MASS COMBAT

UNIT BASED MASS COMBAT IN FORBIDDEN LANDS

INTRODUCTION: These rules were inspired by and largely adapted from Exalted 3e mass combat guidelines. Additional adjustments were added for Forbidden Lands.

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These rules do not replace the rules for stronghold battles (PHB175), but can supplement them. The rules for stronghold battles reflect the process of a siege, whereas these rules reflect opposing forces upon a open field of battle, whether that's a gang fight in an ally or warfare upon the plains of Margelda. You can move between the two rulesets depending upon the needs of your story.

TROOPS

A troop is the basic character unit of mass combat. Simply put, a troop is treated as a single character with the attributes and skills of the average combatant making up the troop, plus a few other traits which modify these capabilities.

Individuals cannot FEINT troops, nor can troops FEINT individuals, but troops may FEINT other troops.

Troops cannot be DISARMED, though troops may DISARM individuals.

Troops cannot be GRAPPLED by individuals although a troop may GRAPPLE individuals or other troops.

Troops cannot be SHOVED by individuals although troops may SHOVE individuals or other troops.

Troops may not use Hidden Combinations against individuals, or vice-versa, but non-monstrous troops may use Hidden Combinations against other non-monstrous troops.

The rare troops of monsters use the general rules and special attacks for single monsters unless these mass combat rules overrule them. Troops of monsters will not use Hidden Combinations - instead they will rely on their special attacks.

Troops have the weapon(s) and armor of "the average member" in the troop, though the special rules for helmets are ignored for troops.

Very special troops may have talents (for excellent a highly trained unit of Sword Fighters or a troop of sorcerers; note, however, that magic use by troops is highly abstracted, see below).

Troops can DODGE incoming attacks. If a troop is armed with shields, the troop may choose to PARRY incoming attacks.

Otherwise, units act as individuals (albeit very large ones). They draw initiative card(s), and have 1 FAST and 1 SLOW action per turn.

ADDITIONAL TROOP TRAITS

Units have a few additional traits: SIZE, TRAINING, MAGIC, and FORCE.

SIZE

SIZE is simple - it measures how big a troop is, in terms of how many combatants are in it. The greater a troop's SIZE, the harder it hits and the tougher it is; SIZE is the single greatest source of a troop's power.

Troops gain a bonus to their attack rolls, base damage, FORCE (see below), and Armor Rating equal to their SIZE. Thus, a SIZE 3 troop gains +3 to its attack rolls, +3 to its base damage, +3 to its Armor Rating, and has 3 extra points of FORCE.

For example, a SIZE 3 troop of warriors armed with short spears and leather armor gains +4 to MELEE rolls (+1 spear and +3 SIZE), has a base damage of 4 (1 spear and 3 SIZE), and has an Armor Rating of 5 (2 leather and 3 SIZE).

SIZE is measured from 0 to 5:

SIZE 0. One or two fighters. These should be modeled as individual

combatants, not as a troops. Any troop reduced to Size 0 through FORCE loss effectively ceases to exist; all of its members are either dead, fled, or surrendered.

SIZE 1: A small group: a half-dozen thugs in an alley, a squad of Rust Brothers, a bar brawl, ten goblins lying in wait under bushes. A dozen or fewer combatants.

SIZE 2: A modest group: a late-night lynch mob, a company of Rust Brothers, an Aslene band of war-braves, an aristocrat's house guard. Several dozen combatants.

SIZE 3: A moderate group: a mercenary company, a battalion of Rust Brothers, a sweeping riot, a Dwarven war band. Over a hundred combatants.

SIZE 4: A large group: a mercenary army, a brigade of Rust Brothers, an entire Dwarven clan and its bannermen rallied to war, most of a small town slain and raised as the undead soldiers of Zytera. Several hundred combatants.

SIZE 5: A full army of Rust Brothers, a barbarian horde, a city-annihilating plague of undead. Over a thousand combatants.

If appreciably more than a SIZE 5 troop worth of combatants are present, they are represented by creating an additional troop (or troops). 20 extra combatants are a drop in the bucket, but if an extra 300 are present, that's worth starting up a second SIZE 3 troop.

