

A Brief Introduction to Napoleonic Command, 2nd Edition

The basic units in Napoleonic Command are the infantry battalion, the cavalry squadron and the artillery battery. In the standard game, these are typically represented by four, two and two bases, respectively, although there is considerable flexibility. The actual miniatures on the bases are largely irrelevant to the game, as is the exact size of the bases, as long as the units of all forces are based similarly. The game automatically scales itself to whatever basing is being used, since all measurements for movement distances and gunnery ranges are in "spans", one "span" being the frontage of one infantry battalion rounded off to the nearest inch (or cm) for convenience. The player is free to use miniatures based for other systems, or to base his miniatures in whatever way is most attractive, convenient, or economical. Guidelines are given for keeping the various types of units' frontages in proper proportion to one another.

Even though individual battalions and squadrons (and their typical formations) are represented on the table, combat is resolved at the brigade level. The mechanic involves the comparison of a brigade's Cohesion (derived from its size and quality) with the opposing units' Threat (derived from the number of opposing stands, the weapon types and ranges, and the relative position of the enemy). Threat totals which exceed a formation's Cohesion may cause the loss of "tactical initiative", which imposes restrictions on their actions in subsequent turns, or force them to retreat or lose stands from their component units. Smaller Threat totals will not affect a target brigade's actions, but will still impose levels of "Disorder", the accumulation of which will gradually erode a brigade's Cohesion, even if it loses no stands. Accumulated Disorder levels can only be removed by pulling brigades out of combat and allowing them time to recover.

The command structure of the Napoleonic army is fully represented, and leader figures are important features on the table. Their presence with a unit may mitigate the effects of opposing Threat, and the distance between leaders on the table will affect the time delay of communications both up and down the chain of command.

All die rolls in the game are the difference between two six-sided dice; to get this result, simply roll two dice and subtract the smaller from the larger. This gives a range of possible results from 0 to 5, with the probability distribution as follows:

<u>Result</u>	<u>Number of Possible Combinations</u>	<u>Likelihood of Occurrence</u>
0	6 out of 36	17%
1	10 out of 36	28%
2	8 out of 36	22%
3	6 out of 36	17%
4	4 out of 36	11%
5	2 out of 36	6%

Die rolling does not dominate the game, and the resolution of combat is worked out in such a way that good die rolls will not make a poorly planned attack succeed, nor will bad die rolls spoil a well planned and executed attack, though it may make it more or less less effective.

The zip archive includes three files in .pdf format: the first is the full version (42 pages) with color illustrations of formations and actual games in progress, and several appendices. The actual rules are twelve pages long, and they constitute the second file. This "Essentials Only" version includes everything you'll need at the game table, in a brief black and white layout for easy printing. The third file is a stand-alone page of all the charts, which fit on a single page, or both sides of a half-page. A Quick Reference card can be made for the players by printing out the charts on one side of a piece of cardstock. then printing them again (upside down) on the reverse side. and finally cutting the sheet in half. yielding two double-sided Reference cards.

On the following pages you will find the table of contents, which will give you some idea of what the text covers, the abbreviated turn sequence, and one of the combat examples from the rulebook, so you can get a more concrete idea of how the mechanics play out.

