

PAPER TIGERS™

WWII Miniatures Skirmish Game

by Don Bailey

Introduction

Paper Tigers is designed as an introduction to miniatures wargaming for the beginner. It is intended to be played with paper miniatures printed in 1/72 or 1/76 scale. To that end, the rules are kept deliberately easy to learn. This does not mean the rules are unsophisticated. Players will find that good tactics are generally rewarded.

Paper Tigers uses a standard deck of playing cards to generate an interesting and sometimes surprisingly tense turn sequence. Higher value cards allow you to act first, but they are more difficult to successfully use. Lower value cards are easier to use, but with them, you are more likely to act after your opponent.

Most players' initial games are likely to be solo efforts. This does not pose a problem as Paper Tigers is purposely designed to work well in single-player games. The card-driven turn sequence combined with other mechanisms that limit player control make Paper Tigers highly suitable for solo play yet still provide an enjoyable multi-player game.

A. What You Need

1. One or more 6-sided dice (i.e., "d6" cube dice). Two or three dice are good; 2 or 3 per player are best.
2. An ordinary deck of playing cards (remove the jokers).
3. An area to play at least 3 ft by 3 ft in size. Bigger is better.
4. Items to use for terrain:
 - a. Books or blocks of poly-foam work well for hills.

- b. Cake decorating trees or model railroad trees for woods; also, paper, felt, or some other way to delineate woods areas. Woods areas should be irregularly shaped and approximately 4 x 4 inches to 9 x 9 inches in size. Larger forests can be assembled from several such woods areas placed near each other.



The method for denoting a woods area can be as fancy as the camo-fabric at right or as simple as the piece of string at left. Tree models within the area may be repositioned freely to allow models to be moved in.

- c. Model buildings for towns (see free downloads at papertigerarmaments.com).

5. Some cotton balls to use for "smoke" damage markers.



6. Model vehicles, tanks, guns, and infantry. Aircraft and vessels will be covered in the Advanced Rules. Infantry figures are organized into “squads” of 3 to 5 men. These figures may be glued together on a base or left individually mounted.



A five-man infantry “squad” in front of a cardboard building. Profile infantry, available from papertigerarmaments.com, are great for a beginning game force.

7. A one-foot ruler or tape measure. A piece of string or dowel rod is also useful for checking Line of Sight.

B. Game Setup and Start

1. Determine Attacker and Defender. Each side rolls two dice and adds the results together to get a total from 2 to 12. Re-roll ties.

2. Attacker Sets Up Terrain. The player with the higher total is called the “Attacker” and now gets to set up all the terrain items in the battle area.

3. Defender Positions Forces. The player with the lower total is called the “Defender” and now chooses which side of the battle area to set up his models on. In the basic game, models may start no farther than one-third of the way in from your edge of the battle area. So, if your area is 3 feet wide, you can start troops no farther than one foot in from your edge of the battlefield.

4. Attacker Positions Forces. The Attacker now sets up his models on the opposite side of the area no farther than one-third of the way in from his edge.

5. Shuffle the card deck. The Defender shuffles the deck first. Alternate who shuffles the deck each following turn. You’re now ready to begin the battle.

C. Game Turns

Paper Tigers is played in a series of game turns. Each turn has the following steps:

1. Deal Cards. Each player rolls 2 dice. This is the number of cards the player is dealt.

a. Starting with the player with the highest roll, alternate dealing one card at a time to each player. If the roll was a tie, then deal the first card to the “Attacker”.

b. Don’t look at the cards after they are dealt. What you get is supposed to be a surprise.

c. If both sides start with fewer than 5 units (i.e., vehicles, guns, or squads), then each player rolls two dice but only counts the higher of the two toward his number of cards (this is to prevent an excess of cards being dealt).