TRAINING

While the traits of the average character making up a troop determines the quality of the group overall, TRAINING measures how well the combatants within that group work together. In mass combat, TRAINING is one of the most important traits a group of fighters can have. It represents hours of training and familiarity - the ability to know what the soldier to the left or right of you will do at any given moment because you've been through these maneuvers with them countless times. Well-drilled units hold together better in the face of sudden catastrophe, respond more readily to orders, and are generally much more difficult to defeat than poorly trained units of greater SIZE. As a result, TRAINING modifies FEAR and ROUT rolls, provides modifiers to *command actions*, and enhances a unit's defense (DODGE, PARRY, etc.) rolls. In short, highly trained troops are tougher to defeat, and respond better to commands.
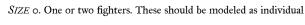
There are three categories of TRAINING:

Poor. A unit with poor TRAINING has no training in fighting together, or no capability for such training. This is the TRAINING quality of rioting mobs, of impromptu peasant conscripts tossed directly into battle, of most village militias, of many bandits, of raiders who fight without any sort of coordination, of groups of experienced fighters brought together without any particular familiarity with fighting alongside one another, and of mindless undead.

Poor-quality troops suffer a -2 penalty to ORDERS and RALLY FOR NUMBERS actions, have a -1 penalty to all FEAR, ROUT and RALLY rolls, and do not modify their defense rolls.

Average. A troop with average TRAINING has some training fighting together, either in the field or through extensive training and practice. In a fight, they know what to do and they move with ease and precision. The majority of military forces in the Forbidden Lands have average quality TRAINING. This covers standing armies, common mercenary groups, and well-trained guards.

Average-quality troops suffer no penalty to FEAR, ROUT and RALLY rolls and enjoy a +1 bonus to their defense rolls.

Elite. Elite troops have drilled extensively with one another, and have probably gone through a number of battles together. The members of the troop often eat, sleep, and relax together, and spend far more time honing their skills as a group than the average band of soldiers. As a result, these troops are often small, prestigious units or semi-religious orders.

Elite-quality troops gain a +2 bonus to all FEAR, ROUT and RALLY rolls and enjoy a +2 bonus to their defense rolls.

MAGIC

MAGIC measures the supernatural power of a troop. A troop only possesses MAGIC if the average member composing it is supernaturally powerful in some martially relevant fashion. As a result, the overwhelming majority of troops have MAGIC 0; no troops with MAGIC greater than 2 have been fielded in the Ravenlands since the Alder Wars.

MAGIC is rated from 0 to 3, and adds to the attack and defense rolls and base damage of the troop. In general and as a loose guide, MAGIC is equal to the rank of the troop's highest average magical talent. For example, a troop of sorcerers with an average rank 1 Path of the Blood has MAGIC 1. It is not important what the talent is, as the use of magic by troops is highly abstracted unless the GM's story demands otherwise.

MAGIC 0: The MAGIC rating of troops primarily composed of ordinary mortals. This rating has no effect on the battle group's traits.

MAGIC 1: The MAGIC rating of troops lightly touched by the supernatural, whose members have rank 1 of a magical talent, or who are fighting under the blessings of some stronger supernatural power.

MAGIC 1 bestows a +1 bonus to attack rolls and base damage and a +1 bonus to Armor Rating

MAGIC 2: The MAGIC rating of troops composed primarily of supernaturally potent beings, such as lesser spirits or demons, or whose members have rank 2 of a magical talent.

MAGIC 2 bestows a +2 bonus to attack rolls and base damage and a +1 bonus to Armor Rating.

MAGIC 3: This is the MAGIC rating of troops composed magically potent monsters or members have rank 3 in magic talents. Such groups have rarely been seen since the Ravenlands, as such beings simply don't gather in sufficient numbers to require abstract representation, and are almost always depicted as individuals, even when three or more are present.

In the event that such a troop appears, MAGIC 3 bestows a +3 bonus to attack rolls and base damage and a +2 bonus to Armor Rating.

