

## Introduction

Welcome to *War by Sail*, a game designed to cover naval combat from the early days of gunpowder on ships, right through the Age of Sail to the end of the Napoleonic Wars. This game is designed for small to medium-sized battles, of around 3-30 ships per side. Smaller games will take around an hour, while larger games can take 2 or 3 hours.

## Terminology

The following nautical terms will be used throughout these rules:

**Port** = Left, **Starboard** = Right, **Bow** = front section of a ship, **Stern** = rear section of a ship.

**Fleet** = All the ships under your command.

**Cannon Nomenclature:** Most cannons are described by the weight of the cannonball they fire, which was generally measured in pounds (the exact type of 'pound' depending on the nation). So a '24-pounder' cannon would fire a cannonball weighing 24 pounds.

This is generally abbreviated to "pdr", so "24-pounder" becomes "24-pdr"

## A note about Re-Rolls

If a dice must be re-rolled, it will only ever be re-rolled once. You cannot re-roll a re-roll.

## What you Will Need

This game is designed to be played with miniature ships, which can be purchased from a variety of manufacturers, and in a variety of scales. 1/2400 and 1/1200 are popular scales for Age of Sail wargaming, although 1/600 and even 1/4800 are also used. The Author uses 1/2400 scale miniatures from Tumbling Dice, which are relatively inexpensive and of good quality. Langton miniatures are also well respected for high quality sailing ships, at 1/1200 scale.



Dutch and English ships Ca. 1652, authors collection. 1/2400 scale from Tumbling Dice

As well as miniatures, you will need a table around 6' x 4' in size (although smaller tables such as 4' x 4' would suffice), quite a few 6-sided dice (referred to as "D6" in these rules), a measuring tape in inches, and some paper and a pen for writing up your Fleet Roster before the game. Wargaming tools such as a laser line pointer (a laser pointer that emits a line on the table rather than a dot) are useful for checking line of sight or firing arcs, and can be purchased online very cheaply. A number of game markers are provided at the end of these rules, which should be printed out on a piece of stiff card (A4 sized), and cut out.

A gaming mat with water printed on it also makes a welcome addition to any naval wargaming table. The Author recommends Deep Cut Studio, which do mats in a variety of sizes. Their 6' x 4' "Mousepad" (Neoprene) mats are excellent quality and sit perfectly flat on a table. The mat pictured above is from Deep Cut Studio.

You may also want some coastal terrain, and making some removable flame markers out of cotton wool can be a nice touch (as pictured above), although "Fired" markers are also provided at the end of these rules, which can be printed out.



## Time and Distance Scale

In *War by Sail*, 1" on the tabletop represents roughly 25 yards in real life. The length of a turn in-game is not a set unit of time, but could represent anywhere from 5 minutes to half an hour of real combat.

## Setting up a Game

### Ship Rosters

These are organized by conflict. A generic list of ships is always given, and most conflicts will also have a more extensive list of individual, named ships. Each ship has a points value. Once players have agreed on a conflict, points limit, and who will play which side, they can then write a Fleet List in secret, consisting of the ships that will make up their fleet. Players must use the Ship Roster from the correct nation and conflict. Because ship points values don't always work out neatly up to the points limit, players should be allowed to exceed the points limit by up to 5%. You can discuss this while writing your Fleet List - for example: "Ok if we go up to 1030?" in a 1000 point game.

Rough points value for games:

#### Conflicts Pre 1588

Small Game..... 500 points  
Medium Game..... 800 points  
Large Game..... 1000+ points

#### 1588 - 1650

Small Game..... 800 points  
Medium Game..... 1000 points  
Large Game..... 1500+ points

