

OLD EMPIRE COMBAT GUIDE



Basics

Combat may be defined as the attempt to impose one's will upon another by main force. In 'OLD EMPIRE' the chance of success for any such attempt is evaluated by G.M., dependent upon the particular circumstances applicable. The character's attempt is represented by the rolling of a twenty-sided die (d20). The score on the die may be modified by the player's choice of action, or by an opponent's counter-action. If a blow is particularly successful a 'Location' roll on percentage dice (d100) may be called for, sometimes also followed by a 'Bash' roll on a d20.

The number of combat choices, or 'OPTIONS', a player may make in a standard combat round, together with the proficiency of performance, is determined by the level of experience achieved in the chosen Character Class.

Combat Round

For the purposes of combat, time is divided into six second 'Rounds', during which action sequences chosen by the participants are performed, or at least attempted. A player may attempt any reasonable combination of actions appropriate to this time interval, but attempting more than one combat option requires a great deal of skill. Only Elite warriors or their equivalents are entitled to more than one combat option per round without considerable risk of error. As a guide, some approximate execution times are given below for some frequently attempted actions. Players may take more or less than this time depending on their skill, the circumstances of the action and their luck at the time.

Some Examples

Mount/Dismount horse	1 round
Drop pack and ready for combat	1 round
Wake from sleep upon alarm	1 round
Prepare and aim missile weapon	1 round
Draw weapon from belt	1/2 round
Unslung shield	1/2 round
Most Combat Options	1/2 round
Rise from prone position	1/2 round

Movement in Combat

The uncontested rate of movement in combat is determined by the encumbrance load of the character. This is detailed at the end of this section and in the price-list of equipment. However, as warriors gain in skill and experience it becomes progressively more difficult to step around them; they acquire a Zone-of-Control (ZOC) around themselves. Within such a Zone all movement is regarded as 'contested' and is resolved hex-by-hex by G.M.; ZOC is influenced by numerous factors including mass, size and strength. Only by the expenditure of a combat option for '*Tactical Movement*' may movement be forced within a ZOC.

As may be appreciated from the above list of action times, any character using more than all his/her combat movement allocation for a round may have to forego combat options, depending upon the circumstances, due to his/her late arrival into the fray. (An obvious exception would be if contact range had been maintained during the entire combat round).

Wounds

Hit Point Damage

Successful blows will inflict damage quantified in 'Hit Points'. These represent a combination of skill, fitness and luck, and their loss simulates the degradation in fighting ability suffered. Combat is viewed as an attrition of skill by a number of blows until a critical threshold is reached, and incapacitation results. The critical threshold is at zero hit points, but attritional effects are significant once the hit point total falls below 50%.

Woundings

Particularly effective blows are 'located' by a d100 dice roll, as mentioned previously, and may result in extra damage quantified by a loss in requisite points and/or 'Blood Points'. This is to simulate some of the blood loss and shock effects inflicted by impact weapons.

Blood points are lost at a 'Bleeding' rate specified by G.M., with this number of points deducted at the end of each round SUBSEQUENT to that in which the wound was received. Wounds will bleed at this rate as long as violent exertion is continued, but the bleeding rate may be reduced by basic medical attention. This is most effective if another trained person administers aid, but may be attempted personally. If wounds are not staunched before the blood point total reaches zero, unconsciousness follows; blood loss rates then drop so by death by bleeding is not automatic.

In short, the result of being reduced below zero in either Hit points or Blood points is incapacitation, often accompanied by unconsciousness and possibly death.

Combat Options

The actions most commonly used are listed below players are free to invent their own options and tactics - entirely at their own risk. Option details are deliberately brief: try them for 'real' yourself and evaluate their performance against various opponents. If in real doubt you may ask G.M. what the hypothetical 'Combat Manual' would advise. This reflects the amount of background experience the character (rather than the player) would have to call upon.