FIGHTING TROOPS

To keep things straightforward, fighting a troop in most ways resembles fighting an ordinary character with its traits inflated a bit by SIZE, TRAINING, and possibly MAGIC. There are a few key differences, detailed below:

Area Attacks. Like other characters, troops draw INITIATIVE, have a FAST and SLOW action on their turn, and must make an attack as their SLOW action. But troops often make large attacks, consisting of hundreds of flashing blades or sheets of arrows darkening the sky. As a result, when a troop makes an ARM'S LENGTH or NEAR attack, it makes a single attack roll and applies that roll's results to *all enemies* in direct contact with the troop (depending on the troop's SIZE, this could potentially cover a considerable area). When a troop makes a ranged attack, it must select a single primary target for the attack. If this target is another troop, the attack resolves normally; if it's an individual, then the attack is also applied to all other *individual* characters (friendly or hostile) within NEAR range of that target. Huge mobs of archers make poor precision snipers.

Defense rolls. Troops must use one of their normal actions to perform reactive defense actions (DODGE or PARRY), as normal characters. However, *against individuals*, troops gain a number of bonus FAST reactive defense actions equal to their SIZE. The troop will use these bonus actions first, as necessary.

Feints. It is impossible for an individual to perform a FEINT against a troop or vice-versa, but a troop may perform a FEINT against an enemy troop within SHORT range (normally, FEINTS require ARM'S LENGTH). In this case, the FEINT is an opposed MOVE roll between the troops, both rolls modified the TRAINING rating of the troop. These rolls can be modified by an ORDERS bonus (see below).

Shoves. It is impossible for an individual to SHOVE an entire troop to the ground, but a troop may shove individuals or other troops normally. These rolls can be modified by an ORDERS bonus (see below).

Grapples. It is impossible for an individual to GRAPPLE a troop. However, troops may surround and pin down ("GRAPPLE") individuals or other troops. These rolls can be modified by an ORDERS bonus (see below).

Movement. Troops move like normal characters in combat, although they are significantly larger than individuals. As a general rule, a troop may attack any character or enemy troop within range of any edge of the troop.

Individuals may pass through a troop, but enemy troops count as a ROUGH zone (PHB88). Troops may not pass through enemy troops.

Although a troop may spread itself out to attack a large area or number of individuals, if it spreads itself too thin (more than an average 10m between troop members) it loses all advantages of SIZE to its attacks and defense.

FORCE AND DAMAGE

Troops do not take damage to their STRENGTH. Instead, troops track damage using their FORCE.

A fresh troop's FORCE is equal to its STRENGTH plus its SIZE. Thus, a SIZE 3 troop with STRENGTH 3 has a FORCE of 6.

Incoming damage is applied to the troop's FORCE rather than its STRENGTH.

Armor

Troops can wear armor and have an Armor Rating although the special rules for helmets protecting against head criticals do not apply to troops. Additionally, a troop's SIZE and MAGIC add to its Armor Rating.

Routs

When the troop's FORCE is BROKEN (reduced to 0), the troop must make a ROUT roll: use the troop's WITS + TRAINING bonus. Essentially, the ROUT roll is a special kind of FEAR roll (though it is not opposed).

Some troops may possess the Fearless talent and may apply it towards ROUT rolls with the following adjustments:

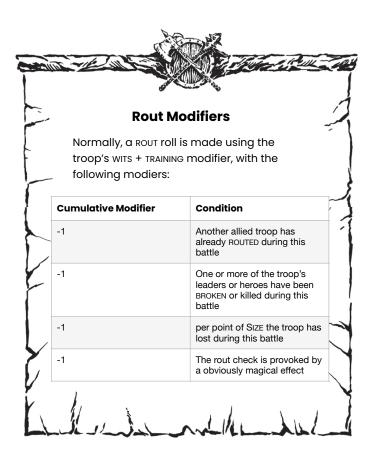○Rank 1; the INSIGHT roll successes reduce failures on the ROUT

like Armor Rating versus damage;

 ○ Rank 2; allows the use of STRENGTH instead of WITS for the INSIGHT roll;

 ○ Rank 3 makes the troop immune to ROUT.

