

Short But Desperate

1. Introduction and basics of the game:

These rules are an attempt to enable players to finish relatively large battles of the American Civil War in an evening in an entertaining, challenging and convincing manner.

The ACW was a conflict where attacks generally proved difficult to co-ordinate and organise. Combat had lulls and activity wasn't always maintained all along the line. Troop formations sometimes stood under tremendous fire or quickly disintegrated. However many firefights were indecisive with much ammunition expended in long range exchanges to no great effect.

As a player your command decisions will be represented by allocating cards from your hand to different parts (zones) of the battlefield.

The battlefield is divided up into square zones, a grid of at least 5 x 5. A unit is an infantry regiment, a cavalry regiment or an artillery battery. The maximum overall number of regiments or batteries allowed in a zone is four in any combination. Any number of leaders can be present.

Difficult terrain **reduces** the number of regiments or batteries allowed to enter **by one** (to 3) and may prevent artillery entering or passing through (i.e. entrenchments, walls). Most difficult terrain affords cover to troops in the same zone and some blocks line of sight i.e. woods. Gentle hills block line of sight and afford cover (if only because shooting uphill accurately is very difficult with weapons that kick on firing) but are not considered difficult terrain. Particularly difficult areas of terrain (i.e. Devil's Den) reduce occupancy to 2 and are inaccessible to artillery.

An artillery battery is represented by 1 or 2 gun models representing 4 or 6 gun batteries (alternatively 2 or 3 gun models if more resilient batteries are desired and the models are available). Infantry and cavalry regiments should have varying numbers of stands to represent varying initial strengths but generally between 3 and 10 based on 10 company regiments and very weak regiments being formed into composite formations. A stand of horse or foot represents approx. 75 men.

Adjacent means a zone across a side of the zone in question. Diagonally touching (corner to corner) areas are not considered adjacent. Only a genius or charismatic leader influences zones diagonally touching the zone occupied. Movement, skirmishing or engaging such diagonal zones is possible under certain circumstances described under these options.

The local officers are assumed to be in control within each zone and therefore the formations and arrangement adopted by the troops do not affect their performance in these rules with the following exceptions:

- artillery is either limbered or unlimbered
- all regiments or batteries face one of the sides of the zone they are in

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The game uses a pack of playing cards; this should include two jokers as “wild cards” (54 cards). Aces are “1”, kings “13”. The deck supplies the hands held by the players and the top card of the discard pile is the current “live” card setting the suit or face value of the next card to be played.

Dice used are D6 and determine results from engagements, skirmishing, bombardment, saving throws and morale.

Cards are used for activating zones on the table and for assault bonuses in engagements.

2. Leaders:

The presence and influence of leaders (brigade, division and higher commanders) on the battlefield is represented by a contribution to the size and composition of your hand during your turn. They also contribute a bonus die if involved in an engagement.

Leaders move as cavalry.

They cannot be targeted by enemy skirmishing, bombardment or engaged. If they are the sole occupants of a zone entered by enemy troops they are immediately lost (captured or killed).

3. Turn Sequence:

- 3.1. The active player (usually the attacker for the first turn) adds cards to their hand from the player deck. The number of cards you draw is equal to the number of zones occupied by the troops of your army within the command radius of a leader. This is generally troops in the same or one of the 4 directly adjacent zones to a leader (5 potential zones in total). A very poor leader only influences troops in the same zone he occupies. A genius or charismatic leader can extend his influence across diagonals; influencing up to 9 zones altogether.
- 3.2. The active player selects a zone to be active by matching the suit or face value of the “live” card on top of the discard pile. He places his chosen activation card onto the discard pile; it becomes the new “live” card. The zone activated options are:
 - One **controlled** by his troops; this allows all within an occupied zone to undertake an action. To engage the card must be a picture card. The troops can undertake different actions.
 - Alternately it can be a **target** zone which would allow all within range to skirmish or bombard that zone or move into it if unoccupied by the enemy. To engage troops in the zone the card must be a picture card. Selecting a target zone allows co-ordinated action from multiple zones you occupy, however it

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also maximises the chances of your actions being interrupted by your opponent (see 3.3. Below)

- A **march** zone. Troops in it can move out of it, and troops can also move into it.

