CONTESTED GROUND

No Man's Command

Field Manual. Every table in this manual is read from the game's own rules.

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Getting started

You command a company of the Western Coalition or the Eastern Directorate in turn-based battles on a hex map. Each turn you give every unit one order, then end the turn and the other side moves. A battle is won by its mission: usually by holding objectives when the clock stops.

- BEGIN CAMPAIGN: a short campaign of five battles, the best place to start. When a campaign ends, its summary shows the outcome, every battle you fought and your force at the end.
- GRAND CAMPAIGN: The Long Road, sixteen battles with a company you keep, name and rebuild (see The Long Road).
- Single battles: pick a scenario on the right of the main menu. You can play either side, or two players at one screen (hot-seat). ENEMY sets how good the enemy's troops are: Recruit (green, their fire weaker than yours), Commander (your equal) or Veteran (their fire deadlier, and they go for your heaviest weapons first). The game remembers your choice.
- CONTINUE CAMPAIGN: back into an unfinished campaign where it left off. A campaign autosaves after every battle and every turn end.
- LOAD GAME: five save slots and two autosaves. Every turn end autosaves.
- SCENARIO EDITOR and BROWSE ONLINE: build your own battles and share them (see Scenarios of your own).
- SETTINGS: the window, the UI scale, the board, audio and every key (see Settings and keys).

The battlefield

The board is a map of hexes. Each hex has one kind of terrain, which sets what it costs to enter and how much cover it gives. Cover is subtracted from the damage of every shot and charge.

Terrain	Move cost	Cover	Notes
Open ground	1	0	No cover. Engineers can dig it into a trench.
Trench	1	3	The best cover on the field.
Wire	2	0	Slow to cross and no cover. Engineers clear it; landships crush it.
Shell craters	2	1	Slow going, some cover.
Ruined village	1	2	Good cover. Blocks line of sight and hides whoever is inside.
High ground	1	1	Some cover. Troops here see one hex farther.

Fog of war: you see only what your units can see. An enemy you cannot see is a grey contact, or nothing at all. A unit that walks into an unseen enemy stops and takes ambush suppression. Aircraft are always visible. Ruined villages and smoke block sight: a unit inside either is seen only from the hexes beside it.

The board can be flat or isometric (the ISO button or its key). On the isometric board the camera can be tilted, and the counters can be swapped for miniatures.

Units

Strength runs from 10 down to 0. Movement is in movement points; range and sight are in hexes. Firepower is what a unit's shots and charges bring; armour is subtracted from the damage it takes.

Western Coalition	Eastern Directorate	Move	Range	Firepower	Armour	Sight	Notes
Rifle Section	Line Platoon	2	2	4	0	2	
Trench Raiders	Storm Detachment	2	1	4	0	2	
Gun Team	Heavy MG Detachment	1	3	6	0	3	suppresses at 8
Trench Mortar	Mine Thrower Section	1	4	5	0	2	
Field Battery	Gun Battery	1	6	7	1	2	
Field Engineers	Pioneer Section	2	1	3	0	2	
Flame Section	Flame Pioneers	2	1	7	0	2	
Landship	Assault Car	2	2	7	3	2	
Scout Flight	Observation Flight	5	0	0	0	4	flies; always visible
Pursuit Flight	Hunting Flight	5	2	4	0	3	flies; always visible

Western Coalition	Eastern Directorate	Move	Range	Firepower	Armour	Sight	Notes
Bombing Flight	Battle Flight	4	2	7	0	3	flies; always visible
Company Officer	Staff Officer	2	1	2	0	3	

Orders

Select a unit, then an order, then its target. Most orders end the unit's turn; facing is free. Right-click, Escape or DESELECT on the unit card deselects it. A unit that cannot act says why on the board when you select it. OBJECTIVES in the side panel shows the briefing again, with who holds each objective now.

Order	What it does
Move	Move up to the unit's movement points; wire and craters cost 2. After you pick a destination, click it again to face your direction of travel, or click a neighbouring hex to choose which way to face. Moving ends the unit's turn.
Fire	Direct fire at a visible enemy within range and line of sight. Damage depends on firepower, the roll, and the target's cover; every hit adds suppression.
Barrage	Mortar or artillery only. Shell a hex 2 or more away that a friendly unit can see or a recon flight has spotted. Hits every unit in the hex and its neighbours, friend or foe.
Clear wire	Combat engineer only. Remove an adjacent wire hex so units can cross it at normal cost.
Fortify	Combat engineer only. Turn an adjacent open-ground hex into a trench (cover 3).
Sabotage	Combat engineer only. Damage an adjacent enemy strategic asset (gun battery, hangar) by 5. Sabotage missions are won by destroying the required number.
Flame assault	Flame team only. Assault an adjacent enemy; ignores cover and always does at least 1 damage.
Breach wire	Landship only. Crush into an adjacent empty wire hex, clearing it and moving there.
Recon flight	Recon biplane only. Spot a hex for this turn so mortars and artillery can barrage it, and reveal a radius of two around it.

