

TIN SOLDIERS & IRON WILLS

*Fast Playing Rules for Real Time
Miniature Battles in the Napoleonic Era*



Written by Claus Raasted / Updated 03-06-26

I

AN IMPORTANT WELCOME MESSAGE FROM CLAUS

Hello wargamer!

What you have in your hands is a ruleset for miniature war gaming, but it wasn't originally designed to be a game for gamers. In fact, the rules you sit with are part of my work that is mainly about leadership training, organisational change, and boring-sounding corporate stuff wrapped in nice packaging.

It was born out of the leadership training and consulting work I do, because I wanted to introduce a game element to the military history elements I already used. So how did it end here? Well, while creating that game element, a good friend of mine - Hans Peter Spang Hartsteen, a Professor of Innovation & Entrepreneurship and a professional game designer - asked me a rather wild question.

“What if you could do it real time?”

I didn't know how to do that, but before long, I'd ditched almost everything I'd done up until that point, and was now working within six new design constraints. These form what I (somewhat unimaginatively!) have called the RTW6 (Real Time Wargaming 6) framework:

- Simultaneous action ►► ... so no player waits for other players.
- Continuous time ►► ... so no breaks are needed during play.
- Immediate resolution ►►... so there is no record-keeping needed.
- Direct outcomes ►►... so results are applied by the player causing the outcome.
- Autonomous flow ►►... so no external arbitration is needed, as long as players trust each other.
- Scalable system ►►.,, so it can play with two people, but also with 20+ (or more!)

The game you hold in your hands is therefore not a complete system designed for wargamers, but instead, it is the rules for one of the multiple scenarios I run, adapted to make it as easy as possible for historical wargamers to see if this appeals to them.

That is why it's free.
That is why it's simple.
That is why it's for you.

If you enjoy it, use it!
If it inspires you, improve it!
If you hate it, let it fuel creativity!

And if you want to have a conversation, feel free to reach out.

/Claus Raasted, April 2026
/www.realtimewargaming.com

“Until you spread your wings, you'll have no idea how far you can fly.”

- Napoléon Bonaparte -

II

CORE PRINCIPLE

This is a real-time wargame.

No turns.

No phases.

No initiative.

Everyone acts at once, and everything happens simultaneously, in all its chaotic glory. And the goal? To defeat the enemy!

INTENT & SCALE

This game represents a single pitched Napoleonic battle, but you can tweak the rules to do similar things in Ancient Rome, WW2 or 1757.

The core mechanics are about leadership, decision-making and compromise. Units represent organised formations, not precise numbers of troops. You decide if they're brigades, battalions, or something else.

Since this scenario is for the Napoleonic period, it means that battles are decided more by pressure, exhaustion, and morale collapse rather than by annihilation in battle. The rules are written in short form, rather than to be fully explanatory. With that said... let's go!

DESIGN NOTE

Napoleonic battles were usually won or lost due to morale, not casualties. Major losses typically occurred after an army had broken and fled. That is why base removal doesn't necessarily mean "killed" - it just means "not a functioning fighting unit any more".



III

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPTS: COMMANDERS & SAND TIMERS

Miniature wargame rules have various ways of handling “unit activation”. You might have to roll dice to see if the unit does what you want it to. Perhaps you need to play cards to get them to act. Sometimes, you can just say “I move these troops”, and it happens without any fuss. Here, it’s different!

In *Tin Soldiers & Iron Wills*, all infantry, cavalry and artillery units are attached to a Commander unit, and stay attached to that Commander for the entire battle. And Commanders? They are special:

- ▶▶ Commanders can not attack. If fired upon, they might get killed. See page VII for details.
- ▶▶ Commanders are killed automatically if charged by enemies! Again, see page VII.
- ▶▶ Commanders move around like other units - at the same speed as Cavalry. Read below for details.
- ▶▶ Most importantly, Commanders can command the troops attached to them, as long as those troops are within their Command Range (3 bases). What that means you’ll learn in a moment!

So what does “commanding units” mean in Tin Soldiers & Iron Wills?

