BATTLETECH

HOW THE CORE RULEBOOKS WORK

A Stone's Revenant's Axman *takes the war to the Word of Blake during the battle of Cairo on Terra.*

BattleTech is an epic, ongoing universe with a game simulating combat between various military vehicles in the thirty-first century. The kings of the battlefield are the 30-foot tall humanoid titans known as BattleMechs. However, a myriad of other military units bring additional fun to any game, from Combat Vehicles to Support Vehicles, infantry to aerospace units and more.

The current award-winning *BattleTech* core rulebooks take a "kitchen sink" approach, meaning they provide a vast smorgasbord of rules and options from which each player group gets to decide what they'll use each time they play. However, even though each rulebook (and by extension, the rules it contains) has been made as easy as possible to plug into existing games, the sheer depth and scope can be intimidating.

The following *Primer* is designed to quickly and easily walk you through everything the *BattleTech* game system has to offer and how each core rulebook can be of interest to your gaming group. (Much of this information is found in various sources, but is compiled here for ease of reference.)

QUICK-START, INTRODUCTORY, STANDARD & ADVANCED RULES

BattleTech divides its rules into quick-start, introductory, standard and advanced levels, making it easy to transition from a "newbie" to the full experience of all the universe and game system have to offer.

Technical Readouts: Technical Readouts are the "toy books" of *BattleTech*. They include full-page illustrations, game statistics and "in-universe" write ups for a host of the war machines that populate the universe, including the 8- to 14-meter-tall metal avatars of war, the BattleMech. A full line of Technical Readouts exist, covering a wide range of military units, as well as time periods and technology.

The Introductory, Standard, and Advanced *BattleTech* rules are discussed below. In addition, the covers for the various Technical Readouts are shown, providing a quick look at how these sourcebooks match up with the different levels of rules. Some Technical Readouts (such as *Technical Readout: 3075* and *Technical Readout: 3085*) include some advanced/experimental rules, but even in those cases, the vast majority of the units detailed in those books are fully useable with the standard rules.

QUICK-START RULES

Players new to the *BattleTech* game system should first read the Quick-Start Rules, available as a free PDF download. (also found in the Introductory Box Set — see below). The Quick-Start Rules lay out the basic rules of the game and allow players to jump right into playing after only minutes of reading. Once players have tackled the Quick-Start Rules, they'll be ready to move onto the introductory rules of the *Introductory Box Set*.

Note: This discussion specifically refers to the "*BattleTech*" Quick-Start Rules. As discussed in the following pages, there are quick-start rules for additional "scales" of play.

Want to get right into the action? You can check out and download the Quick-Start Rules for *Battletech* for free by clicking **here**.
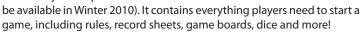
INTRODUCTORY RULES

The *BattleTech Introductory Box Set* is the introductory rules for *BattleTech*. The introductory rules use technology available in the year 3025, including all 'Mechs and weapons described in *Technical Readout: 3039*. While the current "in-universe" time frame is set around 3078-3085,

the rules in the *Introductory Box Set* apply to *BattleTech* before 3050, when a technological renaissance swept the universe; this keeps the rules easy to digest and use.

The *Introductory Box Set* is the best place to start when jumping into the *BattleTech* universe and game (the *25th Anniversary Box Set* is currently at the printer's and will be available in Winter 2010). It contains everything players need to start a game, including rules, record sheets, game boards, dice and more!

A free universe primer is available **here**.

STANDARD RULES

The rules presented in *Total Warfare*—and its companion construction rules volume, *Tech-Manual*—are considered the standard rules of *BattleTech*. They expand on the rules in the introductory box set by adding various advanced technologies and additional rules for infantry, vehicles and so on, as described in the rest of the *Technical Readout* series beyond 3039. They represent all tournament-appropriate rules; the "big" *BattleTech* tournaments run directly by Catalyst Game Labs at the Origins International Games Expo®, any Gen Con Game Fair® and many other conventions, as well as world-wide events run by Catalyst Demo Team members in various gaming stores, all use the rules presented in *Total Warfare*.

