THALASSA

NAVAL BATTLES ON THE ANCIENT SEAS

CONTENTS

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CREDITS

Key Concepts

Dice

Thalassa primarily uses two types of dice: regular ten-sided dice and special six-sided fleet command dice.

Re-Rolls

Regardless of the type of dice, or the source of the re-roll, no dice in the game can be re-rolled twice.

D10s

Ten-sided dice are known as D10s and are usually numbered from 1 to 0 (with the 0 representing the number 10). Most tests in the game are conducted by rolling several D10s. After rolling the dice, players should separately check the results of each individual dice to determine the number of successes obtained.

In most tests a 6+ is considered a success.

The Rule of 1 and the Rule of 10

When a test using D10s is required, a natural result of 1 (this being the actual number scored on the dice before applying any modifiers) is always a failure.

On the other hand, a natural result of 10 (or a '0') is considered an automatic success even if the score required was higher than a 10 because of certain penalties or other circumstances.

Fleet Command Dice

Each fleet starts the game with a specific number of fleet command dice. The fleet command dice represent the tactical skills of the fleet admiral and the orders they give to benefit the entire fleet.

The number of starting command dice that are allocated to each fleet is based on its size as measured in points value.

In the command phase, players roll all their command dice. They then put them to one side but with the face up showing the results of the rolls.

The fleet command dice results can be used as required in the operations phase during any of the players' activation. Any unused dice are discarded at the end of the round. You can use regular six-sided dice (D6) to represent the fleet command dice.

The icons and their correlation with the D6 results are as follow:

/6 **Drift**: This order represents the use of water currents or the tide to shift the position of a ship. A player can use this order to resolve a Drift with one of their own ships or force an enemy ship to Drift.

/5 **Blessing**: This order represents the commitment of a crew to their ship, to their crew mates, and to the gods they worship. A player can use this result and receive a Blessing token ( ).

/4 **Fleet**: A player can use this order on a ship of their choice to trigger a fleet's unique Fleet Command special rule. These are individually described in the rules for fleet selection. Each fleet will benefit in a different way.

/1-3 **Manoeuvre**: A player can use this order on one of their ships during its activation. This allows it to make an additional move or turn following the normal rules for manoeuvring. This is a bonus action in addition to the three manoeuvring actions a ship normally has.

A player can always burn a fleet command dice of any result to re-roll a Mastery test.

Players can use any number of their fleet command dice at any point during any of their own ships' activations (before, during, or after). However, an action cannot be interrupted to play a fleet command dice. A player cannot use more than one of their fleet command dice on the same ship during a round, either for friend or foe.

We recommend that you place the fleet command dice next to the ship that has received its effects as a reminder of this.

MEASUREMENTS

Players will need a tape measure or a ruler marked in inches. In a game of *Thalassa*, all distances and measurements can be checked before committing an action. However, once the ship has been moved from its original position, or dice have been rolled (for a shooting action, for example), you are committed to that action.

Unless otherwise specified, all measurements must be made from the ship's main hull (ignoring the line of oars and any protruding structures such as the ship's ram and other decorative parts) to the closest part of the target model's hull (also ignoring the line of oars and any protruding structures).

When taking measurements to determine shooting ranges or movement distances, players cannot place markers on the tabletop (such as dice, chits, or any other form of mark) that could be used as reference.

TEMPLATES

In addition to dice and other various tokens, players will need two types of special templates - the Drift and the Ramming templates. These are downloadable from the *Wargames Illustrated* website.

Unlike regular measurements, templates cannot be speculatively placed to assess the areas covered by them. If a player decides to use a template, this is a firm decision that cannot be undone after the template has been placed on the table.

SHIP MASTERY

On many occasions, the skill of the captain and the crew to control the ship will be put to the test; from basic navigation and manoeuvring disciplines to more challenging operations requiring the coordination of the entire crew, like putting out fires, navigating a dangerous coastline, or simply keeping the crew organised and motivated.

Most fleets comprise of ships with captains and crew of varying skills and combat experience. Successfully managing the actions of each ship in your fleet is the key to securing victory.

When a ship is selected during the creation of the fleet, players choose its Mastery level.

The Mastery level is the minimum score required on a D10 to pass a Mastery test.

In *Thalassa*, there are three Mastery levels:

CREW	MASTERY LEVEL
Veteran	2+
Experienced	3+
Neophyte	4+

As might be expected, a ship with a veteran crew will cost more to join the fleet than one crewed by young sailors and commanded by an inexperienced captain.

The basic recruitment cost of a ship in the faction fleet lists is assumed to include a Neophyte crew. The additional cost required to recruit a more able crew is listed in the different fleet lists.

When resolving Mastery tests, certain modifiers to the dice roll apply depending on the situation and difficulty of the task:

- **Disadvantaged:** The ship has received one or more Chaos tokens (🌀) (see page 8).

  –1 Mastery test

- **Coordinating Manoeuvres:** The ship is retaining the initiative (see page 9).

  –1 Mastery test

SAILS AND THE MASTERY FLAGS

While sails would have been raised to cruise and organise the battlelines during the approach phase of an engagement, in the close quarters action simulated during a game of *Thalassa*, most captains would have had sails furled. In many cases, the captains might have had the masts removed. Usually, they would be stored on deck or left on a nearby beach. Sails and masts could be a liability in combat, but they were also valuable assets to be preserved for sailing.

When playing a game, however, the spectacle on the tabletop will be improved greatly if players display the sails on their ships; as well as looking good, sails can help differentiate the ships of the opposing fleets.

The mainmast is also the perfect place to position a flag indicating the ship's Mastery level, either by colour-coding or writing on the Mastery value with a permanent marker pen.

As an alternative to the Mastery Flags, you may use red, yellow, and green colour chits to indicate the mastery of the ship.
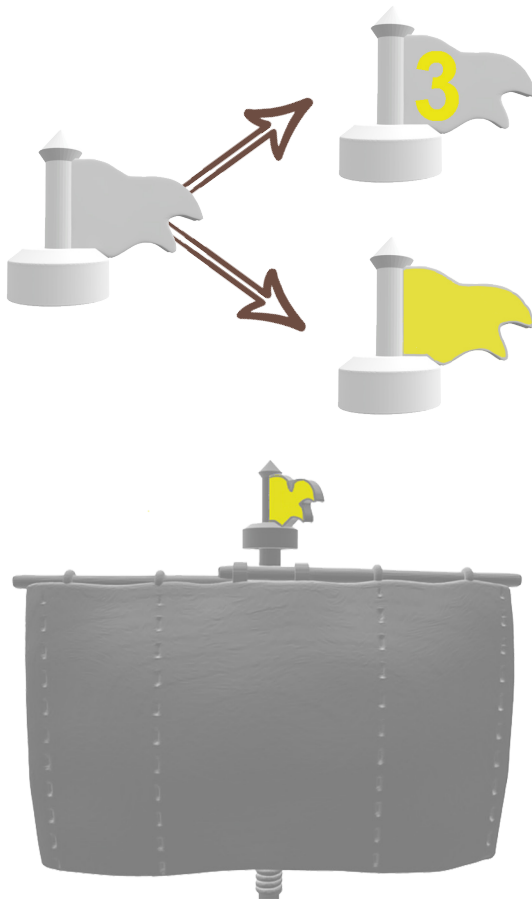
PREDOMINANT CURRENTS

Thalassa focuses on the close quarters action between fleets of classical wargalleys that have come into contact, broken formation, and started to engage ship to ship.

Manoeuvring primarily relied on multiple banks of well-trained oarsmen to power the ship through the water. However, such power had to be coordinated; the orders of the captain and the skills of the helmsman at the rudders were vitally important.

Wargalleys and their crews also had to take into account the currents and tides of their fluid battleground. These could be exploited tactically for advantage or to disadvantage the opponent. In a game of *Thalassa*, the direction of these currents is very important.

At the beginning of a game, players determine the dominant direction of the currents and the tide.

Unless a scenario says otherwise, the game starts with the sea moving steadily from left to right and right to left in relation to the deployment zones of the players. The symbol ≈ in the scenario maps indicates the starting direction of the dominant current.

To determine the direction in which the current affects a ship, trace an imaginary line between the centre of the table edge from where the current flows, and the ship's mainmast.

Check the diagram below to identify the side of the ship the current is pushing against.
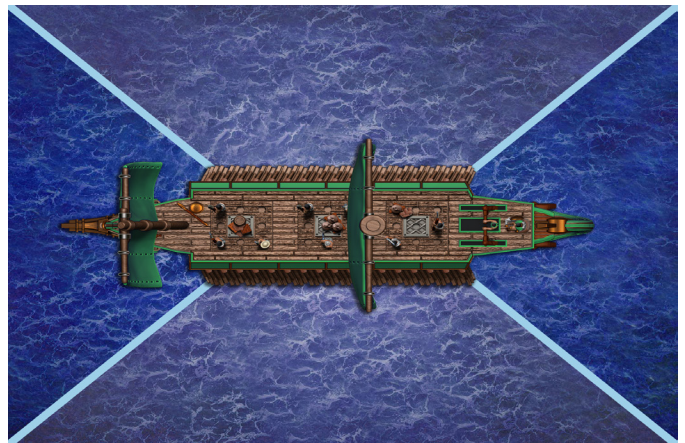
DRIFT

During a game of *Thalassa*, players can both benefit and suffer from the effects of the currents displacing the position of their ships. This effect is called Drift.

Skillful players can take advantage of the Drift for beneficial manoeuvres, but they can also be affected by involuntary Drifts (caused by the opposing player) that can detrimentally affect their position.

Drift is resolved using a template the size of a poker card with two lines crossing its centre as depicted here.
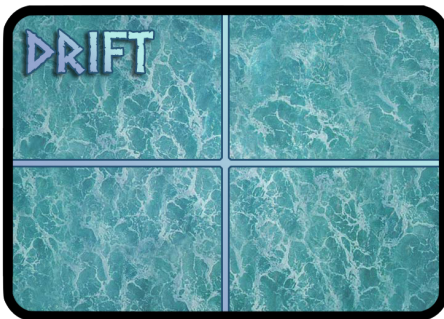
When resolving a Drift, the controlling player must check the direction of the predominant currents at that time and determine if they displace the ship sideways, from port to starboard or starboard to port, or lengthways, from bow to stern or stern to bow. This will determine the positioning of the Drifting template and the side to use in each case.

