

Game rules for Cloudships of Mars – 2023 edition v3

Each ship has a control panel which shows its guns and their positions on the ship and their arcs of fire, its values for movement, altitude, boarding parties, ram value and the status of any critical hits. It also shows the ranges and damage values of guns, the number of die to roll for a gun when it fires and the scores needed to hit a target. Finally there is a track on which damage is recorded. A player may control more than one ship but – for each ship they control – they take on the role of “Ship’s Captain” for that vessel.

SEQUENCE OF PLAY

The order in which ships take their turn is determined by a deck of cards which has one card for each ship. The umpire turns over the top card from the deck and the ship shown has its turn. When all the ships have moved the umpire shuffles the deck and starts a new round of turns.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A SHIP’S TURN:

Determine Order of Play. Then each individual Ship’s Captain completes the following actions:

1. Check the status of the ship: Check the current movement allowance and any limitations on turns, altitude changes etc (the ‘**Red Light**’ section of the control panel, see below).
2. Moves the ship in accordance with those restrictions up to the maximum allowed (although the Captain may chose not to move at all)
3. At the end of that movement phase – the Captain may fire any guns which are in range and have a target within their firing arc. Any ship so fired upon may **return fire** (but only at the ‘moving’ ship that just instigated the action). All such fire is simultaneous. Any guns fired must be marked as having done so with a ‘Fired’ marker or counter on it’s control panel.
4. Mark any damage received, dicing as necessary (see Hitting Guns, below) for the location of guns lost and critical hits.
5. Mark any critical hits received with an Amber light on a ship’s control panel.

All ships repeat 1 through 5. All ships then Check their ship status sheet, spcificaly the ‘**Red Light**’ section:

- a. Remove any **Red** lights and then;
- b. Replace any **Amber** lights with new **Red** lights.
- c. Remove all ‘Fired’ markers from guns.

ALTITUDE

There are 4 height bands: Ground, Low, Medium and High. A ship which descends involuntarily to ground level crashes!

When a ship takes damage and is forced to drop to a lower altitude it will do so immediately unless grappled by another ship. It will drop to its new maximum immediately it is no longer grappled.

- Advanced Rule – You may add a super low height band. This is an extra band below 'Low' called 'REALLY LOW'. Indicate this with an two markers in the Low section

MOVEMENT

Each ship has a movement value, usually between 3 and 6. A ship does not have to use its full movement allowance.

Each movement point allows a ship to move forward one hex and change its facing by one hex side left or right (if it moves, it gets a one turn of a hex face for 'free', as it were). It changes its hex face after it has entered the hex (ie at the end) not before it enters a hex.

It costs a point of movement to raise up a height band if the ship does not move forward (it is doing this on the power of it's lifters or gas bags alone, not using it's motor). A steam ship may also turn hex faces while doing this using Power Turns (see below) and paying a movement point per hex face: other ships may not.

It costs two movement points to go up one level of altitude including one point of forward movement: whilst doing this, ships may get the customary free turn at the end of the hex moved, as for all other movement. A ship may descend one height level as it moves forward at no extra cost (and may turn, just as if it were moving without changing height) or it may remain in the same hex and drop one height level at the cost of one movement point. In the latter case, like ascending, Steam ships may make power turns, other vessels may not.

Kites bowl a dice for movement to see how far they may move in that turn. This is their maximum speed – they don't have to move that far – but, if they don't move, they can't turn. They may only make 1 change of face during their entire movement that turn (this represents its lack of manoeuvrability in the wind) unless its rolls a 6 for its movement. It may then make two changes of facing. Both changes of face must be in the same direction within any given turn and both are after entering a hex.

- Advanced rule – some ships have mixed power systems. These have steam engines and sails to supplement them. These have guaranteed power of 1 to 4 (usually) for steam power movement with power turns (see below) and all that they might have for a steam ship. They then use their sail to add speed if the wind is in their favour. Bowl a dice. On a 5 they add one speed. On a six they add two speed. They may not power turn during that increased extra speed but may turn one hex face once. They count as a steam ship for Rams etc (see below)

POWER TURNS

Steam ships may make power turns. They may change their facing by one hex side left or right at the cost of 1 movement point. They can do this in addition to the free hex face turn they get after entering a hex. They may do it before they enter a hex. They may do it more than once in a hex if they have the points). This makes them more manoeuvrable.

