

chapter 11



Combat

Combat must be resolved at the end of a Movement order that involved any active units charging into contact with passive units. Units which charged into contact are called attacking units or **attackers**. The passive units they attacked are called defending units or **defenders**. Opposing units in contact are **engaged**.

Remember that a unit with a strength of "1" may not charge. Therefore an attacker always has a strength of at least "2" prior to resolving combat.

The players proceed in the sequence shown above. First, the active player completes all movement from his movement order, including all charges. Then the defender determines whether he wishes to attempt to **retire** any of his engaged artillery units. Then both sides calculate the **combat score** of each engaged unit. The defender then resolves the status of each of his units to determine whether any of them were broken and must be removed or **staggered**. Finally the attacker resolves each of his units to determine the effect of the combat upon them.

There are no true "advance" or "retreat" moves after combat in *Lasalle*. At most, one side or the other might have to stagger a unit.

Once all combats are resolved, the passive player has the option to interrupt the active player.

Combat Resolution Sequence:

1. The active player completes all of his movement, including charges.
2. Roll for artillery to retire.
3. Both sides roll to calculate the combat scores of all engaged units.
4. The defender resolves all of his units.
5. The attacker resolves all of his units.

Artillery Retires

Artillery units have a chance to retire and thus avoid combat altogether. Once the active player has finished all his movement, the passive player may attempt to roll for each of his engaged artillery units to determine whether they retire. This is optional; he is never required to roll for any of them.

An artillery unit is *not* eligible to retire if it has been engaged on *two opposite edges*, i.e. if enemy units contact both its front and rear edge, or both its left and right.



Both Sides Roll Dice

If the artillery attempts to retire, then the attacker rolls one die if he is attacking the artillery solely with infantry; two dice if any cavalry units are attacking this battery.

The defender rolls one die if he has an unlimbered foot battery; two dice if it is a horse battery or any type of artillery that is limbered.

Each side uses the highest number that it rolled. If it rolled two dice, it picks the higher result.

If the defender's score is equal to or greater than the attacker's then the artillery has retired.

If it Fails

If the defender's attempt to retire fails (the attacker rolled higher), the artillery unit is not moved in any way, and it will fight in the upcoming combat.

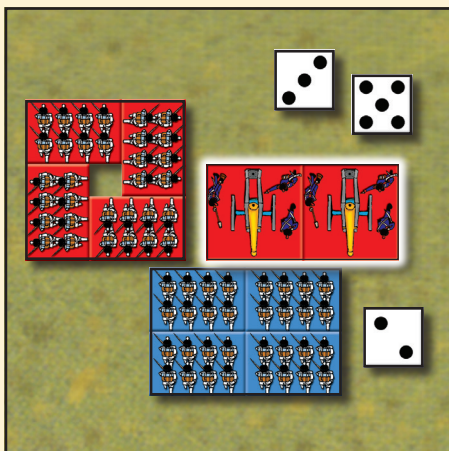
If it Retires

An artillery unit that retires is immediately removed from the table and placed off-table in that player's reinforcement area. It may be able to re-enter the game as a reinforcement in this turn or a subsequent turn.

The Attacking Unit

If artillery retires, the unit(s) that attacked it do not move and are not affected in any way (they suffer no DISR). They may have also engaged other defenders, in which case they will resolve those combats. Otherwise, they are now unengaged. If an attacking unit is still engaged with a defender, even if only an incidental contact that he couldn't otherwise have charged, he must resolve that combat.

Artillery Retire			
The Attacker		The Defender	
INF	CAV	Foot	Horse, Limber



Artillery Retiring and Incidental Contacts

The French infantry charged the British horse artillery and in so doing, made an incidental contact with the British infantry as well. The British want to retire. As an unlimbered horse battery, they roll two dice. The French infantry rolls one die. The British roll a "3" and a "5" and keep the higher result, although it doesn't matter because either roll beats the French "2."

The British artillery unit retires and is placed in the British reinforcement area, leaving the French in incidental contact with the British square.

The French will resolve the combat against the square.



