Ships & Shield Walls

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SHIPS & SHIELD WALLS

Ships, Seaborne Encounters & Massed Battles in RuneQuest

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Ships & Seafaring

Travelling by sea is the fastest, and, usually, one of the safest means to cover long distances and explore foreign lands. It is, without doubt, the cheapest and best means to move a cargo. Many ships can make their way for a full 24 hour period, so significant distances can be covered in a relatively short time.

On the other hand, sailing for extended periods of time in the open ocean and out of easy reach of a safe port or harbour is highly dangerous. If a ship gets into trouble with the weather, waves or wildlife it can easily be fatal for everyone aboard.

Taking A Ship

Scheduled passenger services are rare. Except for specialist military vessels, the main purpose of all ships travelling between ports is to transport cargo. People who intend to travel by boat need to go to the docks, find out which vessels are sailing in the direction they want to go, and see if they can negotiate passage. Of course, those who have unlimited funds can charter a vessel for the journey and thereby dictate when it sails.

Passage on a ship is not necessarily very expensive. Assuming the passengers provide their own food and are prepared to sleep on deck – often the only option – assume a cost of 1-2SP per person per day, depending on the quality of the ship and the comforts it can afford. Large animals take up a lot of cargo space and care, which amounts to approximately 8SP per horse per day.

Charters can be had from 15SP per day for a small vessel with a three-man crew, and can easily go up to 250SP per day for a larger vessel with an expert captain and a complement of 25 crew.

Sailing in Strategic Time

When an adventure involves travel by sea it is often a good idea to stay in Strategic Time, and allow that the journey is completed as expected. As a rule of thumb, Strategic Time is used when the total time taken for the journey is what matters, and the voyage is an interlude in an adventure rather than part of it – something to be handled quickly before progressing with the action.

To work out roughly how long a voyage should take, calculate the distance to travel, then divide by the sailing speed of the ship taken. The result is the time taken in hours. When working around coasts and islands, the rate is a little slower, reducing sailing speed to three quarters.

Oared vessels, such as war galleys, normally travel under sail, using the rowing crew for bursts of speed, or to keep the boat moving in a calm.

Exceeding Travel Distances

Sailing speed cannot be increased unless the winds and weather allow it. For oared ships, the captain can gain extra distance either by pushing the pace, or by denying proper rest breaks to the crew, in either case gaining up to 50% additional distance, at the expense of a level of fatigue per day. Of course, an undead crew can row indefinitely, being immune to fatigue.

Sailing In Local Time

A great deal of fun can be had adventuring at sea rather than just treating the ocean as a thing to be crossed. In order to do that it is necessary to go into a little more detail about ships and sailing. When sailing in local time, the distance and route is plotted, and the time taken to reach a destination calculated according to the vessel's movement speed, the sailing conditions, and the captain's Navigation skill.

Boating And Seamanship

When travelling in Local time, Boating and Seamanship become vital skills. Whoever is in charge of running an ocean-going ship must have the Seamanship skill. Boating is used for smaller craft, but at a minimum of one grade of difficulty harder if on the open ocean rather than on rivers, lakes or inshore. These skills are only tested when the ship encounters a hazard, or there is a situation that requires a response from the captain and crew.

Navigation

The essential skill to get a vessel from one place to another is Navigation. If the journey is a short hop (less than three days) between locations well known to the ship's captain, the Navigation roll should be Easy; or, if it is a simple journey along a familiar coast on which land and landmarks are always in sight, then the roll should be Very Easy (or treated as an Automatic Success).

If the Navigation roll succeeds then the ship arrives at its destination at more-or-less the expected time, unless encounters or disasters of seamanship prevent it from doing so. Should it fail, then a suitable delay is placed on the ship's arrival at its destination, perhaps resulting in more encounters; the Navigation skill is then rerolled, with each failure adding further delay. If the roll is fumbled then the Games Master should feel free to declare the ship has gone wildly astray, and come-up with a suitable stretch of empty ocean, or an unknown shore, for the ship to find itself upon before the crew realise they have gone wrong.

Sailing Conditions

The weather is a fundamental consideration for anyone trusting their life and fortune to a sea-going vessel. While weather conditions may be capricious and unpredictable, the truth is that, in most cases, a sea captain waits for conditions to be favourable before setting out on a voyage, and hopes that they may remain so. On the whole, people do not sail at all during those seasons when the weather is both more unpredictable and capable of greater extremes.

The Sailing Conditions Table (see page 4) gives a general idea of what sort of conditions are encountered: specifics will differ depending on the setting and campaign world. In most cases, it is a matter of waiting in port until a good moment to set out to sea. Of course, sometimes there is no choice but to risk whatever the gods bring.

Changing Weather

The weather is quite capable of changing during a voyage. Rather than roll for weather conditions every day, assume that the rolled weather will remain the same for 1d4 days in winter, 1d8 days in summer, and 1d6 days in spring or autumn.

Wind Damage

Ships suffer damage from strong winds and waves. This battering places stress on the hull and rigging, accumulating a series of, initially, small breakages, that grow in severity as other parts of the vessel have to take-up the strain.

Wind damage is inflicted per day of sailing under the determined weather condition. When the weather changes, so too will the daily damage incurred.

Damage is calculated by taking the Wind STR value (see RuneQuest page 130), and cross-referencing it against the Damage Modifier table on page 13 of the RuneQuest rules. Thus, damage only ensues when the Wind STR reaches 26 or more. However, the Armour Points of the vessel reduce this damage.

EXAMPLE SAILING CONDITIONS TABLE

Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Wind Type	Sailing Speed Modifier	Seaworthiness Roll
01	01-02	01	-	Calm	No movement unless under oar	Easy
02-04	03-05	02-03	01-02	Poor Wind	Reduce by One Third	Standard
05-07	06-08	04-05	03-07	Contrary Wind	Reduce by Half	Standard
08-12	09-14	06-09	07-08	Good Wind	No Adjustment	Easy
13-15	15-16	10-12	09-11	Following Wind	Increase by Half Again	Standard
16-18	17-19	13-17	12-14	Violent Wind	Reduce by Half	Hard
19-20	20	18-20	15-20	Calamitous Wind	Reduce to One Tenth	Formidable

Calm: Insufficient wind to provide impetus for the sails.

Poor Wind: The winds are weak; vessels under sail struggle to make enough speed. Wind STR is 2d8-1

Contrary Wind: The wind is blowing in the wrong direction, and requires tacking (a zig-zagging course). Wind Strength is 2d8+14

Good Wind: A good wind blows from the right quarter. Wind Strength is 2d8+29

Following Wind: A powerful tail wind will give the vessel a fast ride across the ocean. Wind Strength is 2d8+44

Violent Wind: Gale force conditions on the very edge of manageable. If the captain fails a Hard Seamanship roll the ship will go badly off course. Wind Strength is 4d8+57

Calamitous Wind: Conditions are deadly due to fierce storms. No captain will take their ship out on that day unless forced to or provided with dependable magic or divine help. If already at sea, the captain must make a Formidable Seamanship roll to hold course. Prevailing Wind STR is 4d8+87

Ships And Galleys

Ships come in all shapes and sizes, depending on the culture, requirements, milieu and so forth. These rules focus on sail and oar-powered vessels, as found in Fantasy and the Ancient World.

Ship Class

For game purposes, every waterborne craft is categorised as one of three basic classes according to its purpose, available tools, materials for construction, and the prevailing technology. The huge variety of circumstances, conditions and technologies that may be encountered mean that many variations and hybrid types exist, and frequent bouts of competitive escalation in vessel size and magical enhancement have also produced some interesting departures from the standard models.

Seaworthiness

The class is the primary factor in determining a vessel's Seaworthiness, a percentage score that acts like an Endurance skill to resist damage from wind, waves and other hazards. A good captain takes care with his ship - and can augment the Seaworthiness roll with his Seamanship skill. If the roll succeeds, then no harm is done. If the roll is failed, then the vessel takes on water, suffers stress to its timbers or sails – or simply suffers overall wear and tear that requires maintenance and repair. The three basic classes of vessel are as follows:

Utility

The craft is designed for a very specific purpose, or with restricted access to materials, and cannot be expected to stand-up well to damage and punishment when in situations it was not designed for. On the other hand, a utility vessel may provide its crew with an easier grade skill roll when performing the task it is designed for, and to gain the same advantage itself if a Seaworthiness roll is needed.

The basic Seaworthiness for a Utility craft is 30%

Galley

The ship is proportionally long for its width (beam), with a ratio of approximately 5 or 6:1, and sometimes even more. A galley is built for speed and to accommodate plenty of rowing positions along its length, and with high sides if it is to accommodate more than one bank of oars. Galleys are shallow draft and can usually be beached (dragged onto the shore) as well as ride at anchor. A galley's specialist design results in some compromise to its stability, or perhaps makes it more fragile. Each vertical bank of oars, after the first, increases the ship's Size but can also reduce the vessel's seaworthiness.

Most galleys are either warships or private yachts. A war galley is typically 30-40m in length, and 5-6m across the beam. With a full crew at the oars, it can produce sprint speeds, which increase ramming damage, but also allow it to overtake or outmanoeuvre, a vessel dependent on sail alone.

Merchant galleys, with a smaller rowing crew manning perhaps 10 oars to the side, and cargo capacity for between 100 and 200 tons, are commonly used for shipping goods up and down the larger rivers, but are also used at sea. They are not capable of the sprint speeds that a war galley or sleek yacht can deliver, but have the same advantages when making a voyage in calm weather. Galleys cannot risk going out onto the water on a 'no sailing' day any more than a sailing ship can.

The basic Seaworthiness for a Galley is 50%; however, the bigger it is, the less seaworthy. For every Size above Large, a galley's Seaworthiness is reduced by 10%. War galleys are something of a hybrid between Galley and Transport, having some of the advantages of both, and have a Seaworthiness rating of 70%.

TRANSPORT

The vessel is optimised for carrying a cargo, hence it typically has a lower length-to-width ratio (circa 4:1 but some, immense, vessels are more like 2.5:1), and deeper draught. Such vessels are usually the most resilient to heavy seas, but have to be anchored off-shore, or berthed in a harbour, rather than beached.

The basic Seaworthiness of a Transport vessel is 70%.

RANGE

A vessel has a Range of one-tenth of its Seaworthiness. The range is the amount of time in days it can remain on the open sea – including riding at anchor outside a sheltered harbour, before it begins to suffer from the effects of the elements and general wear and tear. Whenever a ship is at sea for a period longer than its Range, it must make a Seaworthiness test. It must make a further test if it exceeds its Range x2, a third if it exceeds its Range x3, and so forth.
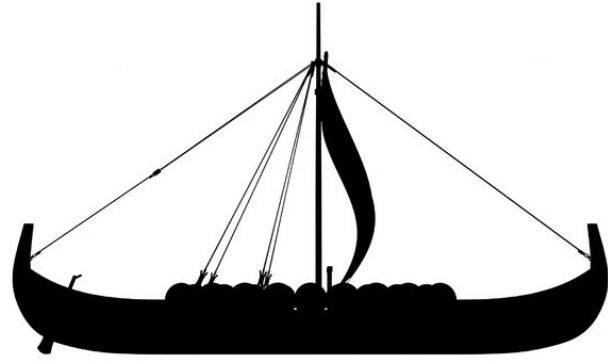
SHIP CONDITION

Failed Seaworthiness tests always result in a reduction in the ship's Condition – similar to when a character suffers from fatigue – that requires measures such as drying out the hull, repairs, re-caulking, careening, and so forth, to reverse. If too much deterioration is allowed to accumulate, the vessel eventually ships too much water, and begins to sink. A brand-new vessel starts life as Ship-Shape, and, once this has deteriorated, then it needs to undergo repairs and refitting to bring it back-up to top condition. However, if it has suffered damage to its Hit Points, it can never be restored to full Seaworthiness unless the Hit Point damage is repaired first.

