The Fantasy Trip

Melee™

Man-to-Man Combat With Archaic Weapons

Third Edition

Game Design by Steve Jackson

Cover by Brandon Moore • Illustrations and counters by Liz Danforth
Logo and Production by Ben Williams • Prepress Checks by Miranda Horner

CONTENTS

STEVE JACKSON GAMES
thefantasytrip.game

I. INTRODUCTION

Flavius Marcellus, youngest centurion of the Legion, was angry. They had been in this forest for three days. The German barbarians weren't showing themselves, except to pick off an occasional scout. And now Honorius was overdue from sentry duty. If that old fool was dozing off again, there'd be trouble.

As he stepped into the little glade, Flavius saw movement at the other end. Honorius? No! He sensed, rather than saw, the shaggy clothing – and the ready bow. His soldier's reflexes launched him into a charge. Burdened as he was by his armor, he could still probably get that barbarian before . . .

An arrow snapped. Flavius felt pain, but not much; thank the gods for that armor. He moved in, weaving to spoil the archer's aim. A second arrow missed. As Flavius neared, the barbarian moved to put his back to a tree. His third arrow went off as the Roman swung his sword. It glanced off Flavius' armor. His own swing went wild, but his opponent was forced to abandon his bow.

Now the German tribesman had come up with an enormous broadsword, and the two were trading hacks. Slowed by his armor and shield, Flavius despaired of striking his agile opponent. Somehow, he did, wounding the barbarian badly.

The bleeding German tried to sidestep, but Flavius cut him off. Then the tribesman's desperate stroke hit home. Glancing off the shield and through armor, the broadsword bit into Flavius' side. Giddy from the shock, he abandoned the attack for a few seconds, content to parry and wait. The swords clashed and sparked.

Then, suddenly, it ended. Flavius' shortsword went under the German's wild slash and bit deeply. The unarmored savage staggered back; Flavius followed quickly and struck again. The barbarian collapsed, either dead or too badly wounded to stand. Flavius was hurt, but well able to walk. In the bushes he saw what was left of Honorius – but *he* was all right. He had revenge for his man, and maybe a prisoner. He bent over the savage . . .

Melee is a game of man-to-man combat with archaic weapons. It can be used to simulate combat between single opponents or small groups in any period.

Players create figures and send them into combat against a variety of opponents. Selection of weapons and armor, the strength and dexterity of the fighters, and the tactics the players choose will combine to tell which figures will survive. Successful fighters increase their strength and dexterity by gaining experience; losers die.

The narrative above was taken from an actual game. The *Combat Example* (page 23) takes the same fight and shows, using the *Melee* rules and dice rolls, how Flavius bested his foe.

Melee can also be used as a tactical aid for fantasy roleplaying. Players will find that the *Melee* system meshes easily with most rules, allowing tactical combat to be worked out in a logical manner. *Melee* lets the Game Master regularize movement and attacks on a small scale, taking one of the biggest headaches out of fantasy gaming.

Melee is basically a two-player game, but solitaire and multiplayer games are possible. Each player may control any number of figures; the only limit to the possible scenarios is your imagination.

II. COMPONENTS

This *Melee* game contains:
• This rule booklet.
• One arena map, divided into hexagons ("hexes") to govern movement, and larger dark-bordered "megahexes" to govern missile weapon fire.
• Over 70 counters representing men, animals, monsters, and dropped weapons.
• Three six-sided dice.

You will also need pencils, scratch paper, and a straightedge. Miniature figures are not necessary, but add interest.

III. CREATING A FIGURE

Melee is a game of man-to-man combat, in which the most important factor is the ability of the individual fighters. Each counter in *Melee* represents a "figure" with its own capabilities, chosen by the player before the game begins. A fighter's basic attributes are Strength (ST) and Dexterity (DX).

When a figure is first created, the player sets its ST and DX as follows: A human figure starts with 8 ST, 8 DX, and 8 extra points to be allotted as the player chooses. Thus, each figure begins with a total of 24 points – 13 to ST and 11 to DX, or any other combination adding to 24. Neither ST nor DX may begin at less than 8 for a human figure. (Animals and monsters go by other rules, which will be discussed later.)

STRENGTH governs:

(1) how many hits a figure can take. "Hits" represent combat damage. The hits a figure takes are subtracted from its ST; when ST reaches 0 a figure collapses and cannot fight. When ST reaches -1, that figure is dead.

(2) what weapons a figure can use. Each weapon (shown on the *Weapon Table*, page 14) has a ST number. Only a figure whose strength *begins* at or above that number can use that weapon. (Reduction of ST during a fight does NOT affect weapon use.)

(3) how well the figure does in unarmed combat (see *Hand-to-Hand Combat*, page 17).

DEXTERITY governs:

(1) how likely a figure is to hit an enemy it attacks.

(2) how easily a figure can disengage from an enemy.

(3) how quickly a figure can strike.

Dexterity is adjusted for several factors, such as armor, wounds, etc. When these rules call for a roll against DX, the *adjusted* DX (adjDX) is what is meant. A figure with a high basic DX may have a very small chance of hitting if its adjusted DX is low – and a clumsy figure can improve its chances by getting a positive DX adjustment. A table of DX adjustments is given under *Attacks*.

To hit, you must roll 3 dice and get your adjDX or less. This is a "3/DX" roll.

Once a figure's 24 beginning points are divided between ST and DX, they cannot be shifted. However, a figure who gains experience by surviving combat may gain strength and dexterity, and in time become more powerful – see *Experience*.

Once a figure's ST and DX have been determined, the player should decide what armor, if any, the figure will wear, and what weapons and/or shield he or she will carry. A figure may carry only two weapons (plus a dagger) at a time; *a shield counts as a "weapon."*

Armor and Shields are covered on page 10. They can provide protection, but reduce DX and movement allowance (MA). The weapons a figure chooses, of course, govern how much damage it can do. A figure's ST and DX must be considered carefully when weapons are chosen; a strong but clumsy fighter will use arms and tactics totally different from those of a dexterous but weak one.