Order	What it does
Intercept	Fighter only. Attack an enemy aircraft within 3 hexes of where the fighter stands; a fighter that has to move first cannot fire that turn. Enemy fighters go for your bomber, so keep your own fighter beside it.
Bombing run	Bomber only. Bomb a hex within 4 that your side can see: hits enemy units and strategic assets in it and around it. The bomber sees only three hexes, so a farther target needs a spotter such as the recon plane. Select a plane to see the enemy fighters' reach.
Rally	Officer only. Remove 3 suppression from a friendly unit beside him; an Inspiring officer removes 5 and reaches 2 hexes. This is how you free a pinned unit.
Creeping barrage	Field artillery only. Suppress every enemy within 2 hexes of a spotted hex; light damage on high rolls.
Face	Choose Face, then click an adjacent hex to turn the unit toward it. Facing is free and does not use the unit's turn. A unit takes more damage when fired on from the flank or rear, so face the direction you expect the enemy to come from.
Deploy	Place a reserve unit onto an empty hex inside your deployment zone before the battle proper begins.
Assault	Charge an adjacent enemy. Pin it first: an unpinned defender fires at you before you close. Break it and you take its hex; a broken unit runs and cannot act.
Dig in	Dig In trait only. Spend the unit's turn digging in where it stands: +1 cover until it moves.
Smoke	Mortar or artillery only. Fill a hex you could barrage with smoke until your next turn: nothing sees into it or through it, except from the hexes beside it. Smoke a machine gun and it cannot fire on men two hexes away. Costs a shell; no damage.

Order	What it does
Gas	Mortar or artillery, in battles that give your side gas shells. Gas a hex you could barrage: everyone in it, friend or foe, loses 1 strength and takes 4 suppression, and anyone who stands in the cloud fights masked (2 less firepower, out of command) until the end of your next turn. Uses one of your side's gas shells, not the gun's own.

Command

Your officers carry your orders. A unit within 2 hexes of a friendly officer acts freely; a pinned officer reaches only 1 hex, and a broken one none. A unit out of reach can still act, but its order costs one of the turn's command points. When the points run out, only units in reach can act. Facing, deploying, rallying and ending the turn never cost a point.

ASK THE STAFF gives an appreciation of the situation: what is most pressing on the board, and where. The staff advises; it never gives an order.

Difficulty	Appreciations a battle
Recruit	unlimited
Commander	3
Veteran	1

Fire, suppression and assault

Every hit adds suppression. Suppression wears off at the start of a unit's turn, but a unit that reaches its pin threshold is pinned and cannot act. A pinned officer commands only the hexes beside him. Pin a unit before you charge it: a pinned defender cannot fire first.

Rule	Value
Pin threshold	8 suppression
Suppression recovered each turn	2
Most suppression a unit can carry	10
A rally removes	3 suppression (5 from an Inspiring officer)
A unit breaks at strength	3 or less, when hit hard
A broken unit falls back	2 hexes

Contact is sticky: a unit cannot move through a hex next to an enemy, and leaving one costs an extra movement point.

Facing matters: fire from a unit's flank adds 1 to the damage, from its rear 2, and fire from the rear halves the cover it gets. A unit that is fired on replies with defensive fire unless it is pinned, broken, fired on from behind, or a flame team or aircraft. A broken unit cannot act until it steadies, which it does at its turn's start when no enemy is close.

An assault charges an adjacent enemy. An unpinned defender fires first. Win and the defender breaks or falls back and you take its hex.

Gas: some battles give a side gas shells, and the briefing says how many. A mortar or field gun fires one at a hex it could barrage. Everyone in that hex, friend or foe, loses 1 strength and takes 4 suppression, and the cloud hangs there until the end of the firing side's next turn. Anyone standing in it is masked: 2 less firepower in everything it fires, its replies and its charges, and out of command, so ordering it costs a point. A masked officer commands only the hexes beside him. Walking into gas does no harm, but the

men are masked while they stay. Gas the machine gun you mean to charge next turn: it replies weaker, and its officer cannot reach it.

Night and mud

Night: some battles are fought in the dark, and the briefing says so. Every unit sees 1 hex, hill or no hill, so your men find the enemy only when they are beside him. A unit that fires gives itself away: its muzzle flash shows it to every enemy that could see that far by day, until it spends a turn of its own without an order. A mortar or field gun can still fire on anything your side sees, so a section beside the wire calls the shells down on it. No aircraft fly at night.

Mud: in some battles the ground is a swamp. Every hex costs 1 more to enter. Mud never stops a one-hex move a unit could make on dry ground, so a machine gun still crawls a hex a turn; it is the quick who are slowed.

