Modern Kriegsspiel Rules: Fourth Edition (2021)

Kriegsspiel is a tabletop wargame originating in 19th-century Prussia as a tool to teach officer cadets tactics and strategy before leading troops into battle. Its rules, originally written by George von Reisswitz and later modified by Erich von Tchischwitz, are incredibly complex, with the purpose of recreating as realistically as possible the battlefields of the time. Kriegsspiel is the ancestor of all modern tabletop wargames, including the ever-popular *Warhammer 40,000*.

Upon rediscovering the old Kriegsspiel manuals in 2018, I wrote more modern rules aiming to recreate the spirit of the original while making it easier to play. It retains its original usefulness. The First Edition (2018), only worked for land battles, but could be adapted to any time and place. By the Second Edition, naval battles had been added, and the 2020 Third Edition included land, sea, and air, effectively uniting all three theaters of war.

This Fourth Edition is designed to be used with the Kriegsspiel program I have designed, which is written in Python for the use of the umpire. The Fourth Edition achieves the original ultimate goal of making Kriegsspiel time-independent, place-independent, player number-independent, relatively easy to play, and fully immersive.

# Basic Mechanics and Principles

## Players and the Umpire

A Kriegsspiel campaign can be played with at least three players. At minimum, there must be two teams, or militaries, represented by at least one player each, plus an umpire to oversee the game. Militaries may be unified, with one or more players working together and with perfect information, or may be divided, where each player has a subcommand, and even players on a single team do not work together. Unified campaigns are ideal for new players.

The umpire is a universal; every campaign will have an umpire. The umpire’s role is to manage the gamespace and track the attributes of each unit. The Kriegsspiel program is designed to eliminate the use of paper-and-pencil by the umpire, and to prevent preferential treatment or cheating on his part.

In contrast to many other tabletop wargames, the players themselves do not touch or alter the gamespace itself. Only the umpire may alter the gamespace, including the battlefield, units, and any other objects. In any dispute over location or position, the umpire’s word is final.

## Gameplay

Gameplay of Fourth Edition Kriegsspiel is open-ended. Campaigns are prepared in advance, either based on real or imaginary scenarios. Campaigns will include the units each military will have, the structure of the battlefield, and the scenarios in which each military will win or lose. See the section “Creating a Gamefile” for more details on what goes into a particular campaign.

Gameplay is turn- and command-based. At the beginning of the campaign, a particular military will go first, either chosen at random by the umpire or based on the campaign scenario itself. During a player’s turn, they will issue a series of commands to their units. This is done by passing the commands to the umpire silently, either on paper or over a messaging system (the particular manner of delivering commands is irrelevant, provided that the opposing military cannot become aware of them). Commands submitted are final, and the umpire will interpret them as he believes it would realistically be interpreted on a real battlefield. Some units may receive more than one command, but only in a certain order, so it is imperative that the player issue them in the correct sequence. There is no limit to the number of commands that can be issued in a given turn, except as provided for by the attributes of the units and gamespace.

In campaigns involving air warfare, a separate air warfare turn is taken before other commands. In this turn, only air commands can be passed.

## Gamespace vs. Units

The gamespace itself consists of the *battlefield*, and the *structures.* The battlefield is composed of the actual natural terrain, whether it be land terrain or the depth and nature of the water, in the case of naval battles. The structures are any manmade thing on the gamespace, including buildings, fortifications, minefields, roads, bridges, and so on. Elements of the gamespace can be either *extrinsic*, that is, built by the players in the course of the game, or *intrinsic*, pre-existing the campaign.

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|  | **Intrinsic** | **Extrinsic** |
| **Battlefield** | Terrain | Terrain changed by the players (damming a river, clearing a forest, etc.) |
| **Structures** | Pre-existing towns, roads, etc. | Fortifications, rebuilt structures. |

The elements of the gamespace can be controlled by the players, but only through commands issued to *units.* Units are groups of soldiers, sailors, marines, or airmen, along with their equipment. The nature of the unit is enumerated before the campaign begins, by assigning the unit a unit type. The unit type assigns a variety of attributes that dictate how it behaves on the battlefield.

Distances on the battlefield are given in this manual and in the program itself as dimensionless integers. In the Second and Third Editions, most Kriegsspiel games were played on battlefields measuring about one meter wide and two meters long, so the distances could be directly reckoned as centimeters. In truth, these distances can be converted to anything, provided the ratios are preserved.

## Unit Attributes

### Team

Every unit belongs to a team, and a given unit’s allegiance is largely, though not entirely, immutable. Ownership can be changed only for naval units via the commandeering of a ship.

### Unit Type

Every unit has a “type.” The standard unit types are universal (see the heading “Units and Unit Types”) but are altered in reality depending on the time and place of the campaign. For instance, the standard unit type “heavy cavalry” would be “hussars” for the Battle of the Brandywine River. These unit types are very important, as attributes are assigned by *type*, rather than by individual unit, which would be far too clunky and slow.

### Health

A unit can represent any number of men, depending on the size and scale of the battle. It can represent as few as a handful of men, or an entire division. Most commonly, a unit represents a battalion of 500 to 1,000 men, but this is by no means standard. Feel free to create campaigns with any desired unit size. Since unit sizes are variable, the health of a unit is measured in Health Points, or HP.

### Size

### Command Tables

## Communication

# Installing the Kriegsspiel Program

## Prerequisites

## Downloading the Repository

## Creating a Gamefile

## Running a Campaign

# Units and Unit Types

## Army Units

## Naval Units

## Air and Space Units

# Commands

## Umpire Functions

### Change a Unit’s Health

### Kill a Unit

### Freeze a Unit for a Turn

### Change a Unit’s Type

### Disable a Unit

### Disallow a Unit from Being Issued New Commands

### General Combat

### Display the Score

### End the Current Turn

### Display Details

### Display the Help Menu

### Quit the Game

### Merge Units Together

### Split Units into Subunits

## Theater-agnostic Functions

### Move a Unit

### Hide a Unit from the Gamespace

### Reveal a Hidden Unit

### Acquire Military Intelligence

### Fire Projectiles that Cannot be Defended Against

## Army Functions

### Build a Structure

### Fire Projectiles that Can be Defended Against

## Naval Functions

### Alter the Heading of a Ship

### Torpedo a Ship

### Launch Air Sorties

### Drop Depth Charges

### Commandeer a Ship

## Air/Space Warfare Functions

### Take Off a Plane

### Land a Plane

### Drop an Electromagnetic Pulse

### Airlift Units

### Fly a Plane into an Army or Naval Unit

### Drop Bombs

# Documentation

# Glossary