

Pirates of the Blood Main

A cinematic fantasy ship combat system for GURPS by Pythagoras

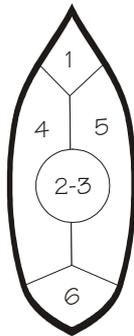
Introduction

These rules present a fast and fun naval combat system. For navy enthusiasts, a word of warning: my naval knowledge is based on watching campy pirate movies and I frankly cannot even tell Port from Starboard. Thus, these rules are intended for cinematic pirate battles as opposed to realistic naval engagements.

These rules allow for a stand-alone game but are intended to be used in the context of GURPS. For this reason, skills range from about 6 (unskilled) to 20 (elite) and are resolved by rolling 3d6 equal or less the skill value to succeed.

The Ship Sheet

The ship sheet shows a representation of the ship. There are several zones, as shown in the diagram below:



The number in each of sections represents the hit propability. Small ships use one die to determine locations, larger ones use two, three, or four dice. Each section can contain equipment, crew, or cargo. The content of a section is shown in a special table:

| | |
|--------|-----------|
| HP: 30 | |
| DR: | |
| 1 | Waterline |
| 2 | Waterline |
| 3 | Waterline |
| 4 | Waterline |
| 5 | |
| 6 | |

The box at the top shows the hit points and the armour (DR) of the section (multiplied by 10 to get to personal scale). The table below shows the contents of this section. Cargo uses up one or more slots as described. The section shown in the example has only two slots. If this section is hit, a d6 is rolled; if any of the equipment is hit, it is disabled. Hits at or under the waterline (labeled waterline in the table), deal normal damage but are also recorded separately, as these hits require parts of the crew to prevent the ship from sinking until a port can be reached. If a slot is labeled 'Crew Hit', the crew is reduced by one team (each team represent about 5 men). Some weapons are optimized to deal crew damage and will reduce the crew by more than this value.



The speed of a ship depends on the direction of the wind and on the number of its intact masts. Each ship has a table such as the one below to determine speed:

| | One Mast |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Speed with the wind | 5 |
| Speed orthogonal to wind | 3 |
| Speed against the wind | 1 |
| Speed with the storm | 10 |
| Speed orthogonal to storm | 5 |
| Speed against the storm | -1 |
| Turns per round | 3 |
| Manoeuvrability | 0 |

The details of this table are explained below. If masts are lost, the speed and handling of the ship decreases.

The last two remaining tables on the sheet represent the number of crew needed to keep the ship floating if damage beneath the waterline has been sustained and the other lists the weapons the ship has.

Skills Required

There are several GURPS skills which are needed in the context of this game. This section lists these skills for each of the command crew members (these do not count as part of the crew and cannot be killed by crew hits - that would be a boring death for a hero).



The Captain

The captain should have the skills of seamanship (to know his way around the ship), shiphandling (for manoeuvres), tactics (to outsmart the enemy), and possibly merchant.

The First Mate

The first mate has the same skills as the captain (at a lesser level) to replace him

during night shifts etc. He should also have freight handling and possibly boating.

Navigator

The navigator has the skills of navigation and meteorology.

Chief Gunner

The chief gunner coordinates all attacks. He needs the gunner skill but also a capable gunnery crew.

Crew

The crew needs the skills of seamanship, boating, and gunner. The gunner skill of the crew is capped by the chief gunner, whereas the the shiphandling skill of the captain is capped by the seamanship skill of the crew. Crew might also have various combat skills although for the purpose of boarding actions, these are averaged to a single value: boarding.

Combat

When two hostile forces meet, combat ensues. Normally, the direction of the wind should already be known, otherwise, use some random means to determine it. Each combat round represents one minute of time.

Order of Acting

The ship with the highest speed acts first. If two ships have the same speed, a quick contest of tactics or seamanship determines who goes first. The order of acting is determined every round (unlike in the standard GURPS game).

Actions

Unlike in personal combat there are not many stances to take. Basically, a ship can move (see movement) and each team of crew can perform one action. The following actions are possible:

- **Fire Guns:** one group of guns is fired by the crewmen. Treat this as a normal attack. Note that the guns are limited to one side of the ship and are thus limited to a 90° fire arc.
- **Reload Guns:** The reloading of a group of guns takes one round.
- **Remove/Raise Sails:** This actions allows the ship to reduce/increase speed. Basically, each mast can either be under sails or not, effecting the movement appropriately. To remove a sail, a seamanship+5 roll is required by the crew, otherwise, a retry is needed next turn. Raising sails is more complicated, requiring a seamanship+2. Damaged masts (HP less than 1/2 of the original value) cause an additional -4 modifier to both rolls.
- **Work at Pumps:** If the ship has sustained damage beneath the waterline, a certain number of crew members is required to keep the ship from sinking (see Damage section).

