

# Ship to Ship Combat (fast start rules)

Optional Rules for Dungeons and Dragons 3.5

## Introduction

This is a paired down version of my full ship to ship combat rules. The main difference is that we are not using the wind and PCs are only directing ship movements and firing ship weapons. In other words, no personal weapons or spells.

## Uses One Minute Turns

Ship combat uses a unit of time called the ship turn, or simply turn for short. A turn is one minute long, which is equal to ten normal combat rounds.

## Uses a Hex Combat Mat

Each hex on the combat map is equal to 50 feet.

## Ships Move in Initiative Order

The ships' initiative checks determine the order in which they act, from highest to lowest. At the start of a battle, each ship makes a single initiative check, adding the ship's shiphandling modifier. Each ship acts in initiative order, with the check applying to all turns of the combat.

## The Basics of Ship Movement

The number of hexes per turn a ship can move works as pool of points—termed **move action points**—which are spent to move hexes on the combat map. Table 6: "Boats and Ships" lists the speed for each type of ship. The number in parentheses following the ships speed is the number of move actions that the ship can take in a turn.

Moving forward is simple, and all ships follow the same rules, regardless of how maneuverable they are. **Moving forward one hex takes one move action point.**

Ship combat has strict rules for facing. Each hex has six sides, and the front of the ship must be pointing towards one of these sides; it cannot be facing one of the corners. In order to turn, a ship must use some of its move action points to change facing.

## Turning

A ship must move a number of hexes equal to its maneuverability rating before it can turn by one hex face. If it was moving at the end of the previous turn, you can consider the total distance traveled in a straight line when calculating in which hex it can change its direction this turn.

Ships with a "good" maneuverability rating (a maneuverability rating of 0) don't have to spend move action points to turn, but must move at least one hex forward before they can turn by one hex face.

## Rotate in Place

Add one to the ships maneuverability rating for the number of move actions that must be spent to rotate a ship by one hex face when not moving forward. A ship with a "good" maneuverability rating (a maneuverability rating of 0) can rotate in any direction while stopped as a free move action.

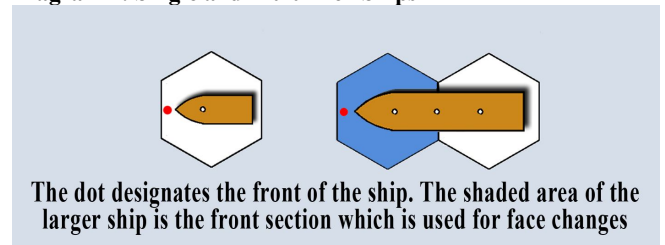
## Reduce Speed

The helmsman can reduce the speed of the ship to match slower ships effortlessly.

## Multi-Hex Ships

Each hex is 50 feet long, and many ships will be larger than this. A ship might be both longer and wider than 50 feet, in which case they take up more than one hex, possibly in multiple directions. See the image below for examples. In these cases the forward most hex is considered the front of the ship and its turning point. When any turns are made, they are based on this hex, and the rest of the ship turns around that hex. For a ship up to 60 feet long, just use one hex. For a ship up to 110 feet long only use two hexes.

Diagram 1: Single and Multi-Hex Ships



## Ship to Ship Combat – Fast start rules

### Firing Ship Weapons

#### Where the Ship is When the Weapon Fires

During a ship's turn the attack actions are performed while the ship is moving and can be performed at any point along its path. The attacks can be made before any move actions points are used, after one or more are used, or after they have all been used.

#### The Attack Roll

The basic ship's weapon attack roll is:  
**1d20 + Base Attack + Weapon Modifier – Range Penalties ± Your ship's Size Modifier**

The total is compared to the target ship's current Armor Class; if the roll is equal to or greater, it is a hit. Otherwise, it is a miss. A 20 is always a hit and a 1 is always a miss. A natural 20 is also a threat—a possible critical hit.

#### Base Attack

Attacking with a ship weapon is based on the base attack bonus of the leader of the weapon crew. If the crew leader does not have the appropriate Weapon Proficiency they suffer a -4 penalty to hit.