#### Conflicts Post 1650:

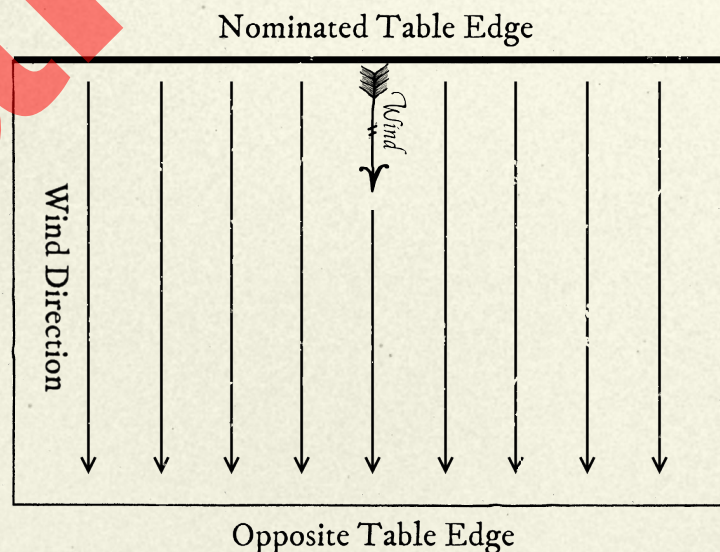
Small Game..... 1500 points  
Medium Game..... 2000 points  
Large Game..... 3000+ points

## Deployment

Both players roll a D6. The winner can choose to either place the wind marker and deploy first, or give this opportunity to the other player.

The first player to deploy can do so within 12" of any one table edge.

To place the wind marker, nominate one table edge to be the direction the wind is coming from. Place the Wind Marker on that table edge, pointing away from the edge. The wind is assumed to blow from the nominated table edge towards the opposite table edge, exactly perpendicular to the nominated table edge, as shown below:



Once one player has placed the wind marker and deployed within 12" of any one table edge, the other player can place their ships anywhere on the table, but not within 18" of an enemy ship.



## Ending the Game & Results

The game will last for 10 turns, after which a D6 will be rolled to determine if the game continues:

| End of Turn             | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14+ |
|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Game will continue on a | 2+ | 3+ | 4+ | 5+ | 6   |

Alternatively, if both players agree to end the game, it will end at the end of the current turn. If the ships of one side are all *Sinking*, *Surrendered*, or have left the table, the game will end at the end of the current turn.

### End of the Game – Victory Points

At the end of the game, resolve any fires that are currently burning, then add up the score listed below for each of the damage conditions you have inflicted on enemy ships. Multiply the score by the Structure Rating of the ship on which they were inflicted. The total is how many “Victory Points” you have earned. If a ship is Sunk or Captured, ignore any other Damage Conditions (such as Heavy Casualties) associated with that ship for the purpose of Victory Points.

If a ship is Captured, but then Sunk, you get no Victory Points for it.

Ships that are currently “Sinking” are considered to be “Sunk” for the purpose of Victory Points.

| Damage Condition | Heavy Casualties | Bloodbath | Dead in the Water | Surrendered and/or Stricken | Sunk | Captured |
|------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------------------------|------|----------|
| Score            | 1                | 2         | 1                 | 2                           | 3    | 4        |

**Example:** Your fleet causes 1 enemy ship to have Heavy Casualties, and another to be Surrendered. The enemy ship with the Heavy Casualties is a Structure Rating 3 ship, making it worth 3 Victory Points. The ship that Surrendered is a Structure Rating 4 ship, making it worth 8 Victory Points. Your total will be 11 Victory Points.

### End of the Game – Results

The results of the game are as follows:

| Victory Points Difference                   | <5         | 5 - 9         | 10 - 14          | 15+             |
|---------------------------------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Result – Player with Highest Victory Points | Indecisive | Close Victory | Decisive Victory | Heroic Victory  |
| Result – Player with Lowest Victory Points  | Indecisive | Close Defeat  | Decisive Defeat  | Crushing Defeat |

## Turn Structure

Each turn is structured in the following way;

1. **Sailing Phase**
2. **Activation Phase**
3. **Boarding Phase**
4. **Sinking & Anti-Personnel Fire Phase**

**Sailing Phase:** All ships move directly forwards based on their direction relative to the wind.

**Activation Phase:** Roll for activation, then players alternate activating ships one-by-one. Resolve Fires as ships on Fire activate. Roll any Morale Checks after a ship takes Crew Casualties from a Salvo.

