

---

# SCIENCE VERSUS LUCK

A game of war, doctrine and matchsticks

---

Devised and written by Jim Wallman

## Setting Up The Game

The game is designed for a group of players – ideally as a fun club project. It has scope for role playing, planning and playing with matchstick cannons and toy soldiers.

To work best it needs around 10 people ideally in a club setting (ie. A hall and several tables), though it will work with less, down to two players and one table (if you just play the battle game part).

The players are divided into teams of 2. There are enough briefings for six teams, though it is easy to add teams. Ideally you need an even number of teams, but that isn't essential.

## The Game Structure

The game is played in three distinct phases:

1. The Arms Exhibition – buying the weapons for the next war
2. Evaluation and Doctrine - testing the new weapons and deciding how they will be used
3. Battle – the acid test of both equipment and doctrine.

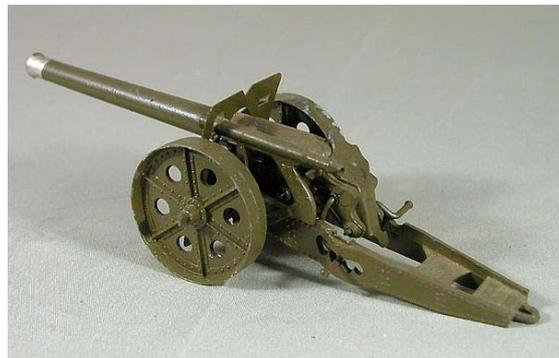
Each of these phases is distinctive.

### 1. The Arms Exhibition.

The players start off representing senior military figures from a fictitious 19<sup>th</sup> century powers which is visiting the Grand Geneva Arms Exhibition of 1859. They are given their briefing to purchase the best weaponry they can for their armed forces. Of course the definition of 'best' will depend on their briefing.

The actual matchstick cannon models you have are laid out as if on display at an arms fair, with card labels and they can be inspected. We have found it helps to have lots of different models. But they must all work.

Unfortunately the players may not touch them, or test them out – they are



relying on the manufacturer's description and the look of the thing to decide which cannon to buy for their armed forces. Actually testing them represents the cannon's performance in battle, so they won't get a chance until later.

The guns models available are then bought at auction – teams can bid for the one they want. If you have enough models then a team can buy more than one cannon.

This represents the procurement decisions taken by the ministry of war.

## 2. Evaluation and Doctrine

The players now drop a level in seniority and become the planning staff in entirely different countries (swapping with a country played in the first phase). They are given their Doctrine briefing. One player has to devise the infantry doctrine, one has to devise the artillery doctrine.

They have to write this doctrine down.

At this point they can test the gun/s and line up the toy soldiers to try out doctrine, but not on the battle terrain (we use the floor or a spare table for this). The players may not evaluate the cannon using the lives of their toy soldiers. However, they can create paper targets etc to test accuracy.

Once the doctrine has been written down by all teams, we can move on to the war fighting phase.

## 3. Battle.

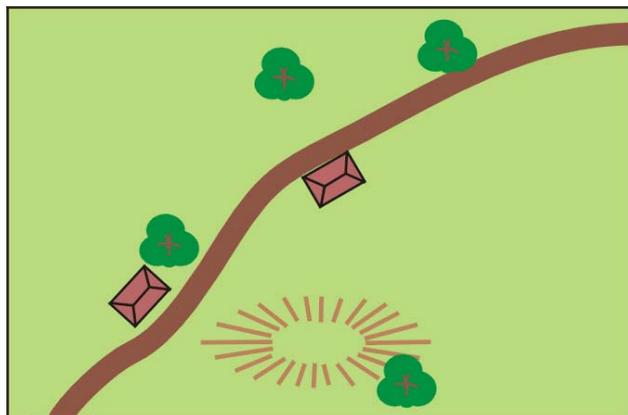
A war has broken out between various of the powers represented. This is their opportunity to see how their procurement, doctrine and planning will pan out.

As it happens, the frontiers of these countries include a number of key passes, which are represented by the tables with terrain on.

### Setting Up the Battle

For each battle you will need a table per team and enough cloths, trees, buildings etc to set up a simple and fairly open terrain on each one. To ensure the entire game is playable in a reasonable time, it is best to have multiple tables – though it could be played out several times on the same table.