Table 3: Ship Size			
Ship Size	Size Modifier	Example	Creature Equivalent
Very Fine	+16		Small
Fine	+8	Kayak	Medium
Diminutive	+4	Dugout	Large
Tiny	+2	Raft	Huge
Small	+1	Small Sailing Ship	Gargantuan
Medium	0	Sailing Ship	Colossal
Large	-1	Junk	
Huge	-2	Warship	
Gargantuan	-4	Galley	
Colossal	-8	Greatship	

#### Weapon Modifier

Some weapons are more accurate than others. Each ship weapon has an attack modifier that is added to all attack rolls.

#### Range

All ship weapons have a listed range, in hexes. They receive no penalty to attack ships within this range. For every hex beyond this, they have a penalty of -2 to their attack roll.

#### Threats and Critical Hits

Each weapon has a threat rating. If the attacker rolls this number or greater, and the attack was a hit, the attacker has scored a threat. Roll the attack again, using the all the same modifiers. If the second roll is a success, the attack is a critical hit. If it is a failure, it is a normal hit. On a critical hit roll the weapon's listed damage twice, including bonuses, such as enhancement bonuses. If the weapon has a multiplier of x3 roll the damage thrice. All damage from a critical hit is totaled before hardness is subtracted.

#### Reload

Each ship weapon has a listing for reload. The number in parentheses indicates the number of times the weapon can be fired in one ship's turn.

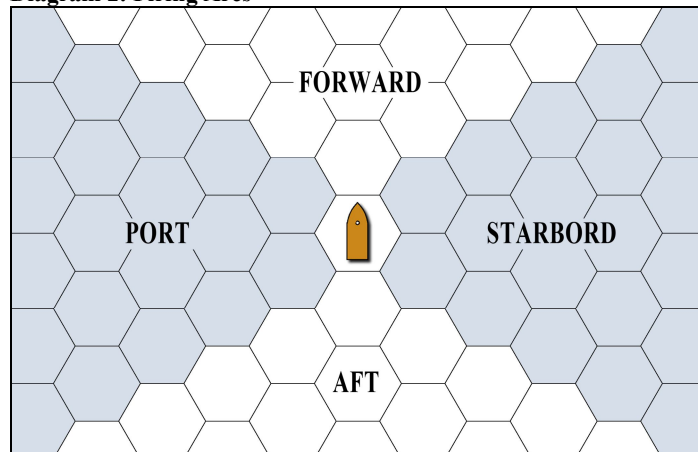
#### Firing Arcs

A ship mounted weapon can fire into a limited area, termed its firing arc. There are four firing arcs: forward, aft, port (left) and starboard (right). The firing arcs are illustrated below. The firing arc of a weapon is determined by its placement and facing. A weapon will be capable of firing into only one of these arcs.

Multihex ships work the same way. Decide which hex of the ship a given weapon resides on, then use that single hex to determine its firing arc.

Weapons are typically mounted on a turret that allows the weapon to change its firing arc. It takes one turn to rotate a weapon into a new arc. This can be done during reloading so the weapon can fire on the turn following turning.

Diagram 2: Firing Arcs



## Ship Damage

Ship weapons are fired at the other ships hull. If you want to fire at the rigging, or at anything else, refer to the full ship to ship combat rules.

### Effects of Hit Point Damage

**Damaged [reduced to 3 / 4 hit points]:** -1 to Seaworthiness saves. The crew suffers 10% casualties. One random PC must succeed on a Difficulty 15 Reflex save or take 1d6 damage.

**Wrecked [reduced to 1 / 2 hit points]:** -2 to Seaworthiness saves, +1 to Maneuverability Rating. A minor leak develops (see below). The crew suffers 25% casualties. Lose half of the ship weapons randomly selected (rounded down, minimum loss of one weapon). Crew must make a Will save at DC 15 to keep fighting. One random heroic character (PC) must succeed on a Difficulty 15 Reflex save or take 2d6 damage.

**Disabled [reduced to 1 / 4 hit points]:** -3 to Seaworthiness saves, +2 to Maneuverability Rating. A major leak develops (see below). The crew suffers 50% casualties. Lose of all ship weapons. Crew must make a Will save at DC 20 to keep fighting. One random heroic character (PC) must succeed on a Difficulty 15 Reflex save or take 4d6 damage.