First off, Commanders are the only units that have sand timers. If you don’t have specialist bases, just get one sand timer for each commander in your game, and put one next to each Commander on the table.

You can also create a base for the sand timer and general, put some magnets on the timer and some metal on the base (or vice versa) and give it some weight, so it doesn’t tip over. This is purely optional, though!

Now for the important part. Whenever a Commander is activated by the player, all units within his Command Range can perform one action each (**MOVE** or **ATTACK**, see p4).

After all units have performed actions, you - the player - move the active Commander up to four base lengths, and flip the Commander’s sand timer. The facing of the Commander doesn’t matter. Just place him as you please, with one important restriction:

Commanders can not end their movement within Command Range of a friendly Commander.

Why? Ego. Hierarchy. Respect. Caution. There are many reasons, but for game purposes, it means Commanders can’t go near each other. *(They send aides back and forth, but we don’t show them on the table!)*

- // You cannot perform new actions before the sand has run out; a bit like a cooldown effect in video games.
- // Therefore, only Commanders with “empty” timers can act. Any Commander, whose sand is still running, has to wait.
- // If a Commander is killed during battle, it means that you’ll probably have troops that now can do nothing until a new Commander approaches!



IV

MEASUREMENTS & UNITS

There are only four types of units in the game.

- // Infantry (can shoot and fight in close combat)
- // Cavalry (fast-moving, but cannot shoot)
- // Artillery (slow-moving, and cannot fight in close combat)
- // Commanders (necessary for other units to act at all!)

All measurements are edge-to-edge, and you may measure at any time. Also, if you are not a fan of measuring a certain amount of “base lengths”, I suggest substituting one base length for 3” on a small table, or 6” on a big one!

DESIGN NOTE

Note that the three basic units of TS&IW have a classic rock-paper-scissors feel to them, that also reflects the period. Artillery is deadly at long range, but cannot defend itself in close combat. Cavalry is fast, but cannot shoot at range, and infantry represent a good compromise, as they can do a little of it all!

UNIT TYPES

	Infantry	Cavalry	Artillery	Commanders
Movement	2 base lengths (incl. free pivoting)	4 base lengths (incl. free pivoting)	1 base length (incl. free pivoting)	4 base lengths (incl. free pivoting)
Attacking (ranged)	D6, hits on 5+ (Range: 3 bases)	[Can't attack]	D6, hits on 5+ (Range: 6 bases)	[Can't attack]
Attacking (close combat)	D6, hits on 5+	D6, hits on 5+	[Can't attack]	[Can't attack]
Command Range	[Can't command]	[Can't command]	[Can't command]	3 base lengths

UNIT ACTIONS

MOVE: Pivot freely, and move a number of base lengths dictated by unit type. After moving, pivot freely.

ATTACK: Roll a D6, hits on 5+. “Fire Arc”: 360°. Units (+terrain you decide!) block Line of Sight. Units need to be within range (Infantry: 3 base lengths, Artillery: 6 base lengths, Cavalry: base-to-base contact).

CHARGE: Combined **MOVE** and **ATTACK** order, allowing a move into base contact, and an **ATTACK** roll.

Note 1: Units may move through friendly units, but may not end their movement on top of them!

Note 2: Units that are engaged in close combat may NOT move away. However, they may turn to face the enemy if they choose.

TERRAIN EFFECTS (OPTIONAL!)

// If a unit starts its action on a road, the unit may move twice as far along the road, but must follow the twists and turns (of the road!). This means that Cavalry can move up to 8 base lengths on a road!

// A unit crossing a river uses one **MOVE** action to get all the way up to the edge of the river, and a full **MOVE** action to cross it and end up just on the other side. Unless there is a bridge, of course, in which case it can move over the bridge normally (and even at double speed, if it's part of a road).

// These are two examples of how terrain can affect play. Feel free to add others as you please!

V

COMBAT

Shooting and fighting use the same basic structure. A unit that wishes to **ATTACK**, rolls a D6. Before the die is rolled, however, you check to see if the unit is within range and within Line of Sight.

