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# HEROIC SAMURAI



**One Brain Cell Rules for Clan Feuding in Classical Japan**

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## **In the Beginning...**

These are rules for playing a wargame with toy soldiers. It is intended for several players - say 4 or more. Players control significant leaders – the key samurai of a clan, who in turn have contingents of fighters under them.

Why 'One Brain Cell'? Well, many sets of wargame rules these days are horrendously complicated, with big thick rule books to read, dozens of additional books to get (at unreasonable expense) and exceptionally complicated rule mechanisms that take ages to work out.

My brain is too simple for this, so I tend to write rules that one require a single brain cell to use and understand. This tends to make games easy to learn and play, and, amazingly, are just as much fun as the dense and complicated game rules for which you have to pay a fortune. Odd, isn't it?

So read on, and, hopefully, enjoy.

Jim Wallman  
*Streatham 2006*





## Game Background And Assumptions

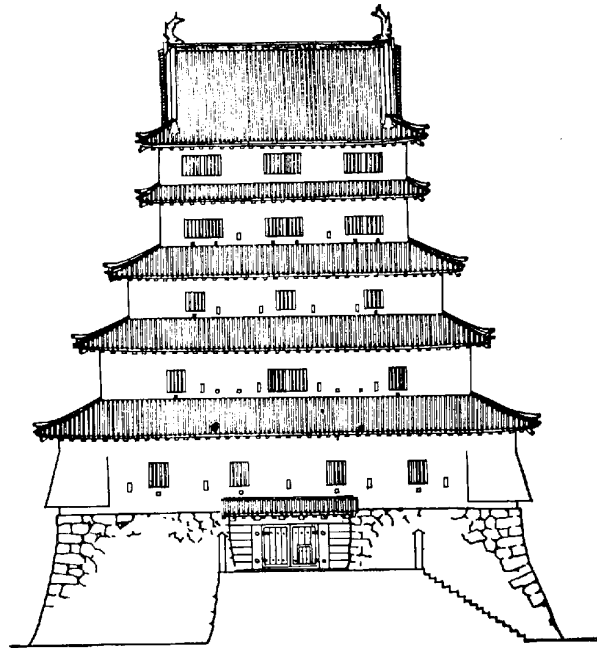
These rules are intended to simulate some of the small-scale conflicts that went on from time to time in Japan.

There are many sets of rules that simulate the epic battles of the Sengoku era, and a number of games about individual skirmishing. These rules are intended for situation in between these two scales.

There are many examples of fights breaking out between smaller families or clans – or even between factions within a clan. These fights might involve only a few hundred fighters – too small to be counted as a battle – too big to be a man-to-man skirmish.

In this game, players are significant individuals – leaders with great martial skills – and they have a following composed of their friends, family, vassals and servants.

This means that the composition of the force controlled by a player can be highly varied.



The rules are written with 15mm scale figures in mind – but there is no reason why they can't be adjusted for other figure scales – or even played with cardboard figures or counters depending on the sort of resources you have at your disposal.



## Setting up the game

To set up a game you need a reasonable sized playing area. A large table or floor area is ideal. Depending on the story you have in mind, this can be laid out with terrain. A green cloth makes suitable ground. Model trees, lichen etc makes woods, hedges and undergrowth. Cottages, hovels, even mansions can be easily made out of cardboard.

This is the playing area.

Next assemble the toy soldiers (sorry, I mean finely crafted military miniatures...).

The players should have at least one leader each. They *can* take control of more than one leader each - but this might make the play more difficult in some ways.

Each hero has a **contingent** of fighters that are their followers in the fight – the contingent is made up of a number of **elements**.

To make things easy, I mount groups of figures on bases – each of these groups being treated as an indivisible **element** of followers.

If you don't want to mount your figures on bases, you can just as easily move them around in clumps of separate figures – but you'll obviously find it takes a little longer to play the game.