Combat Scores: Basic Concept

After all artillery retirements have been resolved, both sides must calculate the **combat scores** of all of their engaged units. It does not matter which player does so first. As you calculate a unit's combat score, mark it temporarily using a die or marker, and move on to the next. When this step is complete, all engaged units on both sides will have their combat scores noted beside them.

A unit's combat score is calculated by starting with the highest number currently showing on its strength track. That number can be modified. The player then rolls a die and adds its result for a final combat score.

Cuirassier
23

6	5	4	3	2	1
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Combat Score

This unit has taken one DISR from enemy fire and is now about to fight a combat. Its strength (6) is added to a die roll, plus any modifiers.

Note the *Shock Cavalry* trait. If in combat against enemy cavalry, this trait might modify the result.

Combat Modifiers

A unit's combat score can be modified in certain circumstances. Modifiers are cumulative; you might have some that add and/or some that subtract. *After* rolling the die and adding its score, a unit's final modified strength may not be lower than 1. There is no upward limit.

The following combat modifiers may apply:

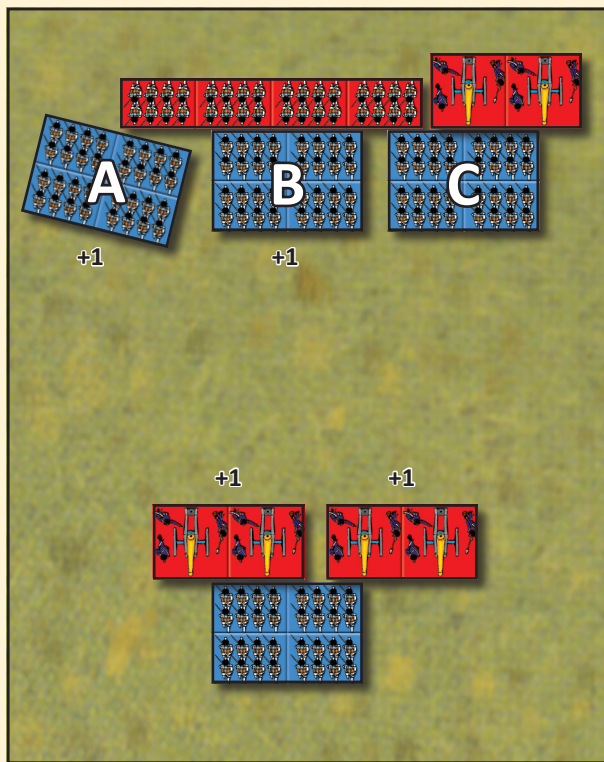
- If you have two or more units that engage a single enemy unit — *and only that enemy unit* — then each of your units adds one to its combat score for **outnumbering** that enemy.
- A *defending* unit in a **strong position** adds one to its score. "Strong position" is defined in this chapter. In order to receive this modifier, a unit may *not be shaken*.
- A cavalry unit that does *not* have the **Shock** trait must subtract one if it is in combat against one or more enemy cavalry units that do have that trait.
- A unit that has any portion of its footprint in **difficult terrain** subtracts one from its combat score.
- A unit that is in a **poor formation** subtracts four from its combat score. "Poor formation" is defined in this chapter.




Outnumbering

A unit, whether attacking or defending, receives the +1 modifier for outnumbering the enemy if it is one of two or more units that engage a single enemy and *only* that enemy.

For example, if the enemy attacked two of your units with one of his, each of your units would receive the modifier, assuming they weren't engaged by any other enemies.



Combat Modifiers

+1	Outnumber
+1	Defending a Strong Position
-1	non- <i>Shock</i> CAV vs. <i>Shock</i> 
-1	in Difficult Terrain
-4	Poor Formation

Outnumbering

Three French units attack a British infantry unit and artillery that did not retire.

French units A and B are attacking the British infantry and no other targets. They each receive a +1 modifier for outnumbering the enemy.

French unit C, however, is attacking the artillery unit and incidentally contacting the infantry. Since it is attacking more than one enemy, it is not “outnumbering” anybody and doesn’t receive the modifier.

Outnumbering

This French infantry unit charged one British artillery unit and incidentally contacted another. Neither artillery unit retired.

The British get the bonus for outnumbering. Each defending artillery unit adds +1 to its combat score.

