

Above the Clouds

Rules for Large Battle Air Combat



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This set of rules is intended to allow players to quickly fight air battles using miniature models on a tabletop with a hex-grid. Each player should be able to control an element of two fighters easily, experienced player should have no problem controlling a flight of four fighter aircraft, making decisions and resolving combat in less than 10 minutes per turn.

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Basic Game Rules

The basic game covers air combat before the age of missiles, basically from the 1930s through the early 1950s.

Terms

Aircraft Performance Display (APD) – the information card with all the data appropriate to that aircraft's performance, firepower, and toughness. See the Examples book for an explanation of the APD.

Behind – any hex which is in the back arc of an aircraft's hex.

Beside – any hex which is in the side arc of an aircraft's hex.

In Front Of – any hex which is completely in the front arc of an aircraft's hex.

Forward – any hex which is completely in front of a line drawn along the center of the aircraft's hex (wing-tip to wing-tip).

Rearward – any hex which is completely behind a line drawn along the center of the aircraft's hex (wing-tip to wing-tip).

Crew Skill

Each aircraft is rated for its crew skill, which will be either *Trained*, *Experienced*, *Veteran*, *Ace* or *Legend*. A Crew's skill primarily determines when it maneuvers during a turn (lowest skills move first; higher skills move later).

Re-rolls

Veteran and higher skilled crews get to re-roll dice in certain circumstances. A re-rolled die takes effect even if the previous result was more beneficial. Also, no single die may be re-rolled more than once per situation.

Re-rolls may be used during gun attacks, and bail-out checks.

Altitudes

Altitude is represented by levels, from 1 (near the ground) to as high as 20 (or even more for jet aircraft).

An aircraft may change altitude levels during a maneuver by climbing or diving in accordance with its climb rating or dive rating.

Aircraft performance degrades at higher altitudes by reducing its power rating to the next lower rating (High Power becomes Normal, Normal Power becomes Low Power, Low Power becomes Lower power). An aircraft's performance depends on its altitude AFTER its maneuver.

When calculating the range between aircraft, the altitude difference is added to the distance (in hexes), i.e. the range equals hexes plus the difference between altitude levels.

Turn Sequence

1. Plot Phase
2. Maneuver Phase
 - a. Bomber Formations
 - b. Experience (least first)
3. Combat Phase
4. Break-off/Check Morale

During each turn's maneuver phase, pilots execute their movement in order from least experienced pilot to most experienced pilot.

Plot Phase

Players select and place a maneuver chit face down next to each of their planes. Maneuver chits are either Straight (S), Left (L), Right (R), or Vertical (V).

Pursuing

A pilot may declare he is pursuing another aircraft if all of the below are true:

- He is in the “Tail Arc” of the other aircraft
- The other aircraft is in his aircraft’s “Pursuing Arc”
- He is within 10 hexes of the other aircraft
- His prey is within his “Vertical Firing Limits” parameters (see Combat below)

A pursuing aircraft may either (1) look at its target’s maneuver chit before selecting its own, or (2) choose to move immediately after his “prey” maneuvers.

Note: a pilot with a higher pilot rating will already move after his prey, so he would naturally select the option of viewing his prey’s plotting chit.

Even if he has pursuing position on multiple aircraft, an individual player may only pursue one aircraft per turn, but several of his aircraft may pursue that one aircraft.

Pursuing Friendly Aircraft

A player may have his aircraft “pursue” friendly aircraft, typically to allow the following aircraft to move immediately after a better skilled leader. If an aircraft pursues a friendly aircraft then it is not eligible to attack an enemy aircraft that turn with its fixed-forward guns.

Example: an Ace pilot is leading a four-aircraft fighter formation consisting of a Veteran and two Experienced pilots, all of whom are in Pursuit position of the Ace. By declaring that they are all “pursuing” the leader they may all move immediately after the Ace rated leader moves, but they will not be able to attack this turn.

Bubble Canopies and Open Cockpits

Aircraft with good all-around vision may choose to not allow another aircraft to pursue them unless that aircraft is actually in their “Back” arc.

Radios

Most aircraft have radios installed, but those aircraft which did not were seriously hampered when trying to coordinate their actions. When a player chooses to have one of his aircraft pursue an enemy aircraft, he is allowed to “peek” at that target’s plot before plotting any of his other aircraft. Basically this assumes that all his aircrews are very adept at communicating with each other in a form of combat short-hand. This rewards aircraft operating closely as a leader/wingman against a more experienced opponent. If both are in pursuing position, one may choose to look at their prey’s plot while the other declares he will move immediately after the target aircraft.

Note, when a player is allowed to peek at an opponent’s plot marker he may NOT share this information with other players on his side. It is impractical to call out that kind of information with the expectation that every aircraft in the fight would comprehend the information in a timely manner.

No Radios

Any aircraft unable to communicate with a pursuing aircraft must be plotted before the player “peeks” at the pursued aircraft’s plot.

See Example of Play #1