**Derelect [0 hit points]:** When your ships hit points drop to exactly 0, it is derelict. It has no Maneuverability and no wind speed and no weapons able to fire. The crew suffers 90% casualties and disbands. Their ship has no effective crew at all. One random heroic character (PC) must succeed on a Difficulty 20 Reflex save or take 4d6 damage. It can move at half speed under oars (assuming it still has at least half the normal number of rowers available). It cannot ram without additional damage. If it performs any other move action (or any other strenuous action) it takes 1 point of damage after completing the act. It is now at -1 hit points, and it's sinking. If its weapons are still manned and functional, it can make attacks at an additional -4 penalty to hit.

A ship can also become derelict when recovering from sinking. In this case, it's a step toward recovery, and it can have fewer than 0 hit points (see Stable Ships and Recovery, below).

**Sinking [-1 TO - (9 + Seaworthiness) hit points]:** When your ship's current hit points drop to between -1 and - (9 + Seaworthiness) inclusive, it's sinking. A sinking ship can take no actions. It can't move or attack. A sinking ship loses 1 hit point every turn. This continues until the ship sinks or becomes stable (see below)

**Sunk [- (10 + Seaworthiness) hit points or lower]:** When your ship's current hit points drop to - (10 + Seaworthiness) or lower it's sunk

### Effects of Crew Casualties

When the crew is reduced by 10%, the ship loses 1 move action point per turn. When reduced by 25%, the ship loses 2 move action points per turn. When reduced by 50%, the ship loses 4 move action points per turn. When reduced by 90%, the ship loses 5 move action points per turn. Note that these adjustments might result in the ship being unable to turn or move.

### Effects of Leaks

**Minor Leak:** The ship is taking on water and may suffer further damage as a result (see "Continuing Leak Damage" below). The ship makes a Seaworthiness save against a DC of 15. A Craft (Shipwright) bonus can be used to aid this check. If the ship makes the Seaworthiness save, the leak is sealed and the ship takes no additional damage.

A Craft (Shipwright) check can be made the next turn and repeated every turn after that at DC 20, success puts an immediate end to continuing damage.

**Major Leak:** The ship is taking on large amounts of water and may suffer further damage as a result (see continuing leak damage below). The ship makes a Seaworthiness save against a DC of 20. A Craft (Shipwright) bonus can be used to aid this check. If the ship makes the Seaworthiness save, the leak is sealed and the ship takes no additional damage.

A Craft (Shipwright) check can be made the next turn and repeated every turn after that at DC 25, success puts an immediate end to continuing damage.

**Continuing Leak Damage:** The ships hull takes an additional 1d6 points of damage from a minor leak and 2d6 points of damage from a major leak each turn until the leak is repaired. This additional damage is from water entering the hull of the ship and can be reduced at a rate of 2 points of damage each turn for each person bailing. This damage reduction due to bailing out water doesn't count as a repair that would cause a sinking ship to stop losing hit points and become stable.

## Ship to Ship Combat – Fast start rules

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### Ramming and Shearing

Ramming a ship may result in damage to your own ship. Ramming is handled a bit differently than ship weapon attacks

In order to ram another ship the attacker must be moving at **Ramming Speed**, have traveled at least four hexes without turning, and made no turns after having moved 4 hexes. The attacking ship must enter the same hex as the defending ship

#### Ramming

The basic attack roll is:

**1d20 + Shiphandling Modifier + Profession (sailor) Modifier ± Size Modifier**

The total is compared to one-half the target ship's Armor Class; if the roll is equal to or greater, the ramming attempt is successful. Otherwise, there is no ship damage. You missed the other ship entirely or glanced off without any significant damage to either ship. A 20 is always a hit and a 1 is always a miss. A natural 20 is also a threat—a possible critical hit. Rams threaten on a 20, and a critical hit does x2 damage.

When one ship rams another both ships take damage. The attacking ship receives half the base damage it inflicts on the other ship. The base damage dealt by the vehicle is listed in that vehicle's statistics.