Types of elements that you will expect to have are as follows:

<b>Element Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Typical representation</b>
Leader	This is the player. There is just one of him.	A single figure on whatever base suits.
Clan Samurai	A group of clan samurai with little or no armour, usually just armed with personal swords.	6 figures on a base 60mm x 60mm
Armoured Clan Samurai	A group of clan samurai arrayed for combat. They will have a mixture of swords, spears and bows depending on the personal preferences of the individuals making up the group. The player has no real choice in the matter.	6 figures on a base 60mm x 60mm
Clan Ashigaru spear	Hastily called out clan foot soldiers, who have grabbed their spears and joined the fight.	10 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Armoured Clan Ashigaru spear	Clan foot soldiers arrayed for battle. They will have their armour and be better mentally prepared for fighting.	10 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Clan Ashigaru Musketeers	Specialist foot soldiers with firearms.	10 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Armoured Clan Ashigaru musketeers	Specialist foot soldiers with firearms who have got their armour and are well prepared for battle. They will have extra ammo and have higher morale.	10 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Mounted Clan Samurai	Clan samurai who have grabbed a horse. The horse will have no armour. As above there is no choice as to how they are armed.	4 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Mounted Battle Samurai	Fully armoured and mounted samurai ready for the most extreme combat. As above there is no choice as to how they are armed.	4 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Warrior Monks	A group of militant monks with little or no armour, usually just armed with staff or naginata.	10 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Battle-ready warrior monks	A group of armoured militant monks with some armour, usually armed with naginata or spear	10 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Armed Peasants	Local farmers encourage to take up bamboo spears and defend themselves.	10 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Bandits	Rag-tag bunch of variously armed and armoured ruffians.	10 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base
Mounted Bandits	A base of mounted bandits can't effectively fight on horseback – it will always dismount to fight – replace it with a bandit base when dismounted.	4 figures on a 60mm x 60mm base



## Actions

In each game turn every player gets to perform **Actions**.

All actions are assumed to happen simultaneously. If there is any doubt, players can note down their action on a bit of paper or a post-it note if they want.

**The sequence of action** in each turn goes like this:

1. Players declare what ACTION they are doing (see below)
2. Players can move their personal figure and any elements under their command in accordance with the ACTION they said they were going to do.
3. If movement brings elements into weapon range then work out who killed who. Work out archers and musket effects first. Then work out melee.
4. At the end of the turn, all elements that have been fighting have to take a test to see how they are feeling (called the *Morale Test*)

These are the **actions** you can do:

- **Hit Someone** (usually another specific named Player). If you choose this you cannot move your elements around that turn because you are too busy concentrating on your immediate enemy to tell them what to do.
- **Shout "BANZAI!"...and charge** Personally lead your elements towards the enemy (assuming that's where you're heading). All your elements within 20cm of your figure will follow you by the most direct route to the limit of their movement distance (See **Movement** below)
- **Inspire Your Followers**. Sometimes your following elements might get a bit downhearted (especially if they've been taking casualties and their morale is low). You can make them happier by stopping what you are doing and giving them a stirring speech (See below for **Morale Test**).
- **Regroup your followers**. This removes the effect of one **Distraction** counter (see below).
- **Converse, Send or Receive a message**. Sometimes you need to tell someone something, or send a message. **If you are not within 12cm of that person then you can't talk to them**, you must write a note – yes, *really write* with a pen and paper. This is an **action**. The message does not have to be in Japanese.  
The note is then transported using a messenger from your followers to the person its meant for. Reading the note is an **action** too, so they might not have time to read it when it gets there!

➤ **Shout "Attack them!"** This is where you can send your following elements to attack a specific, named, enemy element. You don't have to accompany the attack. All your followers move towards the enemy you pointed at as fast as they can move until they get within weapon range - then they fight. If you are not with them they might not fight as well though (see **Morale Test**).

➤ **Issue an Order.** Give a more complex order like – “stay here and shoot at the enemy”, or “Defend the bridge”. If you are not present and leave your contingent, then they will be less effective. Don't forget that all your elements amount to a single contingent so directing elements off to do separate and independent tasks is not realistic. If an umpire is running the game, the umpire will always be the final arbiter as to how detached or abandoned elements act in a given situation.



