Port**
- ✓ When a waiting nation gains the initiative before battle
- ✓ When a player must decide to retreat, fight or choose casualties in **Quick Battles**
- ✓ At the start of the side’s phase in **Tactical Battles**, the Attacker or Defender on that side becomes the active player
- ✓ When answering questions such as “do you square” in **Tactical Battles**
- ✓ When choosing where to **Retreat** to after battles (this can become important, since the nation that retreats generally controls what political actions are possible between battles)
- ✓ When choosing which nation to give a PAP to out of a group, e.g. after a battle
- ✓ If you have an ally who could legally move (but not necessarily if they could only take a political action) during your turn when you are the active player, you ***must*** ask your ally at least once sometime during your turn if they want to move, unless they become neutral at any point during the turn. When you ask this, they become the active player. Players may only move pieces under their control (i.e. cannot move their ally’s pieces). This applies similarly to **Tactical Battles** as well, but it is then the attacker or defender who must give the other players on his side a chance to act.
- ✓ When France has the option to **Enforce Continental System** at the start of **Production Rounds**
- ✓ When France, Spain, and/or Britain must resolve *Colonial Trade*

A player can also let another player become the active player for no particular reason at all, if they want to. Also as players get more familiar with each other’s style, they may sometimes be able to assume what the other player would do (or perhaps the other player has stated their intent before hand), to avoid having to ask some questions and wait for the response. In these cases

though the ‘silent’ player can roll the game back to the decision point if he doesn’t agree with the choices made by the active player.

In a game with more than 2 players, it might sometimes be unclear as to who the next active player should be, for example if nations are allied. Use these in order to resolve which player becomes the active player first, if it is unclear:

1. The player controlling the nation whose turn it is has priority over other nations
2. The current active player rolls a die to decide the next active player. Use this only if there is not a logical choice.

The most important reason for these “active player” rules is to determine when a player may try political actions, as explained next.

PBI Specific Rules – Political Actions

Two important rules have to be introduced for PBI that makes the game different than face-to-face CTG NIE:

1. There are no Diplomatic Rounds. This game-balancing feature is too unwieldy for Play by Internet. Simply skip them. Be aware this can have a large effect on the game.
2. You can only start a Political Action when you are the ACTIVE PLAYER. Other than that, you can try political actions any time you normally could in a face-to-face game.

Messages – General Info

These are some guidelines that will help make the messages on the Yahoo site easier to read.

- **Include a Descriptive Subject** - Every message should have one. Everyone has their own style for message subjects, but here are some examples:

6-06 France (France annexes Bavaria) {for the French turn}

8-02 Battle of Switzerland

5-02 PAP rolls

- **Battles** will be recorded in ONE (1) message (the last one), and all *previous* messages (if any) for that battle will be erased after the battle is over. Feel free to build the message by replying to previous messages during the battle. In the final posted battle message, erase all the “>” and similar extraneous stuff. Alternately, players may choose to resolve battles in “real time”, say using Skype, in which case the battles might not be recorded, but the battle results are still recorded.
- **Don’t use “reply” too much** – Replies clutter up messages, so avoid them generally. They can be used for battles, which will be cleaned up later into one message.
- **Don’t delete your own messages** – because this could give the appearance of trying to cheat, by changing things after die rolls for example. If there is a mistake, post another

message after it with the corrections. If the mistake causes you a disadvantage, the original message will be used, unless all other players agree to use the corrected one. The moderator will maintain a “Log of Erased Messages” in the files section on the Yahoo site, which will list all erased messages except those erased as part of the normal clean up of battle messages.

- **Minimize off-topic messages** - Rules questions and suggestions are probably best handled via email. General announcements and propaganda can be in the Yahoo messages. Whenever a correction needs to be made, it will be described in the messages and/or the log of erased messages file.

Unfortunately it seems you cannot post messages on Yahoo groups faster than about 1 per minute, or they get out of order. So in order to try to keep messages in order, don't post a message until you see the previous message show up in the list. This is a limitation of the Yahoo group system, and the time delay varies according to how busy Yahoo is (it can be up to 3 hours!). Be patient, and consider handling battles via email or a chat system. The final battle message (at least the battle results) must be documented as a Yahoo post though.

Check out the “Expand Messages” option on the Yahoo site. It's a good tool.

Messages – Guidelines for Content

You can write your game messages in whatever style seems convenient to you at the time, as long as it is understandable by the other players. These are some things to consider

Order is significant, write events in order of their occurrence from top to bottom and left to right. Roll at the same time you would in a face-to-face game. Also feel free to include notes about what you are doing, what you are thinking, etc. if desired. “In character” messages are OK but not necessary. You can break your posts up into separate messages if really needed (for example to highlight something), but minimize this (except for Battles) and make sure they are posted in the right order.

