

Principles of Speakerphone Wargaming

Recommendations by Jeff Cornett (jeffreylcornett@aol.com)

Your advice is welcome on how to improve these recommendations.

Introduction

Speakerphone games are played in a conversational manner with real people talking directly to each other without need of a computer. Each player has their own copy of the game set up in front of them but are blind to each other's actions. Players must communicate their actions very clearly so that each game looks and plays identically. Speakerphone gaming is recommended when playing friendly games, but not in situations where there is a valuable prize at stake.

Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is an essential behavior when playing remotely by phone and without a neutral party moderating the game. Players roll dice and draw cards out of sight from each other. There may be rules misunderstandings and disagreements. When rules are unclear, players should try to reach a compromise rather than call or email someone else during your game.

Players sometimes forget to activate, move, or shoot with all their units. Good sportsmanship requires opponents to remind each other of oversights. If practical to do so, fix oversights even if on a later turn.

Fog of War

Remote play on two separate game boards can lead to errors in game setup, movement of pieces, and other surprises. When such mistakes are discovered, immediately correct them while being reminded that fog of war occurs in real combat. For example, if a terrain piece is missing or in the wrong location, correct the terrain piece even if some unit had moved somewhere based on that fog of war misunderstanding. Good sportsmanship may help resolve fog of war situations, but it works both ways. The victim of a fog of war mistake may need to show sportsmanship and just accept that unexpected situation.

Timed Games

Players may have time constraints that do not allow a game to be played to its finish. Players should agree ahead of time how to resolve a shortened game. If the outcome seems reasonably certain, a sporting player should concede the game as the time limit approaches. In friendly games, players should not need to ask a third party to decide.

When there is a reasonable doubt as to the game outcome if played out, determine the winner as follows: Play until both players have finished the same number of turns. The player to move last should not make suicide attacks with wounded units he would protect if the game were to be played out to a finish (use sportsmanship). If still no winner, players should agree upon a die-roll probability as to who is most likely to win. For example, if agreed that the odds are roughly 2 to 1, one player wins on a die roll of 1 through 4. The other player wins on a 5 or 6.