## Movement

Each individual element moves as directed by their leader, up to the following maximum distance each turn:

Type	Distance (cm)
Clan Ashigaru or Warrior monks	15
Clan Samurai	20
Armoured samurai, ashigaru or monks	12
Mounted	35
Carts and other slow stuff.	8

Obstacles can't be easily crossed.

If crossing a low wall or hedge, take one move delay.

Wading through a ford or shallow stream, lose half the movement distance.



## Distraction and Hits

Because each element in a player's contingent represents many individuals, and because I don't want to detach figures from the base to represent casualties, the effect of combat/losses on a base is shown in two ways.

**a. Distractions.** This is a representation of how nervous, distracted or upset they are.

It affects their ability to close on the enemy and their ability to shoot straight.

These are represented by Green Counters placed by (or on) the base.

A base can receive any number of Green Counters.

**b. Hits.** This might be people killed, or wounded, or merely scratched.

Its a vague indication of the actual level of injury or death sustained by the group. These are indicated by yellow counters placed on or near the base.

An element can receive 4 Hit counters and still fight on.

On receiving the **fifth hit** counter the element is out of combat and removed from play (the surviving members of the group are helping the wounded to safety).



## Shooting :

**Archers:** Bows are the weapon of the samurai class – so any base of samurai *might* contain one or more archers.

At the start of the game roll 1d3 per element of samurai for the number of bow-armed samurai it contains. (You'll need to keep a note of this).  
If using separate figures, then the models you have might represent the number of archers, but no more than 3 per element is allowed.

Roll 1d6 per samurai base shooting to score a HIT

- +1 per bow-armed samurai present.
- 1 if the base moved this turn
- 1 per D
- 1 per HIT

Range:		Up to 40 cm		Up to 80cm	
Vs target	Effect:	1 Distraction	1 hit and 1 Distraction	1 Distraction	1 hit and 1 Distraction
Unarmoured on foot		3,4	5,6	4, 5	6
Armoured on foot		4	5,6	5	6
Unarmoured Horseman		3,4	5,6	4	5,6
Armoured horseman		5, 6	6	6	-

**Muskets:** The musket is the weapon of the common ashigaru (it is regarded as only suitable for the lower orders and samurai would rarely use it). An element of ashigaru cannot be mixed, they are either all musket or all spear.

### Muskets may not fire if they moved.

Muskets take one turn to reload (this can be done on the move)  
Muskets generate a lot of smoke, so use cotton wool puffs to show smoke.  
Musket smoke remains for two turns after shooting.

Roll 1d6 per base shooting

- 1 per D
- 1 per hit
- 1 if target obscured by smoke

Range:		25cm		50 cm	
Vs target	Effect:	1 Distraction	1 hit and 1 Distraction	1 Distraction	1 hit and 1 Distraction
Unarmoured on foot		2,3,4	5,6	4,5	6
Armoured on foot		3,4	5,6	4,5	6
Unarmoured Horseman		2,3,4	5,6	4,5	5,6
Armoured horseman		3,4	5,6	5,6	-

**Hitting Leaders** : When shooting at a Player/Leader figure, the target can ignore D results and still takes 5 Hits to kill. (He is the Hero, after all).



## Morale test

Events and circumstances can make your followers less keen to fight.

The entire contingent (that is all the elements led by a single Leader) is affected by the morale rules, whatever their type.

Roll 1d6 when:

- The contingent loses a base
- The contingent is surprised.
- If the player in command wants the contingent to take a test
- Ashigaru, peasants or bandits on their own are being threatened by Samurai for the first time

Add or subtract the following factors:

- 1 for each Hit this turn
- 1 for each element lost in game
- 1 visibly outnumbered.
- +2 having a stirring speech from a friendly leader this turn. The umpire (if present) might increase this if the player actually gives a *real* stirring speech that is...er..stirring.
- 1 if the contingent's leader is not present (in sight and within 30cm)
- 1 Higher class enemy troops moved closer to you this turn.

The check the result in this table:

<b>Result</b>	
Score	Outcome
<b>3+</b>	Morale is fine - carry on as desired.
<b>0-2</b>	Contingent may not move closer to any enemy forces. It has to pass a morale test next turn to move closer to the enemy.
<b>Under 0</b>	Contingent must move away from the enemy as quickly as possible. It must pass a morale test next turn to stop running away.