Offence	Option Details
Normal Blow	Attacker attempts to strike target. Assumes reasonable defence by attacker. d20 to hit.
Ferocious Blow	Attacker attempts to hit target with extra zeal. Makes attacker easier to hit. Speed as per double option. d20+2 to hit. If Wounding result then d4 extra damage.
Mighty Cleave	All out offensive by attacker, with this attack after all other combat attacks. Attacker is much easier to hit. Rate as per triple option. d20+3 to hit.
Charge	Attacker attempts to use body momentum to smite opponent. d20 to hit vs reaction roll of defender with counter action possible.
Defence	
Shield Parry	Defender attempts to parry attacks using shield. d20 to hit with bonus according to experience LVL.
Weapon Parry	Defender attempts to parry a blow using combat weapon d20 to hit with bonus according to experience LVL.
Dodge	Defender attempts to move outside weapon attack range as soon as attack is committed. Roll under AGILITY on 3d10; if successful may opt to roll further d10: if still under AGILITY then may strike free normal blow, if equal or greater then AGILITY is reduced by last die value for next round only. A successful dodge Usually guarantees opponents miss, but this is not ALWAYS guaranteed; the further under your AGILITY the safer you are.
Run like hell	Defender pits reaction roll (d12) vs attacker's reaction. If successful, opponent disengaged; failure gives opponent an advantage on attacks, the bonus proportional to the magnitude of defensive disaster.

<i>Options used by experienced warriors, not recommended for novices</i>	
Shield Bash	Attacker attempts to bash target using shield. d20 to hit. Size disparity between attacker and target gives a modifier.
Force Back	Attacker attempts to force a close target back with either shield or a hafted weapon held in two hands. d20 to hit. Size disparity between attacker and target gives a modifier.
Distance	Attacker attempts to use a long weapon to keep target at long range while inflicting damage. d20 to hit. Must use a long thrusting weapon e.g. Pike, Halberd, or Long Spear.
Side-step	Defender pits combat experience against attacker's combat experience, to try and avoid damage by skilful footwork. d100
Aimed Blow	Attacker strikes at a nominated area. d20-3 to hit, followed by d100 if wounding result follows. Chance of hitting precise location modified by FLVL.
Disarm	Attacker attempts to disarm opponent, using optimum technique (dependant upon circumstance). d20 to hit.
Close	Attacker attempts to close to point-blank range, too close for normal combat. D100. A disparity in AGILITY between attacker and target gives a modifier.
Measured Blow	Attacker pits combat experience against defender's combat experience to try and deliver the optimum attack. d100 followed by d20 to hit. Double Option
Evade	Defender uses speed and AGILITY to avoid attacks by one or more opponents whilst moving. Roll under AGILITY by 3d10 or more depending upon circumstance. Double Option
<i>(Options (16) and (17) are Double options requiring considerable skill and practice)</i>	
Close Combat Options*	
Grapple	Attacker attempts to secure a wrestling grip upon opponent. d20 to hit.
Specified blow/action	Attacker nominates exact attack. Circumstances, particularly a successful grapple, dictate the chance of success. d20 to hit.
Trip	Attacker attempts to disturb opponent's balance, without using any grip. d20 to hit.
Throw	Attacker attempts to bodily throw opponent from a grappled position. d20 to hit.
Defend	All out defence/avoidance using whatever method is available. d20 to hit.

*Only short weapons may be used at full effect, circumstances will dictate the penalties suffered by longer weapons. Generally the longer the weapon the more restricted the options available.

Extra Options

As characters progress in fighting ability they gain extra options and more preferential weapons.

Fighting LVL:	1, 2, 3, 4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Options:	1 / round	1 then 2	2 then 1	2	2 then 3	3	3 then 4	4

No more than two options are possible with one arm; unless some magicks are involved even the mightiest or warriors can strike but twice in a combat round with his right arm. Any surplus options may be used up as desired: SHIELD, SIDE-STEP etc. etc. One SHIELD option with a Combat Shield will defend against two blows, a Great Shield against up to three. In the first case the blows must come from within three contiguous hexes, in the second case from within four. Unless retreating or using a Buckler (a light single-grip shield) not more than one SHIELD option per round may be attempted. Even if these conditions are met the second defence may not always be practicable.

Preferential Weapons

Class	Initial No.	Extra Preferentials at LVL:	Training Period for a new preferential
Warrior*	4+shield	2, 4, 6, 8...	4 months
Rogue, Priest, Ranger	3	3, 5, 7, 9...	6 months
Druid	2	4, 8...	8 months
Magician	1	5...	12 months

*'Warrior' includes the classes of Berserker, Monk and Paladin.

Commonly preferred weapons: Shield, Sword, Spear, Battle Axe, War Axe, Dagger and Bow.

Less common choices include: Buckler, Mace, Hand Axe, Sling, Two-handed Sword and Crossbow.

Rarely encountered weapons: Halberd, Scimitar, Morning Star, War Hammer, Battle Hammer, Flail, Pike and Whip.

Specialised weapons also exist which are not available as initial weapon choices. Everyone is assumed normally proficient with Club or Stone.