**Boarding Phase:** Grappling, then Boarding Actions are conducted in that order. All Grappling is considered to happen simultaneously, after which all Boarding takes place simultaneously. Make Morale Checks as normal if a ship takes Crew Casualties.

Grappling and Boarding Actions are covered in more detail on pages 20 and 21 respectively. After Boarding Actions, Disengaging then Prize Crew Transferring are conducted, in that order.

**Sinking & Anti-Personnel Fire Phase:** Roll for any *Sinking* ships to see if they are removed, then roll on the Stricken Table for any *Stricken* ships, then conduct any Anti-Personnel Fire. Sinking is covered on page 18, Stricken ships are covered on page 17, and Anti-Personnel fire on page 22.

After all 4 phases have finished, a new turn begins, starting again from the Sailing Phase.



## Sailing Phase

In this phase all ships must move directly forward, depending on their position in relation to the wind direction. This forward move is known as a "Sailing Move".

### Order of Sail:

The fleet with the highest Crew Rating will make all their Sailing Moves moves first, followed by the fleet with the lower Crew Rating. If both fleets have the same Crew Rating, roll a D6 each turn to determine which fleet will make their Sailing Moves first. You can freely choose the order that the ships in your fleet make their Sailing Moves, and you may need to choose carefully to avoid collisions.

### Determining a Ship's direction in Relation to the Wind:

Use the Wind & Turn Aide provided at the end of these rules to determine a ship's direction in relation to the wind: Line the Wind & Turn Aide up with the table edge where the wind is coming from, and hold it above the ship you want to move. Make sure the ship is directly in the center of the Wind & Turn Aide (using the mainmast as the center) then draw an imaginary line from the bow of the ship directly forwards. Where this line intersects the Wind & Turn Aide will show you what direction the ship is facing in relation to the wind. It will also show you how fast the ship will move.

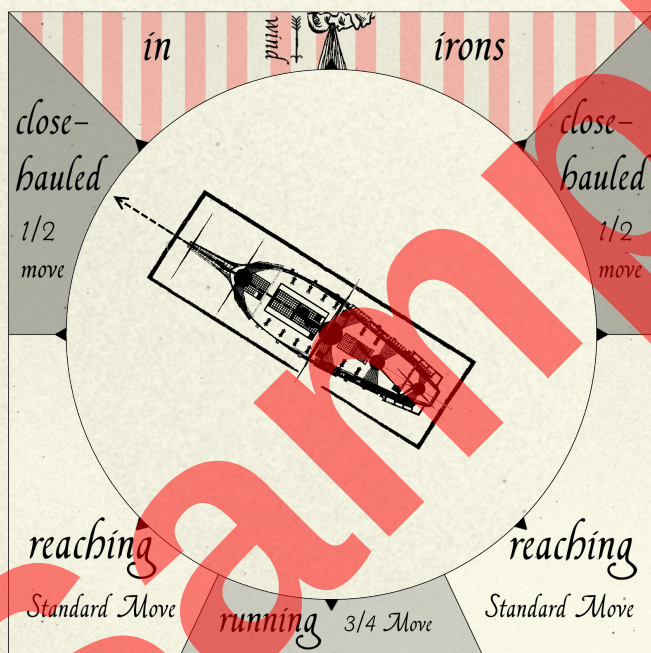
### Sailing Speeds

Ships use their Speed as a basis for their Sailing Move, which may be altered depending on which way the ship is facing in relation to the wind.

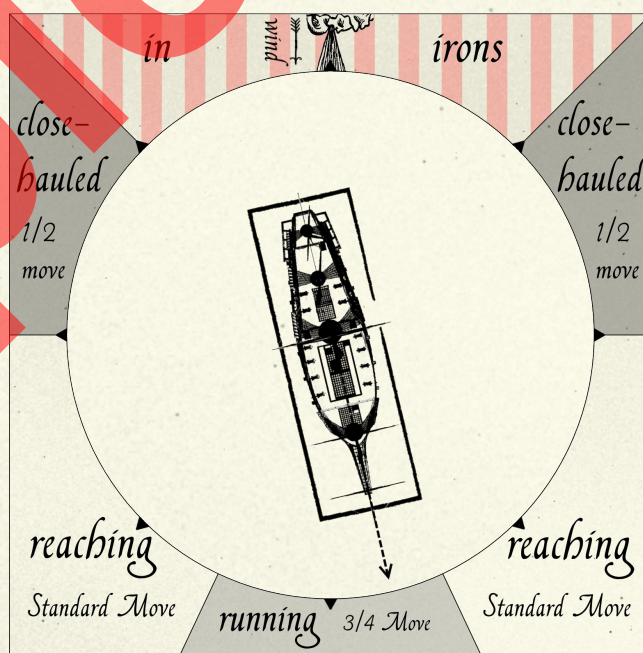
Note that *Unweatherly* ships must use the Unweatherly Wind & Turn Aide, which gives them a much poorer ability to sail towards the wind.