Hardness is subtracted from all ram damage as normal. Any time a ship being rammed is reduced to zero hit points the attacking ship takes half the normal damage he would otherwise take.

See "effects of hit point damage" above.

When one ship rams another both ships come to a stop, unless the ramming ship reduces its target to zero hit points, in which case it can move normally.

#### Shearing

If you enter the defenders hex, you can attempt to shear off her oars, if she has any. You must equal or beat her Profession (sailor) check, modified by the ships' respective shiphandling bonuses.

If you successfully shear your opponent's oars, her speed is reduced to zero, and she cannot change speed until she puts out new oars, which takes one full turn. The ship can still change heading, but it is spinning in place and not making any headway.

### Grappling and Boarding

After you successfully ram the other ship you can automatically grapple and board it if you choose to do so. You can also grapple and board another ship by moving into the other ships hex and beat it in a Profession (sailor) check, modified by the ships' respective shiphandling bonuses. Once the ships are grappled together, initiative is rolled and combat returns to standard D&D rules [6 second rounds, 5 ft. squares]. You can't grapple and board a ship that is 2 or more sizes larger than yours.

#### Statistics

Each of the vessels presented here includes a short statistics block describing the vessel. A ship's statistics block includes the following entries.

**Size:** The size of the vehicle, see Table 3: "Ship Size".

**Seaworthiness:** The ship's overall sturdiness. This modifier is applied to any Profession (sailor) checks the captain or master makes in order to avoid hazards that large, well-built vessels avoid more easily than small and frail ones.

**Shiphandling:** The ship's agility and nimbleness. This modifier is applied to Profession (sailor) checks the captain or master makes in order to avoid situations that small, swift vessels avoid more easily than large and clumsy ones.

**Speed:** The ship's speed and its nautical maneuverability rating. A ship gets to use one move action point for every 5 feet of speed, which relates to moving one 5 ft. square in one round (6 seconds), or moving one 50 ft. hex in one turn (one minute).

**hp:** The number of hit points, hardness and AC of the ship's hull.

**Ram:** The damage dealt by the vehicle if it rams another object.

**Mounts:** The number of weapons the ship can mount. A light mount is suitable for a ballista or stonethrower; a heavy mount is suitable for a catapult.

**Space:** The length and width of the area taken up by the ship.

**Height:** The height of the main deck above the waterline. Most large vessels will have deckhouses, forecastles, or sterncastles that are above this level. Draft is how far under the water the ship's hull extends.

**Watch:** The number of crewmembers necessary to make course changes, adjust for wind changes, and generally handle the ship. On an oar-powered vessel, the watch includes the number of rowers necessary for the ship to make use of its full oared speed.

**Complement:** The number of crewmembers, passengers, and soldiers who can be carried by the vessel for extended voyaging. For a short voyage (a day or less) a ship might be able to cram two or three times this number of people on board.

**Cargo:** The capacity of the vehicle's hold, in tons (1 ton = 2,000 pounds). Most ships are slowed to 3/4 normal speed if carrying half this load or more.

**Cost:** The vehicle's cost in gold pieces.

Table 6: Boats and Ships

Vessel	Ship Size/ Space	Complement	Maneuverability Rating	Speed	Cost
Caravel (sailing ship)	Medium / 60' x 20'	30/7	1 average	sail 30ft (6)	10,000 gp
Dromond (warship)	Huge / 100' x 20'	200/7/100	1 average	sail 20ft (4) or oars 30ft (6)	25,000 gp
Galley	Gargantuan / 130' x 20'	300/10/160	2 poor	sail 15ft (3) or oars 20ft (4)	30,000 gp
Greatship	Colossal / 150' x 40'	500/20	2 poor	sail 25ft (5)	60,000 gp
Pinnace	Small / 30' x 10'	15/3/8	0 good	sail 30ft (6) or oars 5ft (1)	4,500 gp
Rowboat	Diminutive / 10' x 5'	4/1	0 good	oars 10ft (2)	50 gp

## Vessel Descriptions

### Caravel (Sailing Ship)

Caravel: Medium vehicle; Seaworthiness +4; Shiphandling +2; Speed 30 ft. (average); hp 480 (hardness 5), AC 15; Ram 4d6; Mounts 2 light and 1 heavy; Space 60 ft. by 20 ft.; Height 10 ft. (draft 10 ft.); Complement 30; Watch 7; Cargo 120 tons; Cost 10,000 gp.