SHIP CONDITION TABLE

Condition	Speed	Skill Modifier	Repair And Refit Modifier	Range
Ship Shape	-	Standard	-	
Seaworthy	-	Standard	x1	-25%
Battered	-25%	Hard	x2	-50%
Swamped	-50%	Formidable	x3	-75%
Sinking	-100%	Herculean	x4	-100%

Condition: The vessel's state of repair.

Speed: The effect of the ship's condition on its movement rate.

Skill Modifier: The effect of the ship's condition on its handling, applied as a difficulty modifier to Seaworthiness, Seamanship or Boating rolls.

Repair and Refit Modifier: Whether dealing with Hit Point Damage or Condition, repairing a vessel requires the entire crew to undertake an extended task with a basic Task Round Unit of an hour for a Personal vessel, six hours for a Small vessel, a day for a Medium size vessel, two days for large, four days for Huge, and so on. The Repair and Refit Modifier acts as a multiplier to the duration of the Task Round Unit.

Range: Once a vessel starts taking on water, it needs regular bailing and other action by the crew to prevent deterioration. The result is a decrease in its range.

Ship To Ship Combat

Much of the time, a contest between two vessels is, in reality, a combat conducted between their crews, which can be run according to the rules provided in RuneQuest. Nevertheless, the maneouvering that takes place to get into a position where one vessel can attack another – whether to grapple, or ram, or line-up a shot for an on-board siege weapon – is most easily dealt with using opposed Seamanship rolls between the two captains. In these cases, it can be helpful to have a few further details on hand about the ships.

If a boarding action occurs the Battle Rules (starting on page 17) can be used to resolve the conflict, treating each crew as a separate unit.

Ship Statistics

All ships have the following Attributes:

Movement Rate

All waterborne craft have a movement rate (measured in km/hour) reflecting their average sailing speed, if Wind STR permits. Vessels which can be rowed have an additional speed in parenthesis. This value indicates their top speed for short bursts, provided all hands are at the sweeps.

Size

A rough measure of the relative bulk of a vessel. The Size tells you whether this vessel is vulnerable to attack from collisions with other vessels, or can shrug off damage; just as when comparing weapon sizes in a parried attack.

P = Personal	H = Huge
S = Small	E = Enormous
M = Medium	C = Colossal
L = Large	BC = Beyond Colossal

Hit Points

Size also determines how many dice are used to calculate the ship's Hit Points. Hit Points are an abstract measure of the ship's size and structure. This tells you how much damage the vessel can take before it is in danger of foundering.

Each time a ship receives one third of its Hit Points in damage, its Condition automatically deteriorates by one step. Thus, once a ship reaches zero Hit Points, it is either Swamped or Sinking. If the vessel continues to take damage, and reaches a negative score equal or greater than its starting Hit Points, it breaks up completely.

Armour Points

Like any inanimate object, a vessel's armour points are a function of its construction materials:

Construction	Armour Points
Bark, Skins, Leather	1
Reeds	3
Light Timber (Clinker Built)	4
Medium Timber (Carvel Built)	6
Heavy Timber	8
Hull Sheathing	Each +2 reduces Seaworthiness by 10%

Damage

The damage a vessel inflicts on another ship, or a creature, when there is a collision, is dependent on its Size.

A vessel's damage dice are based on the damage it will inflict if moving at a normal speed and striking an object that is not fixed in place, such as another ship or a creature in the water. If moving at ramming speed (15km/h or greater), add 1d6; if moving at a slow speed (8km/h or less), reduce damage by half.

When two ships collide, their relative size is compared, and the damage inflicted adjusted accordingly in exactly the same way as when comparing parry damage.

For example, If hitting rocks or a hidden reef, the ship's Size-based damage is used against itself - however shallow draft vessels might gain a significant reduction in the right circumstances.

Crew

The minimum crew for a vessel is also a function of Size. Certain boats (Size P) are made to only require (or accommodate) a single crewman. A Small vessel has a minimum crew of 3, Medium of 5, Large of 10, Huge 15, Enormous 25, and Colossal 40. A craft being handled by an undersize, or skeleton, crew makes Seamanship rolls at least one grade harder.

For larger oared vessels, such as galleys, bear in mind that oars are not the basic propulsion, but a substitute for sail, or an adjunct. As a result, it is the sailing crew that determines whether there are sufficient hands to manage the vessel. When the ship is in a situation where the oarsmen are required, then penalties for reduced rowing crew may apply.

Sample Vessel Types and Statistics

Vessel	Class	Movement Rate	Size	Typical Crew (Min-Max)	Armour Points	Hit Points	Damage
Raft, Small	U	2.5 (3)	P	1-4	4	1d6+3	-
Kayak	U	(7.5)	P	1	1	1d6+6	-
Dugout	U	3 (5)	P	1-6	8	1d6+6	-
Rowing Boat	U	(3.5)	P	2-8	4	1d6+6	-
War Canoe	U	27 (12)	S	3-6	1	1d6+6	-
Small Fishing Boat or Skiff	U	7.5 (3)	S	3-8	4	1d6+9	-
Raft, Large	U	2	M	5-8	4	2d6+6	1d3
Reed Galley	U	2.75	M	5-12	3	2d6+12	1d4
River Transport	T	5.5 (5)	M	5-18	4	2d6+18	1d6
Viking Longboat	G	15 (10)	L	10-60	4	2d6+18	2d6
Small Merchantman/Cog	T	11	L	10-25	4	2d6+30	2d6
Small Galley	G	9.25 (17.5)	H	15-30	6	3d6+24	3d6
Medium Merchantman	T	9.25	H	15-50	6	3d6+30	3d6
Bireme	G	8.5 (19)	H	15-100	6	3d6+40	3d6
Trireme	G	7.5 (21)	E	100-200	6	4d6+60	4d6
Large Merchantman	T	8	E	25-60	6	4d6+72	4d6
Hexareme	G	8 (17.5)	C	40-300	6	5d6+90	5d6
Grain Transport	T	7.5	C	40-120	8	5d6+120	5d6
Imperial Battle Barge*	G	7.5	BC	100-1000	8	6d6+150	6d6

The sort of vessel a decadent, ultra-wealthy empire might use to control the seas - something the size of a floating town.

Ship Quality

Seaworthiness and other attributes can be improved – or indeed reduced – by using the Manufacturing and Quality rules provided in RuneQuest (see RuneQuest page 102). Spells, enchantments and other factors may also make a difference.

AP: Add 1 per enhancement

HP: Add the minimum of the dice being rolled, counting each +6 as an additional die (so 4d6+60 becomes 4d6+74) per enhancement. *For example, Enhancement provides +1 per dice (4), and +1 per +6 added to the dice (10). In this case 4d6+60 becomes when enhanced 4d6+60+14 = 4d6+74.*

Movement Rate: Increase by 1km per hour

Seaworthiness: Increase by +5% per enhancement

If a boat builder or shipwright fails to properly complete the extended task project to build a vessel, the effect is usually to reduce the vessel's Seaworthiness.

Crew Quality

The quality of a ship's crew (their average skill) affects the difficulty of the captain's Seamanship rolls, with a skill of 26-50% delivering Hard rolls. A green crew with an average seamanship skill of less than 26% is at a Formidable grade. Professional crews of 51-75% has no effect on the Seamanship roll, while 76% and above make the roll Easy.

Other Features

There are other ways to augment or improve a ship – some examples are given here.

Ships with Personality

As a major construction, and something that people place a great deal of faith in, it is common to invest a vessel with personal attributes – and in RuneQuest this can, of course, mean actually binding a spirit into it to, literally, bring it to life. For example, some Meerish cults use an Awaken miracle to summon one or another deity to inhabit their ships – or even a part of the ship, such as the spur or ram.

Ships As Temples And Shrines

Larger vessels are routinely consecrated, and a sea captain may well act as a priest for his crew (at the very least being of acolyte status).

Ship's Weaponry

Ships can be fitted with weapons with which to hurl missiles at enemy vessels, or to give them an edge in ship-to-ship combat.

Rams

A galley can be augmented with a ram, which adds +1 Damage per dice it can inflict on an enemy vessel. Hence, a Trireme at ramming speed will inflict 5d6+5 Damage when it strikes an enemy ship.

A ram enables the Sunder Special Effect, and also enables the naval equivalent of the Bleed special effect: *Breach Hull*. If the attacker's player chooses Breach Hull, the defender must make an immediate Opposed roll of the ship's Seaworthiness against the original attack (Seamanship) roll. If this fails, the defender is now holed below the waterline, and, until some emergency measures or repairs are taken, must make a further Seaworthiness roll every 15 minutes or the ship's Condition will deteriorate by one grade.

Siege Weapons

Sufficiently large ships may mount a single siege weapon. The size of the siege weapon carried cannot exceed the ship's own without causing stability problems; for every step by which this limit is exceeded, all Seamanship and Seaworthiness rolls are one grade harder. Conversely, mounting a siege weapon smaller than the maximum permitted allows one extra weapon, per step difference, between the two. Thus a Bireme permitted to mount a single mangonel, could install two ballistae instead.

Siege Weapon	Size
Scorpion	M
Ballista	L
Mangonel	H
Onager	E
Couillard	C
Trebuchet	BC

Elementals

The use of an Elemental Summoning miracle together with Extension – or an Evoke Elemental spell with sufficient Duration or Enchant applied – can enable a captain to make use of the power of an elemental for the full length of a voyage. So long as the Intensity of the Summoning or Evokation magic matches the minimum requirements (see the Ship Elementals table), then the conjured elemental will affect the vessel.

A sylph filling the sails can make the winds blow stronger or safer, improving the ambient sailing conditions by one step (see page 5), depending on the caster's wishes. Every two Intensities the sylph is larger than the minimum (or one Intensity, if using bound elemental spirits), this bonus in increased by an additional step

An undine, on the other hand, can be used to float and propel a vessel, providing motive power equivalent to a Poor Wind, enabling it to make progress without either sail or oar. It can also reduce a ship's draft whilst crossing shallows, refloat it if grounded, and prevent the ship from sinking if it is holed.