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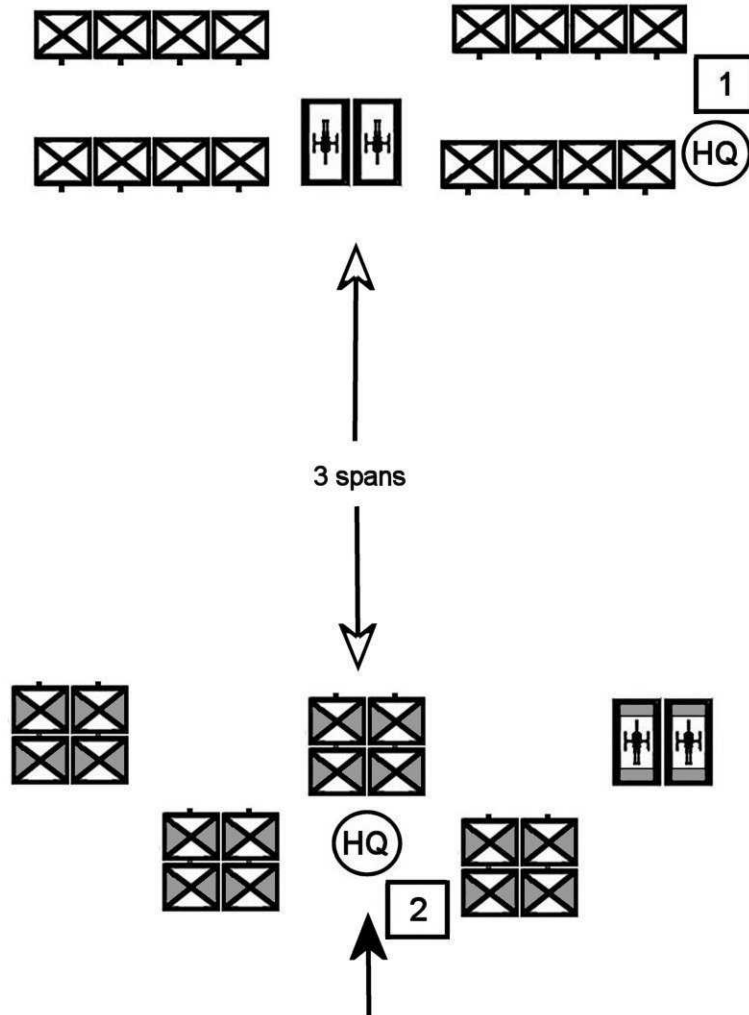
Charts

The Turn Sequence:

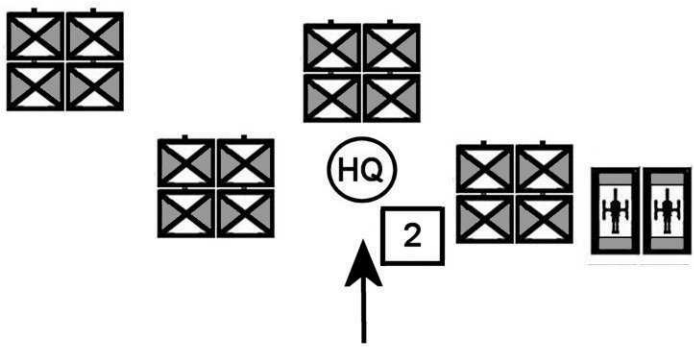
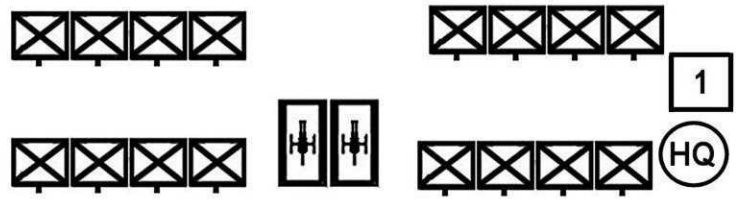
- 0. Command (both players)
- 1. Player One - Movement
- 2. Player Two - Redeployment
- 3. Player One - Charge/Player Two - Countercharge
- 4. Initiative Assessment (both players)
- 5 - 8. (Repeat phases 1 - 4 with players' roles reversed)

The following is one of the sample combats, taken from the appendices. While not everything may be perfectly clear without access to the charts or the full text, this should give you a feel for the mechanics of the game. In this example, a gray infantry brigade (veteran quality) of four battalions (Player One) and a battery is attacking a similar white brigade (of line quality) (Player Two).