Cavalry: Must be in base-to-base contact

Infantry: 3 base lengths (same range as Command Range)

Artillery: 6 base lengths (double the range of Command Range)

A 5+ is a hit, and the effects of the hit are applied immediately, before any other action is taken (which means that you complete the action for one unit at a time!). When a hit is scored, the enemy unit is destroyed, and *taken off the table by the active player*.

When checking to see if a unit is within range, it does not matter if the enemy is engaged in close combat with friendly units or not. As long as you can measure a straight line from any part of your unit's base to the other unit's base, you can attack it - unless of course, it is a Cavalry unit attacking, in which case it must be in base-to-base contact, or the unit you want to attack is not in Line of Sight!

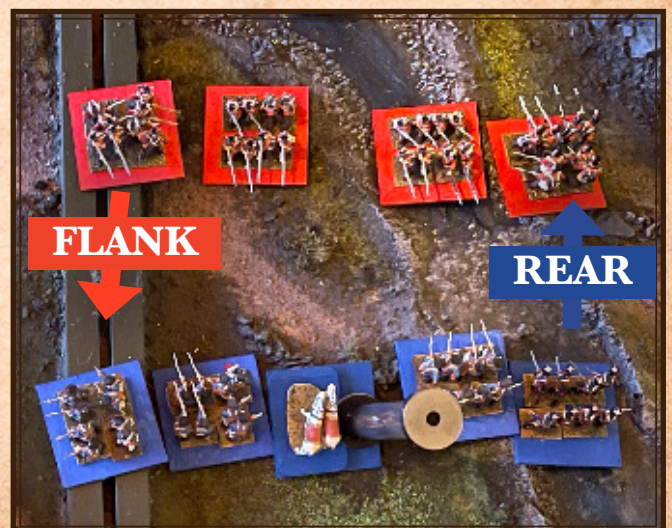


REAR & FLANK ATTACKS (OPTIONAL)

Flanking enemies in the Napoleonic period is deadly!

If attacking in close combat in the flank or rear, you may roll two dice per unit, instead of the normal one, and if you are attacking from the rear, you may both roll two dice AND re-roll missed attacks. In the situation to the right, the British unit **CHARGING** the French (in the flank) can roll two dice, with just a single 5+ needed to destroy the enemy. On the right side, the French unit looking to **CHARGE** the British will not only roll two dice, but also re-roll misses. This means that instead of a the normal 33% to hit (a 5+), the French now have a whopping 80% chance to hit, since it's two dice with re-rolls for misses.

Or in other words, facing matters a LOT in *TS&IW*!



VI



A FEW IMPORTANT NOTES ON COMBAT

Page V explains how Combat works. Now, let's talk a little bit about a few important elements of it.



First off, it's important to note, that this is not a competitive game, or a game where fractions of inches or ultra-precise placement win the day. It's ok to move things around a bit, to make it work on the table, and it's ok to sometimes say "Close enough!". With that said, here are a few guidelines.



When a unit charges into close combat with another unit, re-align them, so they have solid contact with each other. None of this "one tiny portion of a corner touching one tiny portion of a corner". Pivot, wheel and turn units - including the enemy - so it feels like it makes sense, then start rolling dice.



Combat resolution is taken care of by the active player, and while many wargamers have an ingrained tendency to tell the opponent what's going on ("I shoot at your Imperial Guard", etc). Here, you do not have to do that. And yes, that means that players will focus on one part of a battle, and then focus on another, only then to realise that the cavalry charge on the flank is gone, without knowing what happened or when. Such is the nature of warfare!



Units cannot leave close combat voluntarily. They must either win or be destroyed. They can turn around to face enemies, though. And while units can shoot into close combat, they cannot shoot through friendly units. No, not even if you are a particularly brutal Commander!

VII

HOW TO KILL ENEMY COMMANDERS

Commanders form the core of the whole game, and units cannot act without a Commander and his sand timer. If a Commander is killed, the player now has less options, and must stretch resources further to control the battlefield.