If the ROUT roll is successful, the troop remains in the battle but can make no more offensive actions until the *next turn*. The troop's FORCE is reset to full, but its SIZE is reduced by 1. If the troop's SIZE is reduced to 0, it is effectively destroyed and removed from the battle.

Rout Modifiers

Normally, a ROUT roll is made using the troop's WITS + TRAINING modifier, with the following modiers:

Cumulative Modifier	Condition
-1	Another allied troop has already ROUTED during this battle
-1	One or more of the troop's leaders or heroes have been BROKEN or killed during this battle
-1	per point of SIZE the troop has lost during this battle
-1	The rout check is provoked by a obviously magical effect

If the ROUT roll fails, the *next round* troop is BROKEN and departs from the battle and its members either attempt to surrender or flee. This gives the troop's commander a chance to RALLY before the troop breaks.

If the troop remains on the field after a successful ROUT roll, any extra damage the troop took from the initial blow beyond what was needed to reduce the troop's FORCE to 0 is immediately applied against the troop's restore FORCE. If this BREAKS the troop's FORCE again, it must immediately roll for ROUT *again;* repeat this process as necessary until all damage has been accounted for. Thus, it is possible for extremely powerful blows (from larger enemy troops, for example) to quickly overwhelm and rout a troop.

For example, if the STRENGTH 3 SIZE 3 FORCE 6 troop above took a 13 points in a single blow:

 ○ 6 points of damage would reduce the troop's FORCE to 0, forcing a ROUT roll;

 ○ If the ROUT roll succeeds, the troop remains on the field; the troop's FORCE is reset to 6 and its SIZE is reduced to 2. There are still 7 points of damage unaccounted for;

 ○ 6 more points of damage reduce the troop's FORCE to 0, forcing another ROUT roll;

 ○ If the roll succeeds, the troop remains on the field; the troop's FORCE is reset to 6 and its SIZE is reduced to 1. There is still 1 point of damage unaccounted for;

 ○ The last point of damage is applied to the troop's FORCE, reducing it to 5. If the troop takes 5 more points of damage, it will effectively be destroyed, whether it succeeds its ROUT roll or not.

COMMAND ACTIONS

Troops are mostly self-contained and self-directed entities, under the GM's control - even troops allied with or "owned by" the players' characters. Sometimes, however, individual heroes wish to exercise more direct command over a troop. This is done with *command actions*.

To issue a command action, a character must be either the recognized leader of a troop - such as the boss of a gang or the commander of an army - or must be a known hero to the members of the group, whom they would be willing to trust and rally around in the midst of battle.

A command action is a one of three different combat actions: either an ORDER, a RALLY, or a RALLY FOR NUMBERS.

In order to direct command actions to a troop, a character must have some way of making themself understood - shouting to subordinate officers from the front of battle, using signal relays from a back-line command post, and magic are the most common methods.

Orders

Issuing an ORDER requires a PERFORMANCE roll and takes a SLOW action. If the character issuing the orders is embedded in and fighting with the troops they are ordering, the character may choose to make a MIGHT test to physically lead by example. Humans can invoke their Adaptability talent to use other skills, making them versatile leaders.

An order action determines *both* what the targeted troop will do on its next turn and adds its successes (6s) as a skill bonus to the troop's for *all actions* taken during that turn. For example, if a commander succeeds with 2 successes, the troop gains +2 to all rolls during for the turn.

RALLY

RALLY actions can be taken after an allied troop has failed a ROUT check, but before it has BROKEN and left the field of battle (remember, a troop BREAKS on its next turn after it fails a ROUT check). RALLIES effectively give a troop a second chance to rally back. A RALLY action is a PERFORMANCE roll, modified by the same penalties or bonuses as the failed ROUT check. It is a SLOW action. If the RALLY action succeeds, then the targeted troop recovers as though it had succeeded at its ROUT check.