***Example:** Tom and Cindy are playing a small skirmish with only 3 units per side. They roll for their number of cards for the first turn. Tom gets a 5 and a 2, so he ignores the 2 and gets 5 cards this turn. Cindy rolls a 4 and a 3. She ignores the 3 and gets 4 cards this turn.*

2. Assign Cards to Units. Starting with the Attacker, players take turns assigning one card at a time to models on the battlefield, keeping them face-down.

a. A card may be assigned to a vehicle, gun, or infantry squad. An individual model may have no more than two cards assigned to it.

b. You don’t have to assign all your cards. Some may be saved for later. You may never have more than six unused cards in your hand at the end of a turn.

3. Combat Actions. Once players are finished assigning cards Combat Actions begin. Each player picks one of his models, with one or more cards assigned, to act. He then flips over at least one card for his chosen model. If a model has two cards, either or both may be flipped over. If both cards are flipped, the model will take two actions at this point in time. If one is left face down, the model may act



again at a later time in the turn. The card colors and values determine the type of actions that may be performed as well as the order the models perform them in:

a. **Card Initiative Value:** The higher a card's value, the more quickly it gets to act. This is called its "Initiative". From lowest to highest, card initiatives are: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King, and Ace. Thus a model with a "King" card acts before a model with a "3" card. In case of ties, red cards always act before black cards. If the value and color are the same, then spade beats club and heart beats diamond. The models perform their actions in the order determined by the cards' Initiative values.

b. **Card Difficulty Value:** The higher a card's Initiative value, the harder it is to use. So, the quicker-acting cards are also less likely to yield a successful result. A card's "Difficulty" is equal to its number value if it's a numbered card or ten if it's a face card. Aces have a Difficulty value of eleven. To successfully act on a card, you must roll two or more dice to get a total equal to or greater than the card's difficulty.

c. **Card Color:** A card's color determines what you may do when you play it:

Red Cards: *Fire* (roll 3 dice) OR *Move* (roll 2 dice)

Black Cards: *Move* (roll 3 dice) OR *Fire* (roll 2 dice)



*The T-34 at left has the **Queen of Spades**. However, the Panther at right has the **Queen of Hearts**. The initiative values are the same, but since Hearts are red, the Panther gets to act first. Its controlling player decides the Panther will fire, so he must roll 3 dice and get a total equal to or greater than 10 to hit.*

If the T-34 survives, it may either move (roll 3 dice, or return fire (roll only 2 dice for firing on a black card).

d. Note that, if one or both of the models players chose to act has two cards flipped over, one might perform both its actions before the other or the two models might alternate actions. This is determined by the initiative values of the cards.

e. Once the two models have acted, each player chooses another to act and so on until all models with an assigned card have acted.

f. If one player still has units with cards assigned after the other player has expended all his actions, then turn over any remaining cards and act with those units in order.

4. Recovery. At the end of each turn, players may use any cards they saved to attempt to remove damage from units.

a. At the end of the turn, all players may assign cards still in their hands to any models or squads that are "damaged" (i.e., have taken only one hit). A damaged model may have only ONE card assigned. After all cards desired have been assigned, flip them over. For each damaged model, roll two dice and compare the total to the Difficulty value of the card. If a recovery roll is equal to or greater than the card's Difficulty, then remove the hit marker from the model. If the roll is less than the difficulty, the recovery attempt fails and the hit remains.

b. Models that recover may have cards assigned and perform actions normally. Models that still have a hit are considered to be damaged and "shell shocked". They may not have cards assigned and may take no actions. If a damaged model takes another hit, it is destroyed.

5. End of Turn. When all actions are complete and recovery attempts are done, the turn is over.

a. Discard all used cards. Players then turn any unused cards in their hands face up on the table for all to see. At this point, begin a new turn.

b. Cards that were saved from the previous turn (and are now face-up on the table) may be used in the new turn along with any new cards received. Note that face-up saved cards must remain face-up when they are assigned to a unit for actions or recovery attempts. Thus the opponent will know what the card is as well.



c. Remember, you may never have more than six cards saved at the end of a turn. If you have more than six cards, discard any excess. Choose which cards to discard **BEFORE** you turn the remaining ones you will save face-up.