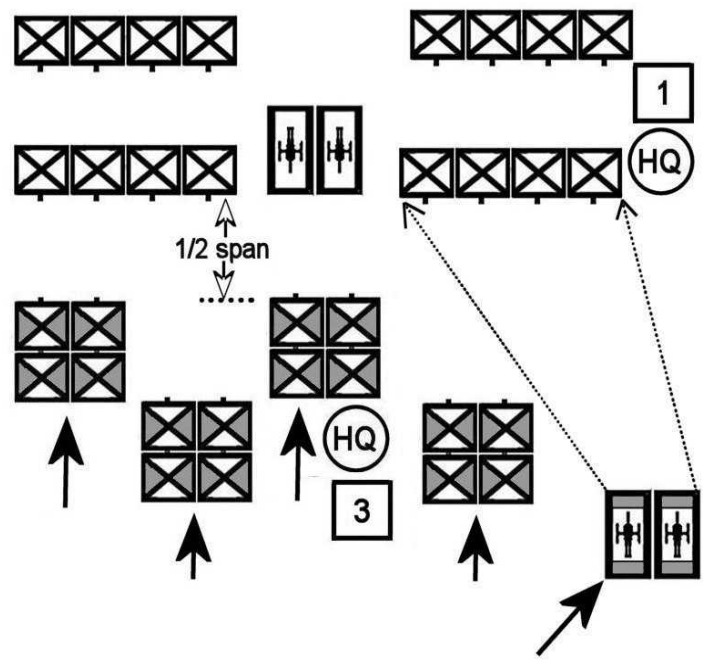
The gray brigade is advancing in columns of attack, deployed "en echequier", with the battery on the right. The white brigade is deployed in two lines of two battalions in line, with the battery in the interval. The gray brigade has a Disorder Level of 1, as a result of long range fire from the white battery on the previous turn. At the end of its move in Turn 1 of this example, the gray brigade has reached a distance of three spans from the enemy, and in the Initiative Test following, the gray artillery assesses 3 Threat Points against the front right battalion (3 for each artillery base, halved because the target is in line) which causes white to increase his Disorder Level to 1. In the following white movement phase, they stand. In the Initiative Assessment phase following the white move, the white artillery then assesses 4 Threat Points (4 for each artillery base, halved because of the HQ attached to the target battalion), which is not close enough to the gray brigade's base Cohesion of 18 to require a die roll for the Initiative Test. Gray increases his Disorder Level to 2.



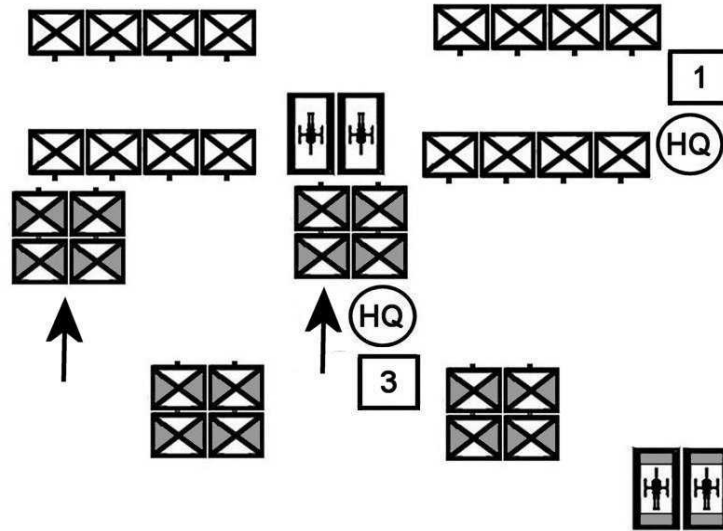
Turn 2. It is now gray's move, and the gray commander advances his brigade two spans, ending with his front line battalions just one span from the enemy. The battery, previously even with gray's front line, stops just outside of the enemy's Threat zone, a little more than two spans distant from the white infantry.