Screw Galleys may not make power turns but may turn at the end of every hex they move (ie a movement of three hexes means three turns). If a screw galley only chooses to move, for example, at a rate of 2 hexes, even though they have a maximum speed of three, they may still only turn two times: once after entering each hex.

The Skylord and other kites may not make power turns.

RAMMING

In a ship enters a hex containing another ship and deliberately tries to ram the other ship, the following ensues:

Each Captain dices: Add a +1 to a ship's dice if steam powered. If the rammer (the one actually trying to ram) scores higher it hits. If the score is tied or the rammer scored less than his intended victim then they miss and the ram fails and the ships slide by. In the event of a 'successful hit', the Rammer inflicts its Ram value plus its current speed as damage on its target.

COLLISIONS

If two ships are in the same hex and at the same altitude they may collide. Each rolls a d6. If the scores are the same they collide and each inflict their Ram value as damage on the other ship.

GRAPPLING AND BOARDING ACTION

When can a ship Grapple and Board? What's the difference?

A ship that enters another ships hex at the same height may attempt to grapple and board. It does **not** have to collide to do so. It does **not** have to deliberately ram to do so (though both of these events may be advantageous in inflicting initial damage): all that is required is that they be in the same hex at the same height.

Firstly, if a captain wishes to conduct a boarding action the ship must be attached – it must be grappled – to its target. To grapple:

- Each side rolls 1d6, adds current boarding value, This represents the available crew and gun crews throwing lines with hooks on them to attach the ships versus the opponents ships crew cutting those lines with cutlasses and so on. A higher score by the ship trying to grapple means they have succeed and may then proceed to boarding. A lower score by the ship trying to grapple means they have failed: their lines have been cut and no one will be boarding in this turn! If they succeeded, how to they fight a boarding action?

- Boarding action: each side rolls 1d6, adds current boarding value, (remember this already includes +1 for each working anti-personnel weapon, irrespective of firing arcs). Also remember this will also have an addition for superior crews where appropriate. This figure (for the undamaged ship) is contained in the hexagon at the top of the control panel. Just don't forget to remove losses in anti-personnel weapons and boarding parties (if any) before using this figure in the hexagon.
- The lower scorer reduces its boarding value by the difference in the two scores: they take crew losses. However, the higher scorer also takes some loss: they **BOWL A DICE 1 – 4 = reduce their boarding value by 1. 5 = reduce their boarding value by 2. 6 = reduce their boarding value by 3**
- In the event of a tie, both lose 1 boarding value. These scores are always marked off of boarding value, not gun crews on Nordenfelts, Gatlings etc.
- In the event of a win or a tie for the attackers, the ships stay grappled and – in the next turn – the boarding action may carry on.
- If defenders are the higher scorer, the boarders are repelled and retreat to their own ship, the grapples are cut and the defender is free to move off in its next move, although they may try again by another grapple/boarding attempt.
- When Boarding Value of a defending ship is reduced to zero the ship surrenders. The ship may not be used during the game unless the scenario dictates this action (it would require a dedicated, specialist crew to do this within the limited time frame of a game).
- Ships being boarded or boarding another ship may not fire any weapons at other vessels or targets. Any fire into a boarding action from any outside ship will do damage to both ships equally: not split between them but the same damage to both ships.

FIRING

All guns may fire once each turn. They are marked with a 'Fired' marker when they have done so.

The ship control panels show the firing arcs for its guns marked in red. A target must be within that arc for a gun to fire.

Count the number of hexes to the target and add one for each altitude level the target is higher than the firing ship. Each gun type on the control panel shows the distance which counts as short range and long range.

Maximum declination of weapons is 45 degrees so a ship must be one hex away from its target if the target is one height band below or above it. Anti Personnel weapons can not fire up at target ships – they can hit them but all they hit is hull which they cannot penetrate.