D. Combat Actions in Detail

1. Moving

a. Roll the number of dice allowed by the card color and action you chose, and add them together. Compare this total against the card's difficulty value for each move attempt (Note that on black cards, you will roll three dice but if you try to move on a red card, you'll only roll two).

b. If the total is equal to or greater than the difficulty level, the model gets to move a number of inches equal to the dice total. However, infantry and unlimbered guns may never move farther than 6 inches on a single card. Measure the move distance from the front of the model.

c. If the roll is less than the difficulty, the model does not get to move on this card.

d. If a model moves into an area of woods, a building, onto a hill, or some other area that might be considered difficult terrain, it must stop. It may continue movement on later actions. Vehicles may not enter buildings.

e. Guns and their crews are treated as a single unit for moving. All move together.

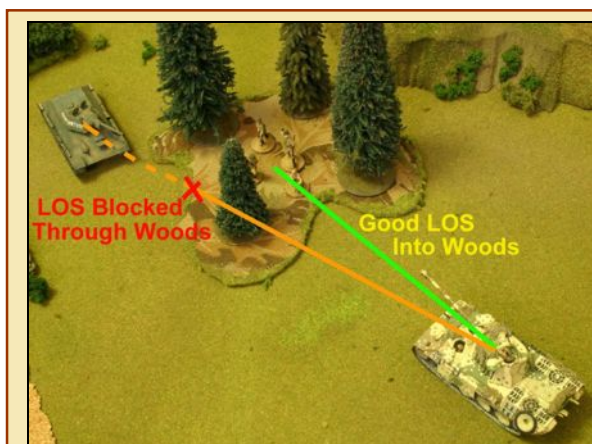
2. Firing

a. You must be able to trace an unblocked Line of Sight (LOS) from your firing model to the target. This is a straight line drawn from the approximate center of the firing model to the approximate center of the target model. Hills, buildings, and woods areas all block LOS through but not into them.

b. If there's any doubt about whether a clear LOS exists, roll one die. On a 1, 2, or 3, LOS is blocked. Otherwise, it's clear.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: *A forest composed of several woods areas, or a village composed of several buildings, will have very limited visibility indeed. This is because each separate woods area or building blocks LOS through it. A unit in one building or*

woods area will only be able to see and fire as far as the next.



The Panther tank (right) has a good LOS to the infantry in the woods area. However, LOS through the woods to the T-34 is blocked.

c. In the basic game infantry models may only fire at targets within 12 inches. All other models may fire at any distance.

d. Roll the number of dice allowed by the card color and action chosen and total them together. If the total is equal to or greater than the card's difficulty, the shot hits the target model. Mark the model with a piece of cotton "smoke" to show it is damaged. Alternately, single-mounted infantry figures in a squad may be turned over on their sides to show they have been hit. Note that if you are firing on a red card, you'll roll three dice, while if you are firing on a black card, you'll only roll two dice.

e. If the roll is less than the card's difficulty, the shot missed and there is no effect from this fire action.

f. Models with armor. Tanks and armored cars have armor that may negate the effect of hits. Immediately after a tank takes a hit, roll two dice (one for armored cars or halftracks). A roll of 5 or 6 on either die negates the hit.

g. Infantry squads don't get an armor roll. However, if a squad is in a building or woods area, it does get a "cover roll" if hit. Roll only one die. On a 5 or 6 the hit is negated.

h. After any armor or cover rolls have been made, any models that still have one hit are damaged and "Shell-Shocked". Any cards that were assigned to



them are immediately discarded. A damaged unit that takes another successful hit is destroyed.

i. Any models that have two or more hits remaining after any armor or cover rolls are destroyed. Remove them from the battlefield and discard any cards assigned to them. Players may alternately choose to leave destroyed vehicles on the battlefield and mark them with cotton that is dyed or painted black. Such “burning” vehicles block LOS.

j. Guns and their crews are treated as a single unit for firing. They fire and are fired upon as a single entity. If a gun is damaged/shell shocked or destroyed, so is its crew.



This T-34 has taken a hit and failed its armor roll. The white cotton “smoke” denotes that it is now damaged and “shell-shocked”.

