

BATTLETECH MISSIONS

GM RULES



Version 3.0 (2022/05/17)

GENERAL

The GM for Living Battletech acts more like a Dungeon Master in D&D than a regular Battletech player. Your primary role is, of course, to act as the OpFOR and to play Battletech against the players. But your job is also to ensure that the players have a good time. It is possible that a given mission will have secret conditions that only you know at the beginning. It's also possible that a mission will specify certain behaviors (the bad guy lance commander is a coward, and will attempt to stay clear of fire, that sort of thing). Please adhere to the spirit of the scenario as much as possible. As in a D&D game, simply wiping out the party, while possibly cathartic, isn't a particularly fun time for anyone. To a first approximation, the players should *usually*, but not *always* win.

Remember that part of the goal of Battletech missions is to get new players into the game. Missions works exceptionally well for new players as they have relatively little to worry about, and have other players to talk about tactics with.

TIME LIMIT

The missions are designed to take roughly four hours to play. That doesn't necessarily mean that the scenario will be completely finished at the end of that time. If possible, you can extend the time, or you can simply call the game at the end of the block. You can make the call at the end of that time as to whether or not you believe the players will have been able to complete the mission, although some missions will be explicit: "Survive until the end of the block".

Kills and Salvage should only be awarded based on what actually happened during the actual game time. Bonus mission objectives, however, can be awarded at your discretion.

INITIATIVE

Because of the time limit, it is suggested that initiative be handled randomly. This means that when it is a team's turn to move, the unit that actually has to move should be determined randomly. One very efficient way to handle this is to have a set of playing cards assigned to each player or NPC unit. You then use a different set of cards for the players and for the OPFOR. For example, *Dave's Locust* could be the Ace of Spades, while the bad guy *Hunchback* is the King of Diamonds. Keep a separate stack for the players and for the bad guys, and when it's one side's turn to go, select a card (or more) from the respective stack.

Alternatively, you could prepare ahead of time cards for all of the units in the OPFOR, and only use playing cards for the players. I find that Sticker Stock on old Battletech CCG cards works very well.

In general, the PCs will not have infantry to act as "Initiative Sinks" to balance out the mission bad guys. It is suggested that Infantry are simply divided evenly among the initiative phases, but this is not a requirement.

If you choose not to use random initiative, then steps need to be taken to make up for the fact that the OPFOR will generally have more units than the PCs, and they will generally have mixed units including Initiative. The Battletech initiative system assumes a certain parity of units between the two sides (at least of type). Otherwise, if the OPFOR had, say, 4 infantry and 4 'mechs to the PCs' four 'mechs, they could easily enough move only infantry for their first two movement phases – effectively giving them a massive advantage.

In this case, there should be one initiative phase per PC 'mech. OPFOR units should be distributed as evenly by type ('Mech, Vehicle or Infantry) across those phases.

MISSIONS

Missions are organized into **Campaigns**. There are currently three Campaigns available, each consisting of six missions. Those missions can be played in any order, although playing them in numeric order is a good idea, as they'll make more sense that way.

Each mission has the following pieces of information:

Briefing: This is the unit commander's instructions to the players. Feel free to read this out loud in whatever goofy voice you want. Consider this to be the "Box Text" for the mission. This includes the Mission name, location and date. Most briefings will include a "Bonus Mission" – capture the enemy leader, scan the cargo, that sort of thing.

Inclusivity Note: *Some players have noticed that Captain Lucius always opens with "Okay Boys" – this is actually a character thing, left over from his time as a member of the TDF. Some missions players, of course, aren't or don't present as male. If they (or you) are uncomfortable with this, feel free to modify the introduction to "Okay everyone" or something similar. You may want to introduce this at some point after the first mission with: "Okay Boy- er. Okay everyone, listen up. Corporal <insert one of your players here> has informed me that the phrase "Okay Boys" isn't really accurate. Feel free to call me on this in the future"*

Pilot Skill: This should give the minimum and maximum pilot skills (remember lower is better!) for this mission. If players don't have any pilots that meet this requirement, they should be able to play a pre-generated character. There are currently no missions which require pilot skill better than 3, so this can't happen (yet!). When missions do come out that require skill below 4, there will be pregens to match that. Pilot skill requirements are based entirely on Pilot (not gunnery) skill.

Map: Each mission has a recommended map. These maps are made up of existing printed maps from the history of Battletech. Of course, you may not have all of the maps (many of them are difficult to get and have been out of print for years), or you may prefer to use terrain of some other sort. The map in the scenario briefing is a suggestion to give you a feel for the rough size and layout.

OPFOR: This includes both a list of the possible enemy units, and a series of groupings, based on the total BV of the players. So if the players have five 'mechs for a total of 3240 BV (including the BV

multiplier for Pilot skill, found in the Tech Manual), then you would use the OPFOR based on the 3000-3500 BV category. It is possible (although hopefully unlikely) that the players will have too much or too little BV for the listed bands. In that case, feel free to adjust accordingly.