To resolve a side Drift, when the currents are pushing towards the port or the starboard of the ship, the Drift template must be placed alongside the line of oars on the side of the ship opposite to the direction of the current.
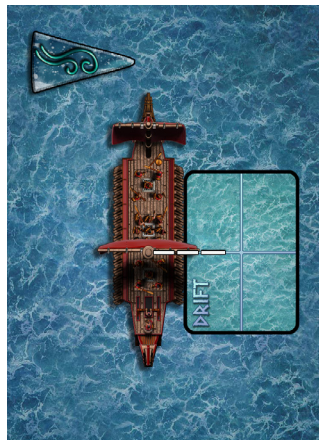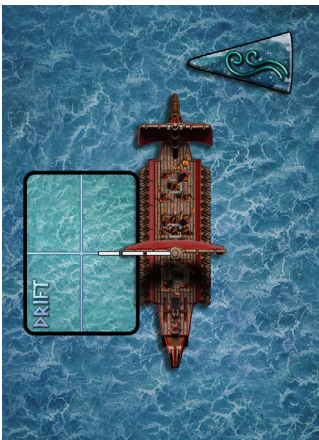
When resolving a Drift with the current pushing forward (from stern to bow) or astern (from bow to stern), the Drift template is placed against the stern or the bow of the ship aligned with the main mast (following the white dashline as shown below).
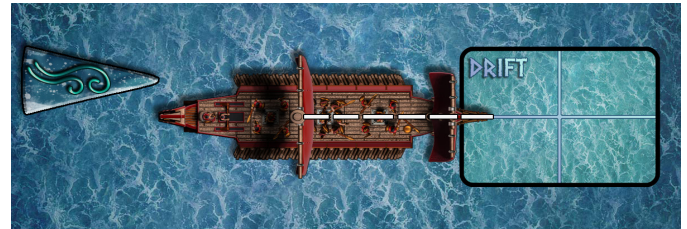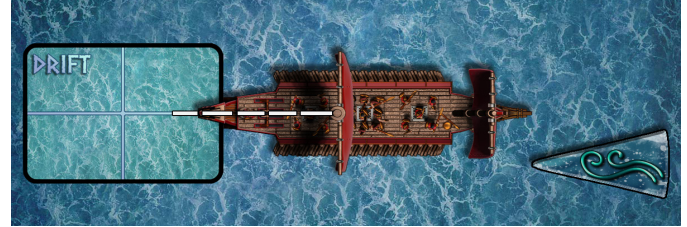
Once the template is placed as above, the ship can be shifted into its new position anywhere within the bounds of the template so long as the centre of the main mast remains within the area covered by the template. Its facing may be changed in any direction within 90° of its original facing.

When a player places a Drift dice (⚅) on one of their own ships, it is they who decide the positioning of the ship within the Drift template.

If a ship receives a Drift dice (⚅) from the opposing player, that player positions the ship. In both cases, the following rules must be observed:

- **The centre of the mainmast must be inside the template area.**
- **The ship cannot be turned more than 90° from its original facing.**

If after completing a Drift, a ship comes in contact with another ship (friend or foe) or a solid object like a wreck or part of the coast, a collision must be resolved immediately (see page 11).

In these examples (below), the red ship is affected by a Drift fleet command dice from another player. After positioning the Drift template according to the direction of the predominant current, the enemy player moves the ship and changes its facing, ensuring that it doesn't rotate more than 90° from its original facing and that the centre of the mainmast (yellow dot) remains within the template area.
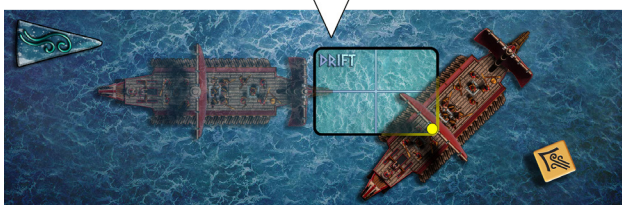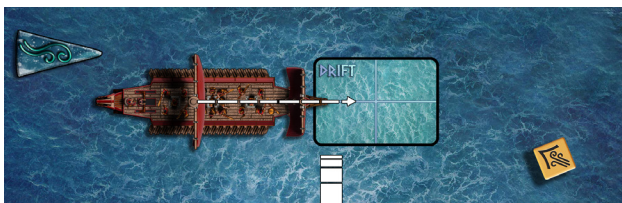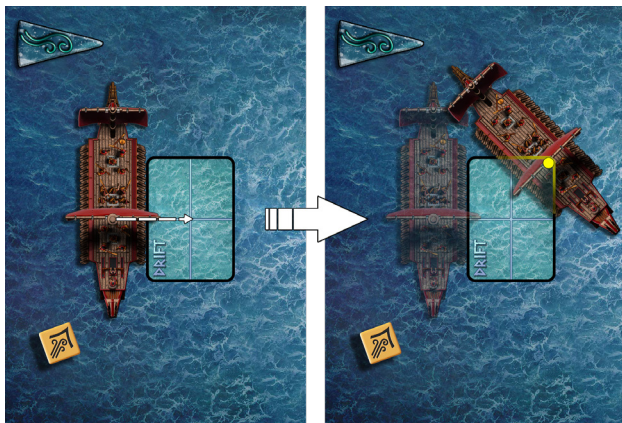
A ship that resolves a Drif during the operations phase counts as having moved, and any benefits for being stationary are therefore lost.

MINIATURE STANDS

A key element of *Thalassa* is the use of stands of models to represent the sailors, marines, and other hands vital to the running of the ship. This includes manning the oars, steering the ship, repairing it, and of course, fighting the enemy.

Stands can also represent the many varied engines of war sometimes carried by these ships.

Each ship in *Thalassa* has a number of stand slots that can be filled with various crew and engines of war stands.

Some ship upgrades can also occupy these stand slots, as explained in the rules for assembling a fleet on page 22.

Crew-stands have a resilience value that represents the harm they can receive before removing them from the ship. To temporarily mark the wounds received, players can place wounds tokens next to the affected ship.

STRUCTURE POINTS

Each ship has a number of structure points on its profile representing their construction, size, and resistance to shock and heavy impacts by enemy ramming, engines of war fire, or collisions.

Structure points can never be lost by the effect of a boarding action or from light projectiles like arrows or javelins, unless these attacks carry special rules. The only exception to this is the 'overkilling' of crew-stands during a boarding action as explained on page 17.

Players can mark the loss of structure points by placing structure tokens next to the ship's model.

ENGINES OF WAR

Stand slots can be used to house engines of war like catapults, ballistas, and defensive towers. The rules on how to acquire these engines of war are explained in the section on how to assemble the fleet.

Engines of war don't have their own resilience value; instead, their robust construction is represented by a Structure point value, usually one.

When a ship suffers the loss of a structure point, instead of reducing the ship's main hull (*Structure*), a player can decide to remove an engine of war instead. Engines of war and the ship they are mounted on always have the same Armour save.

If more than one structure point is lost, the defending player can distribute them amongst engines of war and the ship itself.

If a ship with no remaining crew stands suffers hits from shooting or boarding actions, the controlling player must remove one engine of war for every uncancelled hit received to represent the loss of the manning crew or the destruction of the machine at the hands of enemy assaulters.

CHAOS TOKENS

The stress and confusion suffered by a crew during battle is represented in the game by an accumulation of Chaos tokens (🌀). A ship that carries one or more Chaos tokens (🌀) during the game is said to be *Disadvantaged*.

A Disadvantaged ship is affected by the following penalties:

- **-1 Attack Dice (AD) for every 🌀, to a minimum of 1D10.**
- **-1 to all Mastery tests.**
- **-1 to the results to hit a target when shooting.**

Broken Morale

As soon as a ship accumulates more Chaos tokens (🌀) than its Governance value (**Gov**), as shown on its profile, the morale of the ship is Broken and the controlling player must remove all Chaos tokens (🌀) and replace them with a *Broken* marker.

While Broken, the controlling player cannot activate the ship nor play any fleet command dice on it. During each end phase, the player can try to restore order and regain control of the ship as explained on page 20.

ACTIVATION TOKENS

After a ship has taken its turn during the operations phase, and regardless of the outcome of the mastery test, the ship must be marked with an activation token to avoid confusion during the round.

The grey side of the activation token can be used to indicate special orders or conditions on the ship that may appear in future releases.

BLESSING TOKENS

The ancient nations believed strongly in the favours of their gods and that their fates were decided by divine intervention. To represent this strong belief in supernatural phenomena, players may receive Blessing tokens (🔥) during the game.

A Blessing token (🔥) can be discarded at any time during the activation of a ship to:

- **Remove one Chaos token (🌀).**
- **Re-roll any one D10.**
- **Perform other actions that may require Blessing tokens (🔥).**

Victory Points

At the end of each round, any unused Blessing tokens (🔥) are automatically converted into Victory Points and therefore can no longer be used during play unless a rule or special ability indicates otherwise.

THE NAVARCH

The Navarch (or Návarchos) is the ancient Greek name for the admiral of the fleet and this character must be clearly represented in one of the player's ships.

Players must indicate to their opponent which one of their main ships carries their Navarch, becoming the fleet's flagship.

The Navarch cannot start the game on board a pirate ship.

The Navarch does not take up a crew or upgrade slot and cannot be targeted by attacks of any kind.

If the flagship sinks, the Navarch will suffer the same fate unless they are rescued in time (as explained on page 16).

The flagship benefits from certain special rules explained in assembling the fleet (page 22).

Losing the Navarch

If the Navarch is destroyed or forced to leave the tabletop, the controlling player must roll one less fleet command dice during the command phase for the remainder of the game.

Additionally, every ship of the fleet must take a Mastery test immediately. If the test fails, the ship receives one Chaos token (🌀). This could force a ship to *Break*.

ROUND SEQUENCE

1. **COMMAND PHASE**

2. **OPERATIONS PHASE**

3. **END PHASE**

1. COMMAND PHASE

During this phase, both players are preparing their overall strategy for the coming round. The command phase is split into two steps:

- **Fleet Command Orders**
- **Initiative**

At the beginning of the round, both players roll five command dice (for a standard sized game) and keep the results scored to one side, but visible to their opponent at all times.