ADVANCED RULES

Beyond the standard rules is a legion of advanced rules found in *Tactical Operations*, *Strategic Operations* and *Interstellar Operations* (see below) that allow players to expand their games in any direction they desire. Some of the most recently published Technical Readouts include some "advanced/experimental" equipment. In an effort to bring these rules to players in the most usable form, the advanced rules are contained in the three core rulebooks mentioned above, each one building on the previous rules set (see *Core Rulebooks*, below). Additionally, each core rulebook focuses on a particular "in-universe" time frame that allows players to easily grasp where a given rulebook can plug into their existing game.
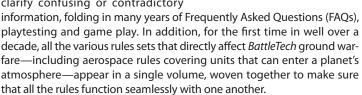
CORE RULEBOOKS

The following provides a more in-depth description of what's in the *BattleTech* core rulebook (and further clarifies where the rules divisions noted above apply).
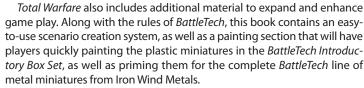
Total Warfare, *TechManual*, *Tactical Operations* and *Strategic Operations* are current releases; *A Time of War* is at the printer and will be available in December 2010. The final rulebook discussed in this primer, *Interstellar Operations*, is still in development; its publication date has not been set.

TOTAL WARFARE

Total Warfare—the core game rules book—is the single-source rulebook for people who play *BattleTech*. It is not intended to teach new players the game (though it can be used in that capacity), but rather to serve as a reference work for people who know the game from the *Introductory Box Set*, while introducing more technologies and expansive rules than appear in that box set.

For those who have played *BattleTech* at some point, *Total Warfare* has been carefully reworked from previous *BattleTech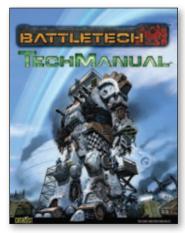* rules editions to clarify confusing or contradictory information, folding in many years of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), playtesting and game play. In addition, for the first time in well over a decade, all the various rules sets that directly affect *BattleTech* ground warfare—including aerospace rules covering units that can enter a planet's atmosphere—appear in a single volume, woven together to make sure that all the rules function seamlessly with one another.

Total Warfare also includes additional material to expand and enhance game play. Along with the rules of *BattleTech*, this book contains an easy-to-use scenario creation system, as well as a painting section that will have players quickly painting the plastic miniatures in the *BattleTech Introductory Box Set*, as well as priming them for the complete *BattleTech* line of metal miniatures from Iron Wind Metals.

For a preview of the Table of Contents, **click here**.

TECHMANUAL

TechManual—the core construction rulebook—continues on the path set down by *Total Warfare*. If you want to build or modify your own battlefield units, this is the book. *TechManual* presents players with a single rules source devoted to the creation of battlefield units that adhere to standard *BattleTech* rules: BattleMechs, IndustrialMechs, ProtoMechs, Combat Vehicles, Support Vehicles (non-military/para-military units, from ground vehicles to airships to fixed-wing craft and more), conventional infantry, battle armor,

Overwhelming firepower denies Coalition forces much of this Word of Blake militia Warhammer.

conventional and aerospace fighters and DropShips. Combining the construction rules from more than ten years' worth of *BattleTech* products, *TechManual* revises and clarifies the construction of *BattleTech* units, and unifies many that have become isolated in various products over the years.

TechManual also includes an extensive "Equipment" section, providing a thorough, in-universe overview of the various weapons and equipment mounted on battlefield units, a section on costs and availability, and finally a battle value section for balancing forces.

For a preview of the Table of Contents, **click here**.

TACTICAL OPERATIONS
SitRep:
Forces on-world.
Conflict expected to last mere hours to achieve objectives.

Tactical Operations is the first of the advanced rulebooks (see *Advanced Rules*, p. 3). Its focus is on a game as it unfolds, and its rules represent hours in the *BattleTech* universe: the time frame it takes for a single, moderate-sized battle to play out on a gaming table.

Building on *Total Warfare* and *TechManual*, *Tactical Operations* contains numerous advanced rules for movement and combat across various units, plus additional rules from artillery to command-level communications to minefields. It also expands core rules such as those for buildings, and implements a host of advanced terrain and weather rules. Rules for the construction and use of advanced Support Vehicles are presented, as well as advanced and prototype construction options and weapons for almost every type of unit.