Outnumbering

The outnumbering bonus applies to any sort of units as long as they have a clear 2-vs-1 situation. You might wonder why an artillery company, with perhaps 100 musket-armed men in a pinch, would count the same as a battalion of 600 infantry. I decided that it was simpler to make the rule without exceptions, and that a +1 bonus to an artillery unit is not going to save it in combat unless its attacker is very weak.

It is still a better decision to attempt to retire your artillery, whether they outnumber the attackers or not.

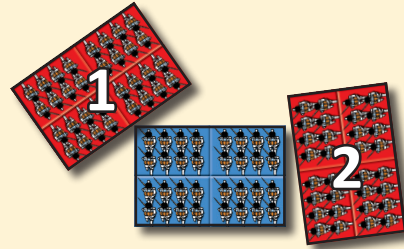


Combat Modifiers, Continued

Poor Formation

A unit receives a -4 modifier for being in a poor formation in **any** of the following cases. The modifier is applied only once, no matter how many cases apply:

- It has an attacker on its flank or rear **-or-**
- It is in March formation **-or-**
- It is an infantry unit that is *not* in a Square formation and is engaged against enemy cavalry.



Attacked on the Flank

The French unit is being attacked by two British units. British-1 is not on the flank of the French because none of its bases is completely behind the French front line. British-2, however, is flanking the French.

In this combat the French will get the -4 for poor formation and the British will each get +1 for outnumbering.

Strong Position

A defending unit that is **not shaken** has a strong position in any of the following cases. The modifier is applied only once, no matter how many cases apply:

- It is a Garrison in a town **-or-**
- It is being attacked across a wall or earthworks by *all* enemies **-or-**
- It is uphill from *all* enemies that are attacking it **-or-**
- It is an infantry unit in Square formation that is being attacked by *cavalry*. (Squares being attacked by *infantry* do **not** have a strong position.)

No unit gets the “strong position” modifier if it is shaken.

If you are unsure whether a defender is being attacked “across” a wall or earthwork, draw a line from the attacker’s centerpoint directly to that attacker’s front, until it contacts the defender. If that line starts in or passes through that terrain en route to the defender, then the attack is coming across that terrain.

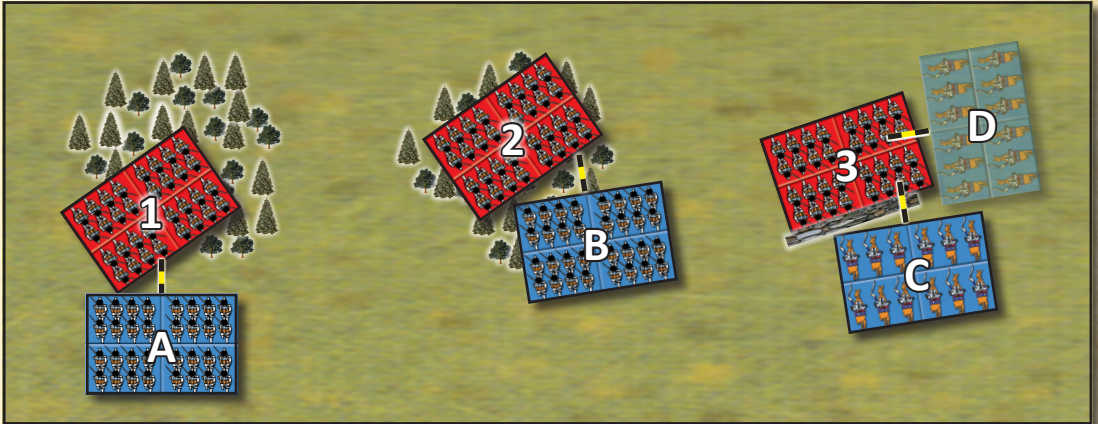
In order to have a strong position by being uphill or attacked across a wall or earthwork, all enemy units must be attacking uphill or across that terrain feature.

Lancers Get a Re-Roll vs. Squares



Cavalry units with the *Lancers* trait, when attacking an infantry unit in a Square formation, may re-roll results of “1” or “2.” They keep the second roll’s result.