A record sheet or card should be made up for each figure, as in the example below:

RAGNAR THE IMPETUOUS
ST = 11
DX = 13 (11)(10)
MA = 8
SPEAR 1d+1
DAGGER 1d-1

LEATHER ARMOR / STOPS 2 HITS;
LG. SHIELD / 4 W/ SHIELD

EXPERIENCE POINTS = 50

R
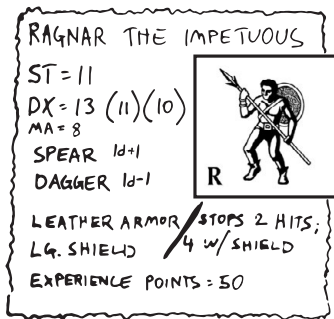
Ragnar is a Viking. He wears leather, which takes 2 hits per attack. He also carries a large shield which takes another 2 hits from any frontal attack, although it is usually slung on his back because he needs both hands for his spear.

His card has *two* adjusted DX stats (in parentheses after his basic DX). The first is 11, which is his adjusted DX *without* the shield; the second is 10, which is his DX when he uses the shield. He can withstand 2 hits per attack without loss of ST due to his leather armor; when he uses the shield he can take 4 hits/attack. His ST is 11, which is just enough to let him carry the spear.

When Ragnar goes into combat, the hits he takes should be shown as tally marks next to his ST; if he survives, the hits can be erased, since he will take time to recover before another fight.

A figure may not put on or take off armor during a combat, but it may pick up or drop weapons as long as it never carries more than two (plus a dagger) at once. Between combats, a figure may freely change weapons and armor.

Giving each figure a name and background adds interest, especially when miniature figures are being used as counters.

Once each player's figures are ready, you may begin the combat.

IV. TURN SEQUENCING AND OPTIONS

Melee is played in turns, representing about five seconds each. During each turn, each figure may execute one "option" from the list below. Each option may include movement, attack, defense, or some combination.

The options available to a figure will depend on whether or not it is "engaged," "disengaged," or in "hand-to-hand combat." An engaged figure is one that is *adjacent to an enemy figure, in one of that figure's front hexes*. See page 9 for diagrams and more details.

Nothing in *Melee* happens simultaneously. Each movement or attack may affect the next one. Each turn goes through these stages:

(1) *Roll for initiative*. Each player rolls a die. The winner may choose either to move their figure(s) first that turn, or to have the other player(s) move first.

(2) *Movement*. The first player to move chooses *one* option for each of his/her figures, and executes the *movement* part (if any) of that option for each figure. How far each figure may move depends on its movement allowance (MA) and the option chosen.

(3) *The second player* then chooses options and moves all his/her figures the same way. (If there are more than two players, the third, fourth, and so on then pick options and move.)

(4) *Combat phase*. All attacks are carried out. No figure may attack unless it chose an option including the word "attack." Figures attack in the order of their *adjusted* DX, highest first; ties are resolved each turn by a die roll. When figures are firing two arrows per turn, they fire their second arrows (again in order of adjDX) *after* all figures have made their first attack. If a figure is killed or takes 8+ hits in one turn *before* its time to attack comes, it does not get to attack that turn.

(5) *Force Retreats*. If any figure inflicted hits (except with a missile or thrown weapon) on an enemy, and took no hits itself, it may *retreat* that enemy one hex (see p. 20) and *either* advance to the hex vacated by the enemy *or* stand still (thus possibly becoming disengaged).

(6) *Counters for thrown or dropped weapons* are placed in the appropriate hexes, and counters for slain figures are flipped upside down.

If both sides still have figures able to fight, begin the next turn.

OPTIONS

An *option* is a set of actions. A figure may execute *one* option each turn, and may *not* mix actions from different options. The options available to a figure depend on whether it is engaged, disengaged, or in HTH combat at the moment its turn to *move* comes. During a turn, a player may change his mind about a figure's option, as long as

• that figure has not yet acted, *and*

• that figure did not move too far to allow it to take the new option.

OPTIONS FOR DISENGAGED FIGURES

A figure which is *not* engaged with an enemy when its turn comes to move may perform any *one* of the following options:

(a) MOVE up to its full MA.

(b) CHARGE ATTACK. Move up to half its MA and attack with any weapon except a missile weapon, or HTH. (A figure can *never* attack if it moved more than half its MA.)

(c) DODGE. Move up to half its MA while dodging (see p. 20).

(d) DROP. Move up to half its MA and drop to a prone or kneeling position.

(e) READY NEW WEAPON. Move up to 2 hexes, re-sling (*not* drop) its ready weapon and/or shield, and ready a new weapon and/or shield, *or* pick up and ready a dropped weapon and/or shield from the hex where movement ends or from an adjacent hex.

(f) MISSILE WEAPON ATTACK. Move up to l hex and/or drop to prone/kneeling position and/or fire a missile weapon.

(g) STAND UP. Rise from prone, kneeling, or knocked-down position at the *end* of the *combat* phase, or crawl 2 hexes during the movement phase; take *no* other action. A downed figure *must* take a turn to stand up before attacking, running, etc.

* (h) CAST SPELL. Move one hex or stand still, and attempt any spell.

* (i) DISBELIEVE. Move one hex or stand still, taking no other action, and attempt to disbelieve one figure.

OPTIONS FOR ENGAGED FIGURES

A figure which is engaged with an enemy (see definition, p. 9) *when its turn comes to move* may perform any *one* of the following options:

(j) SHIFT AND ATTACK. Shift one hex (or stand still) and attack with any non-missile weapon.

(k) SHIFT AND DEFEND. Shift one hex (or stand still) and defend (see p. 20).

(l) ONE-LAST-SHOT MISSILE ATTACK. If the figure had a missile weapon ready *before* it was engaged, it may get off one last shot. (This option reflects the fact that you can almost always release an arrow at a charging enemy.)

(m) CHANGE WEAPONS. Shift one hex (or stand still) and drop ready weapon (if any), and ready a new *non-missile* weapon. (An engaged figure cannot ready or reload a missile weapon.)

(n) DISENGAGE. See page 19 for an explanation of disengaging.