For a preview of the Table of Contents, **click here**.

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS
SitRep:
Forces in solar system.
Beginning burn to planet.
Conflict expected to last weeks to achieve objectives.

Strategic Operations is the second advanced rulebook. It stages up to the next logical area of play, focusing on action in a solar system and multi-game play; its rules represent weeks in the *BattleTech* universe, the time frame needed for several battles to conquer an entire solar system.

Strategic Operations contains advanced movement and combat operations that emphasize the importance of aerospace units, such as capital-scale WarShips, along with extensive rules covering combat drops of numerous troop types into any situation. Linked scenarios and comprehensive maintenance, salvage, repair and customization rules provide an easy format for players to turn multiple games into an interconnected campaign to capture a target system, where the support crew of technicians and doctors can be just as important as any warrior. Complete game play and construction rules for advanced aerospace units are also included. Finally, a complete game system—*BattleForce*—allows players to use their existing miniatures and mapsheets to play quick, fast-paced *BattleTech* games, from small-scale skirmishes to large-scale planetary invasions.

Anyone looking for free Quick-Start Rules for *BattleForce* can **click here**. For a preview of the Table of Contents, **click here**.

Supported by lethal battle armor, a Light of Mankind Padilla tank launches artillery missiles into the fray to add the greatest possible collateral damage.

INTERSTELLAR OPERATIONS

SitRep:
Forces marshaled.
Flotillas assigned to target solar systems.
Conflict expected to last months to achieve objectives.

Interstellar Operations is the third and final advanced rulebook. Players are staged up to the final scale of play, where they can assume the roles of a House Lord or Clan Khan and dominate the galaxy. *Interstellar Operations* rules represent months in the *BattleTech* universe, the time frame for conquering numerous star systems.

Interstellar Operations contains complete rules for generating and running any type or size of force. Additionally, a comprehensive rules set governs the running of an entire faction's military as a player tries to conquer (or defend) numerous solar systems.

This system contains rules that allow players to stage any portion of a given conflict back through the various rules scales, as they desire–from the simple, easy-to-use rules of conflict at the largest scale, down to *BattleForce*, or all the way to a standard *BattleTech* game as presented in *Total Warfare* and *Tactical Operations*. Players have complete flexibility for any type of conflict in which they wish to engage.

As previously noted, *Interstellar Operations* is currently under development, with no release date set yet.

A TIME OF WAR

As previously mentioned, the *Introductory Box Set* is the primary entry point for a player into the *BattleTech* game system and universe, with *Total Warfare* as a secondary entry point. However, a third entry point exists for roleplayers coming into the universe.

A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG brings a full-featured role-playing experience to any gaming table. *A Time of War* uses a 2D6/bell curve system, with a few twists. It's fast and simple, streamlined so players can dive into the universe and action without being overburdened by complex rules. Characters are skill-based, with no classes, so players can customize their team roles and specialize in fields of their choosing.

Players can choose from scores of potential affiliations engaged in a constant state of war in any role imaginable, from a noble MechWarrior or mercenary fighter pilot to a renegade merchant or Clan battlesuit trooper. An easy-to-use point system is available, but players can also build their characters organically, creating a personal history and statistics that a player controls before the adventure even begins.

Gamemasters will find the setting open to adventures as wide-ranging as their imaginations, from following the Byzantine politics of the Great Houses and interstellar corporations, to fighting for glory in the Clan fields of honor or the arenas of Solaris VII. Wage war as a soldier, keep the peace as a police officer, discover forgotten worlds and lost technologies as an explorer, or seek your fortune and fame (or infamy) as a gladiator or pirate.

Designed for compatibility with the main *BattleTech* game established in *Total Warfare*, players can seamlessly switch back and forth between a roleplaying session and the board game to play out a particular battle.

Anyone looking for free Quick-Start Rules for *A Time of War* can **click here**. For a preview of the Table of Contents, **click here**.

On the homeworld of all humanity, numerous factions unite to recapture the planet from nearly defeated terrorist forces.