### Dromond (Warship)

Dromond: Huge vehicle; Seaworthiness +0; Shiphandling +2; Speed 20 ft., or oars 30 ft. (average); hp 1,200 (hardness 5), AC 13; Ram 4d6; Mounts 4 light, 2 heavy, ram; Space 100 ft. by 20 ft.; Height 15 ft. (draft 15 ft.); Complement 200; Watch 7 plus 100 rowers; Cargo 150 tons; Cost 25,000 gp.

### Galley

Galley: Gargantuan vehicle; Seaworthiness +0; Shiphandling –2; Speed 15 ft. or oars 20 ft. (poor); hp 1,520 (hardness 5), AC 11; Ram 6d6; Mounts 6 light, 3 heavy, ram; Space 130 ft. by 20 ft.; Height 15 ft. (draft 15 ft.); Complement 300; Watch 10 plus 160 rowers; Cargo 150 tons; Cost 30,000 gp.

### Greatship

Greatship: Colossal vehicle; Seaworthiness +6; Shiphandling –4; Speed 25 ft. (poor); hp 4,800 (hardness 5); Ram 6d6; Mounts 12 light and 4 heavy; Space 150 ft. by 40 ft.; Height 20 ft. (draft 20 ft.); Complement 500; Watch 20; Cargo 500 tons; Cost 60,000 gp.

### Pinnace (Small Sail Boat)

Pinnace: Small vehicle; Seaworthiness +2; Shiphandling +2; Speed 30 ft. or oars 5 ft. (good); hp 50 (hardness 5), AC 16; Ram 3d6; Mounts 2 light; Space 30 ft. by 10 ft.; Height 10 ft. (draft 5 ft.); Complement 15; Watch 3 plus 8 rowers; Cargo 30 tons; Cost 4,500 gp.

### Rowboat

Rowboat: Diminutive vehicle; Seaworthiness –4; Shiphandling +2; Speed oars 10 ft. (good); hp 30 (hardness 5), AC 19; Ram 1d6; Mounts —; Space 10 ft. by 5 ft.; Height 2-1/2 ft. (draft 2-1/2 ft.); Complement 4; Watch 1; Cargo 1,000 pounds ; Cost 50 gp.

## Ship Weapon Descriptions

Shipboard weapons require specific mounts, or hardpoints, where heavy equipment can be securely installed on the deck. You can install a weapon requiring a light mount in a heavy mount, but not vice-versa.

**Ballista:** The ballista is a Huge heavy crossbow fixed in place. The ballista takes up a space 5 feet across and weighs 400 pounds.

**Stonethrowers:** These are a cross between a ballista and a catapult. They use the same firing mechanism as a ballista, but have a cup for holding a stone, like a catapult. Because of the weight of the stone they are not as fast and as accurate as a ballista, but do more damage.

**Catapult:** A catapult uses a tensioning device to throw a heavy stone hundreds of feet. Because the catapult throws its stone in a high arc, it cannot strike a target within 100 feet—the range is simply too close. The catapult takes up a space 10 feet across and weighs 2,000 pounds.

Table 7: Ship Weapons

Weapon	Attack Bonus	Damage	Threat/ Critical	Crew	Reload	Range	AC	HP/ Hardness	Cost
<b>Ballista (damage type: Piercing)</b>									
Medium	+4	2d8	20x2	2	3 (3)	9 hexes	19	48/5	1,200 gp
<b>Stonethrower (damage type: Bludgeoning)</b>									
Medium	+2	4d6	19-20/x2	3	4 (2)	6 hexes	19	48/5	1,400 gp
<b>Catapult (damage type: Bludgeoning)</b>									
Medium	+0	4d6	20x3	3	5 (2)	3 hex	19	48/5	1,600 gp
Reload: the first number is the number of rounds it takes to reload. The number in parentheses is the number of times it can fire in one ships turn (one minute).									