RALLY FOR NUMBERS

Finally, a RALLY FOR NUMBERS action can be taken after the troop has suffered FORCE damage, to stiffen the resolve of hesitating soldiers or to call warriors who have begun to break formation and flee back to battle. It is a PERFORMANCE or MIGHT roll as per an ORDERS action; it is a SLOW action. Every two successes rolled restore one point of FORCE, effectively "healing" the troop. RALLYING FOR NUMBERS can't give a troop more FORCE than its current maximum rating, nor can it restore a lost point of SIZE - that can only be done by recruitment or rounding up deserters after the battle. A troop can only benefit from one RALLY FOR NUMBERS action per battle, though losing a point of SIZE resets this limit.

COMPLICATIONS

Perfect Morale

Some troops, notably undead, possess perfect morale. In the case of undead, they are WITS-less and thus immune to fear. However, there are some mortal troops that might possess perfect morale through training or magic (they possess the rank 3 of the Fearless talent, for example).

Such a group automatically succeeds at all ROUT checks, and simply will not retreat unless ORDERED to do so. Fearless troops enjoy a +3 bonus to their FORCE, but cannot benefit from RALLY FOR NUMBERS actions (since all of their casualties represent fighters killed or injured too badly to continue fighting).

The most common groups with perfect morale seen in the Forbidden Lands are mindless undead, although legends persist of fearless clockwork Dwarven legions and similar wonders of mystic artifice. If such a force could be excavated and restored to working order, it would be a treasure beyond price.

Slaughter

While a troop that has suffered ROUT and BROKEN is no longer a meaningful actor in battle, the surviving fighters that made up the group still exist - they're usually either laying down arms or running away from the fight in an uncoordinated manner. In the latter case, if allowed to escape, they may very well reform and offer battle again at a later date. As a result, the standard military response to a ROUT is to run down the fleeing survivors and slaughter them.

This gruesome practice consists of simply directing SLOW attack actions at the fleeing battle group, which suffers a -3 penalty to its defense rolls. As the group no longer has any FORCE, the GM simply looks at the damage inflicted and the number of fleeing soldiers, and estimates what it amounts to in terms of dead enemies - the more damage, the more carnage inflicted against the ROUTING troop.

Note: If the fleeing group is of a SIZE greater than 2, then only other troops can generally attempt slaughter attacks against it - an individual hero just can't cut down enough fleeing soldiers to make much of a dent in a 600-man retreat, at least not without powerful magic.

Magic vs Troops

Player characters with access to offensive magic will clearly want to be able to use their magic in battle. They may, with the following modifications:

○ *Kin*. If the magic is restricted to kin and the troops are not "the right" kin, the magic fails. However, if the troops are some mix of kin, "right and wrong", then it may partially affect them. For ease of play in these situations simply state the magic does 1/2 of its normal effect and move on.

○ *So many targets*. Most offensive magic spells may only affect 1 target. However, via the talent War Magic, a spell caster may affect troops in additional to single targets.

TALENTS

WARFARE

You know how to lead soldiers into battle. You have studied the stratagems and tactics of war.

○ RANK 1: You may perform a command action as an FAST action on your turn (as opposed to a SLOW action), and your commands have a +1 skill bonus. You may "craft" (or train) new troops at a stronghold.

○ RANK 2: You may "parry" an enemy commander's command actions as a reactive FAST action if you have troops engaged with the enemy troop that is the target of the command action. The enemy commander must overcome your INSIGHT roll with his command roll (usually PERFORMANCE) to issue the command.

○ RANK 3: You may issue a number of command actions (as a single FAST action) equal to your WITS, though only 1 command action may be given to 1 troop per turn. You may increase the training of one troop under your direct command 1 rank (poor to average, average to elite) and. Already elite troops gain no further benefit.

WAR MAGIC

You have been trained to use your magic in mass warfare allow doing so is incredibly dangerous.

○ Rank 1: You may cast any of your Rank 1 spells at a troop, treating the troop as a single target. However, it takes 1 slow action per willpower you spend to empower such a ritual (and thus may take several rounds to complete). Additionally, if you have a mishap, you must read the mishap dice in the least favorable order (for example, if you roll a 13 for your mishap, you must read it as a 31).