(o) ATTEMPT HAND-TO-HAND ATTACK. During the movement phase, the figure stands still or shifts; when its turn to attack comes, it moves onto the hex of any adjacent enemy, and attempts to hit with bare hands or (if it was ready) its dagger.

(p) STAND UP. Same as (g) above.

(q) PICK UP DROPPED WEAPON. "Bend over" (not moving), drop your ready weapon and/or shield (if any), and pick up and ready a dropped weapon in your hex or an adjacent hex.

* (r) CAST SPELL. Shift one hex or stand still, and attempt any spell.

* (s) DISBELIEVE. Same as (i) above.
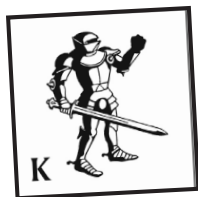
OPTIONS FOR FIGURES IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT

(t) HTH ATTACK. Attempt to hit an opponent in the same hex with bare hands or, if dagger is ready, with the dagger.

(u) ATTEMPT TO DRAW DAGGER. See page 18.

(v) ATTEMPT TO DISENGAGE. Disengaging while in HTH combat is not automatic; it requires a die roll. See page 20.

* This option involves magic and is only relevant if *Wizard* is being used.

V. MOVEMENT

Figures begin the game in any of the four entrance hexes (starred) at opposite ends of the arena.

Each figure has a movement allowance (MA) of a certain number of hexes. An unarmored human has an MA of 10 – that is, he/she can move 10 hexes per turn. Armor reduces MA: leather armor = MA 8, chainmail = MA 6, and plate armor also = MA 6. Movement allowances for nonhumans are given under *Nonhuman Figures* (page 21).

SHIFTING

Only disengaged figures have options which let them move their full MA. An engaged figure may move only one hex during movement, *and must stay adjacent to all figures to which it is engaged;* this is called a "shift" in the list of options. Figures in HTH combat may not move at all until they successfully disengage.

MOVING ONTO OTHER FIGURES

Normally, only one figure occupies a hex; a figure may *never* move through a standing or kneeling figure, friend or foe.

A figure may move into another figure's hex for HTH combat and stop.

If someone dies, flip their counter to the skull side. Fallen bodies are obstacles. To leap over one, spend 3 MA and move into the hex beyond it.

To move into the hex *with* a body, either spend 3 MA to move cautiously, *or* take a move-one-hex option, *or* follow a retreat, *or*, if you insist on moving quickly onto the body, spend only one MA but make a 3/DX roll to stay afoot. If you fail, you fall in that hex.

A figure must stop its movement when it enters any front hex of an enemy figure, thus becoming engaged. See *Facing*, below.
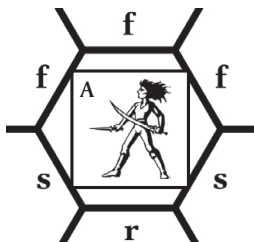
VI. FACING

Each figure faces one side of its hex, as shown by the direction the counter is turned. A player may change the facing of a figure whenever it *moves*, and may always change its facing at the end of its movement turn, even if it stayed in the same hex.

A figure on the ground, or one bending over to pick up a weapon, is considered to face "rear" in all six directions; it has no front. However, a prone or kneeling archer has normal "front" hexes for purposes of determining where he/she may fire.

Example: Astrid is facing the hex directly "above" her in the diagram. The three hexes marked "f" are her front hexes. The "s" hexes are her side hexes. The "r" hex is her rear hex.

Facing determines which figures are engaged. A figure is *engaged* if it is in an *enemy's* front hex. If a figure is behind an enemy, the front figure is engaged, but the rear one is not.

Facing also determines which figures may be attacked. *Only an enemy in one of your three front hexes may be attacked*. For missile and thrown weapons, only figures "in front" of you may be attacked, as shown below.
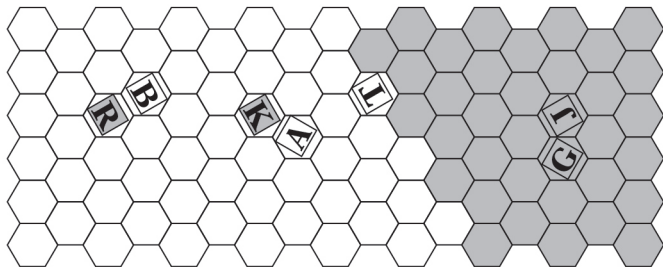
Attacking from an enemy's side hex adds +2 to your DX; attacking from his rear adds +4. See *Attacks*, below.

In this diagram, Tark is not engaged. Bjorn is engaged (he is in Rolf's front hex), but Rolf is not engaged (he is in Bjorn's rear hex). Karl and Astrid are both engaged; each is in one of the other's front hexes. Jon and Grath are not engaged; they are not enemies.

The unshaded hexes are "in front of" Tark. He can fire missile weapons, or throw weapons, only at figures in these hexes.

VII. ATTACKS

An "attack" is an attempt to hit an enemy. There are several types of attacks: regular, thrown-weapon, missile-weapon, and HTH.

In order to attack (except HTH), a figure must have a *ready weapon*. A figure has one weapon and/or shield (specified by the player) ready when it enters the arena. A weapon stays ready after an attack, unless it is thrown or dropped (except a crossbow, which takes time to reload). In order to change weapons, a figure chooses option (e) or (m) to ready a new weapon. This takes a turn; the new weapon can be used on the *next* turn. A shield, like a weapon, is "ready" or not. An unready shield is slung on the figure's back.

Remember: A figure may not attack during a given turn unless it chose one of the options whose title includes the word "attack." Figures which change weapons, stand up, move more than half their MA, disengage, etc., *cannot* attack that turn.

Only one figure may be attacked per turn (exception: a figure which fires two arrows can fire at two different targets).

ROLLING FOR A HIT

When an attack is made, the attacker rolls three dice to see whether it hits the enemy. To hit, a figure must roll its *adjusted* DX or *less* on 3 dice. Thus, a figure with adjDX 8 must roll 8 or less.

Adjustments to DX are as follows:

ATTACKER'S ARMOR, SHIELD, ETC.