Movement

Your movement speed depends on your bearing with regard to the wind and the number of intact and used masts. These are the number of hexes you may move during this turn.

| One Mast | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Speed with the wind | 5 |
| Speed orthogonal to wind | 3 |
| Speed against the wind | 1 |
| Speed with the storm | 10 |
| Speed orthogonal to storm | 5 |
| Speed against the storm | -1 |
| Turns per round | 3 |
| Manoeuvrability | 0 |

If you wish to go less hexes, you have to roll a shiphandling roll modified by Manoeuvrability (with an additional -5 during a storm) and you can reduce the number of hexes by the Margin of Success (but you have to move a minimum of one hex while under sails).

The number of hexsides you may turn during a round is also given. If more than one turn is made, one (and only one) of them has to be at the start of your movement. If three or more are made, exactly one turn has to made at the beginning and exactly one at the end of your movement with the other ones taken at will.

Ramming

If you enter the hex of a ship during your move and either of the captains is eager to provoke a collision, make an opposed shiphandling roll, adding manoeuvrability. The winner decides whether a collision occurs. A ship that has its bow pointing towards the other ship deals 1d6 points of damage per hex moved in a straight line. Thus, a head-on crash will deal substantial damage to both ships (adding up their velocities). The ship(s) hit by the side of the opposing ship merely take 1d6 points of damage per 4 hexes of straight movement. If ships end up side by side, boarding action may take place.

Boarding Actions

If PCs are actively involved in a boarding action, play it out as a normal combat, treating crew as "goons" (i.e. die from any damage, do not defend etc.). Otherwise pair up crew teams from each side taking turns (let an opposed tactics roll decide which side has to put out the first team) and make opposed "boarding" rolls. The side which wins might destroy the enemy. A MoS of 5 or more means that the enemy has been crushed. A lesser MoS means that the team gets +1 on its next check, next round (cummulative). Teams that do not face enemies may take normal duties or can support fighting, granting one the fighting team a +2 on its roll.

Example: A ship with 3 crew teams ("Pirates") boards a ship with 2 crew

teams ("Elven Navy"). The Pirates have one team that has boarding 15 and 2 with boarding 12. The Elves have one 15er and one 13er team. The tactics roll gives the Pirates the initiative. Thus, the elves put out their 15er team first. The Pirates decide to match a team w/ strength 12 against it. Now the Pirates deploy their team of strength 15 and the elves have to react and so on, until all teams of the smaller crew are paired with opponents. Now support crew may be added by the larger crew.

Cannon Attacks

Cannon attacks are normal GURPS attacks but due to the longer time of a round, the Acc bonus is always added. For simplicity reasons, there is no range modifier. The hit location is determined at random, however, if ships are 2 or less hexes apart, a section may be targeted at a -2 to hit.

Damage & Hit Locations

Some effects of damage have already been explained in the section on the ship sheet. However, there are additional effects, which should be discussed here.

Critical Hits

When a section is hit, there is a chance that some part of the ship will be damaged. If no damage penetrates through the hull plating, there is only a 1 in 6 chance for critical damage to be rolled on the appropriate section table. If damage penetrates, you always roll for critical damage.

Destroying a Location

If a location is reduced to zero or less hitpoints, its content can no longer be used. Once it is a -1*HP, it is completely destroyed.

Sinking a Ship

If any of the sections containing a waterline entry is completely destroyed, the ship sinks immediately. Crew sections which pass a seamanship test +2 survive, possibly within a lifeboat. PC crewmembers have to take this test as well and take 1d6 points of damage per Margin of Failure. If they are still conscious, they can try another roll to get off board.