Use these abbreviations for pieces and nations:

I = Infantry	A = Artillery	F: = France	A: = Austria
EI = Elite Infantry	HA = Horse Artillery	B: = Britain	S: = Spain
M = Militia	G = General	P: = Prussia	R: = Russia
C = Cavalry		M: = Minor Nation	
HC = Heavy Cavalry	S = Naval Squadron	O: = Ottomans	
IC = Irregular Cavalry	AD = Admiral	TO: = Tan Ottomans	

Nationality can be left off if obvious. Heroes should be spelled out (Napoleon instead of F: H).

Die rolls should be included in the message as R+X, where R is the roll and X is the total of all modifiers, so other players can quickly see if the right modifiers were used.

For PAP rolls, the first number is the roll, the second is the number of PAP's gained. For example: PAP rolls: France 5/1, Britain 3/1, Austria 2/0

Examples of messages can be found at <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/moraviactgnie/>.

Tactical Battles

Blind setup for tactical battles follows this process:

Step 1) The defender creates a folder named similar to “8-02 Battle of Switzerland” in the “**Status Files for Tactical Battles**” folder in the files section on the Yahoo site. He then makes a copy of the Battle Setupv1r6.doc file in the files section, and places his side’s pieces, using correct colors, by typing them in the correct boxes on the map, and names the file “defender setup”. The words Attacker and Defender in the setup file should be colored to agree with the attacking and defending nation. The defender sets up all pieces on his side, even other player’s pieces. All players on the defending side should agree to the initial placement, but the defender has the final decision. He then adds a password to the file (see the instructions in the files section), and posts the file to the folder he created for the battle. Don’t forget the password!

Step 2) The attacker records the setup for his side in a file called “attacker setup”. The attacker sets up all pieces on his side, even other player’s pieces. All players on the attacking side should agree to the initial placement, but the attacker has the final decision. He posts the file, without a password, to the battle folder *after* the defender posts his password-protected file there. The attacker should also download the defender’s password protected setup file at that point.

Step 3) After the defender sees the attacker's file, the defender posts his password in a message in the Messages section or via email. If the defender (or anyone, at that point) wants to, he can post an updated battle setup file, showing both sides setup.

Unhidden setup follows basically the same setup process, except there is no password, and whichever of the attacker or defender is setting up unhidden sends in their setup first.

More status files can be added later for the same battle, but don’t post too many, because the file space available to each Yahoo group site is limited. After setup, the attacker and defender start posting messages (and rolling on the dice server as needed) as a series of replies to the battle message. Any unqualified references to right or left should be interpreted as being from the *attacker’s* perspective. So, “C Left” means Cavalry on the attacking side’s left, which is the defender’s right. Use these abbreviations for pieces:

I = Infantry
SI = Squared Infantry
LI = Skirmishing Infantry
EI = Elite Infantry
SEI = Squared Elite Infantry
LEI = Skirmishing Elite Infantry
M = Militia
SM = Squared Militia
C = Cavalry
RC = Reforming Cavalry
HC = Heavy Cavalry
RHC = Reforming Heavy Cavalry
IC = Irregular Cavalry
RIC = Reforming Irregular Cavalry
A = Artillery
HA = Horse Artillery
G = General
National Hero’s name = National Hero

Nationality abbreviations are the same as used for other messages (listed above).

All battle messages (naval, quick, and tactical) should continue through Gaining PAP's. Start a separate message for Commitment Rolls, Capturing Capitals and other battle consequences. There are plenty examples of battles at <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/maltactgnie/>.

Dice Rolls

The active player also makes all rolls, both for his nations/units and other players' nations/units. There's no need to wait for another player to roll. All rolls will be made on the dice server at http://www.wargalley.com/die_login.php. Include the results of rolls in messages posted to the Yahoo group, as described below. Each time you make a roll, in the box labeled *COMMENT*: type a description identifying what the roll is for. Everyone has their own style for roll descriptions, but here are some examples:

09-1806 PAP Roll, Russia

Austria recruits Thuringia +3

3I force march Normandy > Paris > Burgundy +1

B:A fires at F:C {part of a tactical battle}

7-02 Battle of Bavaria, F: C, 5I attack {part of a quick battle}

It is best to include any applicable modifiers (like +3 in the above example) and the middle space for any forced marches.

Game Status Files

After production turns or whenever a player requests it, a "game status" file (Excel spreadsheet) should be posted to the files section on the Yahoo site, to help players agree on the correct placement of pieces, etc. The description at the top of these must state exactly when the status was collected, for example, it could be immediately after rolling for PAP's on a particular turn. The order of War markers is read left to right, not up or down, to determine which nation went to war first with the nation on a particular row.

The whole art of war consists of a well-reasoned and extremely circumspect defensive followed by rapid and audacious attack.

- Napoléon