Cloth armor: -1
Leather armor: -2
Chainmail: -3
Half plate armor: -4
Plate armor: -5
Large shield (when ready): -1

FACING

Attacking from enemy's side: +2
Attacking from enemy's rear, or attacking prone enemy: +4
NOTE: Missile weapon attacks don't get DX adds for facing.

WOUNDS

A figure that has taken 5 or more hits since its own last attack is DX-2. A figure reduced to ST 3 or less is DX-3.

THROWN WEAPON RANGE

-1 DX for every HEX distance to the target.

MISSILE WEAPON RANGE

No penalty if target is in same megahex or 1 or 2 MH distant.

-1 if target is 3 or 4 MH distant.

-2 if target is 5 or 6 MH distant – and so on, in bigger arenas.

OTHER ADJUSTMENTS

Crossbowman lying prone: +1

Pole weapon user standing still, against charging enemy: +2

Missile/thrown attack against figure sheltering behind fallen body: -4

Standing in a hex with a fallen body: -2

Adjustments are figured before *each* attack. The adjDX represents the chance to hit the enemy, as stated above. Attacks come off in order of adjDX counting everything BUT missile and thrown weapon range; a distant target makes you less accurate but no slower.

The roll to hit is adjDX or less on 3 dice, as stated above. BUT:

A roll of 3 always hits, regardless of DX, and does *triple damage*.

A roll of 4 always hits, regardless of DX, and does *double damage*.

A roll of 5 always hits, regardless of DX.

A roll of 16 always *misses*, regardless of DX.

A roll of 17 always *misses,* and the attacker *drops that weapon* in its own hex. (A thrown weapon drops in the target hex instead.)

A roll of 18 always *misses,* and the attacker's weapon is *broken*.

ROLLING FOR DAMAGE

When an attacker rolls his DX or less on 3 dice, it hits the enemy. How much damage it does is determined by another dice roll. How many dice are rolled depends on the attacker's weapon, as shown on the *Weapon Table* (p. 14). For instance, a broadsword gets 2 dice. If a figure attacks with a broadsword and hits, it rolls 2 dice. The result is the number of hits the enemy takes (although armor can stop some of those hits). Some weapons have pluses and minuses. A small ax gets 1d+2, which means you roll 1 die and add 2 to the result. If you hit with a small ax and roll 3, the enemy takes 5 hits. A dagger gets 1d-1; if you roll a 3, the enemy only takes 2 hits.

ARMOR AND SHIELDS

Armor and shields take hits for you. For instance, plate armor takes 5 hits/attack. If your enemy attacks with a broadsword (2 dice) and rolls 7, you should take 7 hits – but your armor stops 5 of these, and you only check off 2 hits. If a figure in plate is hit by three different attacks in one turn, the armor takes 5 from *each* attack.

Shields work the same way, except that if a shield is "ready" it protects against attacks from the three front hexes. If it is not ready, it protects against attacks from the rear hex (and does not subtract from your DX).

POLE WEAPONS

Pole weapons can strike an enemy not in an adjacent hex, and they are especially good against a charging foe – or when being used in a charge.

A charge attack is defined as an attack in which the attacker moves from a non-adjacent hex to a hex adjacent to his target.

On any turn when a pole weapon is being used in a charge attack or against a charge attack (or both), roll all the pole-weapon results first, in order of adjDX, before resolving any other attacks. Thus, a polearm user has a chance to kill (or knock down) a figure with a shorter weapon before the other can strike – even if the other figure has a higher DX.

A figure who stands still (or simply changes facing) and uses a pole weapon against a charge attacker gets a +2 DX.

If a pole weapon is being used in a charge attack, and the attacker moved three hexes or more in a straight line (see diagram), the polearm does one extra die of damage if it hits. If a pole weapon is used against a charge attack, it also gets the extra die of damage, whether or not the enemy moved in a straight line.
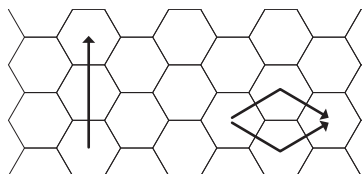
Straight line   *Straight line*
"with the grain"   *"against the grain"*

When one polearm user charges another, both results will be rolled before any other combats are resolved. The one with the higher adjDX will strike first – then (if he lives), the other one.

Jabbing with a Pole Weapon

A pole weapon can strike at a figure two hexes away. This is a "jab." There is no DX penalty. A polearm user has a "jab" area as shown. Javelins are too short to jab.

The polearm user (Ragnar again) may jab at a foe in hex Y only if there is no one in hex X. He may jab at a figure in either of the Z hexes, regardless of intervening figures, because he is jabbing along a line between hexes. A spearman working from between and behind two swordsmen is a dangerous foe.
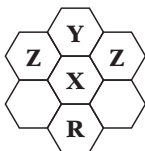
A jab is a regular attack. A polearm user may not "charge" to a hex 2 hexes away from his victim and jab for extra damage; a jab only does normal damage, no matter how anyone had moved.

THE LEFT-HAND DAGGER

The left-hand dagger, or main-gauche, acts as a shield to parry 1 hit per attack, from non-missile, one-handed weapons only, from your front hexes. If you take an attack option, you can also make a separate dagger attack against the same enemy. It is rolled at -4 DX.

A main-gauche gets 1d-1 in HTH combat. A fighter may *not* use two daggers, or a main-gauche and dagger, in HTH combat.

SHIELD-RUSH ATTACKS

The "shield-rush" (slamming your shield into your foe in order to knock him over) is an important tactic in some kinds of combat. The shield-rush is considered an attack for all purposes; that is, you can strike with the shield as a charge attack or regular attack. If you rush with the shield, you may not also strike with a weapon. In order to make a shield-rush, you must have a shield (either large or small) ready. Make your attack by rolling as usual. If you fail to make your "to hit" roll, nothing happens. If you do make your roll, your *enemy* must now make a saving roll against adjDX to stay standing. If your figure is *as strong* as or *stronger* than the enemy, this is a regular 3-die roll. However, if your figure is *weaker*, only two dice are rolled.

Since it is fairly easy to roll your adjDX or less on two dice, a shield rush by a weaker figure is not too dangerous. (A roll of 12, though, is an automatic fall. On 3 dice, a 16, 17, or 18 is an automatic fall.)