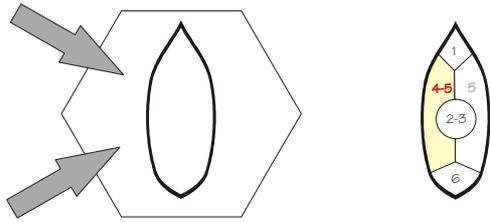
Another way to sink a ship is to deal enough damage to below the waterline. The "Damage Beneath the Waterline" table shows the time it takes the ship to sink:

| Damage beneath the Waterline | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| HP lost | Crew at Pumps | Time to Sink |
| up to 20 | 1 | 10 |
| | 2 | save |
| 21-40 | 1 | 5 |
| | 2 | 10 |
| | 3 | save |
| 41-60 | 1 | 2 |
| | 2 | 5 |
| | 3 | 10 |
| | 4 | save |
| 60+ | 4 | 2 |

For example, in the case of this particular ship, if the ship has taken 26 points of damage below the waterline, 3 crew teams have to work at the pumps to keep it from sinking. If only two teams are available, the ship will sink in 10 turns, possibly enough time to reach an island or to board another ship. Should the number of crew teams at the pumps be reduced, compute the percentage of time already elapsed and convert to the new crew team category.

Random Locations

Random locations are rolled using the table representing the ship on the ship sheet. However, this table is modified depending on the relative bearing of the ships.



If the ship is attacked from the side, the opposing flank of the ship will not take damage, i.e., a roll indicating a hit to that section (a roll of 5 in the example figure), will lead to the corresponding section on the other side to be damaged (as indicated by the modified hit location value in red).

Similarly, an attack from the bow cannot hit the stern. Masts are not affected by this rule, they are assumed to be visible from all sides.

Targeting Locations

As mentioned in the attack section, targeting a hit location is only possible at a range of 2 or less. Any section can be targeted, if it is visible (as explained in the previous section), at a penalty of -2 to the roll.

Crew

Human Crews

Human crews come from very different cultures. Many humans have been sailors for most of their lives and are capable crewmen.

| Ranking | Seamanship | Gunnery | Boarding |
|-------------|------------|---------|----------|
| Green | 10 | 9 | 9 |
| Fair | 11 | 10 | 10 |
| Routine | 12 | 11 | 11 |
| Experienced | 14 | 13 | 13 |
| Veteran | 16 | 15 | 15 |
| Elite | 18 | 18 | 18 |

Elven Crews

The Elven Island of Athalanteion is renowned as one of the premier seafaring nations and the crew skills reflect this. A ship with elven sailors can count itself

blessed but unfortunately, elves seldom work for other races.

| Ranking | Seamanship | Gunnery | Boarding |
|-------------|------------|---------|----------|
| Green | 12 | 9 | 9 |
| Fair | 13 | 10 | 10 |
| Routine | 14 | 11 | 11 |
| Experienced | 16 | 13 | 13 |
| Veteran | 18 | 15 | 15 |
| Elite | 20 | 18 | 18 |

Dwarven Crews

Since the fall of the great Dwarfholds, the race of the dwarves is in steady decline, earning their money as mercenaries for the less stricken races. While dwarves hate the sea, their supreme gunnery skills make them valuable crewmembers.

| Ranking | Seamanship | Gunnery | Boarding |
|-------------|------------|---------|----------|
| Green | 8 | 11 | 9 |
| Fair | 9 | 12 | 10 |
| Routine | 10 | 13 | 12 |
| Experienced | 11 | 15 | 14 |
| Veteran | 12 | 18 | 16 |
| Elite | 15 | 20 | 18 |

Goblinoid Crews

Goblinoids consists of orcs, goblins, and other greenskin races. Normally living in loose tribes in the old world, some goblinoids have chosen a live on the sea. Orcs in particular make excellent marines. Also goblins are poor but enthusiastic gunners and those that survive some time can become quite skilled after all.

| Ranking | Seamanship | Gunnery | Boarding |
|-------------|------------|---------|----------|
| Green | 7 | 4 | 10 |
| Fair | 8 | 8 | 11 |
| Routine | 9 | 11 | 12 |
| Experienced | 10 | 13 | 15 |
| Veteran | 11 | 15 | 17 |
| Elite | 13 | 17 | 19 |

Equipment

There are tons of special equipment available for pirate ships. These are just a few items that might come in useful:

Armor Plating

Ship sections may be reinforced with armour plating. Plating takes up no slots in a section but only one plating can be applied per section. A mast cannot be armoured with anything above iron bands.

| Plating | DR |
|---------------|----|
| None | 0 |
| Hardened Wood | 1 |
| Iron Studs | 2 |
| Iron Bands | 3 |
| Iron Plates | 7 |
| Steel Plates | 10 |

Cannons

These are basic cannons, each of which takes up one slot in a particular section. The cannon stats are described in the table below.