Rockets are a special case. They must ONLY be at 45 degrees, either up or down (depending on the fitment of the rockets). So, to hit with a rocket, the target must be exactly one hex away from its target if the target is one height band below or above it; two hexes away from its target if the target is two height bands below or above it and so on. For example a Locust firing rockets from High at a target on the ground MUST be 3 hexes away from its point of impact as it is 3 height bands above (High to Medium, Medium to Low, Low to Ground). Guns: place a counter on the control panel to show it has fired and roll the number of dice for the gun type (1 or more for quick firing weapons), count each dice separately:

Short range: score 3+ for a hit

Long range: score 5+ for a hit

Modifiers: Ships with a 'Superior Crew' (see below) add 1 to the die roll. Guns which hit inflict their Damage value, +1 damage if the die roll was a natural 6 (i.e. it wasn't modified). These are a 'one shot' weapon. When they are fired they may not be reloaded.

Machine guns Nordenfelts, sweepers Maxims etc (all Anti Personnel): place a counter on the control panel to show it has fired and roll 4, 5 or 6 dice for each weapon:

Short range: score 5+ for a hit

Long range: score 6+ for a hit

So a roll of 1,2,4,5,6 at short range is 2 hits. A roll of 1,2,4,5,6 at long range is 1 hit.

This is **not hull damage** – the rounds are too light for that – but crew damage. To see what one or two hits (or more) of this kind actually does, add up the total of hits achieved and consult the target ship's control panel to see what effect this level of Anti Personnel fire has on this vessel. Hits from multiple guns on a single ship are added together. Hits from Anti Personnel weapons on different ships are not added together but are treated separately.

Modifiers: Ships with a 'Superior Crew' add 1 to hit for each die roll. In addition, they do one more hit in total. So a roll of 1,2,4,5,6 at short range (normally 2 hits) becomes 1+1,2+1,4+1,5+1,6+1 or 2,3,5,6,7 so three hits and then +1 extra hits. So four hits in total.

Rockets: place a counter on the control panel to show it has fired and roll a d6 for each battery.

A hit is automatic and this is the amount of damage inflicted:

Remember, these are a fixed range dependent on the difference in height and do not need to bowl separately to hit. A Superior crew adds +1 damage to each rocket.

Superior Crews

These add abilities in several areas:

- They give +1 on Main guns to hit. So:
 - a 3-6 at short range becomes a 2-6
 - a 5-6 at Long range becomes a 4-6
- They give a They give +1 on Anti personnel guns to hit AND one additional hit So:
 - a 5-6 at short range becomes a 4-6
 - a 6 at Long range becomes a 5-6
 - 2 Hits becomes 3 hits.... or 4 hits becomes 5 hits etc
- They add +1 to boarding attempts

All of these are marked on the ship sheets

DAMAGE - HIT TRACK

Cross off boxes starting at the left hand end of the top row, at the end of each row start at the left hand end of the next lower row.

- **Hull:** boxes are crossed off with no further effect.

- **Gun:** dice among guns visible to the firer to see which is hit; if the target gun could not bear on the firer then it is hidden from damage (unless via a critical hit – see Magazine Hit below). When a gun box is passed on the damage track, mark that gun
- as hit, it may no longer fire. See **Hitting Guns**, below:
- **Medium:** Maximum altitude now possible is Medium.
- **Low:** Maximum altitude now possible is Low
- **Speed:** Reduce the maximum speed available by 1.
- **Boarding Party:** Mark one of the Boarding Party with a hit counter.
- **Critical:** Roll on the critical hit chart for the target ship. Mark any critical hits taken during the ship's turn with an Amber Light (see also Sequence above and What do the Lights mean? below).

WHAT DO THE LIGHTS MEAN?

- A Green light on the control panel – the standard 'naked' state – means that the system is working just fine.
- An Amber light on the control panel denotes that the system is currently not working. It's been hit this turn and has failed.
 - For example, a Critical Hit of 'Lifters Damaged' would put an **Amber light** Marker on the No Altitude Change light.
 - The Critical Hit of 'Bridge Hit' causes multiple warning ambers: mark an **Amber light** on No Altitude Change, No Direction Change and Bridge Hit
- A **Red Light** means the same as an **Amber Light** – the problem is just further along (and nearer to being fixed)
- At the end of a turn, all ships first remove any **Red Lights** showing on their control panels but then turn any **Amber light** accrued during that turn to **Red lights**
- Some critical hits are permanent. These are **not** reflected in the lights status.
- **Can my crew help fix problems?**
 If the ship is not currently involved in a boarding action any remaining boarding action points may be used to either fight a fire or fix a red light. At the end of a turn, after **Amber lights** have been converted to **Red**, bowl less then the number of boarding action points – (add one for superior crews but don't count the points plus the Anti Personnel weapons – the number in the hexagon – just count the remaining number of blue squares on the control panel) and either a fire is put out early, or the red light has been removed: the crew have fixed the problem earlier than anticipated! **EG if a ship has three remaining undestroyed Boarding party blue squares and a bowl of a one or two is made, a red light is removed. A 3 plus means – no effect!**