SCALES OF PLAY

The preceding information provides a thorough overview of the entire core rulebook line and where a player can find any rule he needs for a given game. However, the *BattleTech* standard rules are not designed to simulate conquering an entire planet (or dozens of planets!). Instead, the other scales of rules exist to provide players with the option to take their *BattleTech* game to a new level, and tackle nearly any size of conflict. To allow players the option of tackling almost any size conflict, game play is divided into various scales. (Unlike most other tabletop miniatures games, the use of "scale" here does not mean a changing size in miniatures, but instead a changing size in the scope of play and number of combat units in play.)

The following six scales encompass all *BattleTech* rules and rulebooks. The name immediately following the number is the name of the rules scale; the rulebook where appropriate rules are found appears in parentheses (in the case of *Strategic Operations*, the same book covers two different scales of play).

Please note that usually when someone says "*BattleTech*," he or she is referring to the *TW* scale noted below; that is, the board game as presented in the *Introductory Box Set* and *Total Warfare*. To help clarify that scale against the rest available for play, the term *TW* is used to describe that scale (as *all* the scales are *BattleTech*).

Finally, the order of rules scales below are slightly altered from the order in which the previous rulebooks were discussed to showcase the "smallest to largest" scales in ascending order.

1. **ATOW (A Time of War):** *A Time of War* is the *BattleTech* roleplaying game. It focuses on the actions of individuals or small groups of characters, generally outside of BattleMechs and other heavy combat equipment.

2. **TW (Total Warfare/Tactical Operations/Strategic Operations):** *Total Warfare* is the standard version of *BattleTech* that has captivated players for twenty-five years. It is best suited to small engagements of no more than twelve 'Mechs or other combat units per side.

3. **BF (Strategic Operations):** *BattleForce* is the *BattleTech* game of lightning-fast combat. Optimized to support forces of up to a regiment per side, *BattleForce* is also the first abstract scale of *BattleTech*.

4. **SBF (Interstellar Operations):** *Strategic BattleForce* is the *BattleTech* game of fast combat for large forces or battles where multiple regiments per side are common.

5. **PA (Interstellar Operations):** *Planetary Assault* is the large-scale *BattleTech* campaign setting. From jumping in-system and burning to the planet to capturing the last strategic resource, this scale puts the conquest of an entire planet into a quick and easy game.

6. **ISW (Interstellar Operations):** *Inner Sphere at War* takes *Planetary Assault* to the next level with large-scale campaigns and massive battles. This final scale of *BattleTech* allows for the playing out of entire conquests of the Inner Sphere.

UNIT SIZE

To further clarify the information above, the following paragraphs describe the basic single entity in each scale (the exact numbers change slightly based on the faction/technology used; Inner Sphere Lance (4), Clan Star (5), ComStar Level II (6), and so on). In other words, when playing at the *TW* scale, a single BattleMech, vehicle, and so on is considered to have moved whenever a miniature is moved; at the *SBF* scale, moving a single counter represents movement of an entire company, and so on.

1. ATOW: Soldier (one person)

2. TW: One unit: 'Mech, vehicle, infantry platoon, aerospace fighter and so on.

3. BF: One unit, defined as the smallest grouping of Elements (a unit under TW): one Lance (4), Star (5), Level II (6) and so on.

4. SBF: One company, defined as the smallest grouping of units under BF: one Company (12), Trinary (15) and so on.

5. PA: One battalion, defined as the smallest grouping of companies under SBF: one Battalion (36), Cluster (45), Level III (36) and so on.

6. ISW: One regiment, defined as the smallest grouping of battalions under PA: one Regiment (108), Galaxy (135) and so on.

TIME SCALE AND HEX SIZE TABLE

The Time Scale and Hex Size Table provides detailed game information on the time and map comparison for all six scales noted above. It's important to note that players need not know this information to play and enjoy *BattleTech*. It's simply provided here for those that will find the information useful in understanding how the scales interact and the flexibility and strength this interaction brings to the fun and enjoyment of the game, regardless of the type of game scale a group wants to play. (Please note that scales 4, 5 and 6 are still in development in *Interstellar Operations*, which is currently being written, and so they may be tweaked slightly.)