Cannons

Cannons are the typical gear seen in pirate movies. They come in different sizes and are relatively easy to obtain.

Dwarven Cannons

Due to the Dwarves' intimate knowledge of alloys, these guns have greater ranges and better accuracy. However, only dwarves know how to operate these marvels of engineering, other races use these guns at -4.

Elven Scorpion

While the Elven Scorpion is relatively weak when compared to cannons of all kinds, it is still quite good against unarmoured ships and also does not take an additional round to be reloaded.

Doom Cannon

| Weapons | | | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|---------|-----------|-----|-------|-----|--------------------|
| Name | # Crew | # Slots | Damage | Acc | Range | RoF | Notes |
| Small Cannon | 1 | 1 | 1d pi++ | 2 | 2/6 | 1 | |
| Medium Cannon | 1 | 1 | 2d pi++ | 1 | 3/9 | 1 | |
| Dwarven Sm. Can. | 1 | 1 | 1d+2 pi++ | 3 | 2/6 | 1 | requ. dwarven crew |
| Dwarven Md. Can. | 1 | 1 | 2d pi++ | 2 | 4/12 | 1 | requ. dwarven crew |
| Elven Scorpion | 1 | 1 | 1d-1 imp | 2 | 1/3 | 1 | free reload |
| Doom Cannon | 2 | 2 | 2d burn | 0 | 1/3 | 1 | double crew cas. |

The Doom Cannon spews flaming inferno at an enemy ship at short range. Any crew casualties are doubled.

Other Equipment

Fog Screen

This magical item takes up a slot in each of the sections of the ship and is destroyed if any one of them is hit. The fog screen surrounds the ship with a magical fog bank if so desired, reducing any attack rolls made on the ship by 2. The fog screen is an elven invention.

Reinforced Crew Section

This item takes up one slot in any section where it is installed. When a crew hit occurs in that section, the reinforcement is destroyed instead of the crew (regardless of how many crew teams would have been killed). If the section is hit during a critical roll, it is also destroyed.

Sail of Elemental Air

This magical sail takes up no slots but is destroyed when its corresponding mast is destroyed. The Sail grants +1 to movement if so desired.

Small Ship

HP: 30
DR:

1 **Waterline**
2 **Waterline**
3 **Waterline**
4 **Waterline**
5
6

HP: 30
DR:

1 **Waterline**
2 **Waterline**
3 **Crew Hit**
4
5
6

Waterline Dam.

SM

HP: 30
DR:

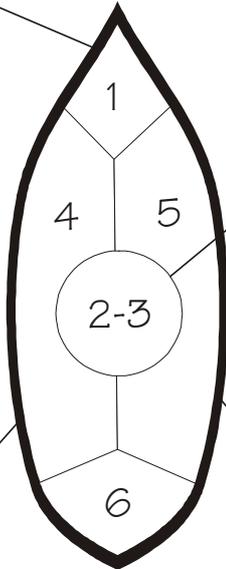
1 **Waterline**
2 **Waterline**
3 **Waterline**
4 **Waterline**
5 **Crew Hit**
6

One Mast

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Speed with the wind | 5 |
| Speed orthogonal to wind | 3 |
| Speed against the wind | 1 |
| Speed with the storm | 10 |
| Speed orthogonal to storm | 5 |
| Speed against the storm | -1 |
| Turns per round | 3 |
| Manoeuvrability | 0 |

Crew

4



HP: 10
DR:

HP: 30
DR:

1 **Waterline**
2 **Waterline**
3 **Crew Hit**
4
5
6

Damage beneath the Waterline

| HP lost | Crew at Pumps | Time to Sink |
|----------|---------------|--------------|
| up to 20 | 1 | 10 |
| | 2 | save |
| 21-40 | 1 | 5 |
| | 2 | 10 |
| | 3 | save |
| 41-60 | 1 | 2 |
| | 2 | 5 |
| | 3 | 10 |
| | 4 | save |
| 60+ | 4 | 2 |

| Weapons Name | # Crew | # Slots | Damage | Acc | Range | RoF | Notes |
|--------------|--------|---------|--------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |