

Exalted Mass Combat: Non-Boring Edition

A replacement for the mass combat rules for Exalted 2nd Edition.

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Before Combat

Establish The Generals

Each side needs a general – someone in charge, even if they don't have the military rank of general. In theory this is the person with the highest Intelligence + War pool. In practice... yeah.

What If There's No General?

If an army has no general then it counts as getting 0 successes every time the general needs to roll anything. This is why proper armies will always handily defeat rampaging mobs.

Pick Out Heroes

Any heroic or otherwise notable characters get the label 'hero'. These are the people we'll be looking at during the course of the battle. All celestial Exalts are heroes. All player characters are heroes.

For terrestrial Exalts, god-bloods, etc. you'll need to use some judgement. Are they powerful enough to swing the battle all by themselves? If yes, then they're a hero. If not, then a group of them might count as 'a hero' for the purposes of the battle.

First-circle demons are not heroes.

Second-circle demons are heroes.

Third-circle demons are often heroes, and sometimes the equivalent of entire armies. (Ligier, I'm looking at you, or at least I would be if it wouldn't strike me blind to do so.)

Engagement Level

There are five levels of engagement:

- Roaming – Having broken through the enemy lines, you are now hunting for targets of opportunity. [Normally characters cannot start a battle roaming, they have to move there from being heavily engaged, but there are any number of military tactics and/or charms that can get people into this position so it is probably trivial for anyone who wants to be roaming to become roaming. A better explanation might be 'characters cannot start a battle roaming *without a decent excuse*'.]
- Heavy – The character is right where the fighting is fiercest, on the front lines, hip-deep in the enemy. It's dangerous, but the opportunities to affect the battle are great.

- Medium – There are some soldiers between you and the fangs of the enemy, but you’re still engaged.
- Light – Hanging back where only enemy skirmishers and artillery are going to find you.
- Not – You are not in this battle. [People not in battles do not normally participate in them at all, but it is plausible that an Exalted sorcerer or archer might be able to play their part from the next mountaintop over.]

Every hero chooses what level of engagement they are in each battle turn. You may choose to be heavily engaged, medium(ly?) engaged, or lightly engaged to start the battle, and may move one category up or down each turn.

You may move from heavily engaged to roaming, and from roaming to any engagement level.

You may only move to not engaged from lightly engaged or roaming.

The general also has an engagement level, typically ‘light’. Generals cannot be ‘not’ engaged, barring charms or sorcery that let them effectively direct an army from elsewhere.

Individuals vs. Armies

An individual or very small group facing off against an army is *always* heavily engaged. You can’t hide behind men you don’t have.

Establish Magnitude

Total up the number of troops on each side, and convert it into a magnitude according to the following table:

| Magnitude | Troops | Approximate Size |
|-----------|------------|------------------|
| 0 | 1 | Solo |
| 1 | 2-10 | Fang |
| 2 | 11-75 | Scale |
| 3 | 76-150 | Talon |
| 4 | 151-300 | Wing |
| 5 | 301-650 | Dragon |
| 6 | 651-1250 | -- |
| 7 | 1251-2500 | -- |
| 8 | 2501-5000 | Legion |
| 9 | 5001-10000 | Many Legions |

Establish Superior Troops

Which side has, on average, the better soldiers? If the answer is not immediately obvious then neither side has an advantage.

The side with the superior troops gets a +1 bonus to its effective magnitude. [Its magnitude counts as one higher when it’s beneficial, but not when it isn’t.]

Clearly Superior Troops

If one side has clearly superior troops – a score of dragon-blooded facing off against a hundred zombies, for example – then they get an extra +1 bonus, for a total of +2.

Advantage

Does one side have ranged weapons when the other side doesn't? Is one side equipped with necrotech death machines? For each *clear* advantage a side can claim, it gets a +1 bonus to effective magnitude, to a maximum of +3 from advantages.

Note that this is nothing to do with the properties of individual soldiers or heroes – those are taken into account elsewhere.

Communication

An army needs a number of relays equal to its magnitude. Any halfway competent army – i.e. one with a command structure – comes with this as standard. Mobs, hordes of the undead, etc. do not.

Socially destructive charms might reduce this number prior to the battle.

Each hero an army has counts as one relay, on top of the usual number.

The number of relays can be lowered by actions in battle, but they 'refresh' up to the normal number afterwards as the command structure reasserts itself.

Battle Turns

Wooga.

The Tide of Battle Roll

Each general rolls Intelligence + War. Subtract one success from this for each relay 'short' your army is, to a minimum of 0.

The side with the higher effective magnitude also rolls the difference in magnitudes and adds that (even if they have no general).

The higher value wins the tide of battle roll – note how many successes each side won or lost by, as that will be important later.

Morale

If an army loses as many tide of battle rolls in a row as its average member has dots in Valour, then the morale of the army is broken and it crumbles. The battle is over, they have lost.

Perfect Morale

Some armies – notably the living dead – have no morale, cannot fail Valour rolls, and keep going until exterminated. The GM should 'call' these battles when it becomes obvious that the side with perfect morale has lost, as otherwise they have the potential to go on for a very long time.

Heroism!

Each battle turn, cross-reference how engaged each hero is with how well (or badly) their side has performed on the tide of battle roll this turn.

The first number on the table is the dice rolled in an effective attack against the hero this turn, representing the accumulated effects of dozens of smaller hits. The base damage of the attack is 0L but it has an 'essence ping' of 1 die. Hardness is your friend.

Because of the nature of this ‘attack’, using charms other than scenelongs against it incurs 3x the normal cost in motes and willpower.

The second number on the table is a bonus or penalty to the hero’s heroic opportunity roll. Thicker fighting and more danger grant greater opportunities for heroism! Also, death.

| | -3 or worse | -2 | -1 | tie | +1 | +2 | +3 or better | |
|---------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|---------|
| Light | 22 / +2 | 18 / +1 | 14 / +1 | 12 / +0 | 8 / +0 | 4 / +1 | 0 / +1 | Light |
| Medium | 30 / +3 | 25 / +2 | 21 / +2 | 19 / +2 | 17 / +2 | 14 / +3 | 12 / +3 | Medium |
| Heavy | 38 / +4 | 32 / +3 | 28 / +3 | 26 / +4 | 26 / +4 | 24 / +5 | 24 / +5 | Heavy |
| Roaming | 20 / +3 | | | | | | | Roaming |

Note: The attack values were calculated assuming a mortal soldier with a DV of 4 (Dex + Melee + spec + shield) and a lethal soak of 5 or 6. Exalts – especially celestial ones – will find battlefields much more survivable.

Heroic Opportunities

Each battle turn, every hero except the general has a chance at a heroic opportunity. (Heroes who are Not Engaged don’t get heroic opportunities.) Roll their Valour, plus the modifier listed on the table above. The number indicates which opportunity you have. If you like, you can select an opportunity that requires fewer successes instead. Before rolling you may spend a willpower point for an extra success.

For opportunities which involve joining battle with enemy individuals, fourteen ticks after battle is joined either party may, on their turn, reflexively leave battle again as the fighting separates you. Clinched individuals may not do this without a stunt.

| Successes | Result |
|-----------|---|
| 0 | No heroic opportunities this turn. Roll your favourite attack roll and kill as many enemies as you score successes. |
| 1 | An objective! You have a chance to achieve an objective; see below. |
| 2 | Relay! You have the opportunity to attack the enemy’s chain of command: join battle with an extra typical of the opposing army. If you can kill or cripple them within fourteen ticks, the enemy army loses a relay. |
| 3 | Duel! You and one of the enemy heroes meet on the field of battle – if an enemy hero also rolls a duel, you meet them, otherwise choose randomly. Join battle with them. |
| 4 | Targeted duel! Like duel, but you get to choose who you fight. The general is off-limits but any other hero is fair game. |
| 5+ | Assassinate the general! You find yourself in the position to engage the enemy general in direct combat – join battle with them. If you slay the enemy general, the second-in-command is assumed to take over (assume Int + War of 3 less than the general had, minimum 0) although it is possible that they have no second in command and the army is now general-less. Even if they survive, the shock of your assault gives them a -2 internal penalty on their next tide of battle roll. |

Casualties

After each battle turn, the winning side rolls a number of d10 equal to its current margin of victory and totals them. Then multiply that total by its magnitude. This is the number of enemy casualties. The losing side rolls a single d10 and multiplies that by its magnitude to see how many enemies they have slain.

So long as there are some troops left on each side, recalculate magnitudes and start another battle turn.

When the battle is over, roll Wits + Medicine for an average member of each army – every success indicates 10% of the casualties who aren't actually dead and can be patched up in time to fight again. This assumes a regular living army – brass legionnaires might roll Wits + Craft, fair folk might just dream reinforcements into being, and certain kinds of armies won't even bother trying to save their dying.

Objectives

Battles are often about more than just slaughtering the enemy to the last man. Even in battles which *are* about slaughtering everyone there are often smaller objectives to attain on the way – seize that high ground, stem that advance, take that flank, and so on.

When you have a chance to take an objective you may choose one of the following options:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Tactical | <p>You can try to gain a tactical advantage for the army – seizing a tactically important location, leading a charge, blocking an enemy charge, that sort of thing. Roll Charisma + War or Intelligence + War to see how successful you are. The tide of battle roll gets a +1 die bonus for a number of turns equal to the successes you roll.</p> <p>Alternatively, instead of leading soldiers to the attack you can seize the objective yourself – roll your favourite attack, and the next tide of battle roll gets +1 die for every three successes you get. This is only a one-turn bonus, however.</p> |
| Morale | <p>You rally the troops around you, firming their resolve in the face in the enemy onslaught. Roll Charisma + Presence; the difficulty is equal to the current level of failure on the tide of battle roll, +1 if the character is moderately engaged, +2 if they are heavily engaged or roaming. Success means that if the tide of battle roll was failed this turn, it doesn't count towards 'failing x many times in a row' for the purposes of breaking morale.</p> |
| Story | <p>If there is a particular story objective in the battle – getting into an ancient tower, destroying a dam, driving a path through the enemy – you have a chance to achieve it. The roll will vary according to the needs of the story, and it may require a variable number of successes (which might need to be achieved in one roll or might be accumulated over several). The GM will be able to provide more details.</p> |

Charms and Sorcery

Because battle turns are effectively long-tick-time, you can spam whatever charms you feel like in battle, as you like. You can cast a single sorcery spell per battle turn, provided the text of the spell itself doesn't indicate an unusual casting time.

[This section isn't finished. Hell, it's barely started. I'm also not highly motivated to dig through all my Exalted books looking for war charms to convert, so I'll leave that as an exercise for the reader.]

Rout-Stemming Gesture: Using it once every battle turn can keep an army on the field even in the face of repeated bad tide of battle rolls.