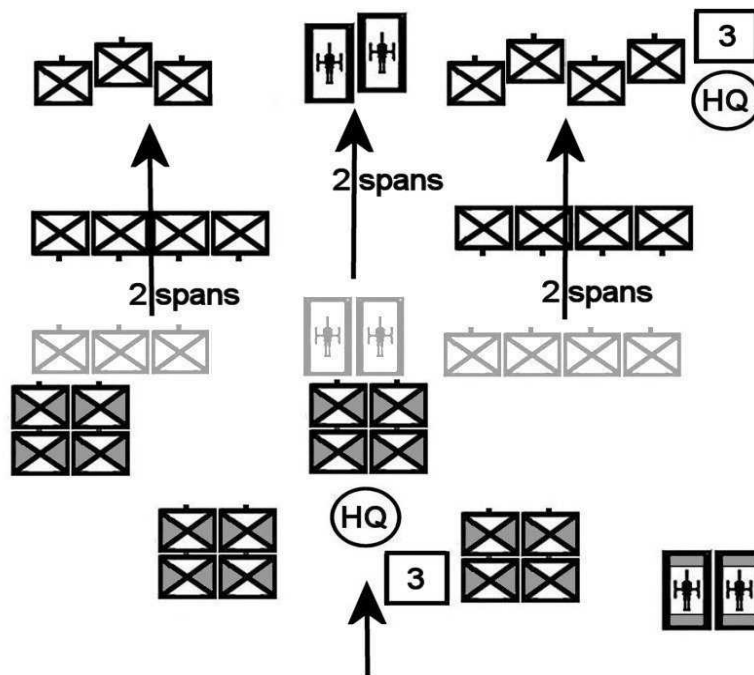
In the Charge/Countercharge phase, the gray commander announces that his two lead battalions (which are within one move of the enemy) will attempt to close to contact. They move to a half span from the enemy's front line; the rear battalions move up to a distance of one span from the enemy to remain cohesive and to support the attack, while the battery obliques slightly to the right to gain a clear line of fire, but without entering the Threat range of the opposing units. The gray brigade increases its Disorder Level to 3 for charging. For the Close to Contact Test, the gray brigade is facing a Threat total of 28 (2 points from each base of the front line white battalions, and 1 from each base of the rear line, plus 8 more points from the artillery halved to 4 by the opposing gray HQ). This exceeds the gray brigade's base cohesion of 19 (16 infantry bases, plus 2 artillery bases, plus 4 for being veteran quality, minus 3 for Disorder), so the gray commander must roll 2 or less to close to contact. He rolls a 4 and a 6, for a difference of 2, which succeeds.



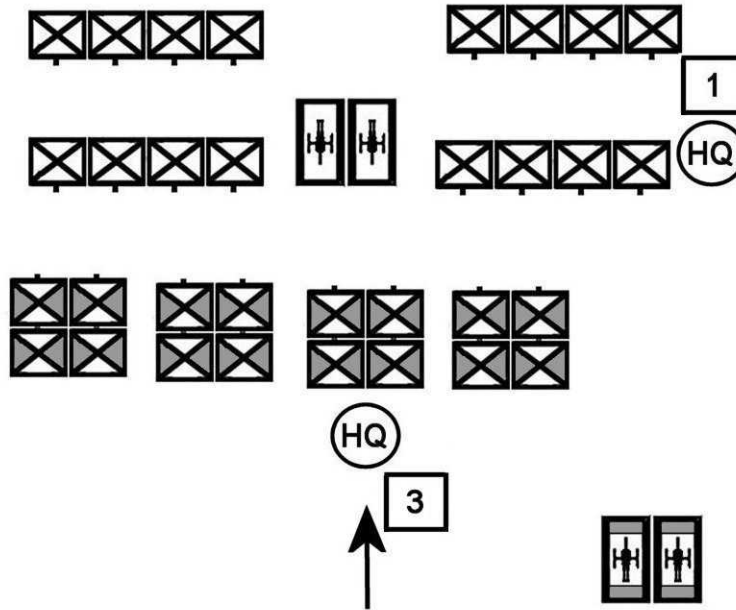
The two battalions designated to charge close to contact. In the Initiative Test the gray brigade assesses a total of 32 Threat Points (12 from each of the battalions in contact, 4 from the left rear battalion, 2 (4 halved by the attached HQ) from the right rear battalion, and 4 from the artillery battery (4 per stand, halved by the target battalion being in line).) The white brigade's base cohesion is 19 (16 infantry bases, plus 2 artillery bases, plus 2 for being line quality, minus 1 for Disorder). The white commander rolls a 1 and a 4, for a final cohesion total of 16.