3.3. Interrupt. This is interference by the non-active player. After the active player nominates a zone and what actions he intends the non-active player may choose to interrupt those actions under circumstances as described below.

- **Delaying action:** If the **target** zone is occupied by the non-active player's troops then a higher value card played from the same suit as the activation card causes the activation to be cancelled. The target zone cannot be selected again this turn.
- **Defensive fire:** If any activated troops can be bombarded or skirmished with (or both) and a matching card (face value) played then those troops are fired at before their activation occurs. After receiving fire the troops affected still undertake their chosen action.
- **Countermeasure:** If either of the above circumstances applies and a **picture** card is played, either matching it in a different suit or exceeding it in the same suit then the activation is **stolen**. Instead of the active player's chosen activation the non-active player gets an activation of his choice (including engagement) for any zone. The original zone cannot be selected again this turn by the active player.

Individual regiments and batteries belonging to the active player can normally only be activated once per turn and perform one action in that turn (manoeuvre*, skirmish, bombard, engage or retire).

If the player is unable to activate any zone with the cards in his hand or wishes to forgo his turn he can discard up to one card per leader from his hand and pick up replacements.

The active player can end his turn after the first activation or continue using more cards from his hand to activate further zones.

The "live" card on top of the discard pile is changed with each card played. Even when the choice is made to discard and replenish cards the last card placed on the discard pile is worthy of consideration because of its influence on what can be played next. Jokers are very powerful: They are wild (so count as a picture card if desired). They have no face value so can only be matched by the other Joker and cannot be exceeded and any card can be played afterward as they remain wild on the discard pile.

* **exception:** troops that manoeuvre and finish in a zone with no enemy adjacent can be activated a second time but only to manoeuvre again

3.4. The other player becomes the active player and steps 3.1.-3.3. repeated.

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4. Activation options:

4.1 Manoeuvre:

All troops can manoeuvre freely except those with enemy cavalry or infantry facing them from an adjacent zone. In these circumstances they can only turn to face or instead select from engage, skirmish, bombard or retire.

Infantry can move into the zone they are facing, can change facing immediately before or after, can change facing a second time if no enemy occupied zones adjacent. They can move diagonally forward maintaining facing however this disallows any changes of facing and is not possible if the zone directly ahead is occupied.

Cavalry can move one or two zones forward. Can change facing once at any point. They can change facing a second time if no enemy occupied zones adjacent. One of their two zones can be diagonally forward maintaining facing however this disallows any changes of facing and is not possible if the zone directly ahead is occupied.

Artillery can move when limbered one or two zones forward, or limber and one zone forward, or move one zone forward and unlimber. The act of limbering or unlimbering can include a change of facing. Can change facing once per turn whether limbered or deployed. They can move diagonally forward one zone maintaining facing however this disallows any changes of facing but allows unlimbering however it is not possible if the zone directly ahead is occupied. Unlimbered guns cannot move to another zone but can change facing. Some terrain prevents artillery either entering or passing through.

4.2 Bombardment:

Attacks by deployed artillery

This must take place prior to any skirmishing or engagement of the target zone. Artillery can shoot through a zone if the zone is less than full i.e. if there is room for two more regiments in a zone then two batteries can shoot **through** it at a target in a zone beyond.

Union artillery can also shoot **over** friends if there is a change in elevation between the battery and its target and the friends are at the lower elevation. Confederate artillery had poor quality fuses and avoided overshooting because of this.

Roll 1D6 per battery. The whole target zone is bombarded. Bombardment range is up to two zones.