A figure which fails to roll its adjDX or less immediately falls down. When comparing strengths for a shield-rush, use original ST, not wounded ST. Also, note that a rush against a figure more than twice your ST will have no effect. Shield-rushing a giant is pointless.

The shield-rush *never* puts hits on a foe; it *only* floors them.
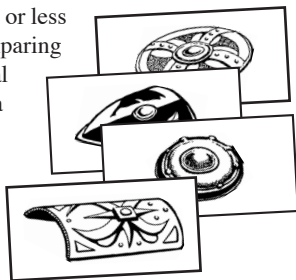
WEAPON TABLE

Weapon	Dice	ST	Notes
Dagger*	1d-1	–	1d+2 in HTH combat
Main-Gauche	1d-1	–	See main-gauche rules, p. 13
Rapier	1d	9	
Club*	1d	9	
Hammer*	1d+1	10	
Saber	2d-2	10	
Shortsword	2d-1	11	
Mace*	2d-1	11	
Small ax*	1d+2	11	
Broadsword	2d	12	
Morningstar	2d+1	13	
2-handed sword †	3d-1	14	
Battleaxe †	3d	15	

Pole Weapons

Weapon	Dice	ST	Notes
Javelin*	1d-1	9	See *Pole Weapon* rules, p. 12
Spear* †	1d+1	11	”
Halberd †	2d	13	”
Pike axe †	2d+2	15	”

Missile Weapons

Weapon	Dice	ST	Notes
Thrown rock*	1d-4	–	You can always pick up a rock!
Sling †	1d-2	–	
Small bow †	1d-1	9	2 shots/turn if adjDX = 15+
Horse bow †	1d	10	2 shots/turn if adjDX = 16+
Longbow †	1d+2	11	2 shots/turn if adjDX = 18+
Light crossbow †	2d	12	Fires every other turn, or every turn if adjDX = 14+
Heavy crossbow †	3d	15	Fires every 3rd turn, or every other turn if adjDX = 14+

* This weapon may be thrown – see *Thrown Weapons*.

† This is a two-handed weapon. If the fighter has a shield, it must be slung on his/her back while the weapon is ready.

ARMOR

Plate armor takes 5 hits/attack; wearer's MA = 6; -5 to DX.

Half-plate takes 4 hits/attack; wearer's MA = 6; -4 to DX

Chainmail takes 3 hits/attack; wearer's MA = 6; -3 to DX.

Leather armor takes 2 hits/attack; wearer's MA = 8; -2 to DX.

Cloth armor takes 1 hit/attack; wearer's MA = 10; -1 to DX

No armor: MA = 10, no hits stopped, no DX penalty.

SHIELDS

Large shield takes 2 hits/attack (to front); -1 to DX.

Small shield takes 1 hit/attack (to front); no DX penalty.

Main-gauche parries 1 hit/attack (to front); see p. 13.

Remember: A figure may carry one dagger or main-gauche, and two other weapons. A shield counts as a weapon.

THROWN WEAPONS

Some weapons may be thrown (see *Weapon Table*, page 14). A thrown-weapon attack is treated exactly like a regular attack, but there is a DX penalty of -1 for every hex of distance to the target. A target 3 hexes away is attacked at -3 DX.

It is possible for other figures to block the path of a thrown weapon. If a line drawn from the center of the attacker's hex to the center of the target hex passes through any hex containing a standing figure, that figure is "in the way." A line passing along the edge of a hex does *not* go through that hex. When a weapon is thrown, the attacker must *first* "roll to miss" each figure between him and his target. The attacker makes a DX roll as usual, but on a roll of adjDX or below, the weapon *misses* and flies past; otherwise, it hits.

When you are "rolling to miss," a 14 becomes an automatic hit, a 15 is a double-damage hit, and a 16 is a triple-damage hit. 17 means the weapon drops in that hex; 18 means it breaks.

When a thrown weapon hits, it falls to the ground in that hex.

If a thrown weapon misses its intended target, it continues along the line drawn between the attacker's hex and the target hex for 10 hexes past the target hex. Roll for each standing figure whose hex the line passes through (rolling to hit or to miss, as appropriate), until the weapon hits, goes 10 hexes, or strikes a wall and stops.

Exception: If you roll to miss an enemy (for instance, to hit a more important foe) and fail the roll, you do not hit the enemy you tried to miss . . . instead, the weapon falls to the ground in his hex, *unless* you roll a 14 or above. (This keeps a clumsy figure from "trying to miss" and hitting easily.)

Whether the attacker is trying to hit or to miss, his DX is always adjusted by -1 for each hex distance to the figure rolled for.

A may throw a weapon at B (DX-2) or C (DX-3). To throw at D, he must roll to *miss* B (DX-2) before rolling to hit D (DX-3). He may throw at E (DX-2), but if he misses, must then roll to hit (or miss) F (DX-3). If he misses F, he must roll for G (DX-4). If he wanted to hit G, he would have to roll and miss both E and F. He *cannot* throw at H, who is in the shaded area *behind* him.
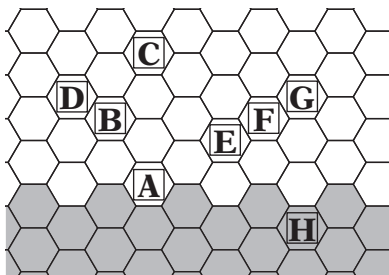
MISSILE WEAPONS

Generally, only a disengaged figure may attack with a missile weapon (option f). However, a figure with a missile weapon ready can get off one shot if suddenly engaged (option l). Missile weapon fire calls for a DX adjustment based on the number of *megahexes* (MH) distance to the target. If the target is in the same MH or is 1 or 2 MH distant, there is no DX adjustment. If the target is 3 or 4 MH distant, DX is -1. If the target is 5 or 6 MH distant, DX is -2.

Otherwise, missile weapons follow the same line-of-flight rules as do thrown weapons. The target must be in front of the attacker, and the attacker must roll to miss any standing figure in the way. A missile which misses its target continues until it hits a wall or a figure; roll as above to hit (or miss) each figure its line of flight passes through, making new DX adjustments as necessary. A roll of 17 or 18 on any target but the first breaks the *arrow* but does not affect the bow.