E. “Follow Me!”

1. Vehicle and gun models, as well as infantry squads within three inches of an acting model or squad may perform the same action as long as they had no cards assigned to them at the beginning of the current turn. If moving, they must attempt to stay within three inches of the other unit if possible. If firing, they may fire at separate targets. Each unit must make a separate difficulty roll for moving or firing.

2. More than one model, but NOT more than three, may act on the same card in this way so long as each new acting model or squad starts within 3 inches of the previous. Thus, a “chain” of up to three acting models will be formed with each model within

3 inches from the last. Each unit must still make a separate difficulty roll for moving or firing.

DESIGNER’S NOTE: *This rule is intended to help when players roll badly for their number of cards or if they are using a large number of models (i.e., greater than 12).*

3. Note that a unit may not “follow” another unit if it already has one or more cards assigned to it in the current turn.

4. A unit may follow only a single unit within a turn (i.e., it may not follow one unit on its first action and then follow a different unit on its second action).

5. Units may never perform more than two actions in a single turn whether assigned cards or following another unit.



The T-34 has been assigned two cards. When flipped over they show the 6 of Hearts and 3 of Spades. The T-34 first attempts to FIRE with the 6 of Hearts.

The nearest infantry squad is within 3 inches so it may also attempt to fire at this time with the same difficulty as long as there is a target within 12 inches. A second infantry unit is within 3 inches of the first so it may also attempt to fire.

Once firing is finished, the T-34 decides to attempt moving with the 3 of Spades. Both infantry squads may also attempt to move. The first squad must try to stay within 3 inches of the T-34. The second infantry squad must try to stay within 3 inches of the first squad.



F. Vehicle Passengers and “Tank Riders”

1. Up to one infantry squad may ride in a truck, halftrack, or on the back of a tank. It takes a successful move action to mount or dismount the vehicle. The squad simply moves onto or off of the vehicle using its normal move.
2. Passengers may not fire until they dismount. If the vehicle they're riding on is a tank, the passengers must dismount if the tank fires.
3. Passenger squads are not fired upon, only the vehicle transporting them. If a truck or tank that is carrying a squad is hit by fire (regardless of whether it passes its armor roll if a tank), the squad also takes a hit and immediately dismounts.
4. If the transporting vehicle is a halftrack, the squad still takes a hit, but dismounting is optional.
5. Roll one die for the distance the squad moves from the vehicle after any such “forced” dismount (also for dismounting from a tank that fired or the “optional” dismounts from a halftrack hit by fire).
6. Guns may be towed by trucks, halftracks, weapons carriers, or jeeps, but not tanks or armored cars. The gun's crew rides inside the towing vehicle just like an infantry unit. Guns and their crews are loaded and unloaded in the same way as infantry (i.e., make a successful move up to the vehicle), except that the gun is towed behind the vehicle rather than riding in it.
7. Guns and their crews can be forced to unload in the same way as infantry. Roll one die for the distance moved from the towing vehicle.

G. End of Deck and Winning the Game

1. When all the cards in the deck have been used and discarded, players check to see if one of them has won.
2. Each player counts the number of his opponent's models he has destroyed and totals up his “Victory Points” (VP). Each infantry squad or unarmored vehicle is worth one victory point. Each gun or armored car is worth three victory points. Each tank is worth five victory points. Each side will want to

have roughly the same point value in units at the start of the game.

3. Victory Points may also be awarded for having control of certain key terrain features, such as a building, hill, or bridge, at the end of a deck.

a. Such key areas are called “Objectives”. Players should decide on the VP value of Objectives before the game starts. Objectives can have any VP value, but a good rule of thumb is:

Low Priority Objective = 2 VP
Medium Priority Objective = 4 VP
High Priority Objective = 8 VP

b. Note that, several low priority objectives may group together to form a higher priority objective overall. For instance, in a small village of five buildings, each individual building may only be worth 2 VP. Controlling all five buildings in the village, however, would be worth a total of 10 VP.

b. To control an objective, a player must have a unit on/in the terrain feature after the last card in a deck is drawn and any actions are performed. Also, there must be no enemy units within 3 inches of the objective.

c. If one player starts the game in control of one or more objectives, so that the game starts with an imbalance in VP, give the other player a number of points for additional units equal to the value of the objective(s). However, the total of such bonus points gained should normally be limited so that one side's do not total more than twice the other side's.