Rifled guns hit with a score of 3, 4, 5 or 6,

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Smooth-bores hit with 3, 4, 5 or 6 at 1 zone range

4, 5 or 6 at two zones

A six gun battery (2 (3) stands) that misses re-rolls.

Target priority: Bombardment is straight ahead at the zone immediately in front. Any friends in that zone prevent the battery from shooting unless they can shoot through or over them.

If still eligible to shoot but that zone is empty of foes then an adjacent zone left or right can be targeted still counting as a range of one zone.

If all these three zones are free of targets the range is extended to two zones straight ahead. If this zone is empty of targets then the zones to each side of it can be targeted unless the zones immediately in front of these two zones contain friends who prevent the battery from shooting unless they can shoot through or over them.

If a player registers any hits he rolls a further D6: 1 or 2 and he allocates hits to targets, 3-6 the recipient allocates his own hits. The receiving troops then attempt to save these hits.

Saving throws vary according to the weight and/or type of guns causing them:

All heavy guns and 12 pounder smooth-bores: 6

All light guns and 10 pounder rifles: 5 or 6

All hits not saved result in a stand permanently lost. Check morale for all units taking losses.

4.3 Skirmish:

Represents relatively long ranged fire by infantry or cavalry where there is no intention to force the enemy from ground he occupies. Where activation of a target zone is to skirmish deployed batteries of guns instead bombard prior to the skirmishing taking place (see bombardment above).

The zone to the firer's front is targeted. Any friends in that zone prevent regiments from shooting. If this zone is empty of friends or foes a zone to either side can be targeted.

Generally roll 1D6 per infantry regiment, 1D6 per Confederate cavalry regiment, 2D6 per Union cavalry regiment, however a minimum of 2D6 should be rolled. There is no distinction between mounted or dismounted cavalry, they are assumed to be arranged to best suit the circumstances.

Hit registered with each score of 6 or pair of 5's or 3x4's or 4x3's or 5x2's or 6x1's

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If a player registers any hits he rolls a further D6: 1 or 2 and he allocates hits to targets, 3-6 the recipient allocates his own hits. The receiving troops then attempt to save these hits.

Saving throws vary according to degree of cover:

Entrenched troops facing 3, 4, 5, or 6

Troops in other cover 4, 5 or 6

Others 5 or 6

Troops only count as in cover if facing those firing

Entrenchments have a facing that cannot be changed

All hits not saved result in a stand permanently lost. Check morale for all units taking losses.

4.4 Engage:

Close range firing and charges by foot and horse (assaults) intended to dislodge an enemy from his position (a single zone) and hopefully cause him to break and run. In engagements both sides fight seeking a decisive result. In order to engage enemies you must be able to move into the zone they occupy. Additional regiments (above 4 if an open zone, 3 if difficult terrain or 2 if very difficult) instead skirmish. Green troops cannot be selected to skirmish unless all those to engage are green. Deployed batteries in a *controlled* zone or in range of a *target* zone bombard in support instead of engaging if the target is eligible (see under 4.2 above).

- a) Add up the following to arrive at a combat value for each side involved in the assault.

Attacker:

1 per infantry stand

1 per cavalry stand if enemy cavalry or infantry present

2 per cavalry stand if only engaging artillery

(attacking artillery will bombard instead of engaging)

Face value of any cards from your hand you choose to play of same suit or face value as the "live" card in sequence as the "live" card changes with each bonus card played. The attacker plays all his bonus cards before the defender plays any.

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Defender:

1 per infantry or cavalry stand

2 per deployed artillery stand facing the attackers if defending a zone shared with cavalry or infantry

1 per artillery stand in all other circumstances (including limbered)

Face value of any cards from your hand you choose to play of same suit or face value as the "live" card in sequence as the "live" card changes with each bonus card played. You do this after seeing the cards being played by the attacker.

- b) Compare the two combat values arrived at in a).