Missile weapons never get a bonus for the target's facing.

The DX adjustments for missile and thrown weapon distance are *not* considered when determining which figure attacks first. Crossbows normally fire every 2nd or 3rd turn (depending on user's DX and type of bow – see *Weapons Table*). Reloading a crossbow comes under the "ready a weapon" option for all purposes.

Prone and Kneeling Fire

Crossbows may be fired from a prone position. Any bow may be fired from a kneeling position. A crossbow may be reloaded by a prone or kneeling figure; no other weapon may be readied by a prone or kneeling figure. A crossbowman lying prone gets a +1 DX adjustment.

Sheltering Directly Behind Fallen Bodies

Any figure may lie prone or kneel in a hex directly behind a sheltering body. A missile/thrown weapon attack then has a chance of hitting that body instead. Any figure making a missile or thrown weapon attack against a "sheltering" figure suffers a -4 DX adjustment. In a situation where it matters (i.e., the "body" was still alive), the archer must make a second roll – rolling his adjDX to try to *miss* – if and only if he misses his original target.

HITTING YOUR FRIENDS

An attacker must "roll to miss" when his missile or thrown weapon passes through the hex of a figure he does not want to hit (see *Thrown Weapons*). In the same way, he must "roll to miss" a friendly figure when he strikes at an enemy in the friendly figure's hex and misses. This can happen when a standing figure tries to hit an enemy on the ground in HTH combat, and misses. He may then roll, one by one, to see if he hits other enemies in that hex. If he misses them all, he must roll, one by one, to *miss* each friendly figure in that hex.

He stops rolling when he hits one figure, or misses them all. Figures in HTH combat never hit their friends in the same HTH combat. Only standing figures striking "into the pile" must roll.

HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT

A figure may move *onto* an enemy figure's hex, initiating HTH combat, if (a) the enemy has his back to the wall, or is lying down, prone, or kneeling, or (b) the enemy has a lower MA, or (c) the attacker comes in from the rear, or (d) the enemy agrees to HTH combat. Initiating HTH combat is considered an attack.
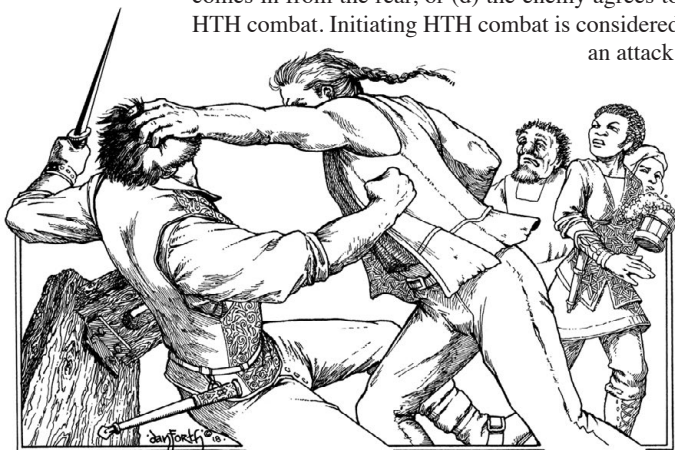
A disengaged figure picks option (b) to initiate HTH combat; he moves onto the enemy's hex during movement and attacks during combat. An engaged figure picks option (o), stands still or shifts, and enters an enemy hex and attacks during *combat*.

If the attacking figure had a dagger ready already, it may use it in HTH combat. Otherwise, it drops any ready weapon and shield in the hex it started from and attacks bare-handed.

When a figure is attacked HTH, it immediately rolls one die to determine its defense against the HTH attack, as follows:

1 or 2 – the defender drops any ready weapon and/or shield (unless ready weapon is a dagger) and fights bare-handed. Both figures fall to the ground in the defender's hex.

3 or 4 – the defender drops any ready weapon and/or shield, but has time to ready a dagger. It can be used in the next attack. Both figures fall to the ground in the defender's hex.

5 – the defender does not drop its weapon, and the attacker immediately backs up to the hex from which it entered the defender's hex. HTH combat does not take place.

6 – the defender does not drop his weapon, and *automatically* gets a hit on the attacker (even if the defender had already attacked that turn!) The attacker must retreat one hex as above. HTH combat does not take place. (If the attack was from behind, ignore a 6 and roll again.)

Since figures in HTH combat are on the ground and/or grappling with their foe(s), they always get the +4 "rear hex" DX adjustment.

During the combat phase, HTH combat is rolled for like any other combat. A dagger gets 1d+2, a main-gauche gets 1d-1, bare hands against a stronger enemy get 1d-4, bare hands against an enemy of the same strength get 1d-3, and bare hands against a weaker enemy get 1d-2.

A figure engaged in HTH combat may try to draw and ready its dagger (if it has one) by picking option (u). On a roll of 1, 2, or 3, the dagger was drawn and readied; otherwise, nothing happened. You may use only one dagger (or main-gauche) in HTH.

MULTIPLE HTH COMBAT

When two figures are rolling around fighting, any other figure can move onto that hex and join the brawl, using option (b) or (o), without rolling to see if the attempt is successful. If two or more figures are fighting one enemy, the lone fighter's strength is compared to the total enemy strengths to see how many dice he gets. If he is stronger than all put together, he gets 1d-2, and so on. When there are two or more figures on the same side in a HTH brawl, all figures on a side get 1d-3.

Figures on the ground in HTH combat can *only* attack the enemies they are in HTH combat with. They may attempt to disengage according to the disengagement rules below.

If a standing figure attacks an enemy who is down in HTH combat with other figures, and misses, he then rolls for each other enemy in the HTH combat, and then for each *friend,* until he hits someone.

Example: Two goblins have engaged Ragnar in HTH combat. He can only attack them (he must pick one or the other), and they can both only attack him. Bjorn comes up with his sword and hacks at one of the goblins. His DX for that attack will be +4 (because the goblin is on the ground, it counts as a rear attack), plus Bjorn's other DX adjustments, if any. If Bjorn misses the goblin, he rolls again – same DX adjustments – to see if he hit the other goblin. If he misses again, he rolls – same adjustments – to see if he *hit* Ragnar. See *Hitting Your Friends,* p. 17.