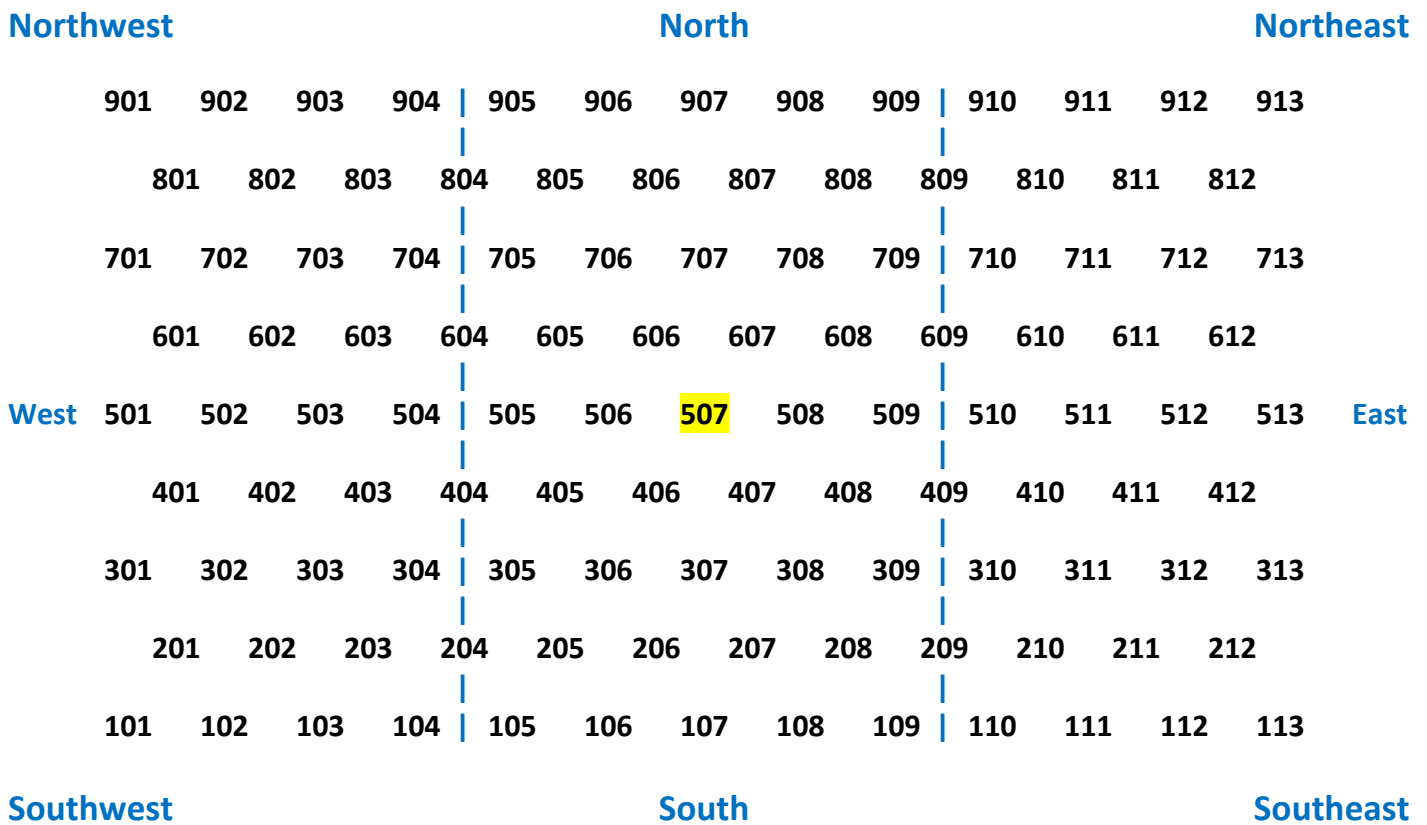
Map Movement and Targeting

Playing by phone, players cannot watch what each other does on his turn. Players must clearly explain what unit is moving, in what direction, and which target it is attacking. Playing on a map, it helps to use geographic direction references. Decide which player is sitting on the Northern side of the board. All other directions are then easy to reference. Playing on a hex map, movement and targeting can all be done geographically: North, South, East and West, plus Northwest, Northeast, Southwest and Southeast.

Areas on the map should be given names or referenced geographically. For example, refer to the Western and Eastern map sections. Avoid referring to the Right or Left since your opponent sees them in reverse.

When a unit moves, state the geographic direction it moves. For example, a cavalry might move three spaces “Northwest, Northwest, then West.” Do likewise to describe the direction of shooting or attacking. Before rolling any dice, be sure your opponent understands what unit is shooting and at what target.

Sometimes units and directions are obvious and can be described in a natural way such as, “My artillery is shooting at the infantry in the woods.” That is OK, but it is surprising how often something obvious to you, is not at all obvious to your opponent. This might even be due to a mistake between maps in exactly where something is located. To be very precise about locations, refer to specific row and column numbers starting from the Southern side of the map and from the Western edge. For example: “row 5, column 7” or “507” is a simple way to pinpoint a specific hex or in this case, the exact center hex of the following map:



Battle Cry Speakerphone Gaming

The following recommendations are for playing Battle Cry by speakerphone. Players should read the following and make sure they agree on how they will play.

Game Version

There are two versions of the game: the older “classic” rules, and the newer 150th “Anniversary” Edition. The newer anniversary version has many improvements in the rules and card deck. The original classic rules are simpler and easier to learn. The anniversary edition adds a level of complexity that might slow down a speakerphone game.

When opponents can play with the same game edition, that simplifies things. When inexperienced opponents must play with different game editions, a compromise between these two versions is needed. Unless otherwise agreed, use the rules from the original classic game, but use the cards as described in the newer anniversary version. The decks will need some adjustments to give them an identical mix of cards.