The side with the lower combat value rolls 1D6 per facing regiment (or deployed battery if defending).

The side with the higher value also rolls 1D6 per facing regiment (or deployed battery if defending) if their combat value is not double or greater than the opponent's.

If double but less than treble roll 2D6 per facing regiment (or deployed battery if defending)

If treble or greater roll 3D6 per regiment (or deployed battery if defending)

Defending troops not facing the attacker do not contribute any dice.

Limbered artillery does not contribute any dice.

The attacker adds one D6 per defending regiment or battery not facing the attack

Either side adds 1D6 if it has any veteran infantry or cavalry involved

Either side adds 1D6 if a leader is present

- c) Each side registers a hit for every resulting 3, 4 or 5 and a double hit for every 6
- d) If a player registers any hits he rolls a further D6: 1 or 2 and he allocates hits to targets, 3-6 the recipient allocates his own hits. The receiving troops then attempt to save these hits.
- e) Saving throws vary according to the degree of cover and circumstances:

Entrenched defenders frontally: 3, 4, 5 or 6

Other defenders in cover: 4, 5 or 6

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Defenders in the open: 5 or 6

Attackers: 5 or 6

Troops only count as in cover if facing those engaging them

Entrenchments have a facing that cannot be changed.

- f) All hits not saved result in a stand permanently lost. Check morale for all units taking losses.
- g) Surviving troops on the defending side after the first round of an engagement not facing the attackers can immediately turn to face. Similarly surviving limbered artillery can immediately deploy facing the attackers or move one or two zones in any direction, remaining limbered and facing the direction they moved.

4.5 Retire:

Extricating your troops from a difficult situation.

This is different to manoeuvre in that it is 1 zone directly away from an adjacent enemy occupied zone where at least some of the enemy is infantry or cavalry facing them. If successful the troops will be facing the zone they retired away from. Those retiring can be facing or flanked by or have the enemy to their rear. The danger is that those retiring might decide to leave the colours whilst performing such a stressful action.

All those retiring are moved into the appropriate zone. A D6 is rolled by the other player, if a 1 or 2 results he picks a regiment or battery to take a morale test otherwise the owning player selects one. If it passes all is well. If it fails a base is removed and the procedure repeated (including the D6 roll described above; the same troops could be picked again by either player). While fails continue the tests continue, all the troops could "skedaddle". A single pass ends the process.

5. Allocating Losses:

Whether attacking or defending the arrangement of forces within a zone are matters for officers at regimental level making distribution of losses less predictable by higher command represented by the players.

A separate die roll determines which player allocates losses prior to any saving rolls being attempted. A roll of 1 or 2 allows the player causing the losses to determine the spread of losses otherwise their owner does the allocating. This die can be rolled with the hit dice as long as it is clearly different.

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Certain conditions restrict the choices made whoever is allocating:

- A regiment or battery cannot have allocated more losses than it has stands until every regiment or battery has at least one loss allocated.
- Veteran troops cannot have more losses allocated than experienced or green troops in the same zone.

6. Morale:

A regiment or battery taking losses (unsaved hits) from bombardment, skirmishing or engagement always checks its morale. They check their morale immediately after the losses are caused. Therefore more than one check can occur in a turn.

Some or all troops retiring (see 4.5) may have to test once, multiple times or not at all.

Roll 1D6. To pass its test it must achieve :

Green troops 6

Experienced troops 5 or 6

Veteran troops 4, 5 or 6

Troops that fail their test lose another stand immediately.

All troops on the defending side in an engagement that fail their morale test will disengage and move one zone directly away from the attackers still facing them. If this zone hasn't room for all the troops wanting to enter then those that can move do so (owner's choice) and the remainder remove an extra stand and remain in their original zone instead. Other troops left behind by disengaging troops can join them in their rearward movement or hold their position

The attacker in an engagement, **irrespective of his own losses**, will occupy an entirely vacated zone with every surviving regiment of his engaging force. If zone attacked is still occupied he can choose to immediately continue the assault if he caused the removal of at least one stand (fighting another engagement round immediately) or let the engagement end.