Any 🔥 results must be discarded and the player receives one Blessing token for each one, which can then be used during the round.

The results of the remaining fleet command dice can be allocated to the player's ships in the fleet to receive their benefits, or against the opponent's ships to inflict certain penalties.

1.1 FLEET COMMAND ORDERS

As mentioned above, at the beginning of the round both players take five command dice and roll them. Keeping the results face up, they can be set aside in a convenient place from where they can be used during the round. The results on these dice can be allocated to the player's ships in the fleet to produce benefits, or on the opponent's ships to inflict penalties.

A ship cannot benefit from more than one command dice from the controlling player per round. Additionally, the same ship can only suffer the penalties of one enemy command dice per round.

A player may re-roll any or all the command dice if they aren't happy with the results but as a penalty their flagship automatically receives 1 Chaos token (🌀). Only one re-roll attempt is allowed per turn. Any change on the command dice as a result of these re-rolls can affect the initiative order of activation.

1.2 INITIATIVE

During a round of *Thalassa*, both fleets alternate the activation of their ships.

After rolling the fleet command dice, the player that scored more manoeuvring results (🚩) may decide to be either the first player and activate their first ship, or alternatively they can declare their opponent as the first player.

In case of a draw in manoeuvring results (🚩), the player who didn't have the initiative on the previous turn counts as having scored one additional manoeuvring result (🚩).

If a tie occurs in turn one, both players roll-off on a D10 with the higher-scoring player deciding whether to go first or second.

1.2.1 COORDINATED MANOEUVRES

Once per round, each player may decide to try and activate another ship immediately after their previous ship has completed its actions.

To do this, the player simply takes a Mastery test on the ship they want to activate next. When activating a second ship this way, the Mastery test incurs a -1 penalty to the result to represent the difficulty of the operation.

If the Mastery test is passed, the player may activate the ship as normal. Once this is done, the opponent will activate their next ship as normal.

A player may only attempt one Coordinated Manoeuvre per round unless other rules or abilities allow for more.

2. OPERATIONS PHASE

During this phase, each ship on the tabletop is activated individually, starting with the player with Initiative, then alternating with the other player until all ships have activated.

The operations phase is composed of two main parts: the manoeuvring actions and the captain's orders.

When a player wants to activate one of their ships, they must first pass a ship Mastery test.

- If the test is passed, the ship can perform its manoeuvring actions and receive and execute one captain's order as explained next.

- If the test is failed, the ship will not be allowed to perform any of its normal manoeuvring actions. It still receives one captain's order during the activation. The ship can also still use a fleet command dice to perform a manoeuvre or other actions.

The captain's orders and any manoeuvring the ship is allowed to perform (moving, turning, or 🚩) can be resolved in any order the player wishes, unless the captain's order or any other special rule states otherwise.

2.1 MANOEUVRING ACTIONS

Unless the ship is immobilised for some reason, a player can perform up to 3 manoeuvre actions with each ship, which can be used to move or turn.

Ships can sometimes perform additional manoeuvre actions as a result of using fleet command orders, special command rules, or character perks and scenario rules.

Ships cannot move or be forced to move off the tabletop by any of the edges contained in their deployment zone.

If a ship moves or is pushed off the table in any other case, the ship must normally move just to the edge, thus ending the manoeuvre. The ship receives 1 Chaos token (🌀).

2.1.1 MOVING

All ships have a basic distance of movement in inches (M) on their profile. A ship can move that distance for every movement action it takes during its activation. This distance can be resolved directly forward or backward (reversing).

To move a ship, simply measure the required movement distance from a convenient point on the ship, e.g. bow (front) or stern (rear), and move the ship in a strictly straight line forward or backward the appropriate distance. If the ship is performing more than one successive movement action, simply add the distances together and move that distance.

The facing of the ship should not have changed in any way. It should face in exactly the same direction at both the start and the end of the move action.

A large vessel in the sea has quite a bit of momentum. Changing speed rapidly is not an easy task. When resolving a move manoeuvre, ships must always move the maximum distance indicated on their profile, e.g. a Trireme has a movement value of 3"; it must always move the 3" for every movement action. The only exception to this is if the ship must move less due to a collision.

2.1.2 TURNING

Turning the ship is another manoeuvring action. Performing this action allows a ship to turn on the spot up to 90°. To perform a pivot, place one finger on the centre of the ship's deck or its mainmast and push the bow or the stern of the miniature to face the desired course. There should be no forward or backward movement.

If whilst turning, a ship contacts another ship or a scenery element, treat it as a collision (see page 11).

COLLISIONS

Except when resolving an Away Boarders, a Ramming, or a Cutting Grapples order, when a ship comes into contact with another ship (friend or foe) or a solid terrain feature, a collision occurs.

Collisions aren't necessarily devastating, and in most cases they just generate a bit of confusion and require additional ship handling. To resolve a collision, the controlling player of the ship affected must take a Mastery test.

- If the test succeeds, the collision produces 1 Chaos token (☼) for the ship. This reflects the crew's distraction in avoiding the collision.
- If the test fails, the collision generates 1 Chaos token (☼) and the ship suffers 1 impact on the relevant location of the hull (front, side, or rear). This hit can be saved as normal to avoid losing a structure point.

If a collision occurs between two opposing ships, both players roll 1D10. The player with the highest score may decide to launch a boarding action and resolve it immediately as if the Boarders Away! captain's order had been given. A ship whose morale has been *Broken* by the effects of this collision may not take this action.

Alternatively, the player that won the D10 roll-off can decide to push away to avoid a later boarding action (see page 18).

A ship that has been involved in a collision does not count as *stationary*.

2.2 CAPTAIN'S ORDERS

It is the job of the captain to judge the condition of their ship and crew and be aware of the ebb and flow of the battle going on all around. The captain will endeavour to issue orders that best preserve his ship and exploit any opportunities for victory.

A ship can always receive ONE order from the captain, either before or after any of the manoeuvring actions have been performed. This is true even if the player fails the Mastery test to activate the ship. A captain's order cannot interrupt an action unless specified.

Ramming (page 12)

By giving this order, a player can use one of a ship's manoeuvring actions to perform a ramming attack (see the rules for ramming).

Away Boarders! (page 16)

A ship already engaged with an enemy ship or within 3" of an enemy ship (measured between both ships' hulls, excluding the lines of oars, the ram, or other protruding elements), can make a boarding action against that ship.

The attacker places their ship so that the lines of oars or the sides of their hulls (if they have no oars), have the maximum contact surface with each other. This is called *Grappling*.

If the attacker is boarding a ship already engaged by another ship, players must agree to accommodate them so that the maximum number of ships are touching the maximum contact surface with the minimum repositioning of the affected ships. In this case, a ship can board an enemy ship through an already engaged friendly ship.

While a ship is engaged in a boarding action, only the *Away Boarders!* order is allowed.

Unleash Fire (page 18)

Any crew-stand armed with ranged missile weapons (bows, javelins, slings, etc) can open fire against a target as described in the rules for shooting.

Rally (page 20)

One of the most important duties of a captain is to ensure that his crew maintains high morale and remains disciplined during battle. Failures in those areas can be disastrous for a ship of war. This captain's order represents motivational, organisational, and command skills being used to rally the crew in the heat of battle.

Special Orders

Other special orders can be given as indicated by any special abilities or rules.

2.1.1 RAMMING

A war galley knifing through the water at 10 knots directly at an enemy ship with an intention to ram is probably the most popular image of classical naval combat. Few things could be more terrifying for a sailor of that period than the splintering crash as the enemy galley's imposing bronze ram smashes planks and beams asunder. Dazed and thrown to the deck, they must quickly prepare themselves for the enemy marines who are sure to follow.

During the operations phase, a player may replace one of his three manoeuvring actions with the Ramming captain's order.

A ship that fails its Mastery test to activate cannot execute a ramming order using fleet command dice.

To resolve the order, the controlling player must place the ramming template to cover the ram just in front of the bow and project in a straight line (as shown in the image below). The line between the main mast and the ram on the miniature should be a good reference to trace the line correctly.

To launch a successful ramming action, part of the template must reach the target vessel.

If the ramming action reaches an enemy ship, and the course and distance have been determined, the players must identify the point of impact on the target ship.

THE RAMMING TEMPLATE

The ramming template shows five different courses taken to line up on the target ship. The more the attacking ship needs to adjust its course, the less effective the ram will be. The five courses available are:

Dead ahead

This is the optimum course and offers a +1 to the impact rolls on the D10s.

Adjust starboard/port

A minimal course change that gives no bonus to impact.

Steer starboard/port

A more radical turn that generates a -1 penalty to the results on the impact rolls.
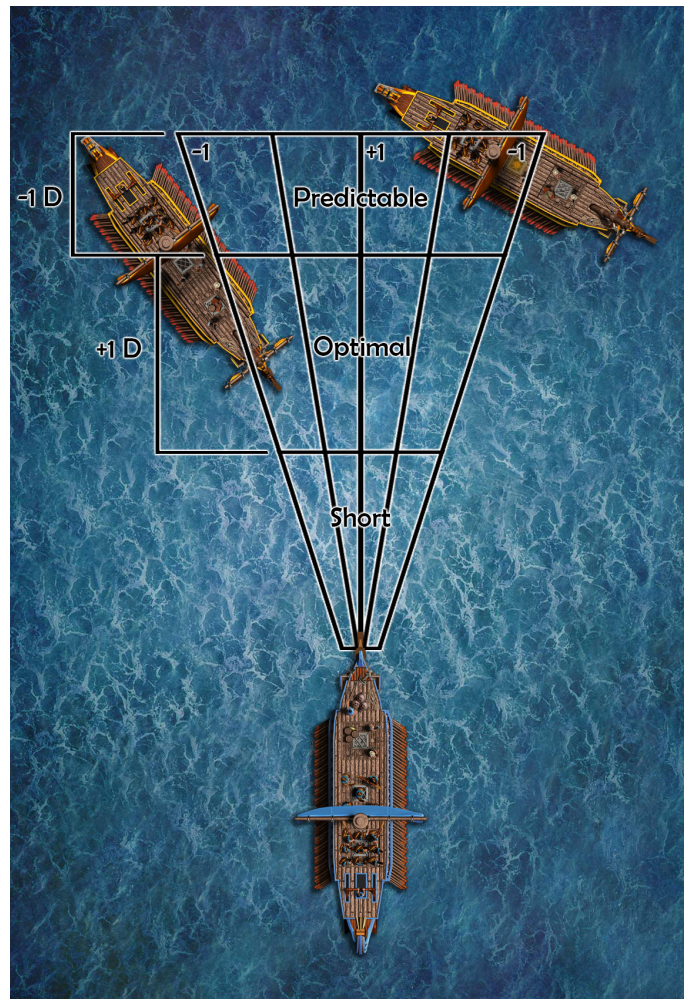
The area covered by the template is also divided into three lengths that represent the effects of the distance to the target at the time the ramming order is executed.