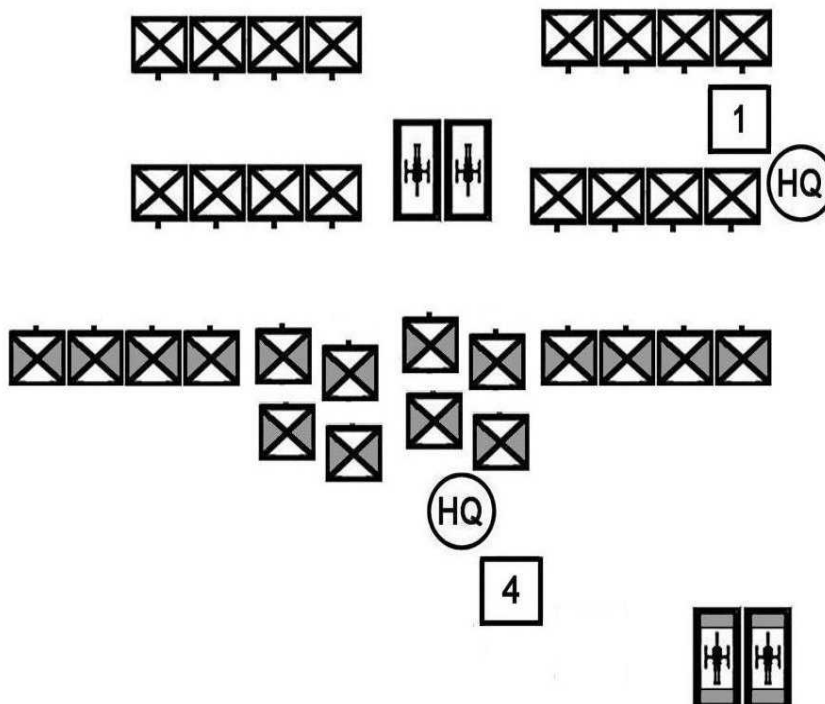
Since the white brigade's Cohesion is doubled by the gray brigade's Threat, the three units which were assessed against must retreat, and the most threatened unit (in this case, the battalion facing the gray left with 16 points assessed against it) loses a stand. These three units end their retreat movement unformed, but fortunately the second line of battalions remains to cover their retreat and give them time to reform. The white brigade increases its Disorder Level to 2 for failing the Initiative Test, and then to 3 because of the retreating units passing through the rear line. Since it has lost the Initiative it may not advance in Player Two's movement phase, but the two battalions still facing the enemy will assess 16 Threat Points against the oncoming grey brigade (Cohesion 19; 18 bases, +4 for being veteran, - 3 for disorder.) Grey will need a roll of 3 or less to retain the initiative and continue his advance . . . an 83% chance. Elapsed time, 30 minutes.



This attack could have turned out very differently. Going back to the point where the gray commander declared his intention to move to contact . . . instead of using both arms available to him, he decides to rely on his bayonets to get the job done, and so commits all four of his infantry battalions to the charge. They move to a half span from the enemy, and increase their Disorder Level to 3 for charging. Since the Threat from the white forces is 28 (as in the previous example), gray's Cohesion of 19 is exceeded and he must get a result of 2 or less on his Close to Contact test die roll to succeed.

