The Lord of Hosts Battlesystem

War is a force that gives us meaning. The clashing of armies has the power to rewrite national boundaries and change the course of history. While the standard combat rules of Dungeons & Dragons can handle fights of up to a few dozen, they struggle to adequately handle true mass combat.

The *Lord of Hosts Battlesystem* builds on the standard combat rules to model larger scale battles, from dozens to hundreds to thousands, while still enabling individual adventurers to lead an army's charge against an enemy regiment, rally dispirited soldiers to rejoin the fray, or defeat powerful enemy creatures.

In most cases, when two armies oppose one another, the DM serves as the general for one side, and the players serve as generals for the opposing force. These leaders direct the soldiers that make up their armies, and everyone at the table might also represent individual champions (such as the PCs and important NPCs) who are capable of turning the tide of battle all by themselves.

Battlefield Units

To make managing dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of creatures at a time easier, similar creatures are organized into units. A unit might be a small squadron of 10, a company of hundreds, or a battalion of thousands of individuals. Each unit acts together on the battlefield, fighting until they are victorious, destroyed, or flee, succumbing to broken morale.

Each unit may have a commander, though it can also operate without one. Commanders play a key role in resolving battles, and their Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma might be what stands between victory and defeat.

Building a Unit

Units consist of similar creatures, for example 15 **goblins** or 6000 **star spawn manglers**. In general, units are organized in sizes according to the scale of the combat being played out. The scale of a battle impacts how big of a map to use and the length of a round of combat. Refer to the Battlesystem Scale Table to determine appropriate map scales, combat round lengths, and unit starting sizes.

Battlesystem Scale Table

Square/Hex Size	Time of Combat Round	# of Creatures per Unit
25 ft.	30 seconds	15
50 ft.	1 minute	60
100 ft.	2 minutes	240
250 ft.	5 minutes	1500
500 ft.	10 minutes	6000

The starting size is the number of creatures a unit begins the battle with. As a unit takes damage, the number of surviving creatures will shrink. Starting size is like a unit's maximum hit points, while surviving creatures is like a unit's current hit points. Note these numbers - they will impact when the unit makes morale checks and will be refered to throughout the battle.

A unit of creatures with a starting size equal to the number of creatures per unit shown in the Battlesystem Scale Table occupies the same space on a battle grid that a single creature would occupy on a 5ft grid.

Resolving Actions

When operating as a unit, the unit's creatures make a single initiative roll and act together as one, using the same stats and abilities as of the single creature. If a creature has an ability that requires an ally to be nearby, such as *Pack Tactics*, that ability is active for all creatures within the unit.

All rolls other than initiative are resolved using these modified mob rules.

Modified Mob Rules
- Whenever a unit of identical creatures makes a roll (attack roll, ability check, saving throw, etc.), make a roll as if for a single creature.
- Divide the unit's surviving creatures into three roughly equal sections.
- One section rolls this number, one section rolls this with a +5 bonus, and one section rolls this with -5 penalty.

If a unit's actions result in making damage rolls, use average damage or roll damage as if for a single creature, then multiply that number by the number of creatures that scored a hit. The same applies for healing.

Example: a unit of 14 **drow** attacks an enemy unit of **svirfneblin** (AC 15) with their shortswords. The player makes an attack roll and rolls an 11 on the die, with a +4 that attack bonus that results in a 15 to hit. 5 **drow** hit with a 15, 5 more hit with an unnatural 20, and the last 4 miss with a 10. The player rolls damage and gets 8, multiplied by 10 creatures that hit equals 80 points of damage dealt to the enemy unit.

Advantage and disadvantage can apply to these rolls as circumstances favor or disfavor the entire unit. Critical Hits and Critical Fails apply to the entire unit as well. If a player rolls a natural 20 on an attack roll, every creature in the unit hits the target and deals critical damage. If a player rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll, every creature in the unit misses the target regardless of their other modifiers.

Durations of Spells and Other Abilities

When casting spells or using creature abilities with lingering effects during mass combat, like a **ghoul's** paralyzing claws, the duration of these effects is measured in combat rounds.