**The terrain should not be elaborate and cover should be fairly sparse, like this:**

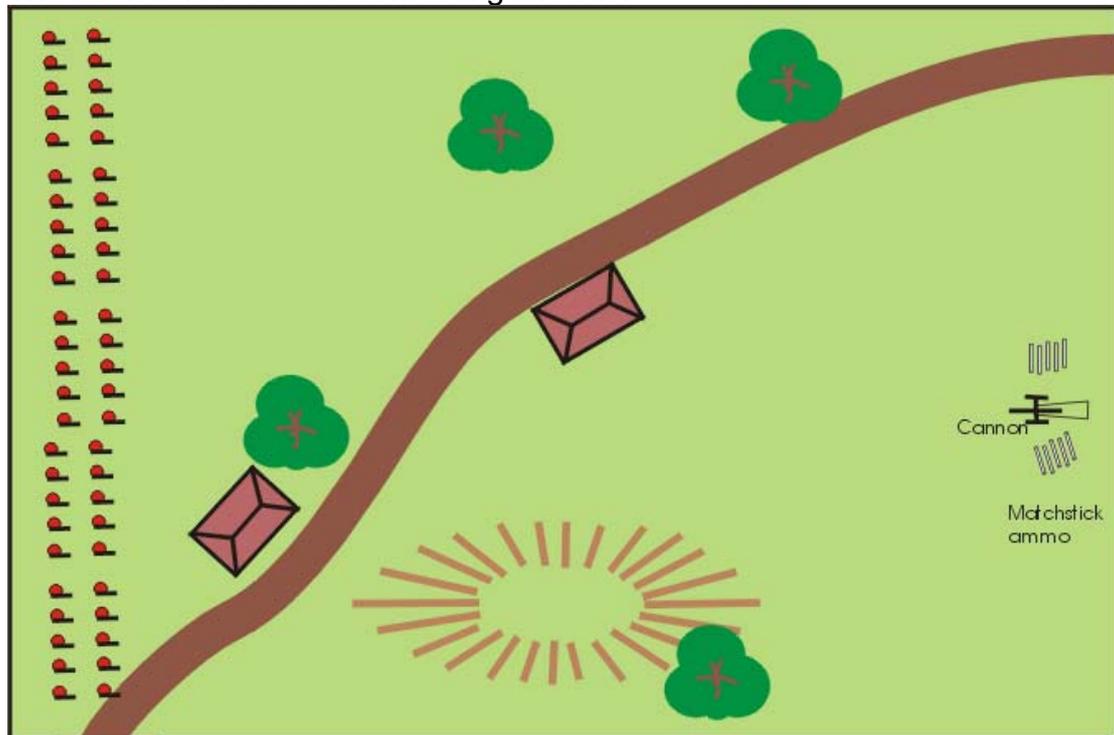


Before the battle the players get demoted again and re-arranged once more. The player writing the infantry doctrine becomes a junior front line artillery commander, and the player writing the artillery doctrine becomes a junior front

line infantry commander. If you want to create a further challenge you can get them to swap nationality once again too.

The player then have to read their written doctrine (which they didn't write) and must fight the battle accordingly.

The battlefield is set out something like this.



The Battle Rules explain how the war is fought.

### **Game Over**

At the end of the game, there are no winners as such, but there should be a lively discussion about which doctrine was superior. With any luck they will also moan continually about the poor purchasing decisions and the daft doctrine handed down by their superiors.

### **Summary of Briefings:**

There is one document, called 'Arms Bazaar' which has briefings for each country for phase 1 of the game. There is also the document 'Weapons' which is a guide to how you might describe your model guns – though you may have to produce your own version.

There are separate documents for each country, each one consists of the briefings for the Infantry and Artillery evaluation teams in Phase 2. Namely, Albionia, Bosrovia, Freedonia, Ruritania and Sylvania.

---

## **SCIENCE Vs LUCK THE BATTLE RULES**

---

### **EQUIPMENT**

At least one working matchstick firing cannon model.

A collection of 50 or so plastic 20mm or 25mm figures (Airfix will do fine – but they need to be able to stand up unaided, so you might have to make small card bases for some of them).

Tape measure or ruler

Dice

10 Matches or cocktail sticks per cannon.

Model terrain such as trees/lichen etc and a cloth.

### **LAYOUT**

A wargame terrain is laid out, featuring undulations in the ground, trees, lichen etc.

The cannon is placed at one end of the table and is controlled by one player, the figures placed at the other end and controlled by the other player.

### **SEQUENCE OF THE TURN**

Each turn has two phases:

1. The Attacking Player's Phase

In this the attacking player (in command of the figures) moves all his figures in accordance with the rules below. He has a time limit of 2 minutes (or less as directed by the umpire).

2. The Defending Player's Phase.

In this the defending player (in command of the gun) fires as many matchsticks of his allocation for that turn as he can in one minute.

### **MOVEMENT**

Figures may move 6" at the walk or 9" at the run.

Figures may not move and fire.

Movement speed and policy about taking cover must be according to doctrine as laid down in the appropriate latest version of the attacking force's Infantry Manual. So, for example, running will not be permitted unless it says so in the Manual.

Guns may move 6" during their phase - and lose 2 shots penalty for the time taken.

## **FIRING**

If infantry get within 12" of the gun they can (if doctrine permits) open fire on the 'crew'. Roll 1d6 & score 6 to hit.

If they start firing within 6", roll 5 or 6 to hit.

Each 'hit' takes one shot from the gun's allocation on the subsequent phase.

Cannon fire is simple. Fire a matchstick and if a figure is knocked over it is a casualty.

Casualties are NOT REMOVED from the playing area.

If due to mishandling the matchstick does not properly leave the barrel of the gun when fired (=misfire) then that shot is lost for that phase.

## **MORALE**

The gun will continue firing until overrun or all its shots are destroyed by infantry fire.

The infantry take a morale test on very simple lines:

Every time 10% of the total start strength are hit in a single turn, roll 1d6:

Score Result

5-6	Continue unaffected
3-4	Pause - no forward movement next phase (may fire if in range)
1-2	Recoil - must move away on subsequent turns (either behind hard cover or increase the range). Must take successful morale roll to stop recoiling.

FACTORS:	Company Commander Obviously Leading	+1
	Bugler Still Playing (if doctrine requires it)	+1
	Still Adhering to doctrine in manual	+1
	Below 50% strength	-1
	Out of sight of cannon	-1

Note: The Company Commander can be regarded as the player - and as such need not be affected by morale results if he wishes.

## **MELEE**

If any attacking infantry reach the gun, it automatically loses one matchstick per figure that reaches it.

## **WINNING AND LOSING**

The gun wins if it beats off the infantry.

The infantry win if the gun loses all its matchsticks; ie. it is destroyed.