○ Rank 2: You may cast your Rank 2 spells at a troop, as above.

○ Rank 3: You may cast your Rank 3 spells at a troop, as above.

TRAINING TROOPS

If you possess the Warfare talent, you may train up troops. You must have a stronghold with training grounds (primarily MELEE troops) and/or a shooting range (primarily MARKSMANSHIP troops). If you have both you gain +1 on your roll to train troops.

All troops begin with poor TRAINING and SIZE 1. It takes little time and cost to round up an untrained posse of villagers, but it can take years and a fortune to build an army of elite troops. Training is abstracted into units of time and money needed to improve either the size or training of the troop. Additional considerations, like armaments, must be crafted and paid for separately.

Size	Training	Interval (Days)	Successes	Salary (silver)
1	Poor	¼	1	1
2	Poor	1	2	2
3	Poor	2	3	3
4	Poor	7	4	6
5	Poor	15	5	12
1	Average	¼	2	2
2	Average	1	4	4
3	Average	2	6	6
4	Average	7	8	8
5	Average	15	10	10
1	Elite	1	4	4
2	Elite	2	8	8
3	Elite	7	12	12
4	Elite	15	16	16
5	Elite	30	20	20

Trained Village Militia (Average Troops)

STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3
SIZE 2, MAGIC 0, FORCE 5
+2 attack, +1 defense, +2 damage, 4 Armor Rating
SKILLS: Melee 2, Marksmanship 2, Endurance 1, Survival 1
GEAR: Spear, short (hunting) bow, leather armor, small shield

HOW TO "CRAFT" TROOPS

THESE ARE VERY ROUGH IDEAS RIGHT NOW AND MAY NOT WORK AT ALL. First, determine the size and quality of the troop you want to create. Assuming you have a population nearby from which to draw, the time given is how long it will take you to find and train a troop of that size and quality along with how much the troop (as a whole) will expect to be salaried (per day, see PHB173). You must pay the salary from the moment you begin training the troops. At each interval, you must make a MANIPULATION roll and count successes. You need a certain number of successes (total) to finish the task; you may accept assistance per the RAW). If you have all the required successes, the training is complete and you may use your troops. If you do not generate enough successes (6s), you repeat the interval and roll again, adding the new successes to the previous pool until you either have the required number of successes or give up. You may push these rolls; however, BANES (1s) generated on pushes not only damage you, but also the BANES damage the pool of successes you have generated (you've pushed your troops too far, too fast - some are injured, some leave, some mutiny, etc). You may attempt to train troops faster, but for each interval step you reduce the time taken (a Quarter Day cannot be further reduced - each roll "takes" a Quarter Day to make, regardless of the interval), you incur a -2 penalty on your training (MANIPULATION) roll. Additionally, weather, seasons, and terrain can have an affect on training (as it must occur outdoors, for the most part). Bad or difficult terrain applies a -1 penalty to training rolls. Training in winter imposes a -2 penalty to training rolls. However, if a training roll succeeds *enough to create* the troops despite these penalties, the troops created gain a +1 bonus to rolls when deployed in combat in those conditions.

For example, if you want to quickly raise a posse of untrained villagers to defend against bandits, you need a Quarter Day, 1 silver to pay them, and a successful MANIPULATION roll with 1 success to whip a dozen of them into some the barest minimum of fighting form. Or, you could be more selective and with 2 successes pick out the more experienced villagers (requiring 2 successes) who would be troops of average quality; it would cost 2 silver. Training an army of a thousand elite soldiers should take many months take months. Assuming you could reliably generate 2 successes per interval and never PUSH, it would take 300 days to train such an army and cost 6000 silver.

Training Troops Skills

You may assign a number of skill points to the troop's skills based on the quality of the troop. You must *always* assign 1 point to either MELEE or MARKSMANSHIP. Quality also caps the max number of points you could put into any one skill.

Poor. 2 skills at 1 point.
Average. 2 skills at 2 points; 2 skills at 1 point.
Elite. 3 skills at 3 points; 2 skills at 2 points; 2 skills at 1 point.