If the attacker did not cause a stand to be lost by the defender the engagement ends.

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7. Differentiating troop quality:

All artillery is veteran. Other veteran troops have their command stand at the right of a line or front of a column.

Experienced troops have their command stand in their midst, not at the ends of lines or front or rear of columns.

Green troops have their command stand at their left of a line or rear of a column.

All regiments that started as experienced become veteran when they are reduced to 1 or 2 stands. Green regiments become veteran when only their command stand remains.

8. Winning and losing:

Usually it should be obvious. If you've been driven from the high ground you've lost, if half your army has left the colours you've lost, if you've been repelled with heavy losses all along the line you've lost.

If you've been held or your attack has stalled you can try again tomorrow, or the day after that (Gettysburg).

Obviously there are lots of in between results where no advantage is sufficient to claim victory, or both sides can do so (Antietam).

If you get the win and lose less troops (as a percentage) than your opponent you've done better than the Confederacy did in the majority of its victories (Fredericksburg and Cold Harbor are the exceptions) so you should consider the result a major victory.

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9. Optional Rule – Fate

Sometimes troops or leaders performed beyond expectationsor worse. To allow for such random events without them dominating proceedings each player holds an extra card from a separate deck at the start of the battle. Card tokens can instead be used for this purpose as they cannot be confused with the main deck. This card is not part of his hand; instead it can influence play thus:

- If he has the corresponding card in hand then it counts as a Joker on his turn and can be played on any “live” card.
- If his opponent plays the corresponding card his activation can be interrupted by either a delaying action or defensive fire (player’s choice), or a countermeasure if a picture card. This is a choice; the fate card can be kept instead if desired.

Once used the fate card is discarded.

Additional fate cards are gained for each enemy regiment or battery destroyed (routed) during the battle.

10. Optional Rule – ammunition supply:

Running low on ammunition was a fairly regular feature of ACW battles. To reflect this issue use the following “bolt on” rules.

Whenever regiments are skirmishing all ones rolled are re-rolled. For every subsequent one a regiment has run low on ammunition and must replenish before any further skirmishing can be undertaken. Green regiments run low before experienced and experienced before veteran. This does not affect engagements

Whenever guns bombard at a range of two zones all ones rolled are re-rolled. If another one results a battery has run low on ammunition and must replenish before any further two zone range targets can be bombarded.

A store of ammunition should be placed in a rear zone for your command (representing the camp, HQ etc). This zone can be activated and all troops short of ammo within that command are replenished. Otherwise if their own zone is activated troops short of ammunition can replenish as their chosen action.

11. Optional Rule – enthusiastic troops:

A phrase used during the war to describe your first action was “seeing the elephant”. After this a lot of the troops’ enthusiasm for gallant charges sweeping all before them evaporated to be progressively replaced by a willingness to shoot until you ran out of ammunition without ever really forcing the issue.

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This optional rule prevents skirmishing by green troops; instead they **always** engage, even if accompanied by more experienced troops. Therefore the skirmishing fire of friends sharing their zone is immediately followed by an engagement initiated by the green regiments sharing the same zone.

Since this occurs whether the commander wishes it or not the trick is to make use of it.

12. Optional Rule – pre-battle manoeuvring:

The following system represents in an abstract way the scouting and skirmishing in the 7 days leading up to the battle. These actions were often cavalry affairs and in part explain why so little cavalry was present on the battlefields. A series of dice battles generate an attacker and a defender from two armies evenly matched prior to this process. The defender will have units either low on numbers from dropping out whilst forced marching to the battlefield or starting off table; still on their way to the sound of the guns.

12.1 Each side distributes 22 dice across the 7 days to represent their efforts to find out what the enemy is up to and where he is. Each day must have at least one die and no more than 6. See suggested allocation in the first row of the pre-battle table below.