Spells and abilties that have a duration of Instantaneous or until next turn happen immediately or last until the next turn, even though the time scale of combat turns is longer. Spells with a duration of a minute or longer instead have a duration in combat rounds equal to the number of minutes times ten.

> **Example:** a unit of **Priests** who cast *spirit guardians* (with a 10 minute duration) have a spell duration of 100 combat rounds regardless of the time scale. Likewise, a single PC warlock who casts *armor of Agathys* (1 hour duration) now enjoys a duration of 600 combat rounds regardless of time scale.

The potential lengthening of spell and ability durations represents the combatants drawing on otherwise hidden stores of magic to rise to the need of their comrades and the heightened challenges of warfare.

Casting Times

Spells that require a longer casting time have their casting time measured in rounds in a similar manner. Spells with a casting time of a minute or longer instead have a casting time in combat rounds equal to the number of minutes times ten.

Tracking Damage Done to a Unit

While each unit uses the statblock of its component creature, the DM and players should round the creatures' average hit points to the nearest 5 or 10. Write down the hit points of a single creature in the unit next to the unit's starting size.

> **Tip!** Adjust the creatures' average hit points up or down to reflect how the combatants have been treated by their allies and commanders, their general health and condition, the stakes of the battle, their investment in the outcome, and any other factors that you think should play a role.

Tally the damage inflicted to the unit as a whole instead of the damage dealt to individual creatures. Assume that every hit targets the most damaged individual. When the damage tally is enough to kill one or more individuals in the unit, remove them from the number of surviving creatures, reset the damage tally to zero, and carry over extra damage.

If a unit has an ability that allows it to drop to 1 hp instead of 0 hp, like *Undead Fortitude* or the *death ward* spell, determine how many individuals are affected by this ability and track those survivors separately as a sub-unit of the main force. This sub-unit is identical to the main unit except for the damage threshhold to kill an individual. Assume that attacks target this sub-unit first, before the main unit.

If a unit receives any healing, apply the healing to the damage tally of the unit as a whole. If multiple creatures within the unit will benefit from healing, multiply the healing by the number of creatures that benefit. If the healing is enough to completely heal one or more individuals in the unit, add them back to the number of surviving creatures, carrying over any extra healing. A unit can never have more surviving creatures than its starting size.

If a unit receives temporary hit points, determine how many creatures within the unit will benefit. Multiply the temporary hit points by the number of creatures that will benefit. These are the unit's temporary hit points and serve as a buffer against damage. The temporary hit points are lost first and any leftover damage is applied to the unit's damage tally.

Movement, Reach, and Range

A unit can occupy an individual creature's space and vice versa, but not the space of another unit. A unit can also move through any opening large enough for one of its individual creatures.

When using a grid, the speed of a unit's movement is measured in squares, and is equal to the speed of an individual creature divided by 5. To translate this speed into feet, multiply the size of the squares/hexes by the unit's movement speed.

> **Example:** a unit of **hobgoblins** have an individual speed of 30 feet, resulting in a unit movement speed of 6 spaces, regardless of the size of those spaces. In a single round, the unit can move 150 ft. in a battle using a 25 ft. scale or 3000 ft. in a battle using a 500 ft. scale.

A unit can make a melee or ranged attack against an enemy if any part of the unit is within reach or range (respectively) of the target. Likewise, a unit of spellcasters can use their spells to target any point that is within range of any part of the unit. If a spell's area of effect covers any part of an enemy unit, the entire enemy unit is affected.

Areas of Effect and Conditions

TAE Damage Multiplier

Some spells and creature abilities like a dragon's *Breath Weapon* attack are especially effective when used in mass combat. Their damage to a unit is multiplied based on how many targets could reasonably be caught in their area of effect. Use the Targets in Area of Effect Multiplier table to adjust damage from area of effect spells and creature abilities. The damage multiplier represents the number of small or medium sized combatants that are caught in an area of effect. Players running spell casting units or units of creatures with similar abilities may want to jot down the TAE damage multipliers for their commonly used spells and abilities.

Targets in Area of Effect Multiplier

Area	TAE Damage Multiplier
Cone	Size ÷ 10 (round up)
Cube or square	Size ÷ 5 (round up)
Cylinder	Radius ÷ 5 (round up)
Line	Length ÷ 30 (round up)
Sphere or circle	Radius ÷ 5 (round up)

Size Damage Modifier

If the targets of an area of effect spell or ability are of a size other than small or medium, modify the rounded result of the TAE damage multiplier by the modifier listed in the Size Damage Modifier Table.

Size Damage Modifier

Size of Creatures in Unit	Size Damage Modifier
Tiny	x 2 (round up)
Small/Medium	--
Large	÷ 2 (round up)
Huge	÷ 3 (round up)
Gargantuan	÷ 4 (round up)

Saving Throws and Conditions

When a spell or ability requires a targeted creature to make a saving throw, the entire unit makes a saving throw using the modified mob rules above. When a unit makes a saving throw to save for half damage or no damage, the total damage dealt is reduced the amount shown in the Battlesystem Saving Throw Effects Table. If a spell or ability imposes a condition, a unit is only affected by that condition if the condition affects more than 50% of the unit.

If a unit is forced to make a saving throw based on the amount of damage they have received, like a concentration check, use the damage of a single attack, before TAE multipliers and size modifiers, to determine the save DC.

Battlesystem Saving Throw Effects

# of Unit Sections that Save	For Half Damage	For No Damage	Against a Condition or Effect
0	Full Damage	Full Damage	Unit Affected
1	Damage Reduced by 1/6	Damage Reduced by 1/3	Unit Affected
2	Damage Reduced by 1/3	Damage Reduced by 2/3	Unit Not Affected
3	Damage Reduced by 1/2	Damage Reduced to 0	Unit Not Affected

Example 1: a single PC wizard directs *burning hands* (a 15-foot cone) at a nearby unit of 60 medium **zombies**. The **zombies** make a saving throw and 1/3 (20) of them succeed, while 2/3 (40) of them fail. Using the TAE Multiplier table, we can say that two **zombies** are actually targeted (15 ÷ 10 = 1.5, rounded up to 2). The wizard rolls damage (3d6) and gets 11, then multiplies that by two to get 22 damage. Since 1/3 of the **zombies** succeeded on the saving throw, the damage to the unit is reduced by 1/6. 1/6 of 22 is 3.67, round down by the general rule to 3. So the total damage from the wizard's spell to the unit is 19 (22 - 3).

Example 2: a unit with ten surviving **archmages** could launch a barrage of *lightning bolts* (100-foot line) at a unit of 15 large **ogres**. Using the TAE Multiplier and Size Damage Modifier tables, we can say that two of the **ogres** are targeted by each **archmage** (100 ÷ 30 = 3.33, rounded up to 4 ÷ 2 due to large size = 2). The **archmages** multiply the damage from their *lightning bolts* by 2 (8d6 rolled got 28 x 2 = 56 damage per spell x 10 sorcerers = 560 total damage). The **ogres** rolled poorly on their saving throw and none saved, so their unit takes the full 560 points of damage, likely killing 9 of them.

Commanders

A commander is a significant creature on the battlefield—usually a player character or a powerful NPC or monster. These individuals may operate independently on the battlefield, but are most effective when they are appointed to a unit.

At the begininng of a mass combat, determine who the commanders are and whether they begin the fight independent or appointed to a unit. Commanders roll their own initiative and retain their place in the initiative order even when joined to a unit. While appointed to a unit a commander shares their unit's space and moves with them on their turn, but takes actions on their own turn. A commander maintains their own statistics and makes their own attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Protected and Protector

As a part of a unit, a commander both protects and is protected by their allies. When a creature the commander can see makes an attack, the commander can alter the target of that attack, but must do so before the attack roll is made. An attack that targets their unit can be made to target the commander. Vice versa, when the commander is targeted, they can choose to make the unit the target instead. Finally, any time the unit is dealt damage, the commander can choose to redirect any amount of that damage to themself.