Short: Offers no bonuses to ramming as little momentum is built up.

Optimal: Adds 1 additional dice to the impact dice pool.

Predictable: Reduces the total number of dice rolled to impact by 1 as the greater distance allows the sailors on the target ship to prepare for impact.

FAILED RAM

If after placing the ramming template, a ship finds itself out of reach of any enemy ship, or if none of the course lines cross any part of any enemy ship, the ramming action fails, and the attacking ship surfs ahead as a consequence of the inertia gained at the start of the ramming command.

The controlling player must resolve one frontal move manoeuvre and finish its activation immediately. The ship also receives 1 Chaos token (🜨).

To determine the impact zone of the ship affected by the ram, look at the diagram below. If the chosen course crosses the oars line (in green), the ramming is resolved against the side of the ship. If the course overlaps the area marked in red, the ram will be resolved against the bow or stern of the boat accordingly.
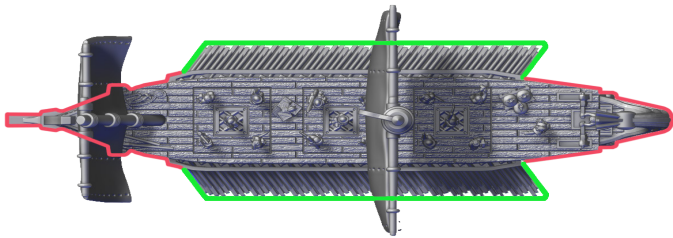
Compare the attacking ship's mass value against the target ship's hull value in the impact zone, then refer to the table below to determine the number of dice to be rolled to hit, adding a single dice if the ram is *Optimal*, or discarding a dice if the ram is *Predictable* (as explained above).

		Hull Value						
		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Mass Value	3	4D	4D	3D	3D	2D	2D	1D	1D
	4	5D	4D	4D	3D	3D	2D	2D	1D
	5	5D	5D	4D	4D	3D	3D	2D	2D
	6	6D	5D	5D	4D	4D	3D	3D	2D
	7	6D	6D	5D	5D	4D	4D	3D	3D
	8	7D	6D	6D	5D	5D	4D	4D	3D
	9	7D	7D	6D	6D	5D	5D	4D	4D
	10+	8D	7D	7D	6D	6D	5D	5D	4D

The total number of dice to be rolled represents the strength and effectiveness of the ram's IMPACT on the target's hull.

MOMENTUM

In addition to the number of dice determined in the Mass vs Hull table, the momentum gained for any manoeuvre actions prior to the ram order can also be added to the dice total.

For every Movement action resolved during the current activation and before the ramming is resolved, the attacking player adds 1 dice to the pool of impact dice. This bonus is lost, however, if they are immediately followed by a turning action.

For example, if a ship performs two move actions before a ram action, it would gain 2 additional impact dice. However, if a ship moves forward with one action but then performs a turn action, the additional impact dice for the move action is cancelled.

2.2.1.1 ROLL FOR IMPACT!

Once the number of impact dice is determined, the attacking player rolls them, attempting to score 6+ for success. Certain advantages or special rules may help or hinder the success of the ram, modifying the result needed in the impact dice.

For example, a Dead Ahead impact benefits from +1 to impact dice rolls, as explained on the previous page.

After the number of rolls scoring 6+ are calculated, the defending player will use their ship's armour save value to try to cancel the damage by rolling a dice for every successful hit scored.

For every unsaved hit, the defending player reduces the Structure of the ship by 1 point. If a ship's structure is ever reduced to 0, the vessel is wrecked and will start sinking.

Crippling ships

Whilst a ram might result in the destruction of an enemy ship, that may not be the ultimate goal of an attacking captain. The components and materials used in the construction of a fighting ship in the classical age were highly valuable and could become important assets. So, the objective of a ramming action might be an attempt to cripple a ship to the point of rendering it helpless, allowing it to be towed away after the battle as a prize to be repaired and put back into service, or if beyond repair, scavenged for its valuable bronze *embolon*, sails, and precious wood.

To represent this, every time a ship loses one or more structure points as the consequence of a hostile action, the attacking player receives the appropriate Victory Points for *crippling* the ship.

The crippling Victory Points are not rewarded for destroying engines of war, suffering a collision, the effects of fire, or any other events, even if the loss of structure is suffered as a result of a previous aggressive action.

TREMOR

The shock caused by an enemy ship ramming at full speed may not only damage the target ship, but the crew will most likely have trouble staying at their stations. Some will be thrown to the deck, while the unlucky ones may go overboard or even be killed by the impact.

To represent this disorder after being rammed, and in addition to any structural loss, the defending ship receives 1 Chaos token (🌀).

Splitting a ship

When a ship is sunk as a consequence of a ramming action, it is defined as being split.

The defending player removes the destroyed ship and the attacker may move the ramming ship, up to 3" in the direction of the ramming attack. Once the attacking ship is in its final position, the defending player must then place 2 shipwreck tokens no more than 1" from either side of the attacking ship but without touching any part of the model.

No further boarding or aggressive actions can be taken, and the wreck of the destroyed ship must then follow the rules for *Sinking Ships.*

In this example, the Athenian Trireme (blue) has rammed the Cretan one (yellow), splitting it after resolving a devastating impact. Once the Cretan player removes the split ship, the Athenian player decides to make a bonus forward movement of 3". Once in its final position, the Cretan player places the shipwreck double-marker.

2.2.1.2 RAMMING FOLLOW UP

After calculating the effect of the impact on the ships involved, and provided the target ship has not been sunk outright, the attacking player must resolve one of the following effects:

Boarding (Optional)

The ramming ship is rotated at the point of impact and placed alongside the defending ship, ensuring the maximum contact occurs between the two ships (usually side by side). A boarding action is then resolved between the two ships involved. The ships count as being grappled together.

Reverse (Optional)

The ramming ship can immediately move directly backwards its normal movement distance (3" in the case of a Trireme) finishing the ramming action. If a ship has any manoeuvres left, these can be resolved normally.

Bounce Off (Compulsory)

If a ramming action doesn't cause the loss of any structural points in the target ship, the ships involved bounce off each other.

In these cases, the attacking ship will also receive 1 Chaos token (🌀) and the players must resolve a Drifting movement for both ships.

First, the defending ship Drifts as if the attacking ship was the direction of the predominant current. After that Drift is resolved, the attacking ship always Drifts forwards in the direction of the attack, placing the Drift template against the bow of the ship.

Ships that bounce off can end up colliding with other ships or other scenery elements on the board. In this case, resolve as a collision (see page 11).

Sinking ships

A ship sinking to the depths is a dramatic part of *Thalassa*; terrified sailors and marines yelling out trying to save themselves, holding onto anything that floats, whilst around them the groan and crack of splintering wood mixes with the gurgling of the water as the hungry sea steadily devours the vessel.

When a ship loses all its Structure points, it is considered to be sinking. As soon as this happens, the controlling player replaces the miniature of the ship with a shipwreck token.

The shipwreck token is made of two halves representing the sinking bow and stern of the ship. To place the token correctly, the two halves must be separated by a 2" gap as shown in the example below.

All the ship's crew and engines of war are automatically lost except for any crew-stand with a hero and the Navarch if they were aboard.

When a ship sinks, the opposing player receives the VP rewarded by that ship regardless of the reason the ship lost its last structure point.

Shipwreck markers represent the bow and stern of a ship that is sinking after losing all its structure points.

A shipwreck marker is treated exactly as any other obstacle or ship during the game, and that means that any ships that enter into contact with it must stop on its edge and resolve a collision (see page 11).

A shipwreck marker interferes when tracing lines of sight like any other piece of terrain on the tabletop.

Shipwreck marker

The opposite side of the shipwreck markers represent the debris left after the main mass of the wreck has been engulfed by the waters. During the end phase, all shipwreck markers should be flipped over to be turned into debris markers.

Debris marker

A debris marker can be ignored when shooting or declaring manoeuvres. However, a ship that enters into contact with a debris marker must pass a Mastery test to avoid the flotsam of the wreck. If the test fails, the player must resolve a collision (as explained on page 11).

Once the contact with the debris has been resolved, the controlling player must remove the debris counter and continue its activation normally.

If after declaring a ramming action, the selected course on the ramming template crosses a feature of debris, the attacking player must first determine the effect of the debris before continuing with the resolution of the ramming movement.

If the Mastery test to avoid the debris succeeds, no bonus for the course or length is received, although penalties still apply normally.

If a collision occurs, the ramming stalls immediately at that point.
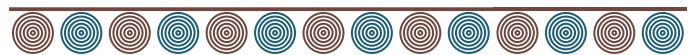
Shipwrecked characters

When a Hero or the Navarch are present on a ship that sinks, place the corresponding character crew-stand and/or the Navarch token anywhere within 1" of any of the shipwreck or debris tokens. This represents those individuals hoping to be rescued.

If a friendly ship ends its operations phase within 2" of a shipwrecked character, they can be rescued and included as part of the ship's crew, displacing a lesser crew-stand of the player's choice if there are no free crew slots aboard. The Navarch replaces the captain of the rescuing ship, which becomes the new flagship.

Designer's Notes

Historical references suggest that in many cases, the crews of attacking ships often calculated their ram attacks to damage but not sink the targets. Whilst we wanted to keep the tabletop relatively clear of unnecessary debris by removing ships after they lost all their structure points, we wanted to reward multiple precision strikes rather than all out brutal ramming. In a way, this encourages the 'milking of Victory Points' at the expense of leaving enemy ships seaworthy. This gives a choice to the players in how they conduct their attacks and encourages historical tactics.

2.2.2 AWAY BOARDERS!

During the battle, opposing ships come together and the crews begin engaging in bloody battles on their decks.

Generally, a ship's fighting force is fairly standard, with a handful of hoplites or marines ready to defend the rowers with the support of any of the sailors on deck. The best commanders, however, can exploit the options to man the ships of their fleets in the most effective way. They can add *toxotai* (archers), *peltasts* (mercenaries), or other effective shock infantry. Crew complements can be customised to fit the Navarch's battle plan.

During the game, a captain's manoeuvres and orders can bring two opposing ships into a close quarters battle. These boarding actions must be resolved immediately after the closing manoeuvre is completed, be it a ramming action or an approach that leads to throwing grapples and jamming enemy ships.

Regardless of the cause of the engagement, we assume that the crew of both ships are hurling themselves at each other, defending their ships, and battling the enemy across decks, swinging from line to line in a most cinematic and brutal display.

To resolve such desperate confrontations, both players must follow the steps explained next.

BOARDING

1. REPEL BOARDERS

If any of the engaging ships have weaponry that can be used to *Repel Boarders (x)*, they can now roll as many dice as indicated between the brackets (x) to attempt to reduce the strength of the enemy attack. As usual, any result of 6+ is a success. Repel boarders can only affect the first round of a boarding action.

For every success rolled while repelling boarders, the opposing player must discard one of their Attack Dice from their dice pool. No armour saves are allowed, and no wounds are scored.

2. PREPARE THE ATTACK DICE POOL

Both players create an Attack Dice pool by adding together the *Attack Dice (AD)* values from the profile of each crew stand participating in the boarding action. This also includes any AD contributed by engines of war. When calculating the Attack Dice pool remember to apply:

- -1D10 for every hit received in the previous Repel Boarders step.

- -1D10 for every Chaos token (⚝) accumulated.

3. ROLL THE ATTACK DICE

Once the final number of attack dice is established, both players roll them simultaneously, trying to hit their opponent on scores of 6+. Before rolling to hit, consider that some melee crew may score hits with better or worse results, or produce modifiers to the enemy armour save when they hit. Roll these separately or use different coloured dice to avoid confusion.

4. ROLL ARMOUR SAVES

Each side then makes Armour Saves (AS) to try and cancel enemy hits. Players can choose to use their crew's best remaining AS value against all hits suffered during a boarding action. This excludes any engine of war as it is not considered crew but an integral part of the ship's structure.

Any hit that is not cancelled reduces the Resilience of a crew-stand by 1 point. When the Resilience value of a crew-stand reaches 0, that base must be removed as a casualty. If there is more than 1 crew-stand eligible to be removed, the controlling player can choose which to remove first.

Any excess of uncancelled hits that don't remove a full crew-stand must be marked using Wound tokens (⚔), keeping them next to the ship until the next *end phase* since subsequent boarding or firing actions against the same ship can continue to accumulate injury until new crew stands are eliminated.

5. DETERMINE THE WINNER

Compare the uncancelled hits produced by both sides (don't forget those accrued on removed crew stands) to determine the overall winner of the boarding action.

BOARDING ACTION OUTCOME

DRAW

Both sides score the same uncancelled hits

Both ships receive 1 Chaos token (☀). The defending ship (the one that received the boarding action) may choose to continue fighting or to cut grapples and disengage, as explained below, unless the ship's paths to disengage are blocked, in which case the combat must continue.

WIN

One side scores more uncancelled hits

The losing ship receives 1 Chaos token (☀). The winner of the boarding action may choose to continue fighting or to cut grapples and disengage unless the ship's paths to disengage are blocked, in which case the combat must continue.

2.2.2.1 COMBAT

If the combat continues, assume the crews are securing the lines to keep both ships grappled together to create a more stable platform for combat. To represent this, the controlling player of the winning side must now reposition their ship to allow the maximum contact surface between the ships involved with the minimum movement possible.

In case of a draw, the defending player is considered the winning side when it comes to rearranging the ships.

Once the ships are grappled together, the boarding action will continue in the next round following the regular cycle of initiative and activation.

2.2.2.2 CUTTING GRAPPLES

When a ship cuts grapples with another ship, the crew parts the ropes, frees the hooks, and uses long poles to break free from the enemy ship and end the boarding action.

To cut grapples, the controlling player (the player that declared they wanted to cut grapples) can move either ship to create up to a 3" gap between them. Ships being moved when cutting grapples cannot change their facing at all.

The movement that occurs when cutting grapples is too slow to create a collision even if the ship comes into contact with an obstacle as a result of this manoeuvre. In this case, the ship simply stops at the edge of the obstacle.

In contrast, a ship that is pushed into a current or water elements that define riffs, banks, or shallow waters, continues to suffer the consequences of these, and they must be resolved imediately.

2.2.3 UNLEASH FIRE

The captain of a ship can choose to give an *Unleash Fire* order. This allows engines of war and any crew-stands armed with ranged weapons to resolve a shooting action against enemy ships.

A ship may carry several crew-stands and/or engines of war capable of shooting projectiles. A player may target multiple ships by assigning individual ranged crew-stands or engines of war to target each ship. For example, a ship with two ranged crew-stands and one engine of war may engage up to three ships if they are eligible targets.

To resolve a shooting action, check that the target is in the arc of fire of the weapons used. Unless they have any restrictions in their profile, most ranged weapons have an arc of fire of 360°.

After ensuring that the target is in the arc, the attacking player measures the distance between the firing crew-stand or engine of war and the closest point on the target model's hull. This should ignore the line of oars, masts, and any other protruding parts such as the ram or flags.

The player then checks to confirm that the target is within the maximum range of the weapon being fired, as shown on their game profile. If the target is within range, the shooting can proceed.

To resolve the shooting order, the attacking player rolls a number of dice equal to the Shooting Dice (SD) value of all ranged crew-stands or engines of war participating in that single shooting action.

2.2.3.1 Obscured Targets

When the target of a shooting action is not perfectly visible to the attacking ship (being partially covered by another ship, any shipwreck markers, or terrain features, for example), a -1 penalty applies to the result of any Shooting Dice rolls.

If the target has more than half of its silhouette covered, the line of sight is considered *blocked*, and the shot cannot be resolved.

Ships involved in boarding actions are considered to be blocked targets, and shooting actions against them cannot be declared.

It may be necessary to lower your head to the table and sight over the firing ship's hull to see if there is anything obscuring the target.

Players are advised to use common sense in determining whether a target is partially or fully covered when declaring ranged attacks and must agree before rolling the dice.

If there are still doubts about a shooting attack, the most sensible thing is to look for a clearer target and not hinder the game unnecessarily. As a last resort, roll a dice-off to determine if the target is obscured or blocked with the winner making the final call.

UNLEASH FIRE

1. PREPARE THE SHOOTING DICE POOL

The attacking player creates a Shooting Dice pool by summing together the **Shooting Dice (SD)** value from the profile of each crew-stand participating in each separate shooting attack.

2. ROLL THE SHOOTING DICE (SD)

The attacking player then rolls their chosen number of dice from the pool for each shooting attack in turn, needing 6+ for a success. Consider any penalties or bonuses that may be applied to these dice rolls.

3. ROLL ARMOUR SAVES

The defending player makes armour saves to cancel enemy hits. Remember that certain upgrades may increase the chances of cancelling hits scored by the enemy.

Players may always use the best saving roll aboard the ship for all the hits received.

Any uncancelled hit is classed as a wound and reduces the resilience of a crew-stand by 1 point. When the resilience value of a stand reaches 0, a crew-stand of the controlling player's choice is removed from play.

Players must allocate wounds to the same stand until its resilience is reduced to 0 and it is removed. A second stand cannot receive wounds if a previous one still has wounds remaining.

Leftover hits are carried over until the *end phase* as boarding or shooting actions against the same ship can continue depleting crew-stands.

4. RECEIVE CHAOS TOKENS (✷)

After resolving the shooting action, if at least one hit was scored, the target ship receives 1 Chaos token (✷) to represent the effects of being under fire. A ship can only ever receive 1 Chaos token (✷) for every enemy ship shooting at it regardless of the number of shooting attacks received during that shooting action.

2.2.4 RALLYING

A disciplined crew with good morale is essential in combat. However, some elements of the crew may not be as enthusiastic about fighting when things aren't going according to plan. Fear and fatigue may take a toll, the crew may hesitate, squabble, or even mutiny. Good captains know how and when to intervene to rally their crew through personal charisma, stirring actions, or an iron fist.

In the game, the effects of combat fatigue, stress, or fear are represented by the accumulation of Chaos tokens (⚙).

When the ship receives the *Rally* captain's order, the controlling player can remove 1 Chaos token (⚙) or 1 Blaze token (🔥) immediately.

Additionally, the player can discard any fleet command dice to remove 1 additional Chaos token (⚙) or 1 additional Blaze token (🔥) for every fleet command dice spent while rallying.

3. END PHASE

Once all ships on both sides have been activated, the end phase begins. Here the players attend to the status of their ships. Both players can perform these tasks simultaneously unless something requires a particular sequence. In such cases, these are carried out in the order of the player with the highest initiative first.

- **Resolve Broken, Unmanned, and Sunken Ships**
- **Fleet Upkeep**

3.1 BROKEN, UNMANNED, AND SUNKEN SHIPS

3.1.1 BROKEN SHIPS

As the ship takes more damage and casualties, the crew's morale can fall, eroding fighting spirit to the point they succumb to hopelessness, surrendering to the enemy, or even mutinying.

When a ship has accumulated more Chaos tokens (⚙) than its Governance value (**Gov**), the morale of the ship is considered broken, and it is marked with the *Broken* token.

During the end phase, the controlling player of a *Broken* ship must take a Mastery test to try and regain control of the ship. Remember to apply the Disadvantaged penalty to this Mastery test as normal.

The Captain's Will

If the test is passed, the player removes the *Broken* token and retains as many Chaos tokens (⚙) as its Gov value.

Mutiny

If the test is failed, 1 crew-stand or engine of war is lost, and the ship remains *Broken*.

3.1.2 UNMANNED SHIPS

If a ship has had all crew-stands removed as casualties, it is considered abandoned or *unmanned* and adrift.

From now on, the controlling player must resolve a Drift at the end of each operations phase instead of activating that ship. This continues each round until the ship is captured or scuttled.

3.1.2.1 Scuttling a ship

An unmanned ship can be easily sunk by simply smashing holes under the waterline or setting it on fire. This is called scuttling the ship, and it destroys it with no chance of recovery. An unmanned ship can be scuttled in the end phase if an enemy ship is within 1" of it. The enemy ship's controlling player simply declares their intention to scuttle the unmanned ship, and the miniature is replaced by wreck markers (see Sinking Ships on page 15).

3.1.2.2 Recovering / capturing a ship

Alternatively, a ship can be recrewed with any number of crew-stands (but not engines of war) transferred from another ship within 1" of an unmanned ship.

If the ship is resupplied with friendly crew-stands, the owning player *recovers* the ship and regains control of it with a basic Mastery level of 4+ from then on.

If the ship is resupplied with enemy crew, the ship is *captured*, and the enemy player takes control of it, activating the ship during the following operations phase with a basic Mastery level of 6+.

A captured ship must remove any engines of war left, except any built-in towers.

If a captured ship fails its Mastery test, it must complete a Drift immediately and misses its operations phase. The ship can still defend during boarding actions if attacked, including the repelling of boarders if applicable.

During a campaign: if at the end of the game a player holds any captured ships, they receive a reward in coin as shown on the captured ship's profile.

3.1.3 SUNKEN SHIPS

When a ship loses its last structure point, it immediately sinks; its miniature is replaced by the two-part shipwreck token (as explained on page 15).

In the end phase, all shipwreck tokens on the tabletop turn into debris tokens to represent the steady sinking of the ship until it will completely rest at the bottom of the sea.

Simply turn the shipwreck markers on the spot, so they show their debris side.

Similarly, any debris tokens on the board are removed in the end phase.

3.2 FLEET UPKEEP

3.2.1 RESILIENCE

During this step, all excess unallocated crew hits that remain are removed from each ship, leaving crew-stands clear of hits for the new round.

3.2.2 PUT OUT FIRES

When a ship has any Blaze tokens, it is classed as on fire. The captain can try to put the fire out at this moment. To do so, the controlling player must take a Mastery test reducing its result by -1 for every Blaze token (🔥) accumulated.

- If the test is passed, the ship discards 1 Blaze token (🔥).
- If the test fails, the Blaze token/s (🔥) remain, and effects are now resolved.
- If the Mastery test fails with a natural 1, the ship receives 1 additional Blaze token (🔥) as the fire spreads.

The penalty for being Disadvantaged does not affect the Mastery test for putting out the fire.

A ship with any Blaze tokens (🔥) remaining at the completion of the end phase will lose 1 structure point that cannot be cancelled with an armour save. This can, of course, cause the ship to sink normally.

Blaze tokens (🔥) also count as Chaos tokens (🌀) and must be considered for the effects of ship morale and rallying (see page 20).

ASSEMBLING A FLEET

Before assembling a fleet, players must decide on its size. Games of *Thalassa* are played in increments of recruitment points; these reflect the worth of ships of different classes - generally war galleys.

When recruiting the fleet, players must use the Fleet of Hellas list in this rulebook and chose their core nation's 'Ship Nationality Rule' from Athens, Sparta, Corinth, or Crete.

Each player must spend at least 75% of their total recruitment points on ships and upgrades from that state's fleet list.

It is very common for other states to offer support in the form of ships and patronage, sometimes creating truly eclectic fleets made up of ships and resources from many states.

Players can spend up to 25% of their recruitment points on ships of different city states. When doing this, those ships will benefit from their own Ship Nationality Rule.

Every ship selected already includes a crew of sailors at no cost to sail and fight with it.

THE FLAGSHIP

One of the ships in the fleet must carry the Navarch, the commander of the fleet. The selected ship becomes the flagship of the fleet and must be clearly identified during the game.

A ship receives the following benefits while it is acting as the flagship:

Sea Dog

The ship counts as having Mastery level 2+ regardless of its original Mastery level.

High Command

The flagship receives one Blessing token (🔥) at the beginning of each command phase. This Blessing token (🔥) can only affect the flagship but can turn into a VP normally at the end of the turn if unused.

One of a Kind

The Navarch has received their rank through being a great strategist, a great warrior, or a great leader. At the beginning of the game, players must declare the type of Navarch they have selected, and that choice will determine certain advantages for the flagship or even the fleet.

Strategist

With a perfect grasp of strategy and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the forces under their command, the Navarch always knows what the best course of action is to follow. The controlling player can change one of the command dice results rolled in the Command phase to the result of their choice. Where both players have a strategist Navarch, the player that scored less Manoeuvring results (🏴) must change their dice first.

Legendary Warrior

This is no ordinary mortal, possessing almost godlike martial skills. Easily able to defeat even the most talented warriors of the enemy, the Navarch has fought in many bloody battles, both at sea and on land. The flagship can roll two additional D10s on every boarding action per turn. In addition, all attacks receive +1 to hit during a boarding action.

Inspiring Leader

A charismatic leader and speaker, the mere presence of this Navarch is enough to inspire the best performance from the crews of the fleet. Any friendly ship within 10" of the flagship receives +1 to any Mastery tests they must take. In addition, they can benefit from the High Command Blessing (🔥) token received by the flagship once per turn.

SHIP MASTERY LEVELS

After selecting the ships that will make up the fleet, players must decide if they want to invest recruitment points in increasing the default 4+ Mastery level of the ships. Any ship in the fleet can have their Mastery level upgraded by spending the recruitment points as follows:

CREW	MASTERY LEVEL	FLAG COLOUR	MAIN SHIP COST	AUXILIARY SHIP COST
1- Fleet Commander	2+	N/A	0 pts.	0 pts.
Veteran	2+	Green	20 pts.	15 pts.
Experienced	3+	Yellow	10 pts.	6 pts.
Neophyte	4+	Red	0 pts.	0 pts.

CREW-STANDS

Each crew-stand represents the brave souls who sail and crew these ships in battle.

A crew-stand can represent many different types of crew, from sailors (the basic lightly armed element of the ship, tasked to defend it from an attack) to more specialised fighting men such as archers, hoplites, and marines. Basic crew is included in the ship's base recruitment cost. More combat capable crew-stands will cost additional recruitment points.

CREW-STAND UPGRADES

Unless special restrictions apply, a player can acquire as many crew-stands as there are crew slots to fill in the fleet's ships. The types recruited and assigned to a ship should be clearly identified on the ship's deck by using different crew-stand models, tokens, or some other convenient method to identify them.

Some crew-stands can receive upgrades in the form of special equipment (for example, incendiary projectiles or siege equipment) or the addition of champions, heroes, and leaders.

While a generic crew upgrade can be applied to either melee or ranged weapon crew-stands, some upgrades are specific to melee or ranged weapon crew types, and they cannot be mixed. All crew special abilities apply so long as that upgraded stand is present on the ship. A crew-stand can only ever receive one upgrade.

For example, an Athenian Trireme, the Alysodeménos, has three crew slots. The ship comes manned with three stands of armed oarsmen (included in the cost of the ship), but the controlling player decides to reinforce the ship's combat element by recruiting one stand of hoplites at a cost of +4 points to the ship's total. The fighting capabilities of the ship are now represented by two stands of armed oarsmen and one stand of hoplite warriors.

ENGINES OF WAR UPGRADES

Engines of war are represented by specific stands that can be fitted into a ship model's crew slots. A ship can recruit as many engines of war stands as it has crew slots available in the ship unless the fleet list says otherwise. Also, unless otherwise described, an engine of war cannot receive upgrades.

Following the example above, the player controlling the Alysodeménos decides to incorporate a command tower to receive certain strategic advantages. The player substitutes one of the armed oarsmen crew-stands for the tower adding the cost of +7 points to the total value of the ship.

During a boarding action, a ship with no crew stands left must allocate unsaved hits to engines of war to represent the attacker decimating the crew or destroying the actual construction. This is the only way a regular crew-stand can target an engine of war.

All engines of war are considered to have the same Resilience as Structure value when involved in a boarding action.

HERO UPGRADES

Heroes of the classical period are often described as playing pivotal roles in battles and deciding the fate of nation states. The stories of their actions and gallant deeds often became the root of myths and legends through continued retelling.

When a named hero is available to be included as part of their fleet, players should represent them with their own impressive crew-stand, taking up one of the crew slots available to the ship.

The restriction on heroes present in a fleet will be indicated by the hero himself, but only one hero can be recruited on a ship.

MELTING POT OF ALLIANCES

One of the most interesting and eccentric characteristics of the Hellenistic period is that of its alliances. The Mediterranean and Aegean Sea region, known in this period collectively as the Hellas, was made up of myriad independent Greek nation states of all sizes and power called *poleis*. These and other local powers, such as the Macedonian, Egyptian, Carthaginian, Sicilian, and Achaemenid Persian empires, continually formed and broke alliances among themselves with the goal of achieving local dominion or influencing the balance of power to preserve their own independence and trade routes.

The Greek city-states occasionally formed leagues of allied member states when faced by large threats, such as during the fight for survival in the Persian wars, or the quest for local dominance in the Peloponnesian Wars during the 5th Century BC. These leagues, however, were often short lived and unstable, with the concept of loyalty and commitment only lasting until the interests and fortunes of member nation states overcame the interests of the alliance.

The first thing a player must decide when recruiting their fleet is the state or nation they want to play as. A list of different nations is supplied in this rulebook, all of them manifesting nuances and special traits that make them interesting to play.

It is important to note that when forming a fleet that includes allied states or nations, all crew and engines of war must be selected from the appropriate nation's fleet list independently; they cannot be mixed with stands from other nations.

For example, a player choosing their fleet to be Corinthian could recruit ships from Crete to add their excellent archery skills. However, the Corinthian ships cannot have Cretan archers aboard and nor can the Cretan ship host Corinthian Epibatai (marines).

If a ship's crew slots are refilled with crew from an allied ship of a different nation, it is treated as a captured ship. For the game effects of captured ships, see page 21.

When a special rule, upgrade, or character refers to a particular state or nation, only the ships from that state are affected by them.

CLASH OF ALLIES

Due to the idiosyncrasies of shifting alliances when assembling the fleet, a player might face an enemy fleet with allied ships that come from the first player's nation state. For example, a player fields a Corinthian fleet with Athenian allies, and the opposing player fields a Spartan fleet with Corinthian allies. To handle this players must follow Nations & Pirates, Allies & Pirates, and Civil War rules (see below).

NATIONS & PIRATES

The core nation of a fleet always takes precedence over the allied nations. The matching allied ships become pirates. A pirate ship loses their *Ship Nationality Rule* and is classed as *pirate ship*.

For example, if a player fields a Corinthian fleet with Athenian allies, and the opposing player fields a Spartan fleet with Corinthian allies, the first player maintains the Corinthian nationality of their fleet, whereas the opponent's Corinthian ships become pirates.

ALLIES & PIRATES

If both players have allies from the same nation-state, both players must roll-off on 1D10 for each nationality they share, adding +1 to the result for each ship of that nationality they possess.

The player with the highest result maintains the nationality chosen at the time of recruiting the fleet, whilst the loser treats their allied ships as *pirate ships*.

For example, an Athenian fleet with a Corinthian ship and two Cretan ships faces a Spartan fleet with three Corinthian ships as allies. Both players roll 1D10 for the Corinthian clash with the first player adding +1 to their result (one Corinthian ship in the fleet) and the second player +3 (three Corinthian

allied ships in the fleet). The second player wins the roll-off and keeps the Corinthian nationality of their ships, whereas the first player turns their Corinthian ship into a pirate vessel.

PIRATES

Pirate Ship Rule

The crew of a pirate ship is usually made up of veteran sailors and experienced mercenaries selling their services to the highest bidder and only loyal to their captain and their pay.

Pirate ships do not benefit from any Ship Nationality Rule. Instead, pirate ships receive a +1 to the result of any Mastery test.

The Admiral cannot start the game on a pirate ship or be transferred to or be rescued by a pirate ship.

Civil War

When two players face each other with the core of their fleets chosen from the same nation, we assume they are fighting a conflict between influential families or the state has simply broken into bloody civil war. When this happens, both players keep the nationality of their ships as normal. Of course, the rules for pirates when allied nations clash still apply.

VICTORY POINTS

Victory Points (VP) are accumulated during a game through three main sources: the victory conditions of the scenario being played, the accumulation of the unused Blessing tokens that turn into Victory Points in the end phase of each round, and the VP earned when destroying enemy ships and other prized targets.

Each ship has two Victory Points values on their profile. The one in the small circle is the VP awarded to the opponent every time the ship is crippled during a hostile action. The value in the large circle is the VP awarded to the opponent when the ship is sunk.

Value of Resources

Most ships also have a number in coin that represents the value of the resources the ship is made of. This is a precious asset for a fleet that captures an enemy ship. This value is mainly relevant to continuous games during a campaign, but is also used during one-off games to decide the outcome of the game in the case of a draw. The side with more coin will be the winner.

In this example, a typical Trireme generates 2VP for the attacker every time it is crippled after resolving an attack. If a Trireme sinks, the player sinking it will receive +3 VP.

Additionally, the Trireme generates 50 coins if captured at the end of the game.

SHIPS

Without doubt the most important element in *Thalassa* is the ships and their crews. *Thalassa* is designed to be played with 6mm miniatures (1:285 scale).

During the naval wars of the classical period, between the 5th and 2nd Centuries BC, battles were resolved using war vessels with relatively low profiles propelled by lines of oarsmen. In smaller ship classes like the *triēris* (or triaconteres) and the *pentēris* (or penteconters), the oarsmen also doubled as the combat force aboard the ship. Contrary to popular belief, and with some exceptions, oarsmen were citizens who served the ship for a salary. Some nations, such as Sparta, employed Helots or other subjugated or lower-caste citizens in exchange for privileges or citizenship.

As warships became larger and more specialised, rows of dedicated oarsmen would serve as the engine of the ship while the *Epibatai* - armed marines - and other soldier types like *Toxotai* - archers - and hoplites - regular army soldiers - would defend the ship, and if the chance arose, board the enemy ships after impact.

The main role of all war galleys changed very little throughout the period; to cripple or sink the enemy ships with their heavy bow mounted and extremely expensive bronze rams (*embolon*). Row after row of oarsmen turned the ship into a projectile to smash its ram into the enemy ship, often with catastrophic results. It was not until the clash for dominance in the Mediterranean between Rome and Carthage that the war galley evolved from a simple ramming vessel to a fighting platform where hoplites and legionnaires would clash en-masse after impact.

Perhaps the key achievement of the war galley evolution was their clever design that allowed a progressive increase in size, which allowed more soldiers, marines, and engines of war to be carried along with increased cargo capacity for an invading force. All this without losing the flexibility and speed that made the war galleys the ultimate weapon at sea.

In this first release of *Thalassa*, we concentrate on two very distinctive war galleys: the Penteconter (or *pentēre*) and the Trireme (or *triēre*).

RESTRICTIONS

When a type of crew-stand, an engine of war, or an upgrade is limited to a certain amount per ship, this is indicated with a 0-X ,where X is the maximum amount of that crew-stand, engine of war, or upgrade allowed to a ship.

Following the same principle, sometimes a type of troop, especially characters, may be a compulsory requirement. In this case, the entry will be indicated with a 1-X, where 1 is the minimum of that troop type allowed and X the maximum allowed.

In both cases, X might be replaced by ANY, in which case there is no limit to the number of units of that type.

MAIN SHIPS

Most of the fleets from the different states described in this book charter ships of similar characteristics, seamanship, and performance. Although the presence of these varies in ratio according to the state, the conflict, or the historical moment, for the purposes of the game, the fleets presented in this rulebook are composed of two main types of war galleys: the Trireme and the Penteconter.

THE TRIREME

The greatest naval revolution during the ancient era was the development of a new war galley design, the Trireme (or *triēre*). It incorporated a larger deck, deeper draft, and heavier ram whilst still maintaining the speed and manoeuvrability of its predecessors. With around 150 oarsmen arranged three to an oar, the trireme was fast enough and heavy enough to perform its role as a ramming vessel. Being a larger ship, it also had a greater capacity to carry troops and war supplies to support a seaborne invasion.

At its height, the Trireme was the battleship of the ancient world.

DENOMINATION	MOVEMENT	MASS	STRUCTURE	HULL			ARMOUR SAVE	GOV
				FRONT	SIDE	BACK		
Hellenic Trireme	3"	6 (7)	3	6	6	6	6+	3

Ram - Add +1 to the Mass when ramming (already included on the profile). Benefit from +1 Armour saves against impacts received on the Front Hull.

Crew Slots (3) - The Hellenic Trireme is manned by 3 **armed Oarsmen** crew stands that can be upgraded with any of the options available on the fleet selector list of their corresponding city state.

Foredeck Slots (1) - Can select up to one foredeck upgrade from those available on the Ship Upgrades list.

CREW*	RESILIENCE	ARMOUR SAVE	AD/MOD	SD/MOD	RANGE
Armed Oarsmen	3	8+	3/-	-/-	-

NOTES

Mastery Level (Novice)
The starting Mastery level of the crew of a Hellenic Trireme is Novice (4+). This can be upgraded when assembling the fleet at the cost in points indicated in the rules.

2VP

3VP

50

COST 75

AUXILIARY SHIPS

As the larger war galleys became more effective, smaller ships of the line were relegated to auxiliary and support duties. Also, in times of total war, even merchant ships were taken up and repurposed as troop transport, artillery, and siege platforms, and even incendiary battle rams!

All auxiliary ships follow the combined tasks rule below. An auxiliary ship cannot start the game carrying the Navarch. However, this character can normally be transferred to an auxiliary ship during gameplay as usual.

COMBINED TASKS

Most auxiliary ships are manned by a crew that conducts the duties of controlling and handling the ship as well as defending it during combat. To represent this multi-tasking role, the ships have their own integral crew and war machine stats instead of crew slots.

Auxiliary ships cannot capture other vessels as they have no men to act as prize crew. If captured by the enemy, these auxiliary vessels continue to use their basic crew stat line, and the capturing ship simply discards one of their crew-stands instead of transferring it to the captured ship.

THE PENTECONTER

Before the Persian wars, the Penteconter was the warhorse of the Hellenic fleets. It was a fast and agile war galley propelled by two rows of 25 oarsmen. However, the development and introduction of the powerful Trireme during the Persian invasion displaced the Penteconter and other similar smaller ships from the front line to the role of skirmishing and outflanking as part of a larger fleet.

DENOMINATION	MOVEMENT	MASS	STRUCTURE	HULL			ARMOUR SAVE	GOV
				FRONT	SIDE	BACK		
Hellenic Penteconter	3"	4 (5)	2	5	5	5	7+	2

Ram - Add +1 to the Mass when ramming (already included on the profile). Benefit from +1 Armour saves against impacts received on the Front Hull.

Swift - Instead of a captain's order, a Penteconter can resolve an additional manoeuvre action during the operations phase.

Small - When a Penteconter sinks, it only produces one of the two halves of the sink token to represent its smaller size.

Ship Upgrades - A Penteconter cannot receive ship upgrades with the *'Trireme'* keyword in their description title.

CREW*	RESILIENCE	ARMOUR SAVE	AD/MOD	SD/MOD	RANGE
Oarsmen	3	8+	3/-	-/-	-
Marines	3	7+	3/-	2/-	12"

2VP

1VP

20

NOTES

Mastery Level (Novice)
The starting Mastery level of the crew of a Hellenic Penteconter is Novice (4+). This can be upgraded following the rules for assembling a fleet.

Marines (+10 pts)
A Penteconter can be manned by a hand of well trained Marines instead of its basic crew of Oarsmen for an additional cost of 10 points.

COST 40

The domain of the Greek culture throughout the Mediterranean, the Aegean Sea, and the Black Sea is known as the Hellas.

The concept of a Greek nation or empire does not exist yet, as all states (also known as *poleis*) and their corresponding colonies maintain a general independence and autonomy, while benefiting from a common and secured trading and cultural area.

This strong cultural and socioeconomic relationship often leads to Hellenic states joining forces, creating leagues to face common enemies like the constant Persian menace or the growing Carthaginian presence in the west Mediterranean and the north coasts of Alkebulan (Africa).