E.g.

	Monday	Tuesday	Weds.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Dice allocation (22 total)	3	3	4	3	3	3	3
Scouting successes (6's)							
Skirmish successes (outscoring opponent's dice)							

12.2 Procedure:

Monday: Both sides roll their dice allocation and record the number of 6's. These sixes represent each side's knowledge gained of their opponent's movements and are either accumulated and carried forward to ascertain the attacker in 12.3 below **or** can instead become 3d6 added to the allocated dice for the following day's actions **plus** a card from the deck as a bonus to their initial hand. This choice is made immediately.

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Both sides then arrange the same dice from highest to lowest score and compare with their opponent's dice to represent the skirmishes between probing cavalry and others along the routes of march. The pairs of dice will generate wins, losses or draws for each side. Where one side has unopposed dice these are ignored; they are not extra wins. If one side has more wins they gain an extra 3D6 for the following days actions.

Tuesday: Both sides roll their allocated dice plus 3d6 for any scouting success dice not set aside and accumulated, plus 3D6 if they won the previous day's skirmishing.

Both sides calculate their scouting and skirmishing success as Monday.

Wednesday – Saturday are repeats of Tuesday

Sunday: Scouting and skirmishing is assessed as previous days. Scouting 6's have to be set aside or taken as bonus cards. Winning the skirmish on Sunday allows a bonus roll of 3D6 immediately prior to calculating the winner of the overall pre-battle phase. Any 6's are added to the number of accumulated 6's set aside from Monday – Sunday's scouting operations.

12.3 Winning the pre-battle phase:

Each side's accumulated 6's set aside (including any bonus 6's from the 3D6 rolled for winning the Sunday skirmish) are compared. The side with the higher total is the attacker. If a draw the side that won Sunday's skirmish is the attacker. If neither won Sunday's skirmish the side with the most cavalry regiments is the attacker. If both sides are equal in cavalry the Confederates are the attacker.

One point is now added to the winning margin for every cavalry regiment in the attacking army. With this total consult the day of battle table in 12.4 below.

12.4 The day of battle:

The attacker deploys all his troops in his first row of zones.

The defender now deploys all his troops in his first three rows of zones.

The defender now uses the table below to ascertain whether his whole army is deployed as he would wish in time to meet the attack:

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Winning margin from 12.3	Number of D6 rolled per unit of defender				
	Cavalry	Green infantry	Experienced infantry	Veteran infantry	Artillery
0-5	4	5	4	3	2
6-14	5	6	5	4	2
15-30	6	7	6	5	2
31+	7	8	7	6	2

Every regiment and battery on the defending side is rolled for using the number of dice indicated.

Every 6 rolled indicates a stand has straggled. If the unit is left in place the straggling stands are removed **permanently** and will not feature in the battle. **Alternatively** you can choose to remove the whole unit in which case it is considered to still be en-route to the battle, marching to the sound of the guns, and will appear in full strength as reinforcements (hopefully) whilst the battle is in progress.

12.5 Reinforcements:

Every turn the defender has three choices prior to playing any activation cards;

- He can bring on **one** unit of reinforcements into any zone (free of enemy and not already at its limit with friends) in his first row
- He can bring on one unit along a road into a table edge zone in any of his first three rows and roll a single D6; two more reinforcement units will join it on a score of 6
- He can roll a single D6. On a score of 6 all his reinforcements will arrive together in his first row of zones. If there is insufficient room for all off-table reinforcements to arrive any surplus is **permanently lost**.