The figure representing the leader/player leading the contingent is not bound by these results and may fight or run away as desired.



## Melee (or hand TO HAND COMBAT)

**STEP ONE:** Break the combat up into 'fights'. A fight is one element vs one or more enemy elements.

**STEP TWO:** For each 'fight' roll 1d6 per side, add the factors below and compare the scores

Factors in Melee :

Peasant	-2
Musket armed ashigaru	-1
Spear armed ashigaru, Warrior monk or bandit	0
Clan Samurai	+2
Leader	+4
On horseback	+1
Outnumbered 2-1 by unengaged enemies	-2
Outnumbered 3-1 by unengaged enemies	-3
Outnumbered 4-1 or more by unengaged enemies	-4
For each D on the base	-1
For each HIT on the base	-1

### The highest score wins

If the result is a draw, both sides receive a DISTRACTION

If one side wins by **1 or more** means the loser is pushed back 5cm. And one DISTRACTION

In addition there might be the following extra effects:

WIN BY	AGAINST	RESULT
2 or more	Unarmoured peasants, bandits or ashigaru	Score 1 HIT for every point difference in score above 1
3 or more	Unarmoured samurai (mounted or not). Armoured ronin, ashigaru, bandits or warrior monks.	Score 1 HIT for every point difference in score above 2
4 or more	Battle Samurai (mounted or not) and any LEADER	Score 1 HIT for every point difference in score above 3

If an outnumbered element wins, it can HIT *only one* of its enemies that turn. Winner chooses which one.

This seems complicated, but is, in fact, very simple.

**Field Defences** : Elements wholly behind field defences or defending buildings can ignore push-back results.





## EXAMPLE OF MELEE

4 bases of Ashigaru fight 2 bases of clan samurai. So, this breaks down into two fights, each of 2 bases fighting one. We'll ignore morale for this example.

FIRST TURN	
<p><b>Fight One</b> Samurai roll 2 +2 for being a samurai -2 for being outnumbered total score = 2</p> <p>Ashigaru roll 6 No additions, total score = 6</p> <p>Result is +4 win for the soldiers, which against samurai is a 'push back and a HIT.</p>	<p><b>Fight Two</b> Samurai roll 3 +2 for being a samurai -2 for being outnumbered Total score = 3</p> <p>Ashigaru roll 5 No additions, total score = 5</p> <p>Result is +2 win for the soldiers, which against samurai is just a 'push back result.</p>
TURN 2	
<p><b>Fight One</b> Samurai roll 5 +2 for being a samurai -2 for being outnumbered total score = 5</p> <p>Ashigaru roll 5 No additions, total score = 5</p> <p>Result is a draw. Both sides take one Distraction and remain in place.</p>	<p><b>Fight Two</b> Samurai roll 6 +2 for being a samurai -2 for being outnumbered Total score = 6</p> <p>Ashigaru roll 1 No additions, total score = 1</p> <p>Result is +5 win for the samurai, which against ashigaru is a push-back, 3 HITS and 1 Distraction</p>
TURN 3	
<p><b>Fight One</b> Samurai roll 6 +2 for being samurai -2 for being outnumbered -1 for distraction total score = 5</p> <p>Ashigaru roll 1 -1 for distraction No additions, total score = 0</p> <p>Result is +5 win for the samurai, which against ashigaru is 3 HITS and 1 Distraction.</p>	<p><b>Fight Two</b> Samurai roll 6 +2 for being a samurai -2 for being outnumbered Total score = 6</p> <p>Ashigaru rolls 6 -1 for distraction -3 for hits No additions, total score = 2</p> <p>Result is +4 win for the samurai, which against ashigaru is a push-back, 2 HITS and 1 Distraction. One ashigaru base removed.</p>
TURN 4	
<p><b>Fight One</b> Samurai roll 6 +2 for being samurai -2 for being outnumbered -1 for distraction total score = 5</p> <p>Ashigaru roll 3 -2 for distraction -3 for hits total score = <b>minus 2</b></p> <p>Result is +7 win for samurai, which means 5 HITS and 1 Distraction. An ashigaru base is removed.</p>	<p><b>Fight Two</b> Samurai roll 6 +2 for being a samurai Total score = 8</p> <p>Ashigaru roll 1 -2 for distraction -1 for hits No additions, total score = <b>minus 3</b></p> <p>Result is +11 win for the samurai. Against ashigaru this means <b>9 HITS</b> and 1 Distract. The remaining ashigaru are wiped out.</p>
TURN 5	
<p><b>Fight One</b> Samurai roll 5 +2 for being samurai -1 for distraction total score = 6</p> <p>Ashigaru roll 5 -3 distractions -1 hits -2 outnumbered total score = <b>minus 1</b></p> <p>Result is +6 win for the samurai. This means 4 HITS on the remaining ashigaru base – wiping it out.</p>	<p><b>Fight Two</b> The second samurai base joins in the combat in fight 1, having won its fight.</p>