So keep those Commanders safe - and remember, an active Commander moves all units within his Command Range first, *then* moves himself (and finally flips his timer)!

DESIGN NOTE

Commanders are the heart and soul of the Napoleonic battlefield. If you lose a Commander in the fight, the men nearby may be willing to fight on, but they are not doing anything until a new Commander rides close enough to them to be in Command Range!

/// First off, Commanders can only be shot at or charged if they can be seen via Line of Sight. Often, you first need to destroy some of the troops near them, before you can see them.

/// Second, if you **ATTACK** at an enemy Commander, one hit (5+ just like any other to hit roll) is a kill.

/// Third, if you manage to **CHARGE** into an enemy Commander, the Commander is killed immediately, and is removed from the battlefield.

/// Killing Commanders is not easy to pull off, but it's definitely possible!

So how do you keep your Commanders alive?

▶▶ Since Commanders can move up to four base lengths when finishing their action (just before flipping their sand timer), it's often quite easy to position them in relative safety behind friendly troops.

▶▶ Now, with that said, Commanders who “stretch their lines” are also more likely to find themselves caught in the open, and the target of enemy fire and charge attempts. Leading from the front is RISKY.

▶▶ Overall, as long as you keep your Commanders close to their own troops and behind the lines, they're safe. If you want to risk them, go ahead... but know that it's awfully frustrating every time you lose one!

Commander with sand timer and special base from Claus' 1/72 Napoleonics collection



Wonderful custom Commander base made by Will Harley

VIII

A FEW WORDS OF ADVICE FOR FIRST-TIME PLAYERS

This page is simply a few tips for those out there, that want to try this out, but are in doubt as to where to start. So, after having being asked by numerous people, I've added this page of somewhat random advice.

How many Commanders is a good idea? For a small, short 1v1 player battle, I recommend 3-5 Commanders per player, and somewhere around 10 - 25 units. When I run fast intro games, each player has three Commanders, and 10 - 12 units.

What “length” of sand timer should we use? This depends on how stressful a game experience you want, but I recommend using 1 or 2 minute timers the first time you play. Then, if you find out that you like it slow and thoughtful, you can consider 3 or 5 minute timers next time - and if you are looking for exceptionally fast and furious, then try playing a game with 30 second timers!

If we don't want to change the rules as written, how do we spice it up? Luckily, even without changing a single rule, there are some things you can tweak, and each will have an impact on your battles.

- /// Battle length and victory conditions matter! Are you playing 10 min, 20 min, or until 50% casualties?
- /// Table size also matters a lot. A 120x80 cm table plays way different than a 240x120cm!
- /// Of course, if you change the number of Commanders each player has, it has a huge impact.
- /// Changing the # of players changes things a lot, especially if you have many Commanders on the table!
- /// The same goes for the number of units. 3 Commanders + 20 units plays differently from 3 + 10.
- /// Finally, Commanders don't need to have the same timers. For example, Will Harley, an early adopter, decided to use a 1 min timer for a “dashing” Commander, and 2 min timer for a “dithering” Commander.

Do you recommend playing the same battle twice, and having players swap sides?

Oh, what a wonderful idea, and great question! Ok, ok, I may have planted that one myself, sorry! The answer, though, is YES-YES-YES. Not only do I do this, when I do my professional training scenarios - it's also a wonderful way of getting two different play experiences out of one battle setup. With most rules, of course, it's pretty utopian to think there's time for an extra battle, but if your games only last 15-20 min (or perhaps even an hour), it's much easier to find time to do a rerun. And if you combine that with assymetric scenario design, then you're really cooking with explosive design ideas!



How do we deal with knocked over sand timers, etc?

Here, I always use a simple rule that I tell players before playing. Every time a player messes up the battlefield (by dropping dice on the floor, knocking over an hourglass, or some such thing), they must stop what they're doing an “reestablish battlefield order”. This represents all the small things that go wrong in the heat of battle, like misunderstood communications, misremembered instructions, accidents, etc. And just like in real life, it turns out that more small accidents happen when players are stressed! 😊

What if we're in doubt? Don't worry!