**Rounding Numbers:** Always round Speeds down to the nearest inch, to a minimum of 1" of forward movement.

### Two examples of the Wind & Turn Aide in use:



This ship will move at half speed.



This ship will move at 3/4 speed

**Reaching:** This is the best position in relation to the wind. The ship is angled away from the wind, meaning all the sails can catch the wind and provide forward thrust.

- Ships *Reaching* move their regular Speed value in inches

**Running:** This is the second best position in relation to the wind. The ship is facing directly away from the wind, but the rear-most sails block the wind to the front sails.

- Ships *Running* move 3/4 of their Speed value (rounded down to the nearest inch)

**Close-Hauled:** This is also known as "Beating towards the Wind" and provides very little forward thrust.

- Ships *Close-Hauled* will move 1/2 their Speed value (rounded down to the nearest inch)



**In Irons:** This is the worst position in relation to the wind, the wind is pushing against the direction you are trying to travel. Ships generally avoid sailing in this direction, and usually only do so as part of *Tacking*, which is sailing Close-Hauled, then turning into the wind and sailing Close-Hauled in the opposite direction. Tacking allows ships to sail upwind, albeit very slowly. Usually ships only spend a short amount of time In Irons.

- Ships *In Irons* will move  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their Speed value (rounded down to the nearest inch), and must place an *In Irons* marker.

At the end of a ships activation, it can remove the *In Irons* marker if it is no longer *In Irons*. If the ship is Still *In Irons* at the end of its activation, it must roll a Crew Check. If this Crew Check is failed, the ship must roll a D6:

1-4.....**Taken Aback:** Ship moves 2" directly away from the wind. The ship becomes "Out of Control" as described below.

5-6.....**Sail Damage:** Ship suffers 1 Sail Damage.

**Being *In Irons* for more than 1 Turn:** If a ship starts the Sailing Phase already *In Irons* from the previous turn, it is in danger of losing control. Place a second *In Irons* marker. The ship will not move forwards during the Sailing Phase, and must immediately make a Crew Check. If this is successful, the ship can pivot on the spot up to 45 degrees. If the Crew Check is unsuccessful, the ship is considered to be "Out of Control".

### Out of Control

Being *In Irons* can cause a ship to become *Out of Control*. Ships in this state will only move 2" directly away from the wind during each Sailing Phase, unless they are no longer *In Irons*, in which case they are no longer considered to be *Out of Control* and conduct their Sailing Move as normal.

Ships that are *Out of Control* cannot make any Sail Actions during the Activation Phase.

### Regaining Control

A ship that is *Out of Control* must make a Crew Check during the Sailing Phase, after making its 2" move directly away from the wind. If successful, the ship can pivot on the spot up to 45 degrees (See *Warping* on page 9 for an example of how to use the Wind & Turn aide to pivot on the spot).

### Boxhauling and Clubhauling

A ship that is *Out of Control* cannot Boxhaul or Clubhaul, as they are done during the Activation Phase, and are designed to be carried out while the ship is *In Irons*, but before losing control.

### Spilling Sail

A ship can choose to lose up to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of its Speed (rounded to the nearest inch, to a minimum of 1" of Speed lost) during any Sailing Phase, provided it can succeed a Crew Check. If the Crew Check is failed, the ship moves as normal.

Spilling Sail has no affect on future Sailing Phases, and can be done an unlimited number of times.