The second, re-rolled result is used when determining whether an “upset victory” has occurred (see p. 82).



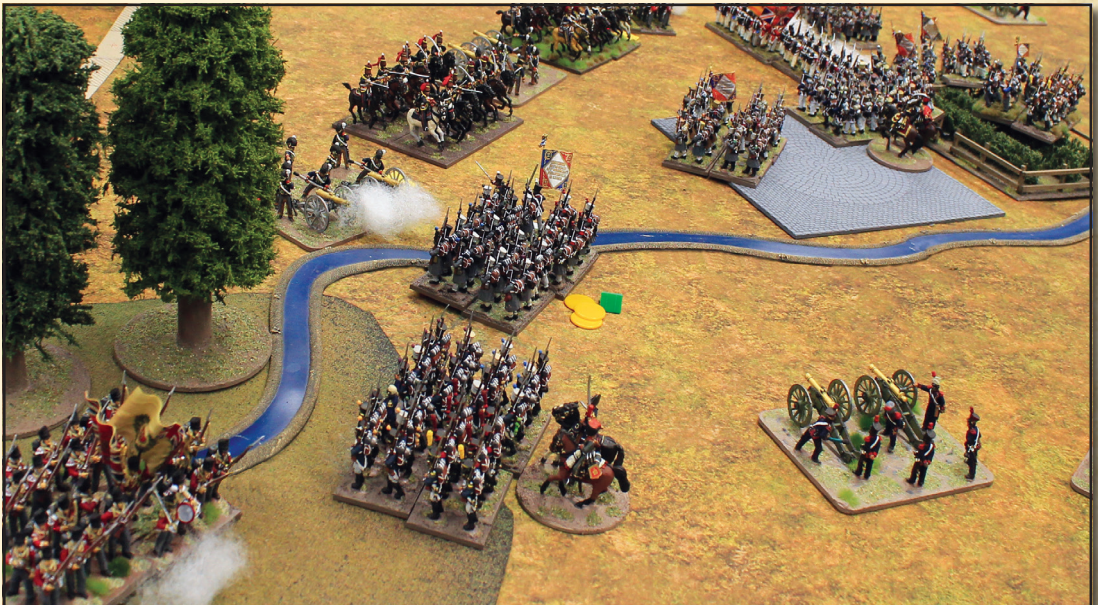
Difficult Terrain and Strong Positions

French-A is in open terrain, attacking British-1, which is partially in the woods. The British receive the -1 modifier for difficult terrain.

French-B is attacking British-2. Both units are partially in the woods. Both are in difficult terrain.

French-C is a cavalry unit, attacking British-3, which is behind earthworks. A straight line from C's center-point passes through the earthworks en route to 3, and thus the British have a strong position. In addition, earthworks are difficult terrain for cavalry, so the French receive the -1 modifier for difficult.

Imagine, however, an additional French-D, attacking British-3's flank. In this case the British do not have a strong position and do not get the modifier because not all attackers are attacking across the terrain. (And the French would get a +1 for outnumbering.)



Having cleared the big town (the paved area), the French keep pushing the British. Colored chits are used for DISRs and permanent losses, thus no labels. Photo by Ralph Hart.



Uphill

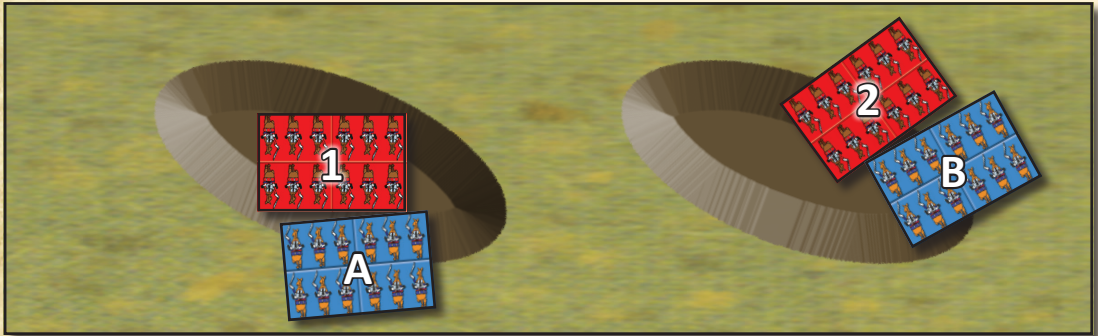
Being uphill is a bonus for a defending unit. If it is uphill from all enemies that are attacking it, the defender has a strong position.