## Personal Combat

Leaders are special cases.

If they fight just the followers of other leaders, then use the rules above, treating the leader as an element in his own right.

If they fight other Leaders – i.e. people of similar standing, then the following rules apply.

Leaders *never* outnumber other leaders. In the event of a multiple fight between leaders, those not involved will watch and cheer from the sidelines until their turn comes.

Personal combat starts with an INTENTION' – decided secretly by placing d6 covered with they player's hand.

The options are:

**1 = Fight** – if the opponent breaks off do not follow.

**2 = Pursue** – if the opponent breaks off, you can follow.

**3 = Stay your hand** – if the player wins he doesn't score HIT but can negotiate with his enemy (or call on him to surrender).

**4 = Break off** and move out of combat



Each player chooses and INTENTION out of sight and reveals at the same time.

If a player has chosen BREAK OFF and his opponent has not chosen PURSUE then there is no combat round.

Then - each game turn of combat is three rounds of paper - stone - scissors.

The player with the best of three inflicts one HIT on their enemy (Unless they have chosen an INTENTION of 'stay your hand', of course).

Distractions and HITS are ignored.

Leaders may break off combat and try and run away - but then that wouldn't be very heroic would it? Whatever would their followers think?





## ADDITIONAL BRAIN CELLS

If you feel like warming up a couple of extra brain cells, there are a few additional, and optional, wrinkles you might like to add.

### Reputation

Each leader can accumulate experience and reputation which can affect their abilities in combat.

This is carried over every time the leader is used in action – ideally over a campaign or series of linked battles.

Score nothing for killing peasants.

Score 1 point for every bandit / monk base HIT

Score 2 points for every ashigaru base HIT

Score 5 points for every un-named Samurai base HIT

Score 10 points for every enemy leader defeated (not necessarily killed) in personal combat

Score 20 points for every action where you are on the winning side.

Accumulated score	Level / Prefix	Benefits
0-100	1 - Noble	The basic level, as in the rules.
101-500	2 - Respected	Melee bonus increased by +2
501-1000	3 - Heroic	Number of hits increased to 5
1001-2000	4 - Impressive	Melee bonus increased by +3
2001-4000	5 - Fearsome	Number of hits increased to 6
4001-8000	6 - Awesome	Melee bonus increased by +4

### Other Personal Characteristics

You might wish to create particular characteristics for your player-character in addition to the reputation scores above.

**Prowess** : Gain additional bonuses in Melee. Roll 1d6 at the start

1 = Unskilled : minus 1 on all melee rolls

2-3 = Average : No bonus on melee rolls

4-5 = Strong : +1 on melee rolls

6 = Masterful : +2 on melee rolls

In personal combat between leaders, the character with the highest prowess wins drawn results of paper-stones-scissors.

**Charisma** : Gain the ability to influence your followers better.

1 = Nonentity : May not make inspire your followers or regroup your followers

2-3 = Average : No bonus

- 4-5 = Encouraging: Can recover 2 x Distractions per turn when regrouping.  
6 = Inspiring: +4 to morale for stirring speeches.

**Endurance**

- 1 = Weakling: 3 HITS  
2-3 = Average: 4 HITS  
4-5 = Robust: 5 HITS  
6 = Mighty: 6 HITS