TIME SCALE AND HEX SIZE TABLE

Staging Scale	Time Scale	Map Scale
ATOW: Personal	5 seconds	5 meters
ATOW: Tactical	5 seconds	5 meters
TW: Ground	10 seconds	30 meters
TW: Low Altitude	10 seconds	500 meters
TW: High Altitude	1 minute	18 km
TW: Space	1 minute	18 km
BF: Ground	30 seconds	90 meters
BF: Space	3 minutes	162 km
SBF: Ground	3 minutes	500 meters
SBF: Space	18 minutes	11,340 km
PA: Ground	24 hours	250 km
PA: Orbital	24 hours	N/A
PA: Space	24 hours	50,000,000 km
ISW: Combat	1 week	10 light-years
ISW: Campaign	1 month	N/A

FLAVOR COMPARISON

The following example shows how a gaming group can take the battles of the Inner Sphere and wed it to the scale-of-play framework (the order here is reversed from the Scales of Play list, "largest to smallest").

On September 23, 3028, nearly a hundred Federated Suns JumpShips arrived in the Tikonov system and launched more than three hundred DropShips, which carried all eight Crucis Lancers Regimental Combat Teams, to begin their in-system burn to take the world of Tikonov away from the Capellan Confederation.
How would you use the rules as discussed to run this conflict?

6. ISW *The* Inner Sphere at War (ISW) *rules are used to run the entire Fourth Succession War (the empire-scale, Inner Sphere-wide conflict that ran from 3028-3030).*

5. PA *Instead of a few dice rolls at a simple board-game scale where most of the action around the Inner Sphere is taking place, the battle for the world of Tikonov (home to one of the largest BattleMech manufacturing centers in the Inner Sphere) is important enough that everyone wants to run the conquest of that world at the* Planetary Assault (PA) *scale. The Crucis Lancers "army" consists of approximately 24 'Mech Battalions and 168 infantry and armor Battalions.*

4. SBF *Most of the action is run at* PA *scale except for the fighting on the continent of Kazan, where the majority of the conflict for Tikonov takes place. That part of the conflict is brought down to the* Strategic BattleForce (SBF) *scale. The Second, Sixth and Eighth Crucis Lancers landed on Kazan, making the Federated Suns army approximately 27 'Mech Companies and 189 infantry and armor Companies.*

3. BF *The importance of the fight for the capital city of Tikograd prompts the player group to bring the scale of that battle down to* BattleForce (BF). *The Eighth Crucis Lancers were tasked with taking Tikograd, giving the Federated Suns an army of approximately 36 'Mech Units (the Eighth was a reinforced regiment) and 189 infantry and armor Units.*

2. TW *In between* BattleForce *sessions, the gaming group decides that a few scenarios of fighting directly around and in the Earthwerks plant are just too crucial and cool to leave at the* BattleForce *scale, so they drop down to* Total Warfare (TW) *scale for those games. A company of the Eighth backed by infantry gives the Federated Suns 12 'Mech units and 12 infantry units.*

1. ATOW   *Like the original battle as depicted in* BattleTech *fiction, the gaming group sees opportunities for some* A Time of War (ATOW) *roleplaying sessions. They toss in one or two of those, particularly surrounding the infiltration and attempted demolition of the power and communications lines running near the Tikograd Wall and its turret emplacements. The party is made up of four members of the Special Recon Company of the Eighth Crucis Lancers Jump Infantry Regiment.*

At each stage, game sessions move up or down between scales based on what a playing group wants to do or how important they think a particular battle is. After that session is done, players bring their game back up into the scale above. Once the entire battle for Tikonov has been played out, all the information the players need to know about what happened to all the units involved is ready for use back up at the *ISW* scale as the Fourth Succession War rages on.

MISCELLANEOUS

As players review all the information available at **www.classicbattletech.com** and **www.battletech.com**, as well as interacting on the forums, they'll likely come across some additional terms that are appropriate to discuss here.

3-D TERRAIN VS. MAPS
BattleTech at its core is a board game; players move pieces on a hex-grid mapsheet. Unlike other tabletop miniatures games, which use three-dimensional (3-D) terrain and rulers to approximate movement and combat, the core *BattleTech* game rules use specific, codified movement and combat ranges within a mapsheet's hex grid. For example, both the *BattleTech Introductory Box Set* and *HexPack: Lakes and Rivers* both contain hex-gridded mapsheets.