If a missile or thrown weapon is aimed at a pile of figures in HTH combat, *first* roll to see if it hit, and then roll *randomly* to see who it hit. It is not a good idea to fire arrows into a brawl!

DISENGAGING

Disengaging is the action of moving away from a figure(s) that has you engaged.

A figure which selects the "disengage" option stands still or shifts during its movement phase. When its turn to attack comes, instead of attacking, it moves one hex in any direction. You *may* move onto another figure to attempt HTH combat that same turn.

Note that an enemy with a DX higher than yours will be able to strike at you on the turn you disengage, since his attack comes before yours. An enemy with a lower DX will not have a chance to strike at you if you disengage away from him.

A figure engaged with more than one enemy may disengage from some while remaining engaged with others, but may *never* attack on the turn it disengages.

A kneeling, prone, or fallen figure cannot disengage; it must first stand up.

DISENGAGING FROM HTH COMBAT

A figure in HTH combat may not automatically disengage, but must pick option (v), the attempt to disengage. During the movement phase it does not move, since figures in HTH remain in the same hex. During its attack phase, it does not attack, but rolls 1 die instead. If its DX is superior to the enemy's, it needs a 1, 2, or 3; if its DX is the same or less, or if there are more than one enemies, it needs a 1. A figure which disengages from HTH combat immediately stands up and moves to any adjacent, empty hex.

DEFENDING AND DODGING

The "dodge" option (for disengaged figures) and the "defend" option (for engaged figures) have the same effect. A figure which dodges or defends cannot attack. However, a figure attempting to hit a dodging figure (with a missile or thrown weapon) or a defending figure (with any other type of attack) must roll its adjDX on *four* dice, rather than three, to hit. 4 and 5 are automatic hits with triple and double damage; 20 and above are automatic misses; 21 and 22 are dropped weapons, and 23 and 24 are broken weapons.

A figure may only defend with a non-missile weapon ready, to parry. Any disengaged figure may dodge.
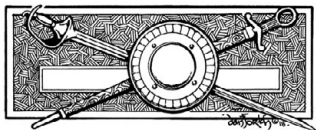
FORCING RETREAT

A figure which hit an enemy figure (missile or thrown weapon hits, or hits taken by the enemy's armor, don't count) and is *not* hit itself, may force the enemy to retreat one hex at the end of the turn. The victorious player moves the enemy figure one hex farther from the attacker, into any hex which is vacant or contains only a fallen figure. The victor may then choose *either* to stay still *or* to move into the hex from which the enemy retreated. If there is no vacant or fallen-figure hex adjacent to the foe, you cannot force a retreat.

REACTIONS TO INJURY

A figure which takes 5 or more hits in one turn has its DX adjusted -2 for its *next* attack *only*.

A figure which takes 8 or more hits in one turn *immediately* falls down. Place a PRONE marker on it. If it has not already attacked, it may not attack that turn. On the next turn it may use option (g) to stand or crawl. If it is in HTH combat it may do *nothing* next turn.

A giant loses 2 DX for 9 hits in one turn, and falls down on 16.

Any figure whose ST is reduced to 3 or less has an extra -3 DX for the rest of the game. Any figure whose ST is reduced to 0 falls

unconscious, and any figure whose ST is reduced below 0 dies. Flip the counter over; it is now an obstacle.

DROPPED WEAPONS

A dropped weapon counter should be placed in a hex where a weapon falls for any reason such as (a) a thrown weapon lands, (b) a figure is standing when it drops its weapon to ready a new one (engaged figures *must* drop their ready weapon to ready a new one; disengaged figures may re-sling their ready weapon as they ready a new one), or (c) a figure drops its weapon when it rolls a 17 on the "to hit" roll.

The counter for a dead or unconscious figure is assumed to include a dropped weapon counter for each weapon it was carrying when it fell.

When a dropped weapon is picked up, the counter is removed.

VIII. NONHUMANS

To simulate fantasy combat or gladiatorial contests, you may use nonhuman figures in *Melee*.

MONSTERS AND BEASTS

A BEAR has a MA of 8. It normally does 2d+2 damage, or 3 dice in HTH combat. Its fur acts as armor, taking 2 hits/attack. Suggested ST 30 (this is a *big* bear). Suggested DX 11.

A WOLF has a MA of 12. Its bite does 1d+1; its fur stops 1 hit/attack. Suggested ST 10 (more for dire wolves); suggested DX 14.

A GIANT SNAKE has MA 6. Its bite does 1d+1 damage. It is very hard to hit; -3 off your DX for any attack on it. Suggested ST 12; suggested DX 12. Its side hexes are considered front hexes for all purposes, because it can strike so quickly.

Other animal figures can be set up along similar lines.

A GIANT (say, 9-12 feet tall) occupies 3 hexes; see diagram for which sides are "front." His MA is 10 unless he is in armor; count the number of hexes his *front* moves. His ST will be *at least* 24; it might be 40 or 50 if he's a tough one. His DX will be low – rarely more than 9, even without armor. A giant uses big weapons, like a spiked club worth 1d+1 for every 10 ST he starts with. A giant gets 2d-1 in HTH combat. A giant must be in the front hexes of *two* foes to be "engaged."

A GARGOYLE has DX 11, ST 20. Its stony flesh stops 3 hits/attack, and
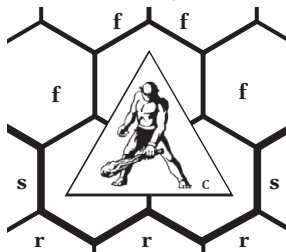
its rocklike hands do 2 dice damage in regular or HTH combat. It uses no weapons. Its MA is 8 on the ground, 16 if flying. It lands to attack, but may land *on* you for HTH.

FANTASY FIGHTERS

An ELF is like a man, except his MA with cloth or no armor is 12. In leather, he moves 10. His movement in other armor is the same as a man's. Min ST 6; min DX 10; total 24.