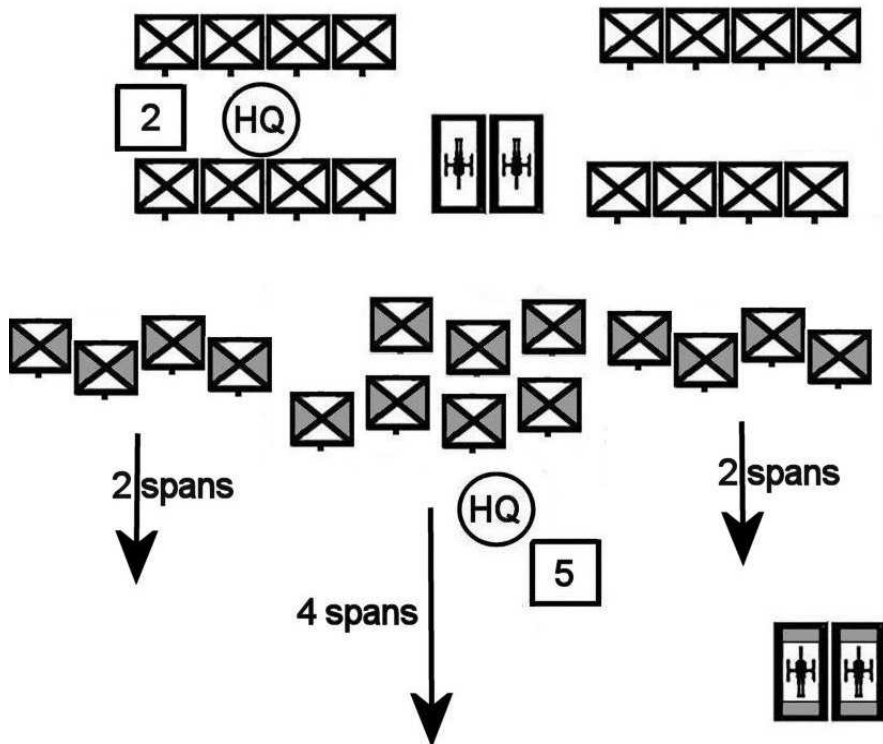


Gray's die roll is a 3. This fails, so the gray battalions do not close to contact, increase their Disorder Level to 4, and must attempt to deploy into line where they stand. Unfortunately, the over-confident gray commander has not left proper deployment intervals between his units, so only the flank battalions have room to deploy. The middle two become unformed.



In the ensuing assessment phase, gray units assess 16 points (8 from the lefthand battalion, 8 halved to 4 from the righthand battalion, and 4 from the leading stands of the unformed battalions; the rear stands of those units and the artillery being blocked by friendly stands in front of them). With a cohesion of 18 (18 stands, plus 2 for line quality, minus 2 for Disorder) the white commander would have to roll a 3 or more to lose the initiative, a 39% chance. If he rolls a result of 3, he would have to reduce the Threat against his brigade by one point, which he could do by simply moving his HQ to the opposite flank, thus enhancing the most threatened battalion in his brigade. On a result of 4 or 5, he would have to retire units to more than a span from the attacking brigade to reduce the threat. On a 2 or less, he would retain the initiative and could advance against the attackers, certainly resulting in a rout.

Let's say he rolls a 3. This increases his Disorder Level by 1, and he also loses the initiative, so he cannot advance. In Player Two's movement phase, the white commander moves his HQ to his righthand battalion, reducing the Threat to 15. In the Initiative assessment phase, white's units assess 40 Threat Points against the gray brigade (8 from white's left front battalion, 4 from the one in support, 8 halved to 4 from the artillery because the target is unformed, and 12 doubled to 24 from the two battalions on white's right because they assess against the unformed infantry by preference, which is equally directly in front and equally distant.) This is more than double the gray brigade's cohesion of 16 (16 stands, plus 4 for being veteran, minus 4 for Disorder . . . the die roll being irrelevant in this case and the battery not being cohesive, having been left behind at 2 spans from the defending white infantry) so gray's Disorder Level increases to 5. All its infantry units become unformed and will retreat in the ensuing gray movement phase. The gray battery may make a normal move to try to remain cohesive with some part of the broken brigade.



The white commander is likely wishing for a couple squadrons of supporting light cavalry at this point, since they could pursue the fleeing gray troops before they had a chance to reform. As it is, his brigade may not pursue if any enemy units are still facing them (like the gray battery) since they failed their previous Initiative Test. The gray brigade will be out of musket range at the end of their move, so the only white unit that will be threatening them is the battery; that will only amount to a few Threat Points, which will not increase their Disorder Level, but it will prevent them from reducing it in the following Command Phase. Elapsed time, 45 minutes.