In order to be uphill from an opponent in combat, your defending unit must meet two criteria:

- Your unit must have *two complete edges* entirely on the hill terrain piece, one of which must be the edge that is being attacked, **-and-**
- The attacking unit's footprint must be only partially on the hill.

If a *defending* unit meets both of those criteria, then it is “uphill” from its opponent, and has a strong position.

The attacker never receives any bonus for being uphill.



Attacking Uphill

Blue unit A is attacking Red unit 1. The Red unit has at least two complete edges entirely on the hill terrain piece, one of which (its front) is the edge that is being attacked.

Blue unit A's footprint is only partially on the hill. Thus Red-1 is “uphill” from its attacker.

Not Attacking Uphill

Blue unit B is attacking Red unit 2. The Red unit has only one edge that is *entirely* on the hill, therefore it is *not* uphill from its attacker.

It doesn't matter that Blue's footprint isn't entirely on the hill either, since Red did not meet *both* criteria for being uphill from its opponent.

Hills as Terrain Pieces

Because of the great variation in hills as terrain pieces — some have no crest, some have long slopes, some are essentially plateaus, etc. — you may have to modify these rules to accommodate the model terrain you use. For example, rather than stipulating that the attacker's footprint must be only partially on the hill, you might have to say, “...must be only partially on the same level as the defender,” or some similar formulation. Discuss with your opponent before the game, if needed.



Resolving the Combats

As you calculate the combat score of each of your engaged units, mark that score temporarily in some way, such as placing dice beside the unit to indicate its score.

Resolve Defenders First

In any order he likes, the passive player checks each of his defending units. He compares the combat score of his unit to the scores of each active unit that is engaging it.

If any attacker's combat score is greater than its opposing defender's score by **three or more**, that defender breaks and is removed from the table.

If the defending unit was outscored by one or two, it takes 1 DISR. That, also, might break it, in which case the defender is removed from the table.

A defending cavalry unit that was outscored by any attacker now staggers.

If the defending unit tied or outscored all its attackers then it remains in place and:

- If cavalry, it suffers 1DISR, **unless doing so would break it.* (In that case, it does not suffer any DISR.)
- If infantry or artillery it does not suffer any DISR.

Resolve Attackers

After all passive units have been resolved, the active player proceeds in any order he wishes, checking his attacking units.

First, check to see whether any defending cavalry unit outscored any attacking unit by **three or more**. If so, that attacking unit is broken and removed from the table.

If any attacking unit is still engaged against an enemy unit, that attacking unit takes 1DISR and staggers.

Attacking units that are no longer engaged against the enemy (because those enemies have broken or staggered) remain in place and are resolved as follows:

- A cavalry unit takes 1DISR.
- An infantry unit takes 1DISR if its modified combat score was an odd number. If it was an even number, the attacker suffers no DISR.

Combat Results	
1st: Resolve the Defenders	
Outscored by 3 or more	Unit Breaks
Outscored by 1 or 2	1DISR CAV Staggers
Tied or greater	CAV: 1DISR* Other: No Effect
2nd: Resolve the Attackers	
Defending CAV outscored you by 3 or more?	Unit Breaks
Still Engaged?	1DISR & Stagger
No Longer Engaged?	CAV = 1DISR INF = 1DISR if odd



Upset Victory

For the Attacker

If, when rolling its combat die, an attacking unit rolls a "6" **and** the defending unit rolls a "1" then that defender has broken, no matter what the modified scores are. If there are multiple attackers against a single defender, and *any* attacker rolls a "6" when the defender rolls a "1" then that defender breaks.

For the Defender

If a defending unit rolls a "6" and *any* attacker against it rolls a "1" then the defender is unaffected and takes no DISR, no matter what the modified combat scores are. The attacking unit's fate is determined by the combat results, as normal: it might break (if a defending cavalry unit outscored it by three or more), it might take a DISR, and if still in contact, it will have to stagger.