Just talk to your fellow players, agree on a solution (quickly!) and move on. Don't pause - but be generous.

IX

SIMPLE MODE: FOR PLAYING WITH NON-GAMERS

TS&IW is beginner-friendly. So much so, that most wargamers tend to look at these rules, decide “This should be more complex!” and immediately start tweaking. That is perfectly ok, though I advise on trying the game with rules-as-written at least once before going down the rabbit hole of customising!

However, the rules are intentionally VERY simple, and the vast majority of historical wargamers are used to eating significantly more crunchy rulesets for breakfast, so that’s all well and good.

But what if you want to play with non-gamers?

Can you make it even simpler, so it’s easy for them?

Why, yes you can, and thank you for asking!

In Simple Mode (which is useful if you’re introducing this to non-gamers), the basic rules are the same. Commanders still use sand timers, units roll to hit when attacking, and so forth. **HOWEVER...**

- None of the optional rules are in effect. No terrain, no flank or rear attack bonuses, just bare bones!
- Even more importantly, Commanders can’t be killed in SIMPLE MODE. You can’t **ATTACK** them or **CHARGE** them, and if you move into an enemy Commander, you just move him one base length aside.

THIS IS WHAT THE BARE BONES VERSION OF THE RULES LOOKS LIKE!

This doesn’t mean you can’t play with the slightly more complex version, or add your own tweaks and edits. But if you want to have a non-gamer try it out, I recommend using this Simple Mode version of the rules. It’s fast, it’s furious, and it’s almost TOO simple - but it does an excellent job of teaching the core mechanics. And hey, after you’ve tried that out, you can easily go crazy and add more complexity!



X

FOR ALL THE REST - YOU HAVE FREE HANDS!

What about battle length? Should we use 90 sec sand timers or 10 minute sand timers? Should a unit represent a company, a battalion or a whole division? What about X, and Y, and Z?

I know, I know! All these questions, and all of them good!

But, as I write in the intro, this is not a commercial ruleset made for wargamers - at least not yet! It's a rather minimalist ruleset written down in somewhat readable form, so interested wargamers might try out this way of doing real-time miniature battles with existing miniatures and minimal fuss.

That's why there are no scenarios (though they do exist), or rules for different time periods (though they also exist), or advanced rules for those that want more complexity. Personally, I've experimented with things like Quality Dice, off-table reinforcements, General Cards, secret player objectives and more.

I do recommend, though, that before you start tweaking, you try the rules-as-written at least once. Then, after you've given it a shot (whether it's for a 20 min battle or one to 30% casualties), go nuts!

Because at its core, that's what *TS&TW* is. A simple, fast-playing ruleset that you can play with. I hope you have fun, and feel free to reach out to me!

With spring smiles from Copenhagen
/Claus Raasted, June 3rd, 2026



XI


CHANGES SINCE THE LAST RULES ITERATION (31-05-26)

- /// MASSIVE changes to several things. Several core mechanics have changed.
- /// Units are no longer forced to flee when hit, but are destroyed on the first hit. A huge change!
- /// The basic rules have become simplified even more, and SIMPLE MODE is even simpler still.
- /// Commanders now work very differently. They are no longer tied to specific units, but can move around on the battlefield and command whatever troops they are near.
- /// Command Range has been changed from 4 base lengths to 3, but now, instead of being tied to specific units, a Commander can give orders to ANY unit within his Command Range. This means that a Commander that is placed in the middle of a formation can activate a LOT of units.
- /// This also has the consequence that units that are within the Command Range of multiple Commanders can perform multiple actions in short order. That is ok, even if it can feel a bit weird.
- /// Commanders can no longer freely relocate, but must move around on the field. They have the same speed as Cavalry (4 base lengths), and can not end their movement within Command Range of another Commander - even though they may be on the same side, Commanders don't go too near each other!



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Claus as the Supreme General
of the Armies of Denmark at
an Alternate History 1930's
Hamlet Live Action Role Play
at Kronborg Castle, Denmark

Photo by John-Paul Richard