4. The side with the most victory points at the end of a deck wins the battle. If the difference between both players' victory points is less than three VP, it's only a “marginal” victory. If both sides have the same number of VP, or they are within 3 VP of each other and both sides want to continue, reshuffle the deck and begin a new turn.

6. If both sides are still tied after three runs through the deck, the battle ends in a draw. Keep track of runs through the deck with pennies or some other marker.

7. Alternately, players may decide to play to a set number of VP. If, at the end of a deck, one or both players have reached this total, the battle ends. Determine the victor as in paragraph G.4 above.



H. Solo Games

1. Your first games are likely to be played without an opponent as you learn the rules. While Paper Tigers is purposely designed to work well for solo efforts, some minor procedural changes can make things a little easier for the solo player.
2. In the two-player game, players assign cards one at a time to units starting with the player who rolled higher for his number of cards. This ends up making the solo player run around the table quite a bit. Instead, make the side that rolled highest perform ALL of its card assignments first. Then assign all the cards for the other side.
3. In the two-player game, players each simultaneously choose one unit at a time to act and then flip the assigned card or cards over for the chosen units. This almost requires the solo player to have multiple personalities as the order in which units are chosen to act can be critical to the battle's outcome.
 - a. Instead, flip over one card for EVERY unit that has one or more assigned and let the card initiative values determine the order of actions.
 - b. After this first round of actions is done, any units with cards left have those flipped over. Perform a second round of actions for those units.
4. Solo players may introduce an element of surprise into their battles by randomly determining what and how many units are available for one or both sides.
 - a. Instead of placing units directly on the table, for one side, write the name/type of each unit on a slip of paper or index card (old business cards work well for this). Make sure the card slips are all the same size and shape so you can't tell which unit is which.
 - b. Before game start, shuffle the unit slips and place them face down in desired spots on the table. After you have placed any "non-randomized" units for the other side, turn over the card slips and replace them with the appropriate units.
 - c. If desired, up to a third of the unit card slips may be blank (i.e., fake units). Shuffle these in with the rest of the card slips and then place them on the table. Also, if desired, leave up to a third of these card slips off the table. In this way, some real units may never show up on the table. You have a

general idea of what units may be present, but no idea of which ones actually are.

- d. Once all the units for both sides are placed on the table begin play as normal.

I. Multi-Player Games

1. While initial games may be solo or two-player, it's also possible to play Paper Tigers with 3, 4, or more players. Again, certain minor changes in some procedures can ease play.
2. Each player should be in command of his own "Battle Group" of units that only he or she may command. Each player also rolls for his own hand of cards. Cards may not be exchanged between players or played on another player's units.
3. For a large number of players, you may need one deck of cards for each side. In this case, if opposing units end up being assigned cards of the same value and color, each side rolls two dice and the higher total acts first.
4. All the victory points for players of each side are totaled for determining victory. However, each player who earns the most victory points for his side gets a special commendation at the end of the battle.

J. Some Alternative Scenarios

The basic scenario described in the rules can provide many enjoyable battles, but eventually, players will want new challenges. The following scenarios provide some additional variety.

1. **"Clash of Patrols"** — Two infantry patrols have bumped into each other in the dark just before dawn. As the sun rises, fighting begins; close and furious.

Special Scenario Rules:

- a. Each side gets 3-5 infantry units. Roll for "Attacker" and "Defender" and set up terrain as normal.
- b. Each side rolls one die. This is the number of inches from the center of the table the first unit of that side is placed. Each subsequent unit is set up three inches back from the



previous to form in a column of units. If necessary, wind your column of units back and forth to fit your entire force on the table.

- c. Each side gets VP for enemy units destroyed as normal.
- d. If desired, each side may receive a certain number of tank and/or infantry reinforcements on a later turn. Start these on each player's table edge.