Normal weapon proficiency may be gained by a prolonged period of practice in addition to those automatically gained through experience gained. The usual period of training is shown above, but this assumes no full-time occupation. It is possible to embark upon courses of exercise to try and boost physical requisites such as STRENGTH, ENDURANCE and even DEXTERITY. It is rumoured that prolonged

study may improve INTELLIGENCE or WISDOM but most reckon this an unhealthy habit which will make you go blind. Some say that diet and strange exercises are claimed to raise CONSTITUTION, but these are thought fancies by the majority.

Those characters lucky enough to be specially talented in a weapon receive +1 on all d20 results with that weapon per fighting level.

Wielding of Two Weapons.

Some people, whether naturally gifted as Ambidextrous or Either-Handed or simply Elite warriors that have taken sword practice with their left hand, prefer to use two weapons instead of weapon and shield. Such people enjoy a greater amount of flexibility in their combat response but are much weaker in defence, as the SHIELD is superior to the WEAPON PARRY. When using a two weapons a extra option is gained which MUST employ the weaker weapon arm; this cannot be a FEROCIOUS or CLEAVE option. The maximum number of offensive options normally available when wielding two weapons is one less than the total number available.

Characters with Dexterity less than 10 cannot co-ordinate well enough to use two weapons (unless naturally gifted as Ambidextrous or Either-Handed). Left-handed characters simply reverse the penalties shown above.

d20 Penalties:	Right Arm	Left Arm
Ambidextrous	0	0
Either-Handed	0	-1
18+ Dexterity	0	-1
17	0	-2
16	-1	-3
13 plus	-2	-4
10 plus	-3	-5

Wielding a Weapon in the off-hand

Occasionally whether due to wounds or some other necessity a character may have to fight using his 'wrong' hand. The penalty is then one less than the Left Arm penalty above.

Rate of Bowfire.

Bowman's Base Rate: 6 secs to reload/draw/aim/fire
 4 secs to reload/aim/fire

Elf with Elvenbow: 5 secs to reload/draw/aim/fire
 4 secs to reload/aim/fire

Dexterity	18	20	22	24	26	28
Advantage (sec)	-1/2	-1	-3/2	-2	-5/2	-3

AGILITY

AGILITY is merely DEXTERITY modified by weight carried, armour worn, physical fatigue or wounds and activity undertaken. Modifiers are listed below:

Armour Modifiers

Stripped	+2
Normal Clothing	0
Leather Armour	0
Studded Leather	-1
Ringmail	-2
Scalemail Hauberk	-3
Chainmail	-2
Mail Hauberk	-4
Banded Mail	-4
Splinted Mail	-5
Plate Mail	-6
Field Plate	-5

Activity Modifiers

Wielding two weapons	-2
Wielding two handed weapon	-2
Wielding Dwarf Axe	-1
Wielding Southern Sword	-1
Using Great Shield	-1
Hurried	-4
Distracted	-6
Surprised	-9
Entering Door	-3
Restricted Space	variable
Casting Spell(LVL=x)	-x+1
Riding Horse	Horse fighting level - 8

Each/Any Damage requisite below

half normal total	-3
one quarter normal total	-6

Unencumbered	+1
Light Burden	+0
Medium Burden	-2
Heavy Burden	-4
Encumbered	-6

Warriors on foot can only have their agility reduced below their fighting LVL by wounds or burden penalties

Armour penalties may be reduced by having it made-to-measure or for armour of exceptional quality.

ENCUMBRANCE

All this junk your character is carting around slows him/her/it down. The maximum burden a character can bear for a prolonged period is represented by an Encumbrance Point Total = (Weight(in lbs)/10) + Strength + Endurance

On the Move

If you exceed your maximum burden you are Encumbered and may only stagger, losing 4 endurance per 3 hours. Other states of loading are: Heavy Burden, Medium Burden, Light Burden and Unencumbered; with loss rates of 3, 2 and 1 endurance/3 hours march. Total all the gear you are carrying on the march and give the ratio of points carried to maximum burden. The G.M. will inform you of your march category.

In Combat

It is important to differentiate between the burden carried on the march and the burden carried in combat circumstances. It is perfectly permissible to wear a quick-release harness on your pack and drop it at the first sign of trouble. You must ensure, of course, that fragile objects are protected. To calculate your combat burden total the equipment burden carried by your character, NEGLECTING your usual combat weapon, and present the ratio of points carried to maximum burden; G.M. will inform you of your combat move in hexes.