A DWARF is also like a man, except min DX 6, min ST 10; total 24.

A HALFLING has min ST 4, min DX 12, with only 6 points added; total 22. A Halfling gets a +2 DX bonus whenever he throws something. He may also throw any weapon on the same turn he readies it.

An ORC is just like a human figure – but most are evil.

A GOBLIN has min ST 6, min DX 8; total 22.

A HOBGOBLIN has min ST 7, min DX 6, totaling 20.

IX. EXPERIENCE

Figures which survive combat gain experience, which can increase their strength and dexterity. The experience a fighter gains depends on the type of combat, and whether the enemy was superior or inferior in total combined attributes (ST+DX).

Combat to the Death. Continues until all on one side are slain. 50 experience points (XP) to each survivor, or 100 if the enemy averaged more than 3 superior in ST+DX.

Arena Combat. Continues until all on one side are dead *or* escape from the "door" from which they entered. Unconscious figures may not be slain. Winners get 30 XP; defeated survivors get 20 XP (unless they ran away unhurt, in which case they *lose* 10 XP). If one side averaged 3 or more weaker in total attributes, survivors on that side get 10 extra XP each.

Practice Combat. No missile weapons. All weapons are blunted and do half damage (round down). A figure drops out when its ST goes to 3 or less. (It is possible to get killed in practice – but difficult.) Those still on their feet when one side is eliminated get 10 XP each. Others get nothing but bruises.

A figure with 100 XP may "trade them in" for one additional point added to *either* basic ST or basic DX. Up to 8 attribute points may be added. After that . . . see *In The Labyrinth*.

X. COMBAT EXAMPLE

The combat described in the introduction actually took place – in *Melee*. Here's how it happened . . .


```
      FLAVIUS
ST= 12           MA = 6
DX= 12 (8)

SHORTSWORD  2d-1
DAGGER  1d-1

CHAINMAIL  / STOPS 5
LG. SHIELD /  HITS
```

```
      WULF
ST= 14           MA = 10
DX = 10

LONGBOW    1d+2
2-HANDED SWORD  3d-1
DAGGER  1d-1

NO ARMOR
```

Both Flavius and Wulf are beginning figures, with ST and DX totaling 24 each. Flavius is a legionary; he carries a gladius (shortsword) and shield; his Roman armor counts as chainmail. The armor and large shield adjust his DX to 8, and stop 5 hits/attack. Wulf is a Germanic tribesman; he wears no armor, so his basic and adjusted DX are the same.

Turn 1. The two enter from opposite sides of the board. Flavius wins the initiative roll. Seeing that his enemy has a bow, he runs his full MA toward him – 6 hexes. Wulf moves up 1. Flavius cannot attack, but Wulf can fire, and does. He rolls 9 on 3 dice, which is less than his DX of 10, so he hits (Flavius was close enough that there was no DX adjustment for range). A longbow does 1d+2 damage. Wulf rolls one die, getting a 5, so Flavius takes 7 hits. His armor and shield stop 5 – so only 2 hits are marked against the Roman.

Turn 2. Wulf wins the initiative roll, and tells Flavius to go first. Flavius decides to move half his MA (3 hexes) and dodge. Wulf backs up 1. Flavius cannot attack. Wulf can fire again. Since Flavius dodged, Wulf has to roll on *four* dice to see if he hits. He rolls a 16, which is not nearly good enough, so he misses.

Turn 3. Wulf wins the initiative roll again, and tells Flavius to move first. This lets Flavius run the 5 hexes to where Wulf is standing – so Wulf is engaged when his chance to move comes. Wulf shifts one hex so his back will be to the wall. Flavius can't attack; he moved more than half his MA. Wulf can fire his bow one last time, since he wasn't engaged at the start of the turn. He rolls an 8 on 3 dice, which hits – but when he rolls for damage, he only rolls a 2, for 4 hits. Flavius' armor stops that much, so he is unhurt.

Turn 4. Wulf wins the initiative. He tells Flavius to go first. Flavius chooses not to move; Wulf shifts again, drops the bow (he has to) and readies his two-handed sword. This time Wulf cannot attack – but Flavius can. He needs an 8 or under on 3 dice. He rolls a 16, which misses. (A 17 would have meant he dropped his sword.)

Turn 5. The players agree to forget about initiative; they simply want to hack at each other. Since Wulf's adjusted DX is higher, he normally gets first hack. He rolls a 13, which misses. Flavius rolls an 8, which hits. His shortsword does 2d-1 damage. He rolls 2 dice and gets a 7, so Wulf takes 6 hits. Since Wulf has no armor, all 6 hits count. Wulf is badly hurt. Flavius doesn't bother to force a retreat.

Turn 6. Wulf's DX is -2 this turn, because of the injury last turn, so his adjDX is 8 – the same as Flavius'. They roll to see who strikes first; Flavius wins, but his strike misses. Wulf attacks and rolls a 4, which is a hit with double damage. His sword is a 3d-1 weapon; he rolls 3 dice, and gets a 6. 6 minus 1 is 5, which is doubled: 10 hits on Flavius. The armor and shield take 5; Flavius takes the other 5. Now he, too, is badly hurt.

Turn 7. The players don't bother with initiative. Wulf's DX is back up to 10, but Flavius' is -2 . . . so it is only 6 this turn. Flavius knows his chance to hit is bad, so he picks option (k) and defends. This means Wulf must roll 10 or less on *four* dice. He fails. Flavius, of course, has no chance to hit, since he is defending.

Turn 8. Both figures now have their DX back to normal. They ignore initiative and hack at each other. Wulf, with the better DX, goes first; he rolls a 13, which misses. Flavius rolls a 6 to hit. He rolls two dice and gets 8 – so he puts 7 more hits on Wulf. The German has now taken 13 hits. 14 will knock him out, and 15 will kill. Flavius retreats him one hex and follows.

Turn 9. Wulf's injured DX is only 5 (-2 for taking 5 hits last turn, and -3 more because his ST is down to 2). Flavius rolls a 7, which hits. Since his sword will do at least 1 damage, Wulf is a goner.