Smaller sylphs or undines can stack their strength together as a substitute for a sole larger one, but, in this case, the number of lesser intensity elementals must be equal to the square of 1 plus the shortfall in Intensity. *For instance a Viking ship requiring a Summon Sylph Miracle of minimum Intensity 8 to boost its sailing speed, could instead use four Intensity 7 sylphs to substitute, or nine Intensity 6 sylphs, and so on, all the way to sixty-four sylphs of Intensity 1.*

In the case of Animism, bound elementals confer the same advantages as summoned ones, save that the effects are permanent until the binding is broken. See the Ship Elementals table for the alternate Intensity value required for binding spirits into a vessel.

Flying Ships and Submarines

It is possible for a large enough sylph to hold a vessel aloft, enabling it to fly through the air, or for a sufficiently big undine to wrap itself around the vessel, holding water at bay while it moves beneath the waves. The basic requirement for this is a single elemental of an Intensity three times that required to assist the vessel's movement.

Ship Elementals Table

Vessel Size	Minimum Elemental Required	
	Spell Intensity	Spirit Intensity
Personal	2	1
Small	4	2
Medium	6	3
Large	8	4
Huge	10	5
Enormous	12	6
Colossal	14	7
Beyond Colossal	16	8

Encounters at Sea

When at sea, a high proportion of the encounters a vessel can run into are likely to be natural phenomena that are, nevertheless, the most common source of peril and disaster. Check once per day; there is a 20% chance of an encounter.

Change in the Weather

An immediate re-roll to the Sailing Conditions, that takes effect within 1d3 hours.

Dangerous Current

An unexpected, but powerful, current pulls the vessel from its course. It may be natural in origin – but it is just as likely that some supernatural forces are at work beneath the waves, and this current is a by-product. The captain must make a Seamanship roll to compensate or to escape the current: Roll 1d6 to determine the level of challenge:

1 Easy; 2-4 Standard; 5 Hard; 6 Formidable. For every failure until a successful roll is made, the vessel is pushed off course by 1d6 x10 km, or six hours' sailing

Fishing Fleet

If close to land, these are a collection of 1d10+4 little fishing boats from the nearest coastal settlement, with a handful of crew, or a team of vessels working together to hunt a large shoal. Further out to sea they may be bigger vessels after bigger fish.

Flying Predator

Wyrms, harpies and (even more rarely griffins) can be found roosting on remote islands, or desolate shores, and spreading their hunting territory over the sea. Few such creatures are able to take off again if they hit water, but they are more than capable of taking someone from the deck of a ship.

Fog

All visibility beyond 50m is lost. The fog lasts for 1d6 hours before clearing, in which time the vessel may become lost unless it has non-visual means of navigation. A Navigate roll is required not to stray from course.

Grounded

The vessel runs aground in shallows or on a sandbank, causing an immediate Seaworthiness test. The captain and crew have to find a way to get-free by jettisoning cargo, being dragged or towed to deeper water, or reducing draft through other means. If a vessel runs aground it gets stuck and needs both a feat of Seamanship, and 1d3 hours of work, to get free. Running aground results in an instant Seaworthiness test, which is Hard for deeper drafted (Type T) vessels.

Sea Encounter Table

Coastal Waters	Trade Routes	Deep Ocean and Wilderness	Encounter
01-15	01-17	01-19	Change in the Weather
16-19	18-21	20-23	Dangerous Current
20-33	22-31	24	Fishing Fleet
34-36	32	25	Flying Predator
37-41	33-37	26-30	Fog
42-50	38-39	31-33	Grounded
-	40-44	34-43	Island
51-55	45-51	44	Pirates
56-60	52-54	45-49	Reef or Submerged Rocks
61-70	55-76	50-75	Sea Life
-	78	76-79	Sea Monster
71-73	79-80	80	Shipwreck
74-80	81-85	81-89	Squall
81-86	86-92	90-93	Trade Ship
87-92	93-94	94	War Ship
93-94	-	-	Wreckers
95-00	95-00	95-00	Special

Island

A small and uninhabited island less than 10km across. There is a 40% chance (or the Games Master may allow use of a Luck Point) that there is fresh water to be had, and, if so, there is also likely to be interesting or edible flora and fauna. Quite possibly inhabited by a creature, such places being ideal basking or nesting sites for monsters.

Pirates

A warboat with a crew of 1d4+2 x10 warriors and sailors. They will always attack if they have the odds very much in their favour – but pirates will not choose to get into a fight they don't think they can win.

Reef or Submerged Rocks

A ship that is driven onto a reef or rocks inflicts its own damage on itself, adjusted for speed. A ship can continue to take damage as the wind and waves pound it against the rocks, over and over until it eventually breaks-up. In each subsequent 15 minute period, until such time as the ship gets free of the rocks, it must succeed in a Seaworthiness roll, or the Wind STR inflicts its Damage Modifier. Many times there are no opportunities to escape the hazard without recourse to magic, and it is only a matter of time before the ship is torn apart. The beleaguered crew simply have to attempt to save themselves, and anything else they value, before they, too, are lost.

Sea life

Sharks or dolphins, flying fish, a swarm of poisonous jellyfish, a huge shoal of tunny, a pod of whales – something delightful, useful or simply frightening offered up by the Ocean Gods.

Sea Monster

Offshore, a giant crab, or octopus, is a likely encounter; in deeper water, a sea serpent. These creatures are big enough to take on a Small or Medium vessel, but otherwise target individual characters that they might grab from the deck, or contrive to knock into the water to more easily drag the prey beneath the waves and be devoured.

Shipwreck

One or more shipwrecked sailors, marooned on a coast and signalling for help; or adrift in a small boat; or even clinging to a piece of wreckage in the sea. Deeply grateful for rescue, they will reward as best they can for safe delivery to a port. Coastal shipwrecks may throw salvageable goods onto the shore.

Squall

A contrary, and especially violent, storm rips at the sails and whips up the sea to dangerous heights. Such a squall has the potential to cause damage to a ship's structure. For every hour a storm lasts, the captain must make a Seamanship roll to get his ship through undamaged. If a roll is failed, test the Wind STR as a percentage against the vessel's Seaworthiness in an Opposed roll. If it succeeds, the Wind will inflicts Damage Modifier directly to the vessel's Hit Points, bypassing its Armour Points, in addition to the usual effects of a failed Seaworthiness roll.

Storms vary in duration and ferocity according to the season. The Storm's Ferocity is used as its combined STR+SIZ on the Damage Modifier table to determine how much damage it can do to a ship when the captain fails to manage the ship through the storm's fury.

Season	Duration (hours)	Squall Ferocity (STR)
Summer	1d4	1d20+75
Spring, Autumn	1d8	1d20+90
Winter	1d12	1d20+105

Trade Ship

Choose or Roll 1d6:

1d6	Encounter
1-3	A small trader from the nearest port that normally plies coastal routes
4-5	A large ship carrying bulk commodities
6	A merchant ship from a distant land, possibly carrying a cargo of exotic goods. Larger vessels may be a joint venture in which several merchants have placed their hopes of making a fortune

War Ship

A large vessel, with an armed crew, from a nearby civilised port, who could be on exercise, or on patrol, carrying dispatches, escorting a dignitary or on a raiding mission.

Wreckers

Wreckers are people who live on a coast where there are treacherous rocks and sandbars, and are skilled at luring unsuspecting ships into difficulties. Once a vessel is foundering on their shore, they proceed to loot and pillage rather than rescue – perhaps killing or enslaving the crew, perhaps just leaving them to their fate.

Special

Roll on the Special Encounters Table

Special Encounter Table

1d100	Encounter
01-15	Cataclysmic Storm
16-18	Colossal Sea Monster
19-22	Deadly Swarm
23-30	Divine Portent
31-55	Fleet
56-65	Loathsome Fog
66-77	Mysterious Island
78-85	Sirens
86-93	Merman Hellraisers
99-00	Zombie Ship

Cataclysmic Storm

This is a storm of such terrible ferocity, with black skies and inky seas, awesome waves of terrifying height and winds impossible to withstand, that there is no hope of survival – except that offered by providence, and all that is certain is that even the survivors can expect a major change of fortune. The characters' ship is certain to be lost beneath the waves, or dashed to matchwood upon the rocks. Its occupants' lives depend on magic, divine intervention, or sufficient Luck Points to secure success in a Herculean Endurance, Survival or Swim test, to ride out the storm until washed up on a strange shore (or are left clinging to a piece of wreckage in the ocean when the fury finally passes).

Colossal Sea Monster

One of the terrible predators of the deep decides the characters' ship is interesting prey. Use the statisticss for a Giant Octopus or Sea Serpent, but increase SIZ and STR by +30 (or even more), and increase the Size/Force and basic damage of its attacks accordingly. Or, present a unique monster, such as a jellyfish 100m across, and capable of sending electric shocks through its prey. Such creatures are capable of taking on, and sinking, even the largest ocean-going vessels. A monster of this size may be the instrument of some god's, sorcerer's or arch-priest's power.

Deadly Swarm

A bizarre swarm of tiny, flying creatures bursts from the water and attacks the characters. This swarm is of terrible size (40+), with 6 Action Points and inflicting 1d8 Damage with bites from the creatures' tiny, razor-sharp teeth.

The swarm can divide into three smaller swarms, each with three Action Points and inflicting 1d3 Damage, in order to chase different victims around a ship. It is as potent, and as hungry, below the water as above it, so there is no escape by plunging into the sea.

Divine Portent

Portents with a particularly maritime character – a great wave within which are seen a whole troupe of supernatural sea creatures: nereids and mermaids, tritons (sea satyrs), sea horses and the like; the sea turns the colour of blood, or seems to become as clear as glass revealing some mystery beneath the surface; a pod of dolphins appears to signal to the characters to change course or away from some danger or towards some new objective.

Fleet

A fleet of ships appears, signaling some momentous events are in train. Roll 1d6 or choose (see page 14).

1d6	Fleet Type
1-2	Migration Fleet: This is a whole community at sea – perhaps refugees aboard their great ocean rafts; or a small fleet of colonists searching for a new land in which to settle; or even a party of colonists, seeking refuge. The fleet comprises 1d6x100 souls, and includes women and children.
3-4	War Fleet: Whether it has set out to mount an invasion of a foreign shore, or is set to engage an enemy in a battle at sea, a war fleet is a terrible sight; the largest number more than 100 ships of war, and occupy several square kilometres of ocean. The fleet is accompanied by a great number of transports, carrying troops and supplies. A fleet will have fast, light, ships detailed as scouts, and to intercept any vessel that might be a threat, or could give its position away. It will also have significant magical capabilities, enhancements and other supernatural help.
5	Merchant fleet: This merchant fleet comprises three, large, galleons, probably all belonging to a wealthy trading family or association. They may look helpless but are likely crewed by marines, or have hired muscle to protect the cargo from pirates and chancers.
6	Pirate Fleet: It is extremely rare for pirate captains to cooperate in a venture, but this gathering of seaborne villains and other hangers-on has created a short-lived alliance of 1d6+4 warboats.

Loathsome Fog

A thick fog bank rolls in; once it covers the characters' ship, it has an oppressive feel and reeks with the stench of dead things thrown up on the sea shore. Within the confines of the fog lurk terrifying sea-wraiths, evil spirits well known to anyone steeped in the lore of the sea. The wraiths are as described in RuneQuest. 1d6+3 in number, they have the appearance of spectral sailors, some bloated in death, others draped in seaweed or crawling with sea life; or with bits of their flesh nibbled away by the fishes. They may be costumed as contemporary crewmen, or in the archaic garb of a long lost era. Sea-wraiths are able to operate beneath the water as well as on the surface – and can appear to walk upon the waves, trying to climb aboard any vessel that is not Consecrated, to get at the crew. They cannot follow a victim onto dry land.