**Example:** A ship with a Speed of 7" decides to Spill Sail in order to avoid a collision.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 7 is 1.75, which is rounded to 2". Therefor the ship loses 2" of Speed, moving forwards only 5".

Wind direction was so important it would usually be included on maps of naval battles – this one from the Spanish Armada attack in 1588.







## Activation Phase

Each turn, at the start of the Activation Phase, both players make a number of Crew Checks equal to the number of *Fightable* ships they have on the table. This is known as “Rolling for Activation”.

### Fightable and Unfightable ships

Ships that have *surrendered*, are *stricken*, *sinking*, *out of control*, in a *bloodbath*, or are *tethered* are considered to be “Unfightable”, and do not generate any dice for Activation. All other ships are considered to be in “Fightable” condition.

Each successful Crew Check gives you one Activation Point, which allows you to activate any single ship during the current Activation Phase. You can keep track of how many Activation Points you have by placing colored dice on the Activation Sheet, provided at the end of these rules, or by using some tokens. Activation Points are an abstract pool, and not tied to the ship that generated them.

When it is your turn to activate you can choose any single ship to activate, although no ship can activate more than once per Activation Phase. After activating a ship, remove one of your Activation Points.

### Small Ships

The Activation Points generated by ships with a Structure Rating of 1 or 2 can only be used to activate ships with a Structure Rating of 1 or 2. This prevents players from taking a number of small, cheaper ships in order to have more chance of activating their larger ships.

### Full Activation & Sail Actions

When activating a ship, it can make two actions as described under *Ship Actions* below. Ships that aren't able to “Fully Activate” in this way can still make a single Sail Action each Activation Phase, which could be making a turn, adjusting sail, etc. This allows ships to navigate the table even if there aren't any Activation Points for them to use. Ships that can't Fully Activate will make their Sail Actions after all other ships have activated, and still alternate ship-by-ship between players.

### Order of Activation

The player whose fleet has the highest Crew Rating will activate first, after which the next player will activate. If both fleets have the same Crew Rating, roll off each turn to determine who goes first.

If one player runs out of Activation Points, they can only conduct Sail Actions for the rest of the Activation Phase.

Players take turns activating one ship at a time until all the ships of both players have activated or made a Sail Action. Place a token, or one of the dice from your Activation Sheet to show that a ship has activated. If one player runs out of ships to activate, the other player will activate the remainder of their ships uninterrupted. Once all ships have activated or decided to forgo activation, the Activation Phase is over.

## Ship Actions

When fully activating, a ship can make one Sail Action and one Combat Action. They can freely choose which type of Sail or Combat Action they wish to take, and in which order. So a ship could Turn and Attack, or Adjust Sail and Reload, or Attack, then Turn, or any other combination. Ships can also choose to swap their Combat Action for any Sail Action except Turning. This allows ships to Turn and Adjust Sail (for example) in the same Activation Phase.

There are a variety of Sail Actions, the most common being Turning, and Adjusting Sail.

There are three types of Combat Actions: Attacking, Dedicated Reloading, and Grappling.

Both Sail and Combat Actions are described in more detail on the following pages.

## Flagships & Squadrons

Ships can be organized together in a “Squadron”. Each Squadron must have a Flagship nominated at the start of the game. “Flagship” markers are provided at the end of these rules.

Activation generated by a Squadron can only be used by ships in that Squadron. The Flagship allows one ship within 12” (including the Flagship itself) to re-roll its Activation Dice.

If the Flagship is *Unfightable*, *On Fire*, or currently *Transferring Command* as described in the Optional Rules, it does not convey any re-rolls to Activation Dice.

Squadrons are ideal for games with more than 2 players – each player can be assigned a squadron to command.