Each unit should also include the reference for the Record Sheet. In general, these are page numbers in the latest, fullest version of that Record Sheet book. For example, "RS3039" is Record Sheets 3039 Unabridged.

Occasionally you may find that your players have a sum BV total greater than the highest band. This may be a sign that you need to split your table up, but if that isn't possible, feel free to improvise by adding in additional units (most missions include 'mechs that aren't in use in every BV band), or by improving pilot or gunnery skills for the units that are there.

Special Rules: If necessary, any special rules will be included here. This might include special things that happen during the scenario, mission objectives, or explanations of scenario parameters (for example, the nighttime rules).

Mission Rewards: This is a summation of the awards for the mission, including the bonus. These will all be listed on the Cert for that mission.

Each mission will also come with a **Cert** and a **Debrief**.

CERTS

At the end of the mission, each player is awarded a **Certificate**, or "Cert". Certs include the player name, their XP and C-Bill awards, and any salvaged equipment that they may have gained access to. Some of these will be optional, and will include checkboxes, while some are automatic, and should include stars. It is recommended that you print out a copy of the mission Cert for every player in advance.

Salvage should only be awarded if the equipment was disabled but not completely destroyed. 'mechs that had ammo explosions (without CASE) for example are not salvageable. Salvage should only be awarded if the unit has been disabled before time runs out. Feel free to use your judgement – a 'mech with a busted hip and a busted Gyro can be awarded as salvage, or one in which the pilot has five pilot hits and is currently unconscious.

'Mechs are salvageable if:

- The Pilot has been killed (due to cockpit or head destruction)
- The engine or Gyro has been destroyed
- One or more legs have been destroyed
- They have been "Mission Killed" (no mobility or firepower)

'Mechs are not salvageable if:

- They have been completely destroyed due to ammo explosion (without CASE)
- The center torso has been completely destroyed (Cored)

Currently there are some missions with vehicle salvage. This is an accident of history. Originally, the plan was for players to be able to salvage vehicles to bring them along as support units, but that has been modified so that support units come as additional rewards.

DEBRIEF

Along with a certificate, each mission includes a **debrief** that should be given to the players. This is a little bit of fiction that furthers the story. It may include things that the PCs have learned between missions, or fallout from their latest adventures, etc.

GM PACKETS

The Battletech Missions web site includes GM Packets. These are intended to be printed out as-is, proving the GM with the mission briefing, sheets for all non-PC units that appear in the mission, several copies of the Cert/Debrief for that mission, and the GM Report for that mission. GM Packets are designed to be printed out as-is to make prep for a game easier.

GM Packets come in two varieties – Single sided and Duplex. The Duplex version is designed to be printed on a printer with duplex mode (i.e. it can print on both sides of a page). Things that can be printed back-to-back will be (the briefing, for example), while things that shouldn't be ('mech sheets, for example) won't be.

GM REWARDS

GMs who run events are awarded XP and C-Bills. Every campaign mission run is worth 10 XP and 200,000 C-Bills. These can be applied to any pilot you have.

ASSISTANT GMS

Battletech Missions are optimized for 4-6 Players. Sometimes there will be more players than that. In some situations, the GM may decide to **deputize** one or more players to help him play the OPFOR. Players who play OPFOR will receive special **Assistant GM** Certs. These will typically have similar XP and C-Bill awards as player certs. Assistant GM Certs can be applied to any of that players' pilots

Assistant GMs are awarded C-Bills and XP differently from players. Assistant GMs are awarded the same C-Bill reward as PCs who complete the primary objective with a completely intact 'mech (currently 350,000 C-Bills), but do not gain extra C-Bills based on bonus objectives.

Assistant GMs are awarded a flat 10 XP. Assistant GMs are given the standard player XP bonus if they bring their own mini (see below), or 8 XP if they bring more than one mini to use as OPFOR.

Assistant GMs are expected to follow the GMs tactical direction during the game. The GM may decide to dock the assistant GMs C-Bills if they fail to do so. Some missions will have additional "Tactical Info" for what it is that the OPFOR is attempting to achieve. Assistant GMs are expected to stick with those objectives.

Assistant GMs are allocated salvage equal to the units that the PCs do not salvage.

If you find yourself in this situation often, then your best bet would be to recruit a second GM! This is actually a great sign.

VENUE SUPPORT

Because your FLGS is important to Battletech Missions, players should be encouraged to support their local store. Additionally, because Minis are cool, players should be encouraged to bring their own.

To that end, players who purchase something at the store during a game receive a 50,000 C-Bill bonus. (This is at the GMs discretion if he feels that the players are abusing this by buying \$.50 candy or something)

Additionally, a player who brings his own mini receives a bonus of 2 XP, or 5 XP if it's painted.