2. "Take the high ground!" — The attacker is sent to take a large hill held by a determined defender.

Special Scenario Rules:

a. Determine Attacker and Defender as normal, however the Defender gets to set up the terrain and choose his side of the table. There should also be a large (~1 foot x 1 foot) hill within 6 inches of the table center. This hill is a "High Priority" victory objective.

b. The defender sets up on his side as normal but may also position up to a third of his units (round up) on the hill.

c. Since this is a BIG hill, units on it get to roll a bonus "cover" die vs hits made by units at ground level. This is in addition to any other armor or cover dice rolls.

d. Since the defender holds the objective, the attacker should get extra unit points as described in G.3.

3. "Fighting Withdrawal" — A small defending force tries to hold off a stronger attacker long enough to evacuate across a river bridge.

Special Scenario Rules:

a. Determine attacker and defender as normal, however the defender gets to set up the terrain and choose his side of the table. In addition to any other terrain features, there should be a river running across the table approximately 1/3 of the way in from the defender's table edge (use colored felt or plastic gift wrap for the river)

b. A single bridge is located over the river where the defender desires. The river is impassable to units except at this bridge.

c. The bridge is a High Priority objective controlled by the defender, so the attacker should get bonus unit points as described in G.3. The defender places his units first anywhere on the attacker's side of the river up to the center of the table. The attacker places his units as normal.

d. At the start of any turn, when action cards are assigned, the defender may assign ONE card to attempt to blow up the bridge. This is treated as an action like any other, but only roll TWO dice regardless of card color.

e. Each side gets VP for enemy units destroyed. Additionally, the defender gets points for any unit successfully moved across the bridge toward his table edge before game end. The attacker gets points for any defending unit stranded on the attacker's side of the bridge at game end. If the attacker captures the bridge (as in G.3) before it is blown, he gets 8 VP for capturing a high priority objective.

f. The game immediately ends when the bridge is successfully blown or the attacker captures it (you don't have to wait for the end of a deck).

Designer's Notes

The central challenge in designing "Paper Tigers" was to come up with a game that both beginners and experienced gamers could enjoy. My solution to this dilemma was to focus on the supply, morale, and command-control aspects of warfare rather than the technical capabilities of vehicles and weapons. In fact, this is exactly what the card deck represents — supply, command-control, and unit morale — all rolled up into one convenient game mechanic.

The varying number of cards players get each turn represents the difficulties inherent in radio communications and the varying abilities of commanders to assess the current situation. Within this framework, players face the not-so-easy choice of where to exert the command control available to them (i.e., assigning cards).

Once cards are assigned, there is always some doubt about how a unit will react to its orders. Card color determines whether a unit has a greater supply of ammunition or fuel, or is otherwise more motivated to move or fire. The commander, of course, may insist that the unit perform an action it isn't prepared to do (for instance fire on a black



card), but the unit will do so at reduced effectiveness (i.e., with fewer dice).

The concept of initiative provides an extra level of tension and unpredictability. Players have some control in that they get to choose which of their units will act next, but they have little idea whether they will act before opposing units.

The only ways the player has to mitigate these variables is by assigning additional cards to certain units or by saving cards for later turns. A unit with an extra card has increased flexibility at the expense of some other friendly unit not getting to act. Saving cards for later turns allows you to know what those cards are. The downside is your opponent gets to know what they are as well.

Early on I also hit upon the idea of balancing card initiative with difficulty. The higher a card's initiative, the greater its difficulty is. This means a vehicle or squad may get to act faster, but at a reduced chance of success. A unit desiring a greater chance of success must take its time and thus risk being preempted by an opposing unit.

I hope to provide an advanced version of these rules, at a later time, that add more detail and options. For now, I hope "Paper Tigers" motivates you to build some paper models and get them into combat. As "Mr. Paper Tiger", Cliff Button, always says at the end of his kit instructions, "Enjoy!"

Don Bailey
Colorado Springs, CO
U.S.A.



If you have questions or want to contact the author, you may do so through the papertigerarmaments.com website or directly via email at pouncing_tiger@mac.com.