When a commander's unit is subjected to a spell or ability that forces a saving throw, the commander is not necessarily affected. Only if the ability has an area of effect which covers 50% or more of the unit's space is the commander affected. Then they must make the saving throw.

If a commander's unit is eliminated, even if the commander was the original intended target of the attack, the commander remains in play. A newly unattached commander can immediately join an adjacent unit without a commander or remain unattached and occupy part of the space the unit formerly occupied.

If a commander is dropped to 0 hit points and forced to make death saves, they make a single save each combat round.

> **Example:** Freyja is a PC with 40hp and an AC 16 is commanding a unit of 20 **pixies**. A single **pixie** has AC 15 and 15hp. Freyja's unit is targeted by the attacks of a unit of 9 **stirges**. Freyja doesn't like the risk of taking all the attacks themself, so lets the unit of pixies be targeted. Six **stirges** roll 15 or better and hit the **pixies**, dealing a total of 30 points of damage. Now at the last minute Freyja steps in to protect their unit and redirects 20 points of that damage to themself. The end result is that the unit of **pixies** takes 10 points of damage, Freyja takes 20, and no **pixies** die in the process.

Commander Bonus Actions

When joined to a unit, a commander uses their Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma to guide their troops and bolster the strength and spirits of those in their charge.

A commander on the battlefield has six new options for their bonus action: Guard, Incite, Prepare, Rally, Reappoint, and Spur.

Guard

A commander can study their enemies and direct their unit in defensive maneuvers by making a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If they succeed, any attack roll made against the unit by an attacker the commander can see has disadvantage until the end of the commander's next turn.

Incite

A commander can try to inspire the soldiers of their unit to greater effort by making a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. If they succeed, the unit makes all attack rolls and ability checks with advantage until the end of the commander's next turn.

Prepare

A commander can order their unit to be more wary by making a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. If they succeed, the unit makes all saving throws with advantage until the end of the commander's next turn.

Rally

A commander can steel the nerve of their troops by rallying them to the fight and making a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. If they succeed, the unit makes all morale checks with advantage until the end of the commander's next turn. Whether the commander succeeds or fails, a broken unit can make a new morale check at the beginning of its turn. (See *Check Morale*.)

Reappoint

A commander leaves their unit and becomes independent, or a commander joins a unit without a commander.

Spur

A commander can order their unit to move more quickly across the battlefield by making a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. If they succeed, the unit can use its reaction to move up to its speed.

Special Unit Action

Reinforce

As an action, a unit can reinforce an adjacent unit of similar creatures. These reinforcements renew the resolve of their allies, reversing the effects of a failed morale check and resetting the sarting size of the unit to the sum of surviving creatures in the two units. The reinforcing unit loses its turn in combat and is joined to the space of the other unit, as the two units meld into one.

If either unit has a commander, that commander is appointed over the joined force. If both units have a commander, the commanders decide which one stays with the newly reinforced unit. The other commander immediately leaves the unit.

Check Morale

Few soldiers want to die. After a unit suffers significant losses, the survivors might lose their nerve for battle. Rather than stay and fight, the rest of the unit tries to run away.

Any time the rules call for a morale check, the unit must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw.

Half-Strength

The first time that a unit is reduced to less than half of its starting size it must immediately check morale.

Friendly Casualties

If a friendly unit within sight of the unit is destroyed or broken, the unit must immediately check morale.

A Commander Falls

If a unit's appointed commander is reduced to 0 hit points during the battle, the unit must immediately check morale.

Failing a Morale Check

If more than 50% of the unit fails the morale check, the unit becomes broken. For the rest of the battle, a broken unit must spend its turns trying to move as far away from enemy units as it can. It also can't take Reactions. For its action, the unit can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there is nowhere to move, the unit can use the Dodge action.

A commander is never broken. They can decide to move with a broken unit or immediately leave the unit at the start of any of the unit's turns.

Rally

If a broken unit has a commander, the unit has a chance to rally at the start of its turn. If the unit has been called to rally by its commander taking the Rally bonus action, it makes a new morale check at the start of its turn, potentially with advantage. If the unit succeeds, it is no longer broken. It takes the rest of its turn as normal.