Winning a battle

Each battle has a mission, and its briefing says which. The round limit is the clock.

Mission	How it is won
Objectives and score	The attacker wins at once by holding every objective at the end of a round. Otherwise, when the round limit passes, whoever holds more objectives wins; a tie goes to the higher score earned round by round, then to remaining strength. Destroying the enemy force also wins.
Capture the dispatch case	Seize the enemy dispatch case and carry it back to your command post.
Annihilation	Destroy the enemy force.
Dash	Rush a unit to the far objective before the clock runs out.
Breakthrough	Break a unit through the enemy line into the exit zone.
Sabotage	Destroy the marked enemy assets.
Hold the line	Hold your position until the final round.
Hold the most objectives	Control more objectives when the clock stops. A tie goes to remaining strength, then to lower suppression; a complete tie is a draw. Destroying the enemy force also wins.

The Long Road

The Grand Campaign. You command one battalion across the war, in four chapters of four battles. The same units fight on from battle to battle: they gain experience, earn ranks and traits, carry the names you give them, and are remembered on the memorial when they fall. The enemy keeps its own army under the same rules.

Between battles, on the core force screen, you choose who deploys, who waits in reserve and who rests, and spend prestige on replacements and new units. A unit under strength 5 cannot deploy. Every survivor regains a point of strength between battles, and a unit left out regains two more.

Ranks

Rank	Experience
Green	0
Trained	60
Seasoned	150
Veteran	280
Elite	450

Experience in one battle is capped at 100. At each new rank you choose one of three traits.

Experience

Deed	Experience
Took part in the battle	10
Each point of damage by direct fire, flame or assault	2
Each point of damage by barrage or bombing	1
Destroyed or broke an enemy unit	12 (6 for an attached enemy)

Deed	Experience
Won an assault	8
Captured an objective	12
Held an objective at the end	10
Cleared wire, fortified, breached or sabotaged	8 each
A recon spot a friendly barrage used	4
Rallied a unit (officers)	6 each, at most 24
Each free order given by a unit in the officer's reach	2 each, at most 20
Battle won	10 (decisive 20)
Came back at strength 3 or less	6

Traits

Trait	Effect
Steady	Harder to pin: pin threshold +1 (past 10, it recovers from suppression faster instead).
Marksmen	Rifles reach one hex further.
Trench Raiders	+1 to the assault score.
Dig In	May spend its order to dig in: +1 cover where it stands until it moves.
Fire Discipline	Replies to fire at full strength.
Pathfinders	Leaves an enemy's reach without the extra movement point.
Wire Cutters	After clearing wire it may still move this turn.
Forward Observers	A barrage on a hex this unit can see pins harder: +1 suppression to all it hits.
Counter-Battery	+2 firepower against mortars and field guns.
Old Sweats	A broken unit steadies itself unless an enemy is right beside it.

Trait	Effect
Inspiring	Rallies at two hexes and steadies men harder.
Flame Drill	Flame attacks add one more suppression.

Prestige

Earned	Prestige
Victory	100 (decisive 150)
Defeat	50, and never less in any battle
Each objective held at the end	15
Finishing before the final round	20
Each unit at strength 7 or more at the end	5
Each unit destroyed	-15

Replacements cost 3 prestige a point of strength with new men, who dilute the unit's experience, or 8 a point with veterans, who do not. Elite units cost half as much again.

New unit	Prestige
Rifle Section	60
Trench Raiders	80
Gun Team	90
Trench Mortar	100
Field Battery	160
Field Engineers	80
Flame Section	120
Company Officer	120

Morale and difficulty

Morale is the campaign's lifeline: at zero the campaign is lost. The winter between chapters restores morale and returns every surviving unit to full strength. When the road ends, its summary lists every battle by chapter, the battalion's ranks, kills and decorations, and the memorial.

Difficulty	Morale, retries and prestige
RECRUIT	Morale 24: a victory +2, a defeat -3, each unit lost -1. Fight any battle again, free, as often as you like; prestige 125% of what is earned.
COMMANDER	Morale 20: a victory +2, a defeat -4, each unit lost -1. Fight a battle again once, for 1 morale; prestige as earned.
VETERAN	Morale 17: a victory +2, a defeat -5, each unit lost -1. Every result stands; prestige 80% of what is earned.

Ironman keeps one save, written at every battle's end and every purchase, and allows no second attempts on any difficulty.

Scenarios of your own

The SCENARIO EDITOR builds battles with the same tools the game's own were made with: paint the map, place both forces, set the objectives and how the battle is won, and draw the deployment zones. TEST AGAINST THE AI plays the battle out many times and reports the balance. PLAYTEST plays it yourself.

BROWSE ONLINE lists the battles other players have published at playcontestedground.com; download one and it appears among your scenarios. To publish your own, rate or report, sign in with a QSEGames account; the game never asks for your password.