Scenario Selection

Select 3 scenarios at random. Each player vetoes one scenario. The remaining scenario is played. Randomly determine who makes the first veto.

If both players are playing with the same game version, randomly select from all the battles in that rulebook.

If playing with different game versions, there are only three scenarios identical in both editions. Perhaps, just limit scenario selection to only these battles:

1. Pea Ridge (maps are upside down from each other)
2. Kernstown
3. Gaines Mill (extend the creek through the Northeast corner)

Otherwise, any scenario selected may require one player to walk his opponent through the entire scenario setup. All scenarios (and many more) can be found on the internet at: <https://www.commandsandcolors.net/battlecry/>. Experienced players with internet access may agree to any scenario selection that interests them.

Side Selection

Some of the scenarios are designed to be historical but are not well balanced for game play. Players bid for choice of sides by offering replacement card-draws. A replacement card-draw can occur at any time in the game. It consists of drawing a card and then immediately discarding a card (including perhaps the card just drawn).

The player who bids first is the same player who vetoed scenarios first. He may bid 0. Players do not need to say which side is preferred. Increase bids until someone passes. The highest bidder gets his choice of sides. The player who passed gets replacement card-draws equal to the highest bid.

Card-draws must be announced when used. Use markers for the number of replacement card-draws remaining. A player is not required to use these card-draws, so his opponent is not required to remind him of any remaining.

Battle Cry Common Misunderstandings

Clarification: Off-Board Retreats

When flags would push a unit offboard (or otherwise cannot retreat) lose that number of single figures, not the entire unit. Richard Borg recommends this as a fix to the classic rules, so do this even when playing face-to-face.

Clarification: Line of Sight

The written rules mislead players when they say to “imagine a line drawn from the center of the hex....” This reminds wargamers of the line of sight rules they used to play in the good old days. Richard Borg’s rules for line of sight never require a straight edge or string to look at all the odd angles that otherwise would require interpretation. Instead, simply consider any half hex of the shooter and look straight in any of the 8 geographic directions from the shooter. See if anything blocks the shooter’s half hex. Richard’s line of sight never curves, so just search in straight directions. If one half hex is blocked, the other might remain unblocked. If still confusing, consider the line of sight from the target’s point of view. If the target cannot see the shooter, then the shooter cannot see the target!



The Union Artillery cannot see any targets!

Using a ruler for line of sight and depending on how carefully each terrain piece is centered, players can make a good argument that the Confederate infantry and artillery can be shot at. Wrong!

Pointing South, the Union guns run into the town. Pointing Southeast, the guns see the hill. The shooter cannot see through the gap beyond the hex East of the town and South of the hill. Although, there are pieces of the target infantry and artillery that can be seen, not enough of either target can be seen. Whatever odd angle the ruler is positioned at is not one of the 8 geographic directions allowed in Richard Borg’s line of sight rules.

It may be easier to understand by considering what the targets can see. The infantry can only look straight Northwest between the town and hill. Nothing is seen on that diagonal row of hexes.

The Confederate artillery looks Northwest to see a town. The left half of the artillery looks North through an unblocked half hex all the way to the edge of the board and sees nothing.

Similarly, the Union artillery and the cavalry cannot see each other when looking in any of the 8 angles. Placing a ruler between them causes arguments that depend on how you place the ruler and interpret the Southeast tip of the woods. Keep your angles simple. When the Union artillery points straight Southwest, it goes past the woods and does not see the cavalry. When it looks due West, it goes straight past the woods and misses seeing the leader.

Targets in sight of each other should be easy to see. If you remove the town, both artillery can see each other. Without a blocker, line of sight is simple. If you move the Union artillery and its hill to the East, there is a clear half hex Southwest to see the cavalry and also a clear half hex to see the artillery due South just West of the hill.

Battle Cry – Adapting to Different Rule Sets

When playing with different game editions, use the simpler rules from the original edition (unless otherwise agreed).

Rules changes when adapting from new to old editions:

Artillery units start with 2 stands, not 3.