Mysterious Islands

An unexpected landfall; a tiny island less than 1km across, with a remarkable feature as created by the Games Master, or picked from the following:

⇒ A scatter of bones and random treasures; there are jewels, coins and gems worth 1d10 x 1,000SP, to be gathered up, but the task will take some time. Before it is complete, a monstrous creature that nests here will return. This should not come as a complete surprise – if the island is the nesting site of a giant bird, there may be fragments of eggshells and immense feathers littered about. If it is the basking site of some sea monster, there may be huge faeces and, perhaps, ominous drag marks where it hauls itself in and out of the water.

⇒ An outcrop of rock containing a rare, blue mineral that negates magical effects on contact. It is relatively soft and can be harvested as a grit or powder with minimal tools and effort. This substance can be used to render an item or person to which it is applied immune to spells for up to 12 hours or until removed. It can also be used to neutralise magic if applied to an object or person that is already under the effect of a spell. A weapon covered in the stuff will pass right through magical protection spells. One dose (50g) is sufficient to cover a medium-sized weapon, a piece of armour, or a human-sized hit location. It is possible to gather 1d10 doses for every hour of scraping and collecting. The mineral is capable of being refined by an alchemist, but even in its raw state is worth perhaps 500 SP per dose.

⇒ A single tree bearing a single small fruit, and, at its base, is a terrifying creature – perhaps a chimera or an immense serpent – that must be overcome to reach the tree and take its fruit. Whoever eats the fruit immediately receives a combined Cure Malady, Heal Body, Heal Mind and Rejuvenate Miracle with a Magnitude and Intensity of 15. The tree will take 1d6+20 years to grow another fruit. The island is a fabled and sought-after location, and many kings have sent expeditions to try to find it. Aside from a random encounter, it can only be found with directions from a supernatural source – an ocean deity or a powerful spirit, perhaps.

Sirens

The characters encounter an island that is home to 1d6 sirens (see page 16). The sirens' song becomes audible within 1d100 x10 metres of their rocky island and begins to lure the sailors in. These sirens are human females with POW 16 and CHA 21 - goddesses of song and beauty that have lured scores of mariners to their doom over many centuries. A cave on the island is filled with the bleached bones of previous victims, and there are 1d8 current victims already on the island, all in advance states of malnutirion and dehydration, but too intoxicated to leave the island. Can the characters resist the sirens' call?

Merman Hellraisers

If several mermen (see page 15) coordinate their powers, the effect on a ship at sea can be devastating. This gang of ocean trouble-makers is led by a merman warlord, who is half man, half sea serpent. He and his gang of fellow mermen (1d4+3 of them) are often belligerent and spoiling for a fight just for the sake of it – but they may well demand some sort of payment or service in return for leaving a ship unmolested.

Zombie Ship

This vessel is simply lost or adrift. A reed galley perhaps, hardly suitable for the open ocean, rowed by tireless zombies and crewed by barbarous, cannibal pirates. The crew includes a captain, a priestess (shaman) and a master at arms, a rowing crew of 30 zombies; a gang of six Slargr mercenary overseers and warriors; and a number of slave deck hands, - captives from recent raids.

Example Ships

The Spear of Myceras, A Meerish War Galley	
Movement	Sail (1 mast, square rigged) 8.5km/h, 60 oars 19km/h
Crew	12 officers and sailors, plus 60 rowers if at full complement or 16 man skeleton or 30 man half-crew). A further dozen men as marines when fully fitted for war.
Dimensions	Length 27m, Beam 4m, Freeboard 1.5m
Capacity	50 Tons
Size	H
Hull Type	G
Armour Points	6
Hit Points	56
Seaworthiness	55%
Range	6
Armaments	Spur. Ramming Damage 3d6+3

The Spear of Myceras is a typical coastal defence bireme, swift and nimble. Stationed aboard is a priest capable of conjuring an Intensity 10 Undine. When summoned, the undine is large enough for the ship to make (slow) progress without even oars or sail, or prevent ithe ship from sinking completely if battle damaged. Its veteran crew grants the captain a bonus to all Seamanship rolls making them one grade easier.
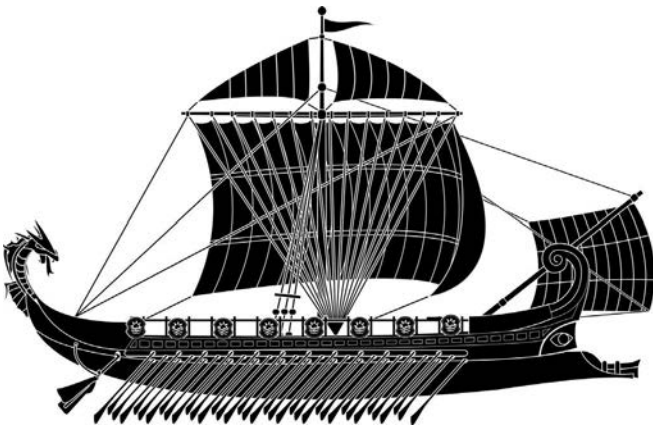
The Shackle, a Badoshi Slaver	
Movement	Sail (1 mast, lateen rigged) 11km/h
Crew	13
Dimensions	Length 22m, Beam 4.5m, Freeboard 2m
Capacity	80 Tons
Hull Type	T
Size	L
Hit Points	40
Armour Points	4
Seaworthiness	70%
Range	7
Armaments	2 x Scorpion (arbalest) mounted on the fore and aft decks, Damage 3d6

Thanks to space devoted to keeping human captives under lock and key the Shackle usually only has a capacity of about 20 tons for regular cargo. However she can hold some 40 captives, and more if the captain is willing to risk a higher chance of damage to his stock, or simply chain them on deck.

The Axeneya, a Large Merchant Ship	
Movement	Sail (2 masts, square rigged) 8km/h
Crew	35
Dimensions	Length 37m, Beam 7.5m, Freeboard 2.5m
Capacity	250 Tons
Size	E
Hull Type	T
Hit Points	87
Armour Points	6
Seaworthiness	80%
Range	8
Armaments	None; Damage 4d6

The Axeneya is a Meerish merchant galley captained by Hermestone of Meeros, the eldest daughter of Trimostones the Gold, the city-state's most successful merchant. Trimonstones is old now, and so his daughter has taken over the running of the family trading operations. The Axeneya is named for a minor sea goddess which is the patron of Hermestones' family. She is a well crafted and elegant trader, with her figurehead carved into the form of Axeneya rising from the waves.

New Creatures

Mermaids & Mermen

A combination of human and fish (but this may easily be a combination of human and shark, or squid, eel, sea-serpent or sea-horse – any aquatic species), mermaids and mermen have a reputation for mischief, petulance and, sometimes, violence, that colours the stories of many an old sea-salt. Mermaids are often depicted as beautiful temptresses and, sometimes, they are; but their looks are as wide ranging as full humans – as are their temperaments.

All mer-creatures have the upper bodies of humans and the lower half of the chosen sea creature. They have the Aquatic, Echolocation, and Swimmer abilities. Mer-creatures that are half-shark also have the Blood Sense ability, and tend to be fond of human flesh.

Naturally enough they are worshippers of the various gods and goddesses of the seas, or propitiate the spirits of the oceans if they are of an animistic tradition. Mer-creature magicians tend be theists and animists, having no concept of sorcery, but some are also mystics and mystical traditions are strong in many mer-creature communities.

Where mer-creatures have magic that is capable of summoning and/or controlling other creatures, they have

a natural tendency to call on the kind of creatures of their hybrid.

Animists can also enter the Spirit World of the ocean and call upon the spirits of those who have drowned – as well as the usual array of spirits in their aquatic forms.

Characteristics (Ave)	Attributes		1d20	Location	AP/HP
STR: 2d6+6 (13)	Action Points	3	1–3	Tail	2/7
CON: 3d6 (11)	Damage Modifier	+1d2	4–6	Dorsal Fin	2/7
SIZ: 3d6+6 (17)	Magic Points	14	7–9	Hindquarters	2/8
DEX: 3d6+6 (17)	Movement	12m (swimming)	10-12	Chest	0/9
INT: 2d6+6 (13)	Strike Rank	15	13–15	Right Arm	0/6
POW: 3d6 (14)	Armour	Scales (lower body)	16–18	Left Arm	0/6
CHA: 3d6	Abilities	Aquatic, Echolocation, Swimmer	19–20	Head	0/7
	Magic	Folk Magic (POW x3%; 1d4 spells): Beastcall, Calm, Co-Ordination, Glamour, Mindspeech, Pathway, Slow			
		Plus appropriate Higher Magic - Theism or Animism - according to need			

Skills: Athletics 75%, Endurance 55%, Locale 80%, Stealth 90%, Survival 75%, Willpower 45%

Combat Style: Mer Creature Defence (Harpoon, Trident, Unarmed, Tail Bash): 65%

Weapon	Size/Force	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Harpoon	*M*	*L*	*1d8+2+1d2*	*4/4*
Trident	*M*	*L*	*1d8+1d2*	*4/10*
Tail Bash	*M*	*M*	*1d4+1d2*	*As For Tail*

Sirens

In Greek myth the sirens are described in varying forms: sometimes as beautiful women with haunting voices; sometimes as a mixture of birds and women (not far removed from harpies). In most tales it is agreed that they are related to the goddesses of the seas, although they are not, themselves, aquatic creatures, but instead inhabit small islands far from the mainland, where they lure mariners to their doom with their haunting, enigmatic voices. In RuneQuest, a siren can take one of many forms: they can be beautiful young women, seemingly human, or they can be harpy-like (see RuneQuest page 363), or even iqari-like (RuneQuest page 366), but with human, rather than raptor, heads. Use appropriate statistics.

What all sirens have in common is the magical ability to beguile with their voices and musical instruments. Sirens crave companionship: they abhor being alone and isolated and so use their song and music to lure companions to their sides and keep them there for as long as possible. They do not mean to be cruel; sirens do not inflict physical harm on those they beguile. Indeed, they love, passionately, those who stay with them. Their danger though, lies in their inability to understand or perceive human needs and requirements. Sirens are immortal: they have no need for food, water, warmth or any of the usual biological and environmental essentials. They also have no sense of time: an hour and a year are the same to a siren. And this inability to understand humans – whom they adore – means that, inevitably, they kill them. Some are driven mad by the attention; others fall into a deep reverie and simply starve to death or die of thirst. When caught by the siren's song, only the strongest escape.

Every siren has the skill of Beguile at 100+POW % (POW based on whatever form the siren takes – 3d6 for human). Anyone hearing the sound of the siren's music must make an opposed roll of Willpower against the siren's Beguile. Furthermore, the grade of the Willpower roll is based on the proximity of the victim to the siren. A siren's music can carry for great distances – up to a kilometre or more – and the closer one is to the song, the harder it is to resist. A single siren can Beguile a number of victims equal to her POW: and sirens are rarely found alone; a typical colony numbers 1d10 individuals.