Loading Factors

Great Sword	10	Scalemail Hauberk	15
Southern Sword	8	Chainmail Shirt	12
Longsword	7	Chainmail Hauberk	18
Scimitar/Sabre	5	Banded Mail	15
Shortsword	4	Suit of Splintmail	20
Dagger	2	Suit of Platemail	24
Throwing Knife	1	Shirt of Elvenmail	6
Battle-axe	9	Mithril Hauberk	10
Waraxe	6	Longbow	4
Handaxe	3	Shortbow	2
Dwarf axe	8	Quiver (per 6 arrows)	2
Battle hammer	10	Heavy Crossbow	6
Warhammer	7	Light Crossbow	4
Morning Star	7	Pannier (per 4 bolts)	1
Mace	5	Pannier of Darts (per dart)	1
Flail	9	Pannier of Javelins (each)	2
Cold Weather Clothing	4	Pouch of slingshot (dozen)	1
Winter (Fur) Clothing	8	Great Shield	10
Leather Armour	6	Combat Shield	6
Studded Leather Armour	8	Buckler/Wooden shield	2
Ringmail Byrnie	12		

Weapons are usually carried on weapon belts, each with a capacity of 12 points. Up to three such belts may be worn. Spears, Polearms etc cannot be back-packed.

A simplified encumbrance/movement scheme is shown below. This may be used as a fair guide but numerous factors are omitted for simplicity. If in any doubt subtract one hex from your calculated movement or ask for a ruling from G.M.

Combat Movement

Weight Ratio	Hex Movement
over 1.0	1
1.0-0.81	2
0.8-0.71	3
0.7-0.61	4
0.6-0.51	5
0.5-0.41	6
0.4-0.31	7
0.3-0.21	8
0.2-0.11	9
0.1-nil	10

**Weight Ratio is the ratio of Burden/Encumbrance Points*

Quick reckoner for new players, carrying minimal equipment in flat good going

- Heavily armoured = 3 hexes
- Armoured = 5 hexes
- Unarmoured = 7 hexes

March Burden

Weight Ratio	Class	Endurance cost per 3hrs	Speed Ratio
over 1.0	Encumbered	4	1
1.0 - 0.76	Heavy Burden	3	2
0.75 - 0.51	Medium Burden	2	4
0.50 - 0.26	Light Burden	1	6
0.25 - nil	Unencumbered	0	8

Forced Marching raises speed and loss rates by one class; this may be continued till a loss rate of 4 per 3 hours is reached.

ARMOUR AND WEAPONS IN OLD EMPIRE	
Agricultural Pitchfork	Cheap. Same as a Spear except you can't throw it or set it to impale a charging foe. Real cheap though...
Javelin	Very cheap. Can only be thrown. Good for hunting little furry things that are fun to kill.
Pike	Terrific in formation with fifty other guys; otherwise forget it, unless you're trying to kill a rat in a drainpipe.
Club	Cheap. Really, really cheap. Ok against peasants and punks in Leathers. Guys in Plate-mail are only going to die laughing. But it's always available, and cheap too.
Quarterstaff	Great for parrying, walking in the hills, and leaning on in your old age. Otherwise a bourgeois club, see above remarks.
Dagger	First of the real weapons. Terrific at 2' range (IN CLOSE). Not much good at normal combat distance of about 5'. Easy to conceal, carry in numbers, and throwing versions are available. You can always sell them to the goblins...
Hand-Axe	Easier to make than a dagger. Does slightly more damage and can be thrown further. Any handaxe can be thrown or fought with at normal, close range or in a confined space. A useful all-contingency weapon.
Spear	Very useful and adaptable. Probably <i>the</i> most underestimated weapon with throwing possible, and thrusting possible one or two-handedly. Can also be set and charged, or set to impale a charging animal. Can be fought in a confined space, is cheap to maintain and several can be carried at one time. However, they are poor against heavy armour and can be cut through easily.
War Hammer	Easy to make. Terrific for hitting the guy in plate-mail, pretty slow hand-to-hand. Can be chucked with a lot of force at point blank range. Haft can break though. Useful for fretwork on off days.
War Axe	Cheapest first-class combat weapon, useful against all armours. A bit slow in hand-to-hand combat, but easy to maintain.