Leaders add 1 die to infantry and cavalry combat, but do not reduce flags on defense.

Units with a leader cannot **take ground** after eliminating or retreating an opponent.

Units cannot shoot the turn they enter **woods** or **towns**.

Clarify rules when confusion arises. Show sportsmanship and regard any misunderstandings as fog of war.

Before playing, decide whether you want to use any of the new rules. Unless otherwise agreed, the changes below should not be used when playing strictly according to the old edition rules:

Rules to use when adapting from old to new editions:

Artillery: Now 3 stands (instead of 2). Add a third figure or marker if using the original game.

Leader:

- Unit leader is attached to may ignore 1 flag.
- May move through friendly units and leaders.
- Unit and leader may take ground after combat when enemy retreats or is eliminated from an adjacent hex.
- Leader's unit is no longer +1 to combat dice.

Retreating onto a Leader: Retreating unit stops and ignores any further retreat moves.

Retreat Off Board: Lose 1 stand per retreat flag move it cannot complete (instead of the entire unit).

Entrenchment:

- Attacker is -2 dice.
- Defender may ignore 1 flag.
- Unit or leader must stop when crossing a hex side with an entrenchment.

Fieldwork:

- Attacker is -1 dice.
- Defender may ignore 1 flag.

Town:

- Attacker is -2 dice.
- Infantry and cavalry are -1 dice fighting out.
- Artillery is -2 fighting out.

Homestead:

- Attacker is -1 dice.
- Infantry and cavalry when moving onto are -1 during entry turn. When already on the hex battle with standard number of dice.
- Artillery is -1 fighting out.

Woods:

- Attacker is -1 dice.
- Infantry when moving onto are -1 during entry turn. When already on the hex battle with standard number of dice.
- Other units may not fight during entry turn.

Battle Cry – Blending the Decks

Card Deck Improvements

Battle Cry was Richard Borg's first game design in his "Command and Colors" wargame series. By the time he republished the anniversary edition, he made many important improvements to the cards. Playing by speakerphone requires players to draw from their own separate decks. When players are using different versions of the game, remove 4 cards from each deck and adopt the wording used in the new edition:

Deck Adjustments

Old Card Deck Removals: Remove 4 cards from the classic edition deck:

3 **Skirmish** cards (Left, Center and Right), and 1 of the 2 **Sharp Shooter** cards.

New Card Deck Removals: Remove 4 cards from the Anniversary edition deck:

Outflank, **Battle Cry**, 1 of the 2 **Counterattack** cards, and 1 of the 3 **Leadership** cards.

Also treat the 3 **Fight Back** cards as **Recon in Force** (1 unit in each section, the same as a **Coordinated Attack**).

Card Wording

All Out Offensive: This should work like the **Coordinated Advance** card in the new deck (activate 2 units in each of the 3 map sections). Reshuffle your deck only after playing an **All Out Offensive** (or **Coordinated Advance**).

Skirmish: After playing, draw 2 cards and discard one of them. Should work like **Scout** in the new deck.

Assault: Activate as many units as your hand limit, not all units in a section.

Hit and Run: Applies to all your generals as well as cavalry.

Leadership: This card results in a net total of +2 dice to attached infantry and cavalry, but not artillery. You may also move (but not fight) with unattached generals.

Fire and Hold: Engaged cavalry may also fight.

Bombard: Artillery that do not shoot may move 3 spaces, but only once before shooting.

Rally: Roll number of dice equal to your hand limit. You can rally multiple units.

Call for Reinforcements: If you do not have undeployed units of that type, activate one of that unit type.

Construct Field Works: Place 3 fieldworks, not just 2. They can be played on any type of unit but cannot be played on waterway hexes.

When the card refers to something missing: If a card refers to a unit type that you do not have, instead issue an order to a unit of your choice in any board section. This applies to **Hit and Run**, **Leadership**, **Bombard**, **Force March**, **Sharp Shooter**, **Call for Reinforcements**, and **Construct Field Works**.