HITTING GUNS

When firing at a ship, guns may be destroyed. Standard rules are that the available guns that may be hit (see Damage Hit Track: Gun, above) are given a number (usually starting at the front of the ship and proceeding clockwise: 1, 2, 3 and so forth) and a dice is bowled.

Whichever the dice dictate is the gun destroyed. If the gun has not yet fired this turn, it may return fire (along with the rest of the ship) before it is destroyed. **And alternate modification to this is that, if the word GUN is in capitals on the damage track, the captain doing the firing (ie not the target) may chose which gun his victim loses from those available and within their own arc. If the word gun is in lower case, the random method is still used. This option must be agreed in advance by all players.**

Remember to include all gun systems in this: individual rockets batteries and Anti Personal weapons as well, not just 'main' guns.

CRITICAL HIT: MAGAZINE HIT

When the critical hit "Magazine Hit" is bowled, use the system in Hitting Guns (above) to randomly determine which gun is destroyed but make the selection from ALL guns (including Anti Personal) on board, irrespective of firing arcs. When it is destroyed, the maximum damage that the gun would do in a turn is inflicted. For example, a 4 inch short would be 4pts, a 1 pounder QF would be 3 pts from three shells (a lot of ammo to cook off) and a Nordenflet would be 5 hits on the AP chart (lots of rounds cooking off). Some particularly vulnerable ships have a vicious 'double gun damage' for a magazine hit. This is likely to be catastrophic. Rocket batteries have their own critical hit point on the chart. A single rocket battery magazine is variable damage with 1D6 hits.

LINE OF SIGHT

Guns must have a line of sight to fire on another ship; ships between the two may block the line of sight. Ships at the same altitude as the firer and target automatically do so. Ships at the same altitude as the target block the line of sight if they are nearer to the target than the firer. Ships at the same altitude as the firer block the line of sight if they are nearer to the firer than the target.

NEW WEAPON SYSTEMS

These are new systems added to the ships as of 2012. All may be marked on ships control panels:

Flying Martians

These are an offensive option or an advantage with boarding actions. They have a limited range and – within a game – may be deployed from *either* a ground location or a ship that is equipped with them.

A 'flight' of them mounted on a base, feature on a ship control panel and can be used as a detachable 'ship' of sorts or to assist with boarding actions.

As a detachable 'flight' at the start of a player's turn (ie when that captain's card is turned up by the umpire) are deployed – placed in the same hex as the ship model and at the same height - until stated otherwise. They move before their own 'mother' ship does. They may venture anywhere on the table at a speed of 2 up to a height of 'High'. Each level they climb costs them a movement point (so they can fly two straight up) they may descend for free – far from costing them movement points, each level of decent gains them a movement point as they swoop down, so a decent of two height bands – from high to low – would give them a movement of 2 plus 2 or 4. In addition, they may manoeuvre for free and at will. **Speed may not carry over between turns**

When deployed on the table they may attack a target as per Anti Personnel weapons. Each 'flight' is the equivalent of a single Nordenflet (5 dice) and hits are delivered accordingly. When

deployed in this way, they may themselves be attacked **only** by ships with Anti Personnel weapons. A result of a hit of 2 or less hits they ignore. A result of 3 or more hits and the 'flight' is wiped out.

When attacking on the table as an anti personnel weapon, they cannot attack a ship from below: like Nordenfelts and Gatlings they can make no impact on the tough hull of the ship. They can themselves be attacked by ships own anti personnel weapon from below, above and on the same height band. They can attack from an adjacent hex on the same level (short range) including the one directly above the target, or two hexes away.

A flight can be 'redocked' with a 'mother ship' by simply flying into the same hex before the ship moves for it's turn. When 'redocked' they may not be targeted separately but become part of the ships boarding parties.