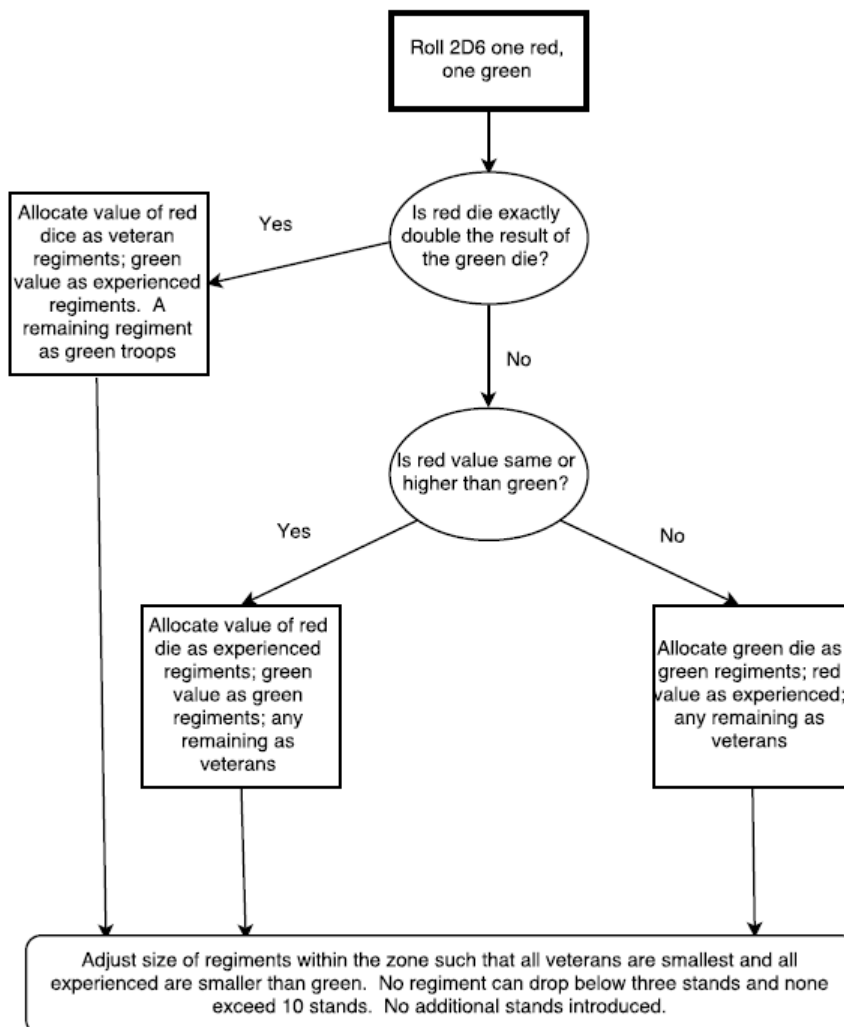
Reinforcements are always chosen from those available by the player. Any permanently lost are also chosen by the player.

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13. Optional Rule - Troop quality generation:

Commanders were generally not fully aware of the quality of all the troops they commanded. The confederates fed replacements into existing regiments as and when available. The Union preferred to form new regiments from an experienced kernel of men from regiments disbanded due to dwindling numbers. Both sides occasionally combined weak regiments in the field. These processes produced troops prone to unpredictable behaviour in their next battle.

The following flow chart enables troop quality for infantry and cavalry regiments to be quickly generated after deployment. The first die is allocated in full before moving onto the second die and then any remainder. No stands of troops are added or removed by this process within any zone but stands may need to be moved from one regiment to another. Any lack of uniformity generated by this is entirely appropriate.



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14. Optional Rule - Differentiating leadership responsibilities:

When assessing the number of cards to be added to the active players hand use the system described in 3.1. only for Brigadier level leaders. For Divisional level leaders collect a card for each Brigadier they have within a cavalry move. For Corps Commanders collect a card for each Divisional Commander they have within a cavalry move.

All the normal manoeuvre restrictions apply to these qualifying cavalry moves except they can pass through zones filled with friendly troops.

However the more senior levels of command can instead perform the role of Brigade level staff if this will create more cards. This is a player choice.