Settings and keys

SETTINGS on the main menu changes the window (full screen or windowed, and the window's size), the size of the whole interface, the board, the audio, and every key below. Escape closes screens and dialogs and cannot be changed. The mouse selects and orders: drag with the right button to move the view, and use the scroll wheel to zoom. The arrow keys also scroll, the numpad plus and minus also zoom, and F also fits the board.

Action	Key as shipped
End turn	Enter
Skip the animation	Space
Ask the staff	G
Mute or unmute	M
Scroll up	W
Scroll down	S
Scroll left	A
Scroll right	D
Zoom in	=
Zoom out	-
Fit the board	Home
Isometric board	I
Miniatures	N
Lower the camera	[
Raise the camera	]

Glossary

Appreciation

The staff's reading of the situation, from ASK THE STAFF: what is most pressing on the board, and where. It advises and never gives an order.

Assault

A charge into an adjacent enemy. An unpinned defender fires first; win and you take its hex.

Broken

A unit that has lost its will to fight: hit hard at strength 3 or less, it falls back 2 hexes and cannot act until it steadies, at a turn's start with no enemy close. A broken officer commands no one.

Command point

What an order costs when the unit is out of every officer's reach. When the turn's points run out, only units in reach can act.

Command reach

The hexes within 2 of a friendly officer, where units act freely. A pinned officer reaches 1 hex and a broken one none.

Contact

A grey marker where an enemy was last seen. It stays until the enemy is seen again or a unit finds the hex empty. Also, standing next to an enemy: a unit cannot move through such a hex, and leaving one costs an extra movement point.

Cover

The protection terrain gives, subtracted from the damage of every shot and charge; fire from the rear halves it.

Defensive fire

The reply of a unit that is fired on, unless it is pinned, broken, fired on from behind, or a flame team or aircraft.

Deployment zone

The hexes where a side places its units before the first turn. Deploying costs no command point. QUICK DEPLOY places every unit still waiting: assault troops forward, riflemen and machine guns behind them in cover, mortars and guns at the back, the officer at the heart of the zone with the company in reach. The computer keeps a scenario's own layout, and deploys the same way where there is none.

Experience

What a unit on The Long Road earns in battle, at most 100 a battle. Enough of it brings a new rank.

Facing

The way a unit points. Fire into its flank adds 1 to the damage, into its rear 2. Turning to face costs nothing.

Fog of war

You see only what your units can see. Aircraft are always visible.

Gas

A shell a mortar or field gun fires at one hex, in battles that give its side gas shells. It costs 1 strength and 4 suppression to everyone in the hex, friend or foe, and the cloud masks anyone who stands in it until the end of the firing side's next turn. It does not block sight.

Hot-seat

Two players at one screen, one on each side, taking turns.

Ironman

A Long Road option: one save, written at every battle's end and every purchase, and no second attempts.

Masked

Standing in gas: 2 less firepower (never below 1) and out of command. A masked officer commands only the hexes beside him. It ends the moment the unit leaves the gas or the gas clears.

Morale

The Long Road's lifeline. At zero the campaign is lost; the winter between chapters restores it.

Mud

Ground that costs 1 more to enter everywhere. A one-hex move a unit could make dry is never stopped.

Muzzle flash

At night, a unit that fires is seen by every enemy that could see it by day, until it spends a turn of its own without an order.

Night

A battle in the dark: every unit sees 1 hex, and no aircraft fly.

Objective

A marked hex the battle is fought over. Most missions are won by holding objectives when the last round ends.

Pinned

A unit whose suppression has reached 8. It cannot act, and in an assault it cannot fire first.

Prestige

The Long Road's currency, earned in battle and spent on replacements and new units.

Rally

An officer's order for a unit beside him (within 2 hexes for an Inspiring officer): it removes 3 suppression, or 5 from an Inspiring officer. It costs no command point.

Rank

A Long Road unit's standing, earned with experience. Each new rank brings a choice of three traits.

Round

One turn for each side. A battle's round limit is its clock.

Smoke

A screen a mortar or field gun lays on a hex it could barrage. Nothing sees into it or through it, except from the hexes beside it, so a machine gun in smoke cannot fire on men two hexes away. It costs a shell and clears when the side that laid it begins its next turn. It hides the ground from aircraft too, but never the aircraft themselves.

Strength

A unit's size and fighting power, from 10 down to 0.

Suppression

The weight of fire on a unit. Every hit adds to it, up to 10; 2 wears off at the start of the unit's turn, and at 8 it is pinned.

Trait

A lasting ability a Long Road unit chooses at a new rank, from three offered.

Contested Ground: No Man's Command. A QSE Games game. This manual is also at https://playcontestedground.com/no-mans-command/manual, with a PDF copy to print.