Stagger

A unit sometimes has to fall back from a combat. This is called "stagger."

A player may always choose the order in which he staggers his units. He must choose the shortest path that results in his unit ending 1BW away from any/all enemy units, not only those with which the unit was engaged in combat. If more than one path is equally viable, he may choose.

A unit may interpenetrate any number of friendly units while staggering, without any penalties. If 1BW leaves it "sitting on" a friendly unit, it must keep staggering until it has space to stop. A unit may never interpenetrate enemies.

A unit may change its facing while staggering, as long as doing so is consistent with the shortest possible path, at least 1BW in length.

Due to the above restrictions it is possible that a unit might stagger considerably more than 1BW until it finds a legal place to stop.

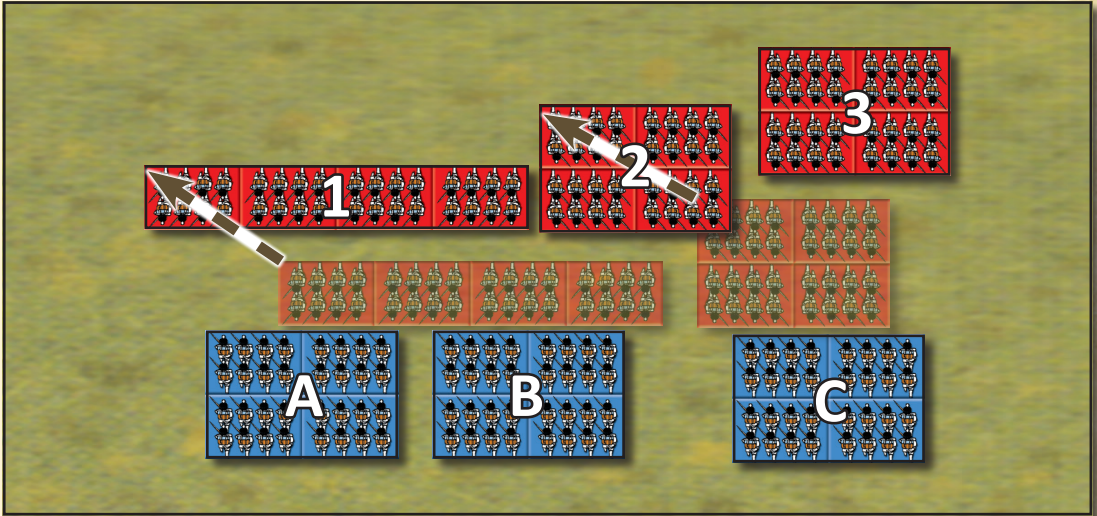
Trapped: Unable to Stagger

A defending unit that was attacked on its rear edge **or** was attacked on **both** of its flanks, may not stagger. If required to do so, it breaks instead.

If a unit cannot stagger without contacting an enemy unit, it breaks instead.

Staggering is not Movement

Staggering as a combat result does not count as "movement." A unit might stagger any number of times in a turn and still be eligible to move.

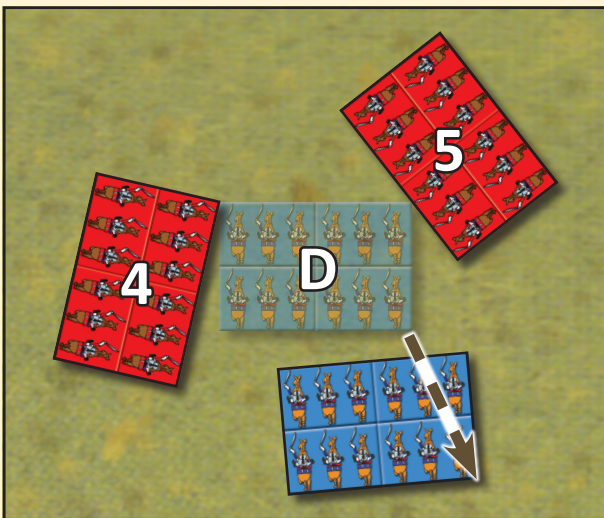


Stagger:

The British player attacked and failed to break the French. His two attacking units must now stagger.