Great War-Axe (Battle-Axe)	Slow and awkward to use. Horrible damage when you hit. Only a weapon used much by Berserks, Dwarves and other such loonies. Can be chopped through by a smart opponent. Great for gathering firewood on long winter evenings.
Great War-Hammer (Battle-Hammer)	Great for crunching heavy armour. Lots of bones breaking, etc., otherwise remarks as for Battle-Axe. Great for breaking rocks, doorat etc. on long winter evenings.
Flail and Morning Star	A skill weapon, iron shafted, only for experienced warriors.
Mace	The nobleman's War-Hammer - faster, lighter and slightly more damage in good hands. Can't be thrown. Iron shafted.
Pole-Arms	Cheap multi-purpose Guardsman's weapon. Very slow in combat, can be cut through. No use in awkward spaces, but Ok in narrow ones. Real cool if you want to imitate Beefeaters.
Long-Knife (Shortsword)	A sneaky weapon. Very strong and light, very good in close and Ok at a distance. Can be concealed, is good to parry with and is readily available.
Longsword	Hideously expensive starting off. <i>The</i> best all round weapon - fairly fast, strong and good to parry with.
Broadsword	The Northern version of the above. Slower with slightly more damage potential. However it has no point and ain't so hot against the bigger opponents.
Scimitar	Fast. Real Fast. Wonderful against light-armoured opponent, terrible against the heavy stuff. A good cavalry weapon.
Southern Sword	Expensive <i>modern</i> weapon. A tip-weighted sword for use against chainmail which can be used in a hand-and-a-half grip for extra damage. A bit slow but a very good multipurpose choice. Pity there aren't many magic versions knocking about... (Ho, ho)
Two-Handed Sword	Head-bangers weapon. Battle-Axe coments apply except it can't be cut through, you can parry with it, and it's even heavier.
Lances and Cavalry Maces	These are Noble, skill weapons and are rare.

Crossbows	Easy to fire, good range and damage. Can be held cocked for long periods. Excellent armour penetration in the heavier models. Terrible rate of fire, but good weapon for those who can't pull longbows (i.e. Dwarves and other short-arses).
Longbows	Need to be strong to fire. More difficult to learn to use. Excellent range and rate of fire. Reasonable armour penetration. Much more difficult to mass produce - Craftsmen required to make and overhaul them.
Shortbows	Hunting weapons really. Cheapest stringed missile weapon. Excellent rate of fire, reasonable range and penetration against medium armour.
Sling	Cheapest useful long range weapon. Packs a fair wallop, do lead bullets, but these don't penetrate for really nasty damage, like arrows and quarrels.
Darts	Cheap and real easy to carry tons of them. Not particularly deadly, but real easy to spill venom on them... Reasonable range, silent and almost unnoticeable flight in dark.

No Armour	If you've got a slightly above average Dex. (eg. 12+) and you <i>dodge</i> in combat, you're better off than in heavier armour. May your God help you if you are hit by a bladed weapon.
Leather Armour	Well it's better than nothing.
Studded Leather	Pretty reasonable if you've got a shield. Always available.
Ringmail	Same as studded leather but slightly better protection to the chest/stomach.
Scale Mail Hauberk	Good protection, especially over torso. Bulky, heavy and noisy.
Chainshirt	Very good body protection, especially Elven made, otherwise, light and quiet. Not much limb protection.
Chainmail Hauberk	Very good body protection with additional chain protection for the arms and thighs. Somewhat more bulky and noisy.

Banded Mail	Excellent torso protection. Not much protection for limbs.
Splint Mail	Very good all body protection. Heavy, very bulky and noisy. Movement restricted.
Plate Mail	Excellent amour. Similar effects to Splint, but bigger.
Field Plate	Rumour has it that this wondrous armour is lighter and quicker, while being even better all-body protection. Rumoured also that the art of construction is lost and it cannot be bought in the Northern world.
Shields	These save your life. The bigger the better (Ho, ho) in general, as there's more to hide behind. Only loonies use two-handed weapons.
Helmets	They may cut down visibility, but they are <i>vital</i>

DEFAULTS IN O.E.

Unless directly stated otherwise

1. Normal armour, marching clothes, carrying full pack on back.
2. Habitual combat weapon in hands.
3. Stringed weapons strung/unstrung according to weather conditions.
4. Normal mealtimes and rate of march apply.
5. Stated watches and watch patterns of surveillance applied.
6. Retrospective purchase of Normal equipment, food, etc., is allowed to a **reasonable** degree as a concession to playability.
7. Crossings of streams, shallow rivers, bridges, etc., are innumerable and not detailed by GM, hence if an encounter occurs here, normal M.O. applies.
8. Time passes as GM relates it unless interrupted. "Oh, but last month I wanted to...", is at discretion of GM.
9. One does not sleep in anything bulkier than chain hauberk. Typical NPC tactics are to ride in Platemail during the day, and sleep in a Chain Shirt.
10. ***In a dungeon, someone has lit and is carrying a light-source.***