Alternatively, Flying Martians may be retained in a 'non-deployed' mode. Playing like this, the Flying Martians stay in close proximity to the ship (and so need not be deployed physically on the table top). These then act as extra boarding parties (and – as mentioned above – may not be targeted separately). Each square for these on the control panel counts as having an effect of two (ie 1+1) so a ship with a boarding party of 4 and two Flying Martian flights has a BV of $8(4+[2 \times 2=4])$. If a ship is hit and takes a Boarding Party hit on a damage track the captain may decide which one to lose: a regular boarding party or a more flexible (and effective) 'flight' of Flying Martians. If a Flight has already deployed, it cannot be a target when the ship itself is attacked: the captain must chose from 'flights' still on board the ship or a regular boarding party.

If a 'flight' is on board a ship, it counts as a regular anti personal weapon when used against other ships. It has no firing arc – they are probably hovering just above or below the ship or in the rigging looking for weaknesses in their opponents – and are not destroyed when guns are destroyed, just when a Boarding Party hit is taken.

Power Grapnel

This enables a second attempt to grapple with a ship in any given turn if the first attempt fails, but offers no advantage to the dice throw. This does not count as a gun to be destroyed but is lost (in addition) when **the first** boarding party hit (blue box) is taken.

Bombs

These are effectively racks of bombs as opposed to racks of rockets. They work in the same way (bowl a dice – this is the amount of damage inflicted) but are dropped onto a hex directly below the ship rather than have a range. Like rockets, they count as a gun to be destroyed. They have their own critical hit point on the chart, when fitted. **These are a 'one shot' weapon. When they are fired they may not be reloaded. A Superior crew adds +1 damage to each bomb.**

Flying (Smutts) Torpedoes

These are fast, mini 'ships' powered by compressed air and kept aloft by liftwood. They travel in a straight line at a speed of 10 hexes for two turns at a level height and their chance of hitting is the same as a chance of ramming. However, they have a ram of +2 so – against a screw galley or kite they add two to their dice roll and against a steam ship, the steamer adds +1 to heir roll. If the torpedo wins it hits and explodes. If not it carries on past. By this method it might

have multiple contacts over the one or two turns that it is flying and miss them all. If it hasn't exploded on a target at the end of its second turn of movement it is removed from the table (it has harmlessly self destructed to avoid capture by enemy forces). Damage is a 1d6 plus 2 damage plus a critical hit on a natural 6. Like rockets, they count as a gun to be destroyed. They have their own critical hit point on the chart, when fitted. **These are a 'one shot' weapon. When they are fired they may not be reloaded. A Superior crew adds NOTHING to a Smutts Torpedo: once it's fired it's gone.**

Tether mines

These are explosive devices deployed on a cable lifted above a ship by liftwood or gas bags. They are deployed at the start of a ship's turn (ie when that captain's card is turned up by the umpire) and are deployed until stated otherwise. They may be winched back down at the start of any subsequent turn (ie when that captain's card is next turned up). They are deployed into the height band directly above a ship (and so are not useful to a ship flying at 'high') and – if a ship moves below a hex containing a target vessel (or vessels) then - using the ramming rules – the mine may hit the target ship similar to a Smutts Torpedo. **A Superior crew adds +1 chance to hit.** In a hex containing two ships (or more) it would bowl against each of the occupants individually (ie – if it misses the first choice it will try again on the subsequent choices. Steam ships – as per the ramming rules – gain a plus one to hit with a tether mine. Damage is 1d6 for a Martian mine and 1d6 plus 2 damage plus – for both - a critical hit on a natural 6. Like rockets, they count as a gun to be destroyed. They have their own critical hit point on the chart, when fitted. **These are a 'one shot' weapon. When they are fired they may not be reloaded.**

Drogue Torpedoes

These are explosive devices on a cable dangled below a ship but are otherwise almost identical to tether mines. **They use the ramming rules to hit and a Superior crew adds +1 chance to hit.** A ship flying at 'Low' can only hit targets on the ground with a Drogue Torpedo. Damage from all Drogue Torpedoes is higher than tether mines as they are bigger: 2d6 plus a critical hit on a natural 6. Like rockets, they count as a gun to be destroyed. They have their own critical hit point on the chart, when fitted.

A ship with two tether mine batteries can let one or both out and drag around the table with them deployed waiting to hit something. **These are a 'one shot' weapon. When they are fired they may not be reloaded.**