He chooses to stagger unit 2 first. Because of British-3 close behind, the shortest path for British-2 would be to either side of 3. He moves the unit as shown, significantly more than the mandatory 1BW, but stops as soon as he has a place for the unit. British-2 is now at least 1BW from all enemies and must stop here.

That, however, means that British-1 can't stagger directly backwards either, and must also do so at an angle, more than 1BW, until it reaches an available space.



Still a Path to Stagger:

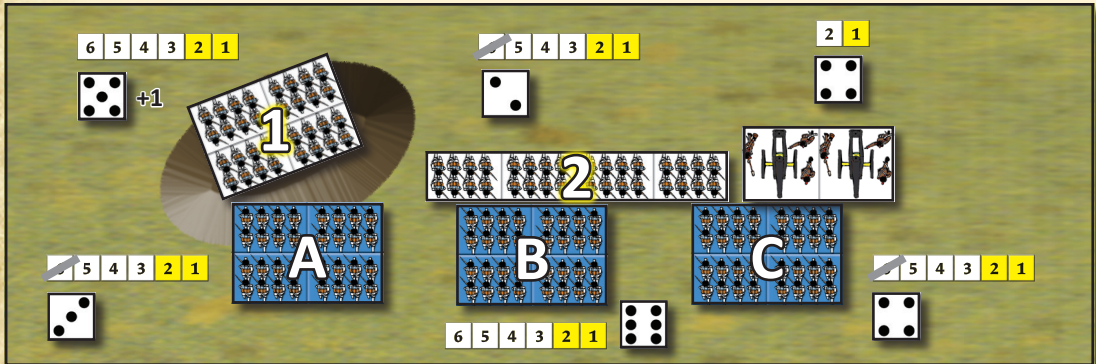
French cavalry unit D was attacked on its left flank by British-4. However, British-5 does not have half or more of its bases behind D's front line, thus isn't on D's right flank.

In the combat, D lost and must stagger. Note that it changed its facing but still staggered the shortest possible path.

If British-5 had been on D's other flank, then a stagger would have broken the French.

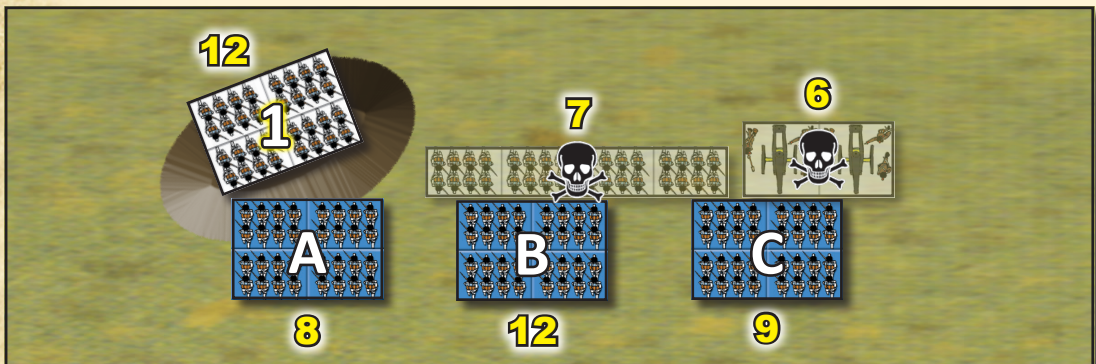


Complete Combat Example



Three French units have attacked three Austrian units. The Austrian artillery did not retire.

Note that the French do **not** get any modifier for outnumbering. Although B and C are both attacking Austrian-2, nonetheless C is also attacking Austrian-3. Austrian-1 is uphill from its attacker and thus gets a +1 modifier for defending a strong position. The starting strengths and die rolls for each unit are shown.



How Did It Turn Out? (Hint: *Vive l'Empereur!*)

First we resolve the defending units. The Austrian artillery rolled a "4" which gave it a combat score of six. Austrian-2 rolled a "2" which gave it a combat score of seven. Austrian-1 rolled a "5" which, combined with its modifier, gave it a combat score of twelve.