## Sail Actions

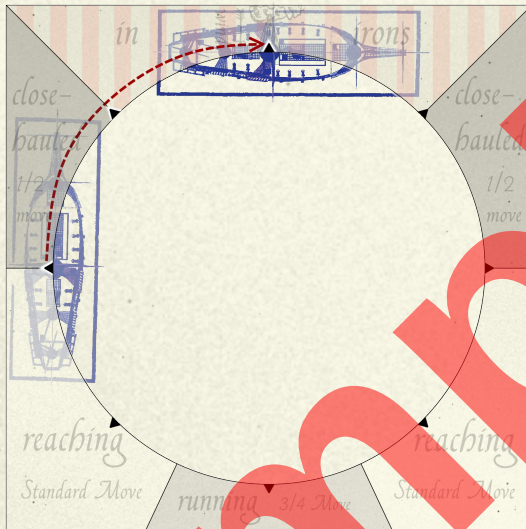
There are 5 different types of Sail Actions a ship can make. Each requires 1 Sail Action to perform:

- **Turning:** Bring the ship about to a new heading
- **Adjusting Sail:** Reduce or increase the amount of sail, in order to control speed
- **Boxhauling or Clubhauling:** Used by more advanced crews to recover from being *In Irons*
- **Dropping or Raising Anchor:** Stop the ship with the anchor, or raise / cut it to continue on
- **Warping:** A very slow method of moving a ship to a new position or heading

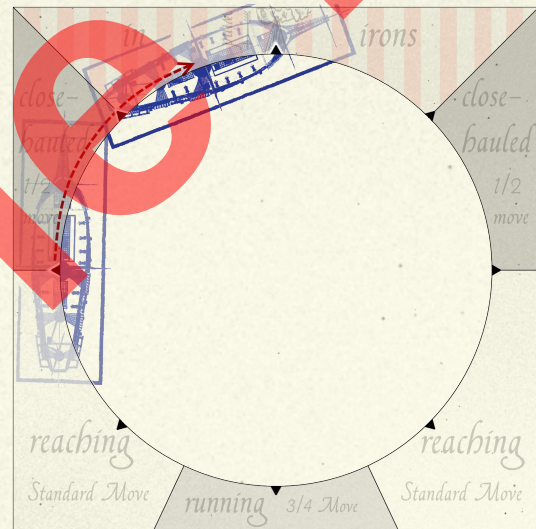
Some Sail Actions require a Crew Check: In most cases if this is failed, the Sail Action is wasted, and the ship does not get to undertake that Sail Action. Boxhauling & Clubhauling are the one exception to this rule, where the ship can potentially take sail or structural damage if the Crew Check is failed, but the maneuver is still executed.

### Turning

Ships turn by using the Wind & Turn Aide: Place the center of the ship directly under one of the black points marked around the circumference of the circle in the Wind & Turn Aide. The ship will turn around the circumference of this circle, with each point being a "Maneuver Point". Ships can turn a number of Maneuver Points equal to their Maneuver Rating. Ships do not have to turn the full amount, and can end the turn at any time. This allows precise turns to line the ship up with a target.



A ship with a Maneuver Rating of 2 making a turn.  
This is as far as it could turn.



Making a partial turn – often crucial for lining up targets.

### Wearing

If a ship started a turn facing the 'In Irons' or 'Close-Hauled' sections of the Wind & Turn Aide, then ended the turn facing the 'Reaching' or 'Running' sections, it can then add 1 point of Maneuver Rating for that turn. This is due to the extra speed gained from turning away from the wind.

### Adjusting Sail

Ships can adjust sail in the Action Phase, as a Sail Action. They can choose to *Increase Sail*, or *Reduce Sail*. Adjusting sail requires a successful Crew Check. If the check is failed, no sail adjustment is made.

Ships can choose to start the game with *Reduced Sail* if desired.

**Reduce Sail:** Place a "Reduced Sail" marker on any ship that Reduces Sail. When making Sailing Moves, a ship with Reduced Sail will only move half its Speed Rating when Running or Reaching, and one-quarter of its Speed Rating when Close-Hauled.

Ships with Reduced Sail must re-roll any successful Crew Checks made for ending the turn *In Irons*.

A ship with Reduced Sail will never suffer Sail Damage from ending the turn *In Irons*.

**Increase Sail:** This can only be done if the ship has already Reduced Sail, and returns the ship to its original Speed Rating during the Sailing Phase. Remove the "Reduced Sail" marker. The ship returns to normal, canceling out all the stipulations of Reduced Sail.