Failing to resist the siren compels the victim to go to the siren's side, whatever the conditions, whatever the circumstances. Once ensnared by the music the victim cannot attempt to resist for another full day and, of course, the closer one is to the siren, the more difficult (and futile) resistance becomes.

Once at the siren's side, the victim may be lavished with love, beauty, praise and delicate kisses. The sirens never indulge in sexual congress with their victims: they have no concept of, or need for, sex; but they do cause their victims to fall hopelessly in love or become hopelessly filled with ennui. Until the victim resists, or is hauled away by someone immune to the siren's call, he (or she) is powerless. All they want and need is the siren's music, attention and embraces. Food and water are forgotten. In time, they will die.

Those who manage to resist the initial strains of a siren must still attempt to oppose the Beguilement every day, but do so at the Standard grade, even when close to the siren. Sirens are puzzled by those who resist their song. They do not attack, but they are saddened by those they cannot beguile and this may create the chance for someone to convince a siren to stop singing and release her victims – which they can do. How does one convince a siren to release her companions? That is something for characters to discover through roleplaying and ingenuity, but sirens are simple, vain creatures, who adore beautiful things and so might be swayed by some treasure or other form of companionship.

Despite their natures, sirens are beloved of their goddess. Physically harming or killing a siren brings about the enmity of the goddess which takes the form of curses, misfortune, spirits of reprisal and other supernatural torments that may last a lifetime.

Distance	Willpower Grade
POW x1 metres	Herculean
POW x5 metres	Formidable
POW x10 metres	Hard
POW x20 metres	Standard
POW x40 metres	Easy
POW x80 metres	Very Easy

Shield Walls & Battles

Combat is a staple of most campaigns, yet attempting to recreate even minor skirmishes, with several dozen troops, using the personal combat rules is likely to lead to prolonged and frustrating melees. The Rabble and Underlings rules (see RuneQuest page 164) can offset the problem to a degree, but running an entire battle at the unit level is still beyond the scope of the core game.

The following rules have been created to permit characters to participate in full scale battles, whether they are mere line troops or the leader of an entire army. When running such an event during a gaming session, players must accept that the role of their characters is going to be limited, and their fate probably beyond their personal control, unless they, themselves, are acting as commanders.

Realities of Battle

Perhaps the most important concept to understand is that battlefield combat is *not* the same as single combat. You might be the most feared champion of your city, or the greatest gladiator ever known, but still die like a dog in a shield wall. Whilst a duel or street brawl allows freedom to attempt feints, and the luxury to focus on a sole opponent, on the battlefield such individual prowess is secondary to formation, morale and above all, *teamwork.*

In a battle, warriors are subject to different dynamics than regular hand-to-hand combat, much of which is dictated by the limited space to wield a weapon, the inability to use footwork, and attacks that can come from any direction to either side, or, indeed, from above or below. No matter how hard you try, there is little hope of doing more than occasionally wounding an enemy when a chance opening occurs, then watch in frustration as they are shifted to the side by the constant jockeying of formations, or drop to the ground, beyond reach. Worse still, you yourself might suffer a terrible wound and be utterly unable to retreat due to the surrounding press of warriors.

Even if you are fortunate enough to take out a foe or two, unless you work together protecting your compatriots to either side, they may be injured instead, or lose faith in your ability to ward them. Once morale starts to fray, the formation will begin breaking apart, leaving you exposed to several attackers simultaneously and, in a matter of moments, you'll be overrun; cut down or captured by the victorious enemy no matter how skilled a fighter you are.

Melee between formations is therefore like no other combat environment: a crushing hell of pinned shields, trapped weapons, sweat, blood, tears, fear and helplessness in the face of approaching death. This is the *true* reality of combat upon the Ancient and Medieval battlefield.

Battle Components

RuneQuest uses a number of specific terms to explain the core concepts of battles. They are further explained in later sections, but in overview these are:

Force

The combined body of troops sent to fight a battle, which can scale from a warband up to an entire army. A force is nominally made up of one or more units.

Unit

A discrete unit of coordinated warriors under control of a commander. Each unit possesses a number of attributes depending on the type and training of its troops.

Formation

A formation is the disposition a unit adopts upon the battlefield. Some units are trained in several different formations which they may select, depending on the tactical situation.

Commander

The character in charge of what a unit does. The actual title depends on the game setting and the number of troops under their authority.

Command Skill

The skill used by commanders to control their troops. Usually this is the Lore (Strategy and Tactics) skill, but Influence or Oratory, at a more difficult skill grade, can be substituted if a commander does not have Lore (Strategy and Tactics). The foundation skill can also be augmented by a suitable Passion to arrive at the overall Command skill roll.

Phases of Battle

Battles have several distinct phases, from the selection of the battlefield, to the retirement of one side or the other, once the main battle has concluded.

Battle Rounds

Length of time, usually about 15 seconds, during which casualties are inflicted upon either side, and, if superiority is gained, a commander can potentially order one or more Battle Actions.

Battle Actions

Special orders which can be issued by a commander, if, and when, their unit gains a tactical advantage. The equivalent of Special Effects from personal combat.

Forces, Units and Formations

Each side involved in a battle is referred to as a force. This is an abstract term because the nature and scale of a battle can vary wildly. A force can comprise of one or more units, and each unit can be something as small as a bodyguard or warband, or as large as a phalanx or legion. The scale is up to the Games Master to decide.

In small scale engagements each force is likely to be a single unit, fighting under the control of a sole commander – say a warband under the command of its warleader, or a company of city militia led by its sergeant. Battles involving forces of a single unit are relatively swift to conclude and require very little use of tactical maps and markers to resolve.

For larger battles, forces can reach the scale of armies, which are, themselves, usually broken down into three parts: a strong centre, and two 'wings'. In most cases the centre and wings are treated as individual units, each under its own commander, with the overall battle plan predetermined by the leading, or superior, of the three. However, some battles are so large that each deployed element is formed from multiple units.

Formation Types

A formation is the tactical disposition a unit of warriors forms, provided that they possess the relevant Combat Style Trait, and have trained in that particular formation. Without the correct trait, it is impossible to coordinate individual unit members as an effective team and ensure they apply the correct tactics.

Depending on the period and culture, more elite professional units may train their warriors in several formations to grant them more flexibility. For instance, despite learning the Shield Wall trait a Viking warband may only know how to form a line formation, whereas a Roman legionary, with the same trait, could adopt line, block, wedge and tortoise.

The following list offers guidance as to which Combat Style Traits are applicable for particular formations, and their benefits.

Broken Formation

Trait: None

Move: Up to sprinting speed

Effects: Cannot engage any other formation, but can be engaged – in which case it inflicts no damage on the enemy unit.

Skirmish Formation

Trait: Skirmishing, Beast-Back Lancer, Mounted Combat or Trained Beast

Move: Up to running speed

Effects: Allows the unit to fight and move through broken terrain with no undue effects. They also suffer only half damage from ranged weapons. Conversely, a skirmishing unit only inflicts half damage, when engaged in hand to hand combat with close order infantry formations. Most skirmishing units offset this disadvantage with a higher movement rate and by use of ranged weaponry.

Line Formation

Trait: Formation Fighting, Shield Wall, Beast-Back Lancer, Mounted Combat or Chariot Fighting

Move: Maximum of walking speed

Effects: A close order formation that grants advantages over skirmishing units, but retains tactical flexibility. There is no limit to the frontage, or, for that matter, depth, but additional ranks only count as half when engaging phalanxes. Line formation grants the ability to overlap enemy units or split off part of its own strength to create a flanking element.

The Scarlet Spears Saga

For the purpose of illustrating the application and use of these battle rules, we shall return to the city state of Meeros and its army as described in the main RuneQuest rulebook.

The army of Meeros has three main troop types. Meerish Slingers are lightly armed units specialising in hit and run tactics, primarily from range. Therefore they are only trained in the Skirmish formation. Meerish Infantry, on the other hand, are close order infantry trained in the Line and Phalanx formations and form the majority of the army. Last, but by no means least, are the Scarlet Spears who are skilled in Line, Phalanx and Wedge formations, being particularly adept in counter-charging cavalry.

The Scarlet Spears are a highly honoured unit of disciplined veteran warriors dedicated to serving the Queen and City of Meeros. At full muster, they have the following ratings: Strength 120, Morale 75%, and Competence 80%. Badoshi barbarian warbands, on the other hand, are a varied lot, depending on the tribe they come from. Most have ratings averaging: Strength 100, Morale 95% and Competence 70%, being insubordinate fanatics with a short lifespan.

More Detail Needed?

These rules heavily abstract what happens in battle and make no effort to delve deeply into the minutiae of Ancient and Medieval warfare. The aim is to immerse players in the dangers of the battlefield while providing their characters with something worthwhile to do. Anyone wishing to run more complex, or historically accurate, battles is recommended to seek-out one of the many, many sets of wargame rules available for different periods of conflict.

PHALANX FORMATION

Trait: Formation Fighting or Shield Wall
Move: Maximum of half walking speed
Effects: A block of close order troops at least 8 ranks deep, which can push back or break through other units. The frontage of a phalanx, once engaged, cannot be changed even by use of a Battle Action (page 28), leaving it vulnerable to being overlapped or flanked. If armed with long or very long weapons, it cannot be frontally engaged by cavalry or chariots.

CIRCLE/SQUARE FORMATION

Trait: Formation Fighting or Shield Wall
Move: Immobile

Effects: A highly defensive, close order disposition, which can protect other troop types, or non-combatants, on the inside of the formation. This prevents the unit from being flanked or overlapped in exchange for tactical immobility. Like a phalanx, if armed with long or very long weapons, it cannot be engaged by cavalry or chariots.

WEDGE FORMATION

Trait: Formation Fighting, Shield Wall, Beast-Back Lancer, Mounted Combat or Chariot Fighting

Move: Maximum of walking speed

Effects: Used against line or phalanx formations, this close order wedge relies on its shape to penetrate an enemy unit, doubling damage on the first round it engages. If this fails to disrupt or break the foe, it will itself fall apart on the following round, disintegrating into skirmish formation. The 'frontage' of a wedge is based upon its rear width and cannot exceed twice its depth (page 21).

TORTOISE FORMATION

Trait: Shield Wall
Move: Maximum of half walking speed
Effects: A solid, close order formation relying on every warrior overlapping their shields around and above the unit, the tortoise provides complete protection against ranged attacks (except those imposed by siege engines). However, the unit is unable to initiate engagement with enemy troops until they change to a less restrictive formation.

UNIT ATTRIBUTES

Irrespective of its overall size, every unit possesses a key number of attributes which are used during the engagement.

UNIT STRENGTH

This is the number of warriors comprising the unit: in effect, its Hit Points, with one warrior equalling one point of Strength. As a unit suffers casualties this number drops, until it reaches a critical level whereupon the formation breaks. At this point, the remaining warriors are considered 'broken' and must flee the battle or be utterly exterminated. When formed up, only warriors trained in a Combat Style which includes that formation trait can be counted towards the unit's strength, otherwise they become a hindrance, or, even, a weak point.