Nevertheless, any game system that uses three-dimensional miniatures (such as the complete line of *BattleTech* miniatures sold by Iron Wind Metals; see **www.ironwindmetals.com**) looks better when played on 3-D terrain. Three-dimensional terrain also enhances the feel of the game. Such terrain exists that still incorporates the necessary hex-grid for use with the *BattleTech* rules as presented in the core rulebooks.

Some players enjoy playing *BattleTech* in a "hex-less" style, similar to other tabletop miniatures games. A free, older conversion system for miniatures play can be found **here**, while a revised and heavily expanded version of those rules is found in *Strategic Operations*.

QUICK-STRIKE RULES
Quick-Strike play combines the lightning-fast *BattleForce*-scale rules with hex-less play (as described above) for a fantastic experience of *BattleTech* as a tabletop miniatures game. The Quick-Strike rules (not to be confused with Quick-Start rules) are found in *Strategic Operations* (Quick-Strike Record Sheets for various units are found at www.battlecorps.com/catalog; check out a free sample of Quick-Strike record sheets **here**).

TECHNOLOGY AND RULES LEVELS
Because of the wide range of technology available in the different time periods of *BattleTech* (click **here** for the *BattleTech Eras* document), the construction rules define a "Rules Level" differently than described in this PDF. Consequently, some confusion may arise as players interact with how the rulebooks define a "rules level' and how the various technology levels are defined "in universe."

For example, according to the rulebooks, "artillery" is considered an "Advanced Rules" weapon. However, that definition has nothing to do with how technologically advanced the equipment is; it's not advanced at all and is used in all eras of play. Artillery falls under Advanced Rules—appearing in the advanced rulebook *Tactical Operations*, rather than with the standard rules of play in *Total Warfare*—because of its relative complexity to use in a scenario, which makes it inappropriate for tournament play. In other words, even if a weapon/equipment item follows advanced rules, it can still be mass-produced within the universe; it's simply separated into another rulebook.

By comparison, the Light Polarization Shield (a technology first developed centuries ago "in universe") has an "Experimental" Rules Level. Note that there is no Experimental Rules Level, as defined on pages 2 and 3; instead, this is an in-universe designation used to indicate that an item has yet to reach mass production because it is prohibitively expensive, extraordinarily sophisticated, exceedingly difficult to maintain or simply deemed too unreliable or restrictive for widespread development (in essence, such technology is only in prototype stage, or only exists in computer simulations). However, for the rulebooks, any "Experimental Rules" equipment is subject to an appropriate advanced rule, found in an advanced rulebook.

CHOOSE YOUR RULES

As discussed, the gateway product for *BattleTech* is the *Introductory Box Set*. The next two rulebooks, *Total Warfare* and *TechManual*, bring the core game and construction rules for all standard rules play to your game table, while *A Time of War* offers a robust roleplaying experience. Beyond that, the "kitchen sink" approach of the core rulebooks really comes to the fore.

In effect, all the rules and weapons/equipment in *Tactical Operations*, *Strategic Operations*, and eventually *Interstellar Operations*, are optional. This means you can use as many or as few of the rules in those books as you want. (In fact, all three books contain so many rules that we recommend you try them out a few at a time, rather than attempting to use them all at once.) Furthermore, most of the rules and equipment can be added individually to a standard game. You can add rules and pieces of equipment to your game one at a time—most of the rules do not rely on other rules in this book to work in existing *BattleTech* games. This allows you to tailor your *BattleTech* game to your taste by including only those rules that you find make the game more interesting or fun. Use whatever new rules and equipment you want and disregard the rest.

Ultimately, we've provided a giant trunk of player tools…make the game and universe your own to enjoy and play in!

All of the currently released core rulebooks are available to order through any retailer. If you can't find a retailer that can order them, feel free to order them directly from Catalyst Game Labs at **www.battlecorps.com/catalog**.

Finally, each of the currently available core rulebooks is available in PDF format for only $15!

The universe of **BattleTech** *awaits… are you up to the challenge?*