Conversely, their strong pledge for their own sovereignty sees the different *poleis* fighting against each other when a surge of imperialism within the Hellas itself threatens their independence. This melting pot of independent states, and the threats they are subject to, generates continuous alliances and confrontations with little long-term commitment; each *polis'* interests are always prevalent.

Only the state of Athens has a permanent fleet, which is well-paid and maintained by the many tributes they receive from smaller states in exchange for protection. The rest of the states commission their fleet only in times of conflict, recruiting their well-paid and trained oarsmen from their citizens as conscripts.

The most common ship of a Hellenic fleet is the mighty trireme, a war galley powered by 170 armed oarsmen that will defend the ship against any aggression. Most triremes also carry a contingent of well-armoured and disciplined hoplites and other types of troops the state can provide. The ships are commanded by a trierarch to ensure that all operations and manoeuvrings are executed precisely, no small task considering the amount of hands that need to be coordinated for the warship to work.

It is quite common that a fleet from a state recieves the support of other states as allies, who contribute with their own ships. These, although under the command of the Navarchs (the admiral of the fleet), operate in slightly different ways according to their traditions, abilities, and resources.

INDEPENDENT STATES

Ship Nationality Rule

To represent the particularities of each *Polis* when assembling their fleets, the players must decide to which nation they belong. Ships from that *polis* benefit accordingly from the following Ship Nationality Rule:

ATHENS -*Profesional Fleet:* All Athenian ships in the fleet can re-roll any roll of 1 when making their Mastery tests.

SPARTA - *Death before Defeat:* All Spartan ships in the fleet may re-roll any roll to hit result of 1 during the first round of combat after declaring a boarding action.

CRETE - *The Honour of Artemis:* All Cretan ships in the fleet can re-roll any result of 1 when rolling to hit with range weapons during a Shooting action.

CORINTH - *No Coin without Corinth:* All Corinthian ships, crew, and ship upgrades in the fleet cost 10% less recruitment points, rounding all fractions up. For example, a Trireme costs 68 recruitment points instead of 75. Corinthian Hoplites will still cost 4 points (4 - 0.4 = 3.6, rounding up = 4).

Note that, as usual, up to 25% of the recruitment cost can be spent on ships of a different nationality from that of the main body of the fleet (as explained on page 24 - Melting Pot of Alliances).

A PANTHEON OF GODS

Fleet Command Dice Rule

While each *polis* of Hellas prides itself on being an independent nation, they all share the worship of their pantheon of Olympian gods to whom they pay obeisance and trust to bring them luck in battle.

Any ship belonging to a Hellas fleet can change the 🚢 result on the command dice to any other result.

STANDS	COST	TYPE	RES	AS	AD/MOD	SD/MOD	RANGE	SPECIAL
Armed Oarsmen	0	melee crew	3	8+	3/-	N/A	-	
Hoplites	4	melee crew	3	6+	3/-	N/A	-	
Epibatai (marines)	6	melee crew	3	7+	3/-	N/A	-	Repel Boarders (2)
Toxotai (archers)	0	range crew	3	8+	1/-	3/-	12"	Reperl Boarders (2) Incendiary (+6 pts)
Peltast (mercenaries)	2	range crew	3	7+	2/-	2/-	6"	Mercenary
Oxibeles (ballista)	6	engine of war	Structure (1)	8+	1/-	3/-1	18"	Incendiary (+6 pts)
Monagon (light catapult)	10	engine of war	Structure (1)	8+	1/-	3/-1	6-24"	Barrage Incendiary (+10 pts)

THE HELLENIC FLEETS SPECIAL RULES

The Age of the Trireme: A Hellenic fleet must include at least the same number of Triremes as of any other ships, including any type of auxiliary ships.

Repel Boarders (X): When being targeted by a boarding action, roll 1D10 for every Repel Boarders value the crew on the ship have. For every 6+ obtained, the attacking player loses 1D10 from their attack pool.

Incendiary (X pts): This upgrade has a cost in points indicated by X for all the crew or engines of war of the same type on board the ship. If during a shooting action a hit is scored, the target ship receives 1 Blaze token (🔥) instead of 1 Chaos token (🌀).

Barrage: After resolving any damage to the crew, if at least one impact was scored, roll 1D10 to check if the heavy projectile affects the structure of the ship. On a result of 6+, the ship loses 1 structure point. This cannot be saved with a normal armour save but can otherwise be allocated to an engine of war as normal.

PLAYING A SCENARIO: OPEN ENGAGEMENT

Each game of *Thalassa* is defined by a scenario that describes the situation, presents both sides with deployment conditions, and lists any special conditions, including prevailing currents, presence of islands, shallow waters, etc. The scenario will also list the victory conditions needed to win the game.

ATTACKER AND DEFENDER

The first thing to determine in a scenario is the role that each side will play. One will be the attacker, the other the defender. The victory conditions will often differ based on which role the players take.

In this scenario, patrolling squadrons of two enemy fleets face each other in neutral coastal waters. There isn't a defined defender or attacker.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The victory conditions describe the objectives that the attacker and the defender must meet in order to score Victory Points.

Generally, the player with the most Victory Points is the winner of the game. However, some scenarios award the victory to the side that manages to accomplish a certain objective, regardless of the casualties or the enemy ships destroyed.

PRIZE SHIPS

At the end of the game, any captured ship counts as sunk, scoring their relevant VP for being sunk outright in addition to any Coin rewarded on a campaign game. If any side has captured the enemy flagship, they score an additional 5VP.

BREAKING THE ENEMY BATTLELINE

At the end of the game, any friendly ship that is not Broken or immobilised, and is occupying the enemy's deployment zone, scores a number of Victory Points equal to its listed Victory Point value. This also applies to any captured enemy ships.

GAME LENGTH

The duration of the game is determined by either the completion of a number of rounds or by fulfilling certain conditions that can grant a sudden death victory regardless of the number of rounds played.

In this introductory scenario, both fleets fight during 4 complete rounds. At the end of the final round, victory points are calculated to determine the victor.

PREDOMINANT CURRENTS

Each scenario indicates the initial direction of the predominant currents via an icon on the corresponding board edge (🌊). The direction of the arrows on the icon indicates the direction of the predominant currents at the start of the game.

The scenario will also describe any special meteorological conditions that might affect the game, or list any modifiers that must be applied to rolls on the weather table during the End Phase of each round.

TABLE SET UP

Create a coastline along the short edge as shown on the map. The coastline shouldn't be wider than 8".

You may keep your tokens, dice, and other gaming elements on the coastline to keep the gaming area neat and tidy.

DEPLOYMENT ZONES

The deployment zones for both sides are defined by an area on each opposing table edge up to 12" deep, as marked on the scenario map.

Players roll off on 1D10 for each board quarter (sector); the winner can choose to place an element of terrain in it:

- In scenarios where there is a defender and an attacker, the defender may add +1 to their D10 score.

- If the dice roll of a player is double that of their opponent, two elements can be placed in that sector instead of one.

6' x 4' AND 5' x 4' TABLETOP

This size of table is recommended for fleets of 300 to 500 recruitment points.

If required, you can omit the coastlines to increase playing area.

DEFENDER DEPLOYMENT ZONE

ATTACKER DEPLOYMENT ZONE
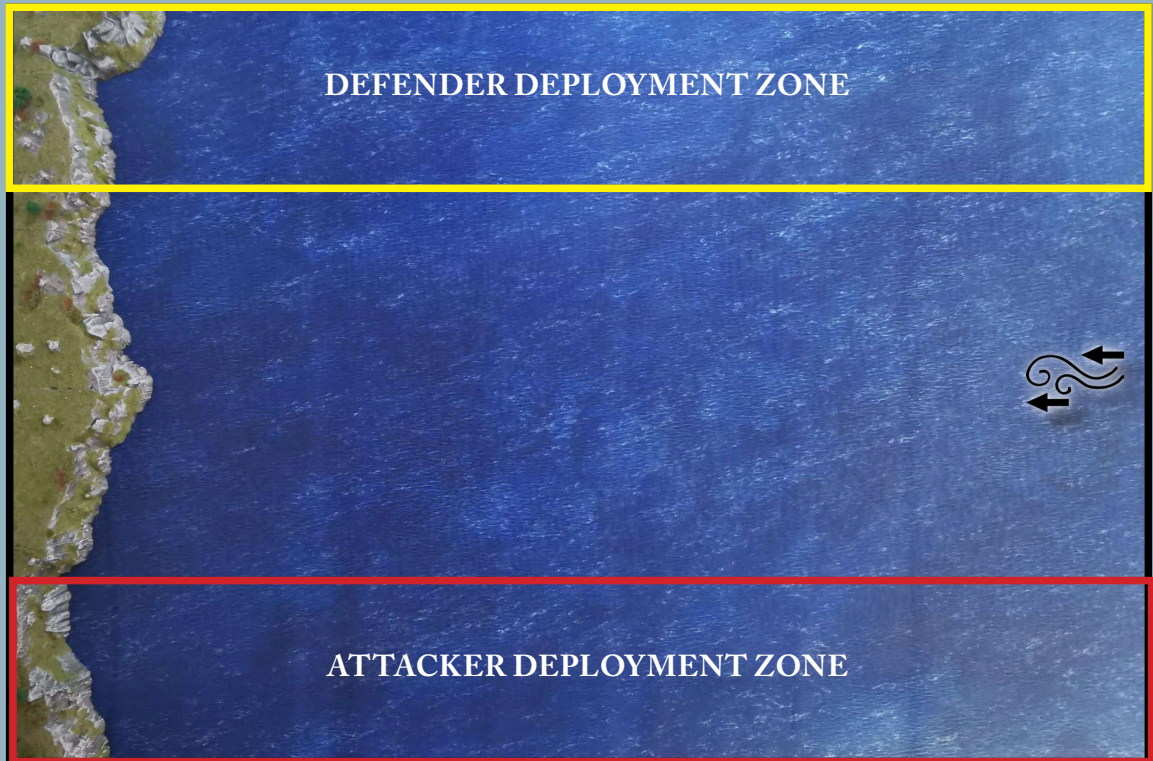
4' x 4' TABLETOP

This size of table is recommended for games featuring fleets of less than 300 recruitment points.

If required, you can omit the coastlines to increase playing area.

All rules for deployment and victory conditions apply normally.

DEFENDER DEPLOYMENT ZONE

ATTACKER DEPLOYMENT ZONE