UNIT MORALE

The average Willpower skill of the entire unit's warriors. Note that this value can drop if a unit receives less experienced replacements to restore it to full strength, taking time to build back up again.

Skill	Temperament
1-30%	Terrified
31-50%	Erratic
51-70%	Steady
71-90%	Disciplined
91-110%	Unwavering
> 110%	Fanatical

UNIT COMPETENCE

The average Combat Style skill of the unit's warriors. This acts as a cap to the unit commander's Command skill (i.e, the Command skill cannot exceed the Unit's Competence). The better trained the unit, the more able the commander can control it in battle.

Skill	Expertise
1-30%	Cannon Fodder
31-50%	Green
51-70%	Seasoned
71-90%	Veteran
91-110%	Elite
> 110%	Heroic

UNIT FRONTAGE AND DEPTH

Whilst the number of participants is vital to determine the strength of a unit, its frontage and depth are also very important. The precise disposition depends on the type of formation the unit adopts.

Frontage determines how many combatants are engaged at any one time and thus the potential damage the formation can inflict each round.

Depth, on the other hand, provides stability to the unit, so that it is more difficult to push around or break through. Depth is measured in ranks, with each rank containing a number of men equal to the frontage. Surplus numbers, insufficient to form an entire rank, do not count towards its depth.

UNIT DAMAGE

The damage a unit inflicts is normally dependent upon its Frontage. This assumes rough parity in the weapons and armour used on both sides of the combat, between cultures which are used to each other's tactics. The dice roll defines how many casualties are inflicted on the opposing unit that round, reducing its Unit Strength.

Actual weapons and armour being used are less important than the teamwork employed to protect one another, and overwhelm their opponents.

Unit Frontage	Damage
<15	1d2
16-30	1d4
31-45	1d6
46-60	1d8
61-75	1d10
76-90	1d12
91-105	2d6
106-120	1d8+1d6
121-135	2d8
136-150	1d10+1d8
151-165	2d10
166-180	2d10+1d2
181-195	2d10+1d4
196-210	2d10+1d6
Every 15	Continue Progression

Troop *types* are important, with cavalry, chariots, and even belligerent creatures, granted a multiple to their frontage value for the purpose of calculating hand-to-hand damage. Except in special cases (elephant howdahs full of archers, for instance, or the flaming breath of a dragon), no benefit is granted for ranged damage.

Troop Type	Multiplier	Example
Infantry	x1	Human (sized) infantry
Cavalry	x2	Mounted on horse sized herbivores
Chariots	x2	Drawn by horses or equivalent
Carnivores	x3	Animal handlers paired with tigers or packs of rabid wolves
Scythed Chariots	x5	As per normal chariots, but armed with long scything blades
Massive Herbivores	x10	Elephants carrying howdahs full of troops
Monsters	x10 and up	Horrific creatures such as giant scorpions or wyverns

UNIT COMMANDER

The commander of a unit is the character placed in charge of it – usually someone who holds the highest level of authority, whether from social rank, political office or tactical knowledge. It is the commander who gives orders, using their Command skill, to direct the unit's troops during the ebb and flow of battle. Authority only passes onto a sub-commander if the current commander is killed, severely injured, flees in terror, or proves so incompetent that a subordinate will risk censure to depose control.

The scale at which the focus of the battle takes place depends entirely on the campaign and setting, allowing a Games Master, if they desire, to place all the player characters as low ranking sub-commanders and divide up their unit into smaller files or warbands.

For example, the characters could play sergeants in a small mercenary unit of 100 warriors, allowing the company at times to be sub-divided into teams of 20 men under the direct control of each player character. In this way all the players will assume a degree of agency, despite the overall result of the overall battle being beyond their notice or ability to influence.

Phases of Battle

A battle is normally broken down into a series of discrete phases, which follow one another in order. These are:

1. Choosing Ground
2. Personal Challenges
3. Stirring Speech
4. Engagement
5. Retiring from the Field
6. Aftermath

Each phase is explained over the next few pages. Depending on the circumstances of the battle, it may not be necessary to use every phase. For example the *Choosing the Ground, Personal Challenges* and *Stirring Speech* phases would be ignored if a unit was ambushed.

Choosing Ground

Before any battle can happen, at least one of the participating forces must decide where the combat will take place. For most battles the selection of the battlefield will be contested, the overall commander of each side making an opposed roll of their Locale skills, or Lore (Specific Region) if not native to the area. The commander who wins the test selects where the battle will be fought.

In certain circumstances, one side might be able to pre-select the battleground, such as laying an undetected ambush or withdrawing to a prepared fortification in advance of an enemy force arriving in the region. Although this may provide a significant tactical benefit to the prepared force, since they automatically choose the ground best suited to them, they may suffer detrimental strategic effects. For instance the enemy refusing to engage in battle, due to scouts detecting the ambush or judging the fortifications too severe, and, instead, ravaging the undefended countryside or building siege works about the defensive position.

The following table provides the benefits and detriments of each type of terrain. Before the battle starts each participating unit must also decide what type of formation their unit assumes (see Formation Types).

Terrain Effect	Examples	Effects
Choke Point	Narrow pass or strip of land between disrupting terrain	A choke point limits the maximum frontage of units and prevents units from being outflanked.
Disrupting	Woods, marsh or broken ground	Disrupting terrain prevents the passage of troops unless they disperse into skirmish formation.
Elevated	Hill or mountain slope	Elevation allows the higher positioned troops to double the troop damage inflicted by a charge, but cannot be charged themselves. Moderate slopes (more than 20o) prevent cavalry charges downhill, whereas steep slopes (more than 40o) prevent foot charges downhill.
Fortified	Ditches, palisades or walls	Until the defenders are pushed back, attacking troops suffer one or more Difficulty Grades to their attacking roll depending on the fortification. Ditches or embedded stakes make attacks Hard, palisades and low walls make it Formidable, high walls make it Herculean and towering walls Hopeless.
Impassable	Rivers, bogs, sheer cliffs	Impassable terrain provides a secure barrier, preventing enemy troops from attacking across it. However, troops adjacent to such terrain are vulnerable if pushed back into the feature.
Open	Fields or plains	Open terrain has no detrimental effect or advantage. Permits the use of chariots.
Precipitous	Steep slope or atop gorge	Prevents direct contact between opposing units, but may allow the higher elevated troops to use ranged weapons unopposed.

Personal Challenges

Assuming the battle is not an ambush, or that one side is defending from behind fortifications, there is the possibility for personal challenges prior to both sides engaging. Some cultures use challenges as a way for up and coming warriors to win renown for themselves, settle long-standing scores, or to shame specific enemies with charges of cowardliness if the challenge is not accepted.

From the perspective of a Games Master, such challenges not only allow player characters the chance to perform some individual combat prior to the more abstracted battle, but it can also be a way of introducing drama into their game, since foes are likely to be of high calibre, and any wounds taken by the character will reduce their chances of surviving the forthcoming melee.

A personal challenge need not end with death. A foe might flee their challenger in fear, or be rescued from the field by supernatural intervention. On the other hand, if they are disarmed or rendered otherwise helpless, there is no shame in allowing them to leave the field in honour, perhaps to return the favour at some other time.

As a commander, permitting personal challenges can be a risk. Whichever side loses the greater number of these heroic single combats is in danger of suffering a psychological disadvantage. This requires that any unit from which a loser originated makes an unopposed test of a relevant Passion, for example Love (Commander), Protect (City), Destroy (Enemy) and so on. The results of this check are potentially crucial according to the roll:

ⵊ Critical Success: The unit is angered by the defeat of its champion, vowing revenge. Morale checks over the course of the battle are one grade easier.
ⵊ Success: The unit laughs-off the loss, claiming the enemy cheated or it was the god's will. Beyond becoming resolute to engage in battle, there is no additional effect.
ⵊ Failure: The unit takes the loss as a superstitious sign, or that their foes are superior to them. Although they will stand to fight in the battle, morale checks over its course are one grade harder.
ⵊ Fumble: The unit is so overwhelmed by its loss that it withdraws from the battlefield to mourn. Its morale is utterly sapped and they will not participate in any further fighting.

Note that some personal challenges can be used to avoid further phases in the overall battle. For instance, if the fight occurs between the two overall commanders, forcing one side to depart entirely.

Stirring Speech

Commanders may attempt to rouse their unit with a stirring speech, bolstering its morale in the face of imminent combat. Such speeches are risky, however, with a chance of back-firing upon the commander if the oration is lacklustre.

To represent a motivational speech, the commander must make an unopposed roll against their Oratory skill. Influence, at a Hard Difficulty Grade, can be used if the commander does not have Oratory. The results of the roll are as follows:

ⵊ Critical Success: The unit is so inspired by the stirring speech that it is immune to morale checks until it has taken 30% casualties.
ⵊ Success: The unit gains a temporary boost to its morale checks for the first 1d3+3 Battle Rounds, making them one Difficulty Grade easier.
ⵊ Failure: The unit is so underwhelmed it suffers a temporary reduction to its morale checks for the first 1d3+3 Battle Rounds, making them one Difficulty Grade harder.
ⵊ Fumble: The unit is so upset or horrified by the speech that it will automatically break as soon as it is forced to make a morale check.

Some ancient armies substituted the declamatory address with sacrifices to the gods or the taking of omens. In such cases use the most relevant skill, such as Devotion instead of Oratory.

Engagement

The next phase of a battle is manoeuvring and exchange of blows. Hand to hand combat requires the units to be in contact, whereas ranged combat does not. Each battle round, both commanders must make a roll against their Command skill. The base Command skill is either Lore (Strategy and Tactics) or Oratory (Hard) or Influence (Formidable). The commander can augment the skill being used with an appropriate Passion (Hate Saxons), for example.

Just as with personal combat, each commander makes a Differential skill roll against their Command Roll. The level of success determines the effect, and results are applied simutaneously.

- ⚜ If neither side succeeds, there is no damage that Battle Round
- ⚜ If both sides succeed, both sides inflict and sustain damage.
- ⚜ If one side scores one or more levels of success higher than the opposing unit, one (or more) Battle Action can be chosen and applied to the combat.

This procedure is repeated every round until one unit retires, surrenders or is wiped out. Player characters who are part of a unit risk being seriously injured whenever it suffers casualties. Morale, Character Injuries and Battle Actions are described later (see Running a Battle).

Retiring from the Field

Once fortune turns against a unit, it will usually depart from the battlefield. There are two methods of performing this. First is that a commander can voluntarily order his troops to fall back in good order, maintaining cohesion so that they can protect themselves and prevent further loss. The second occurs when a unit fails a crucial morale check and routs.

A rout spells doom for the routing troops. No longer in formation the warriors scatter, discard heavy weapons such as shields, and run headlong for cover. Although this permits them to outpace the immediate enemy, they can still be caught by other units previously positioned to cut them off, or by cavalry or creatures which have a higher movement rate. If this happens, the routing troops can be engaged by the new unit, without fear of taking any casualties in return. In this case the likely result will be the total annihilation of the routing troops.

