

DESIGN NOTES

Flames Of War does things a bit differently from other games. This sometimes leads to questions from gamers asking why we do things the way we do. Here are the answers!

TACTICAL AND DASH SPEEDS

Soldiers face a dilemma: speed brings victory, but haste will get you killed.

At the right time, moving rapidly can throw the enemy off balance and force them to react to your plan rather than controlling the battle. On the other hand, fights are usually won by the side that shoots first. The problem is that in order to shoot, you need to see the enemy, and if you are moving rapidly not only do you make yourself an obvious target, but you don't give yourself time to carefully scan the next piece of terrain for the enemy before exposing yourself to their fire. On top of that, shooting accurately while moving quickly is very difficult.

Tactical and dash speeds reflect this. You can move quickly at dash speed, but you won't be able to shoot effectively. Alternatively, you can move slowly and carefully, stalking the enemy at tactical speed.

Fast tanks get to show off their performance when dashing across the battlefield at high speed. This is ideal for quickly repositioning or closing the range. If they want to fight though, they end up spending most of their time stopped, searching for the enemy, or moving slowly to avoid attracting attention while they get into a firing position.

ROLLING TO HIT

The skill of the target is a bigger factor in real life casualties than the skill of the person shooting at them.

Perhaps the easiest way of demonstrating the logic of this is an example. Imagine a horde of barely-trained conscripts attacking another mass of conscripts manning machine-guns. No doubt you have visions of rows of troops scythed down as they charge. The casualties would be horrendous.

Now imagine an elite commando unit attacking another across the same ground. The vision now changes to an empty battlefield with soldiers occasionally making brief dashes from cover to cover. The attackers expose themselves far too briefly for the defenders to easily hit them. Whether they succeed in the assault or not, the attacking commandos would not take many casualties from shooting.

No matter who's shooting, the conscripts will be slaughtered and the commandos will use their experience to minimise their casualties.

HIT ALLOCATION

There's no point in trying to hide when there's a big signpost pointing out just where you are.

A tank's commander spots a lone tank beside a wood and quickly figures out where the other enemy tanks are—in the wood. With that big hint to guide him, he will find the rest of the unit in short order.

The ability of a player to pick their target mirrors this logic. You choose the obvious target to determine the score required to hit and then allocate excess hits to other nearby enemy teams.

GONE TO GROUND

In an impromptu ambush, say when a tank rounds the corner straight into the sights of a waiting anti-tank gun, the gun will usually get the first effective shot. That is unless the tank figures out what's about to happen and prepares a surprise of its own.

The turn sequence means that the tank will always get the first shot. However, the Gone to Ground rule will make it very difficult for it to score a hit on the hidden anti-tank gun. Combined with the reduced rate of fire of the moving troops, it means that although the tank has the first shot, its chances of detecting the ambush and hitting the hidden anti-tank gun are minimal. When the gun opens up in its turn, the tank is easy prey. Its movement and shooting have given away its location.

So while the tank gets the first shot, the gun is likely to get the first *effective* shot.

AMBUSHES

In a carefully-organised ambush, the attacker won't know a thing until the defender is good and ready.

In real life, there are many things that help a defender to position an effective ambush. The details of the terrain and the intelligence on enemy dispositions and plans often give the defender a good idea as to where the attack is coming. The enemy may expect to be ambushed and send scouts out to check potential ambush positions, but ultimately it's always going to be a surprise.

The ambush rules allow players to keep troops off the table so that the enemy doesn't know where the ambush will be until it is revealed. Then the ambushing troops are placed wherever they are needed most. This has two advantages. Firstly you always get to spring your ambush, which is a lot more fun than having your big 88's do nothing all game because you put them in the wrong place. Secondly, ambushes are a lot less predictable this way. When you are attacking, you really have to work on your reconnaissance and flank protection.

A GAME OF TOY SOLDIERS

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about *Flames Of War* is that it's a game of toy soldiers. It's supposed to be fun.

If you and your friends run into anything that seems odd in your game, don't get too hung up on what the rules say. Just decide what makes sense for you and the game you're playing and do that.



Game Designer