Austrian units 2 and 3 were each outscored by three or more and thus break. Austrian-1, at least, is in no danger. It takes no DISR because it tied or outscored its attacker, and it remains in place.

Next we resolve the attackers. French-B and C are no longer engaged. Unit B's final combat score (twelve) is an even number; it takes no DISR. Unit C's final score (nine) is an odd number, so it takes 1DISR. Both remain in place.

French-A, however, is still engaged against Austrian-1, which it failed to break. Thus A must take 1 DISR and stagger. Note that although Austrian-1 outscored French-A by three, it doesn't matter. Only a defending *cavalry* unit can break an attacker.



Lasalle does a few things differently from most Napoleonic wargames, particularly in the way it resolves combat, so it is worth taking note of these and explaining the game's intentions.

Basic Rationale

The attacker's score represents the skill and aggressiveness of this unit; its willingness to drive the charge home in the face of enemy fire, uncooperative terrain, and other friction. The defender's score represents its steadiness. Both of these are obviously conditioned by a unit's fatigue and losses (which we collectively represent with DISR). A fatigued attacker will still obey orders, will still advance toward the enemy, but will be less likely to drive the attack home. A fatigued defender is more likely to break under the strain.

Thus, combat is usually an Either-Or prospect. Either the defender breaks or the attacker is driven off. In the latter case, losses to both sides are probably light because the attack wasn't pressed home.

Defending infantry does not fall back. With the exception of cavalry combats, an ordered retreat from combat was very rare. The defender was trying to hold his ground, and if he failed, he broke. Nor was he usually in a position to break the attacker, although our sequence of play provides for those opportunities when a defender makes a counterattack that breaks the original attacker a few minutes later.

The combat resolution system in Lasalle is not attritional. That's what musketry and artillery are for. Either the combat was decisive (the defender broke) or it was indecisive, and the attacker fell back or recalled without either side getting much blood on their hands.

Combat is Not Necessarily the End of a Turn

Unlike most games, in which combat resolution takes place after all movement, combat in Lasalle can happen at any point(s) during the turn, before units move or shoot, or after they do so. Fighting a combat as a defender does not prevent a unit from moving later in the turn.

This is another reason why there is no "magic movement" after combat as in most games: no advance or retreat. You control the pace of events, not vice-versa. Your units might indeed "advance" after combat if their next move happens before the enemy's next move in that part of the field. For example, you might hold your cavalry charge until late in the turn. Then you might move first in the next turn, enabling your victorious cavalry to exploit its success and charge again before the enemy can react. Learning to control the pace of the sequence is part of the tactics of the game.

Are Squares a Poor Formation Against Enemy Infantry?

An "open" square was essentially a Line (sometimes doubled in depth), folded back onto itself in a formation with no flanks. The tradition in wargames that it was vulnerable to attack by enemy infantry rests upon the notion that an infantry line could out-shoot a square 4-to-1 because most of the shooters in the square are facing the wrong direction. You can do this in the game, of course, by shooting it out with an enemy square and probably doing it a lot of harm. (Not only does the square shoot with fewer dice, it is also easier to hit.)

At the moment of "contact," however, all horse-and-musket combats were at 1-to-1 odds. That is simply the limitation of close-order formations. You can't squeeze any more files of soldiers into contact than the enemy can. For that reason, an infantry unit in Square is not in a "poor formation" when attacked by enemy infantry.

Cavalry Seems Weak

Because cavalry always suffers DISR in combat, win or lose, it loses its staying power more rapidly than infantry does. Players often ram their cavalry against enemy squares and then marvel that it is too "weak." Cavalry must be conserved if possible and used only against infantry that has been worn down by enemy fire or that can be caught in a vulnerable formation.

Can Infantry Charge Cavalry?

Yes, but the infantry will be in a poor formation and will break if they lose by three or more. It's usually a bad idea but sometimes a fresh infantry unit can drive away a beaten-up or vulnerable cavalry unit. Cavalry is the only type of defender that can break an attacker. This represents the fact that cavalry did not fight standing still. Whether attacking or defending, cavalry is moving, attempting to break up the enemy's formation.