In certain circumstances, the commander in charge of a unit which has just broken its enemy, will want to pursue the routing warriors. This is permitted, but entails the unit devolving into skirmish formation to be able to keep up, at the risk of following the routers into a prepared trap or leaving other units on their side unsupported.

A rout has the added bonus in that it permits player characters a final chance of single combat. If desired, a character may attempt to spot a high value target, such as an enemy banner bearer, or commander, amongst the fleeing foes. Spotting such a prize first requires a successful Perception roll at Formidable difficulty, after which an opposed Athletics test between the pursuer and the foe is needed to capture them before they rout from the field; or, if the enemy is cut off from escape, a group opposed Athletics test between all those attempting to reach the target first.

Aftermath

A battle is won by whichever side maintains control of the battlefield once the fighting has concluded. Since the majority of casualties are still living, albeit incapacitated by their wounds, the victors are not only able to recover a significant number of their own warriors, but have the tough decision of whether to ignore, capture or kill those foes still lying upon the field.

Assume one fifth of casualties die outright during the battle, with the remainder too injured to fight again for weeks or months, assuming they get some form of medical treatment.

Of course, some battles conclude with no clear victor on either side. At which point opposing commanders generally come to terms in order to recover their own wounded and bury the dead before they become a health hazard.

Running a Battle

When preparing a battle, Games Masters should first consider the objectives of the enemy force and then listen to their players' plans, before deciding which battle phases will be utilised. The most detailed and time intensive phase is Engagement.

As described previously, each commander makes a Command skill check and compares them as per a differential roll. Rolling equal to, or under, the skill value means the unit inflicts a number of casualties equal to its Unit Damage rating, remembering to apply any modifiers due to its current formation. Rolling over the skill value results in no additional casualties that round. If both units fail to inflict damage then nothing happens if they are exchanging ranged weapons; or both sides briefly draw apart, breaking contact, if engaged in hand-to-hand combat.

If a commander manages to both inflict casualties *and* achieve one or more levels of success over their opponent, then they may select an equivalent number of Battle Actions, granting the unit a tactical advantage over the enemy unit, if successful.

In the circumstance when one unit armed with ranged weapons engages an opposing unit without, the targeted unit obviously cannot inflict any damage on its attacker. Its commander can however, still roll against their Command skill to in an attempt to win some Battle Actions, or at least, prevent any being used on his unit.

Units which are not under direct attack may freely move, redeploy, retreat, charge or flank as they desire, provided there is clear space for their formation to manoeuvre. Once engaged they must rely upon a Battle Action to do anything more.

Winning a Battle

Individual units continue to fight until they are ordered off the field by their commander, fail their morale, either surrendering or breaking, or are surrounded and cut down to the last man. The battle is won when one side is left in possession of the field.

Not all battles need end with a clear victor. Some engagements might be so vicious that the commanders of both sides voluntarily call a cessation to combat before their forces are mutually annihilated. In such cases the battle can be either called a draw or pyrrhic victory.

Unit Condition

To keep track of what is happening to units engaged in battle, a number of terms specific to their status and condition are defined as follows:

Broken

A unit which has lost all morale or cohesion becomes a Broken Formation and must flee the battlefield.

Contact

Units are in contact when they are engaged in *hand-to-hand* combat with one another. Contact can be broken, for instance if the leaders of both units fail Command rolls causing their troops to draw naturally apart.

Disrupted

When a close order formation is disrupted, it temporarily loses its cohesion and is thereafter treated as a skirmish formation. If a skirmish formation is disrupted, it becomes broken.

Engaged

The circumstance when a unit is in combat against an enemy formation. A unit can be engaged, even if it cannot initiate the encounter itself. For example if it is Shaken or is under attack by ranged weapons and lacks the same.

Enveloped

An enveloped unit is one which has been overlapped by an enemy with a larger frontage. This continues until the unit can retire, redeploy or push through.

Shaken

Being shaken prevents the unit from initiating any engagement. If an already shaky formation is shaken for a second time, it becomes Broken.

Morale Checks

Morale checks test the confidence a unit has in both its commander, and its own members, to stand and fight. They are required whenever a unit loses a certain proportion of its warriors, but can also be triggered by particular Battle Actions. As a battle continues, morale checks often start to suffer increasing penalties due to adverse events and conditions.

When a unit's casualties reach a particular level, a morale check is required. This happens provided that no other morale check was rolled for as part of a Battle Action that round. The listed values illustrate the *base* difficulty of any and all morale checks for a unit, once it has suffered that many casualties.

Failing a morale check usually results in the unit becoming *Shaken*, and if it subsequently fails a second time it is *Broken*. Thus, a commander who suspects their troops are on the verge of breaking should pro-actively initiate an ordered withdrawal from the field to ensure no rout occurs.

Casualties	Base Morale Check
5%	Standard
15%	Hard
30%	Formidable
50%	Herculean
75%	Automatically Broken

The situational modifiers (below) should be made, as applicable, to morale checks by the unit. As per the RuneQuest core rules, only the largest penalty and bonus should be applied. They do not stack.

Situation	Difficulty Modifier
Nearby allied unit leaves the field	1 grade harder
Unit is starving or thirsty	1 grade harder
Unit commander is a casualty	2 grades harder
Outnumbered 2:1[1]	1 grade harder
Outnumbered 3:1[1]	2 grades harder
Outnumbered 5:1[1]	3 grades harder
Unit possesses superior arms[2]	1 grade easier
Unit possesses superior magic	1-2 grades easier
Unit fighting to defend homeland	1-3 grades easier
Unit has no means of escape[3]	Surrenders

[1] *Modifier may be ignored if the unit is in favourable terrain, such as plugging a choke point or behind fortifications.*

[2] *Applies in situations when the unit possesses arms and armour significantly superior to those of its opponents. The bonus can be increased in cases where there is a technological disparity.*

[3] *If the unit knows that it will not be offered mercy, its remaining warriors will fight to the last man instead.*

Character Injuries

When player characters join a unit in battle, they face the risk of being injured whenever that unit suffers casualties. Becoming a casualty does not necessarily imply death, but can result in a terrible wound; most likely preventing the character continuing as an effective member of the formation or retreating from the battlefield without aid.

There are several ways of determining whether a player character becomes a casualty, depending on how abstract the Games Master wishes to make the threat. The simplest method is to work out what percentage of the unit was lost that round, and force every participating character to roll 1d100. If the roll is equal to, or less than, the loss percentage, then they have been wounded that round – perhaps because they were attacked more often than they could parry, faced someone better than them, or simply didn't see the blow coming.

Players are permitted to use a Luck Point to re-roll becoming a casualty. On the rare chance that more player characters become casualties that round than the unit actually suffered in damage, the Games Master should either roll randomly to see who suffers, or allow the potential casualties to roll against their Combat Style and declare those who rolled worst as the injured.

Whatever the reason, the character automatically suffers a Serious Wound to a random Hit Location, or if previously damaged in that area, a Major Wound instead. They must make an opposed Endurance test versus the enemy's Command roll to remain functional, conscious or alive.

Character Rewards

Although the risks of battle are very high, and fate can be distinctly capricious, characters can gain recognition for their efforts in battle. Rewards can range from war spoils, or plunder given in thanks for their noticeable efforts, to honours such as medals or even social promotion.

The chance of being rewarded depends on a number of factors which can be seen in the Reward Points table. Once the battle

concludes, each character totals these accumulated points then rolls against that value on 1d100.

- ⚜ Critical Success: The character is either promoted (in military rank or social class) or, instead, granted a valuable medal, wreath or other badge displaying the honour they have won. Such an award will boost their status and grant a bonus to skills used in the right social situation.
- ⚜ Success: The character is rewarded with some form of trophy; either an item of armour or weaponry of quality, which they can personally use, or an item (or items) of conspicuous value which can later be traded for wealth.
- ⚜ Failure: The character falls beneath the notice of their commander.
- ⚜ Fumble: The character manages to perform an act so crass that they alienate their commander or fellow warriors, such as boasting of a kill which wasn't theirs, or being first to retreat before the enemy. Instead of receiving a reward, they are, instead, punished, or even blamed for some failure.

Action	Points
Every round of active battle participation	1 point
Fighting on after becoming a casualty	+10 points
Fighting courageously (doubling character casualty chance)	+1 point per round
Fighting cautiously (halving character casualty chance)	-1 point per round
Winning a Personal Challenge	+1/5 of the opponent's Combat Style
Capturing an enemy banner or unit commander	+50 points
Capturing or killing the commander of the enitre enemy force	+100 points

bogging down and falling apart. Thus, on the second round, the cohort remains in Line formation whereas the warband is in Skirmish formation.

Both leaders roll Command skills, this time Ungoth gaining a critical and a level of success over his opponent. Damage is exchanged, but Ungoth chooses Shake as his Battle Action, driving his screaming barbarians onwards with reckless abandon. This is too much for the Meerish cohort which promptly fails another morale check (Hard difficulty for its current casualty level, increased to Formidable), changing its status from Shaken to Broken. Fearing for their lives the Leopards rout from the field, leaving the way open for Ungoth to attack the hated Scarlet Spears.

Pausing only to redeploy his disrupted unit into a shield wall, Ungoth charges the Scarlet Spears in the hope of repeating his previous success. This time, however, it is Leontichus the Valiant who is opposing him; Misogynistes having mysteriously vanished.

They both roll against their Command skills, but this time Ungoth fails. For his Battle Action (unbeknownst to the Badoshi) Leontichus detaches the rear ranks to form a flanking unit.

Battle Actions

Battle Actions are the equivalent of Special Effects used in personal combat. Each round of battle, a commander who successfully passes their Command skill and gains one, or more, levels of success over their opponent receives the chance to order an equal number of Battle Actions. This can be veiwed as taking advantage of an opportunity – perhaps one leader is briefly distracted, his men falter, or a momentary gap opens up in the formation – at which point, the opposing commander can seize the moment to perform a tactical manoeuvre and take advantage of the situation.

Just as with Special Effects, some of the Battle Actions are restricted due to the quality of the initial Command roll, require pre-prepared troop dispositions, or can only be applied by particular formations.

The table of Battle Actions can be found on pages 30 and 31.

Spot Rules

Some addition spot rules have been included to cover unusual circumstances.

Ambushes and Ruses

Similar in format to flanking, an ambush or ruse relies more on pre-preparing the battlefield to take advantage of its natural features, or by concealing the true nature of a unit so that foes misjudge its purpose.

Ambushes are triggered if an enemy blithely wanders past terrain in which an allied unit has been hidden prior to the battle starting, or is tricked into approaching the area via the Feigned Retreat Battle Action. This normally requires an opposed test of the ambushing commander's Stealth skill vs. the enemy commander's Perception skill.

If the ambush fails to be discovered, then the enemy formation suffers a surprise attack, during which the commander is assumed to have automatically failed his Command roll on the first round, and suffers a difficulty grade of Formidable on the second. If the enemy unit is still intact, there are no further penalties from the third round onwards.

A ruse occurs when a unit is disguised to appear as a completely different body of warriors, either luring the enemy to attack an apparently ill-trained formation or intimidating the enemy from engaging with what seems to be an infamous crack unit. To pull off the ruse requires the deceitful commander to win an opposed test of his Conceal skill vs. the enemy commander's Insight skill.

Changing Formation

Provided that it has trained in the formation being adopted, a unit may freely change formation, provided it is not currently engaged in combat. If it is in contact with the enemy or under fire, it may only change formation by use of a Battle Action.

Charging

A unit not currently in contact may freely charge the enemy, provided they are not blocked by terrain, or, intercepted. by the enemy. Charging over a long distance breaks up the cohesion of a close order unit. Thus, most charges occur at short range, often when two formations briefly draw away from each other after both commanders fail to inflict casualties. In this latter case specifically, assume that the re-engaging charge and Command roll for inflicting damage occur in the same Battle Round.

Fatigue

Each Battle Round represents Medium activity in terms of Fatigue. If Games Masters want to add Fatigue into the equation – especially if it appears to be taking several rounds to resolve a shield wall clash – then Endurance rolls should be made at the end of each round to see if the effects of Fatigue should be applied. The Endurance for the unit is the average Endurance for its members. If Fatigue is accrued, follow the scale provided on page 120 of RuneQuest, but only applying the Skill Grade modifier. When combat moves into standard Combat Rounds, characters should check for Fatigue again, applying the effects as accrued.

Flanking

A flanking attack occurs when an enemy formation, currently engaged in combat to its front, is hit from a second direction. Being unable to turn freely to face the new unit, it suffers a terrible disadvantage in the Differential Roll to determine the effects of the attack; requiring a Hard Command check if struck in the flank or a Formidable Command check if attacked from the rear. If the target formation is a phalanx, make the difficulty grades one step worse.

To perform such an attack, the flanking unit must be out of contact with other units and have sufficient space to manoeuvre so that it can reach the sides or rear of the enemy formation. As flanking can be so devastating, the commander of the targeted formation should be permitted a Perception check to notice the approaching unit. If successful, they gain 1d3 rounds warning to try to protect themselves, either via winning a Battle Action or by calling upon an allied unit to intercept on their behalf.

Ganging Up

The commander of a unit, simultaneously engaged with two or more enemy formations, is permitted to attempt a Command roll against each one that round. This can be done even if some of the enemy units are using ranged attacks, to help avoid negative Battle Actions. No penalty is applied to mulitple Command checks, provided the unit is engaged frontally. Otherwise treat attacks from the side or rear as per Flanking.

Missile Fire

Units which launch ranged attacks inflict the same damage as indicated by their frontage. Whilst it may seem that, logically, the entire unit could loose their weapons together, lack of accuracy over distance and limited rates of fire make it less effective than hand to hand combat. Additionally, some weapons such as slings or crossbows preclude the ability to repeatedly fire in ranks.

Movement & Retreat

All unit movement is treated as occurring simultaneously each round. Therefore units which are not currently in contact are free to move away from the enemy, and cannot be re-engaged in hand to hand combat unless the pursuers have a higher movement rate.

For instance, if two units in Line formation naturally break contact due to both failing Command rolls, one could take the opportunity to retreat off the field safely, whilst the other followed unable to re-initiate contact.

Units which end up in contact after moving, may attack each other in hand to hand combat on the following round.

Final Note

Remember that the battle rules are highly abstracted to greatly simplify the running of large scale engagements. They are *not* intended to be comprehensive, but merely offer a solid framework to fit the core tactics of pre-firearm warfare.

Games Masters should apply common sense where no concrete mechanic is offered, and, as always, feel free to modify them to fit their own campaign settings and periods. Your RuneQuest battles may vary!

On the following day, the surviving army is mustered and rewards are given out. Since she won her very public personal challenge, and performed well during the fighting, Anathaym expects to gain some form of recognition.

The Games Master tallies up the points: 18 for accepting and winning the challenge, but only 5 from the five rounds of combat against Ungoth's warband, since she did not fight courageously. This gives a total of 23. The dice are rolled and Anathaym gets a 47. Although her unit grumbles, she is granted no special honours, leading her to suspect that Misogynistes has deliberately snubbed her.

Battle Actions

Battle Action	Restriction	Effect
Charge	Charging unit must start out of contact	Assuming it is currently out of contact with opposing formations, the unit can charge an enemy formation, hitting home on a subsequent round as decided by the Games Master, based upon the distance it must travel. Close order formations which charge for more than one Battle Round automatically disintegrate into Skirmish formation. Charging, however, will double the damage dice on impact.
Combine	Units must share the same Combat Style trait	Units from the same force may combine together, reinforcing one another, providing they share a common Combat Style trait. Thereafter, they are treated as a single, larger formation, potentially offsetting morale penalties and permitting the ranking commander to apply (hopefully) better skills.
Detach	Unavailable to Phalanx or Tortoise formations	Permits a formation to hive off part of its strength to form a smaller subsidiary unit, which can then be used as a flanking or reserve unit, at the expense of reducing the original unit's frontage or depth. The detached unit must be led by a new commander and is treated as an independent entity for the remainder of the battle.
Divide	None	Allows close order troops to briefly split apart, permitting less manoeuvrable, or unstoppable charging units (rampaging elephants or scythed chariots for instance), to pass through without the receiving formation suffering casualties or becoming Disrupted.
Engulf	Skirmish, Line or Circle formations	Assuming it has equal or greater strength, the unit opens up a killing pocket into which the enemy falls unless they win an opposed test of their Competence vs. the original Command roll. Thereafter the enemy cannot Redeploy and are trapped, unable to escape unless they Push free.
Envelop	Line formation only	If the unit has a larger frontage than its engaged opposing formation, its commander may overlap the spare troops around the flanks of the enemy, thus increasing the damage dice rolled each Battle Round to the full amount permitted to its frontage. The enemy unit, however, is still limited to its lesser frontage until it can redeploy.
Feigned Retreat	None	Sets up the enemy formation, luring it into a vulnerable position or pre-prepared ambush. The enemy unit must win an opposed test of their Competence vs. the original Command roll, otherwise starting on the following round, they chase down the fleeing troops and suffer the detrimental effects of the ruse (see Additional Rules). Once the trap is sprung, the falsely retreating troops must, themselves, pass a morale check to reform, or else the rout becomes genuine.
Guard	None	Reduces the casualty losses of the defending unit by half that round. If the Command roll was a critical success, then no loses are incurred.
Harass	Skirmishers only	Using a combination of false charges or ranged attacks, the skirmishing unit causes an enemy unit to suffer a penalty of one additional Difficulty Grade to any morale checks until the skirmisher ceases engagement.
Push	Unavailable to Circle or Wedge formations	If the unit has an equal, or greater, depth than the enemy, it pushes them backwards. In this case phalanx formations halve the depth of non phalanxes. It can be used to shove an enemy formation from elevated positions, back away from fortifications, through a choke point, or to break free from being engulfed. In confining spaces, such as being pinned against a cliff or river, the enemy must win an opposed test of their Competence vs. the original Command roll, else become Broken.

Battle Action	Restriction	Effect
Rally	Shaken units only	Commander may attempt an unopposed Oratory check, which if passed, removes the Shaken condition from their unit.
Redeploy	None	The unit may change its existing formation to another type permitted by its Combat Style trait, whether or not it is currently engaged.
Reform	None	Permits a Disrupted unit to pull itself back into formation.
Repulse	Units receiving charges only	On receiving a charge, whether from foot troops, cavalry or chariots, the unit repulses the enemy, causing them to become Disrupted (if not so already).
Retire	None	Allows the unit to disentangle itself from close combat and withdraw out of contact. Whilst it may then retreat from battle in good order, it remains vulnerable to ranged weapons or being charged by higher movement rate troops until it has left the field entirely.
Savage	None	The unit rolls its damage dice twice, taking the best result and applying it to the enemy formation that round. If the Command roll was a critical success, then maximum damage is inflicted.
Shake	Critical only	Requires the enemy formation to pass an unopposed morale check at one Difficulty Grade harder than it is currently suffering, or become Shaken. If already shaken the enemy breaks.
Shatter	Phalanx or Wedge formation only	Enemy unit must win an opposed test of their Competence vs. the original Command roll, or else become Disrupted. If already in Skirmish formation, they are Broken instead. The enemy roll gains a bonus of one Difficulty Grade easier for each point of depth that they have in superiority to the attacking unit, and vice versa if they have less ranks. For this calculation, the depth of Line formations is halved. If the modifier reduces the enemy roll to Hopeless, the formation is automatically Broken and the attacking unit breaks through to the other side.
Shock	Charging units only	Charged unit must win an opposed test of their Morale vs. the original Command roll, or else be reduced to Skirmish formation. If they were already in Skirmish formation, they are Broken instead.
Take Cover	Units under ranged attack only	Assuming it is not engaged in melee, the unit seeks cover, preventing it from taking any more casualties from ranged weapons. In the process, however, it becomes pinned down, unable to move unless the unit wishes to lose its protection.
Target Character	Critical only	The unit focuses on taking out a specific member of the enemy unit, whether a hated foe, a traitor or the unit's commander. The target must win an opposed test of their Combat Style vs. the original Command roll, else they become a casualty.

Special Battle Actions	Restriction	Effect
Use Ability	Unit must be formed from creatures possessing the same special ability	The unit can invoke a Creature Ability such as Breathe Flame, Gaze Attack, or Intimidate. Targeted unit must win an opposed test of either their Competence or Morale vs. the original Command roll, else suffer the massed effects of the ability as determined by the Game Master.
Volley Casting	Orchestrated spellcasters only, who must start out of contact	If the unit is trained in casting magic together as an orchestrated volley, it may cast/exhort/invoke a single spell upon itself or against another formation. The targeted unit must win an opposed test of either their Competence or Morale vs. the original Command roll, or else suffer the effects of the battlefield scaled magic as determined by the Game Master.

Unit Battle Form

Unit Name: _____ UnitType: _____

Unit Traits:

Commander: _____ Command Skill % _____

Strength: _____ Current Damage: _____

Competency % _____ Morale: _____

Current Formation: _____ Frontage: _____

Notes

Unit Strength	Damage
<15	1d2
16-30	1d4
31-45	1d6
46-60	1d8
61-75	1d10
76-90	1d12
91-105	2d6
106-120	1d8+1d6
121-135	2d8
136-150	1d10+1d8
151-165	2d10
166-180	2d10+1d2
181-195	2d10+1d4
196-210	2d10+1d6
Every 15	Continue Progression

Unit Battle Form

Unit Name: _____ UnitType: _____

Unit Traits:

Commander: _____ Command Skill % _____

Strength: _____ Current Damage: _____

Competency % _____ Morale: _____

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Every 15	Continue Progression

SHIPS & SHIELD WALLS

This supplement for RUNEQUEST 6th Edition brings you game rules for using sea-going vessels of all sizes in your RQ campaigns, plus a set of semi-abstract mechanics for staging large battles where RUNEQUEST characters can take a key part – either as commanders, or warriors in the shield wall.

Designed to be simple, fast and play-able, these rules are perfect for those campaigns that aspire to the epic: voyages across the oceans; high-seas piracy; shield wall clashes, or battles between massive armies.

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