

False Colors

A game of hidden fleets, fog and false flags, for 2 to 4 captains, ages 8 and up

OBJECT OF THE GAME

The Story

Fog has settled over the archipelago, and every fleet sails under false colors. A ship's true rating is a secret until she runs out her guns. You command a fleet of 14 ships. Hold the harbors and the Capital, capture enemy Admirals, and keep your own Admiral afloat. After 24 rounds the side with the most points wins, unless one side captures every enemy Admiral first. Losing your Admiral costs points; unless her capture ends the game, you sail on to the end.

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What You Need

One 12 x 12 chart with four anchorages, one in the middle of each edge, 12 islands, 4 harbors and the Capital at the center. One fleet of 14 ships per captain, each fleet a different rig. A round marker. Pencil and paper for orders.

Your fleet. The number on a ship is her rating. Bigger beats smaller. Three ships break that rule.

Ship	No.	Move	Note
7 First Rate	1	1	A Privateer that attacks her sinks her
6 Ship of the Line	1	1	
5 Frigate	1	1	
4 Sloop	2	1	
3 Boarding Party	2	1	Sinks a Fireship she attacks instead of burning
2 Cutter	3	1 to 3	Moves in a straight line; may Spyglass
1 Privateer	1	1	Sinks a First Rate when she attacks her
X Fireship	2	0	Never moves. Burns any attacker except a 3
A Admiral	1	1	Never attacks. Any attacker captures her: 8 points

Four fleets, told apart by their sails: **Square-Riggers**, **Lateens**, **Junks** and **Gaffs**. All four fleets are identical in play.

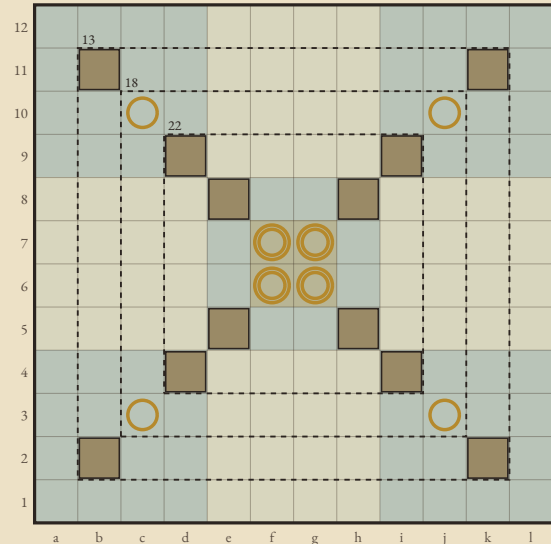
BEFORE THE FIRST ROUND

Setting Up

- Each captain takes the shaded 4 x 4 anchorage in the middle of one edge. Two captains take opposite edges; in Allied Fleets, partners take neighbouring edges, side by side. Three captains play the hex chart.
- Stand all 14 ships anywhere in your anchorage, their faces toward you; two squares stay empty. Fireships and the Admiral may stand in the front row if you dare. **Wings** (agree before setup): you may also use the 2 x 2 of open water on each side of your anchorage, against the edge.
- Placements are then final. Set the round marker to 1.

READING THE BOARD

The Chart



Open water	Ships move one square along a row or column. Never diagonally.
Anchorage	Your 4 x 4 on an edge. Set up here; then it is open water.
Island	Hatched squares. No ship may enter.
Harbor	Gold ring. 1 point to the captain whose ship stands on it at the end of a round.
Capital	The four gilt center squares. 2 points at the end of a round to the side with the most ships there; a tie scores nothing.
Storm	Dashed lines. After rounds 13, 18 and 22, the next ring of squares is lost to the storm. Any ship still there is struck.

EVERYONE MOVES AT ONCE

Playing a Round

Every round has the same four steps. There is no turn order: all captains act together.

- 1. Write orders.** In secret, give up to **three** of your ships one order each (**four** while your Admiral is afloat): Move, Spyglass or Hold. A ship without an order holds. **Round 1 is a truce:** no ship may sail onto an enemy, and no one fights.
- 2. Reveal.** All captains show their orders at the same moment.
- 3. Resolve.** Spyglasses first, then every ordered ship moves one square, all together. Cutters with squares left move a second and a third step. Ships that meet fight (see When Ships Meet).
- 4. Score.** Score the harbors and the Capital. After rounds 13, 18 and 22, the storm takes the next ring. Advance the round marker.

The rules on one card. Bigger number wins; same number, both sink. X burns whoever attacks it except 3. 1 sinks 7 only when 1 attacks. Any attacker captures A; A never attacks. Each round give up to three ships one order (four while your A is afloat); everyone moves at once; round 1 is a truce. Cutters move up to three and can spyglass. Hold harbors and the Capital to score; the storm closes in from the edges; 24 rounds.

ORDERS

Movement

- **Move.** One square, not diagonally, into water or onto an enemy (an attack). Onto a ship of your side only if she leaves that round, else you hold. Never onto your own Fireship, an island or the storm.
- **Cutters (2)** move one, two or three squares in a straight line through empty water, and may attack at the end of the run.
- **Spyglass.** Instead of moving, a Cutter beside an enemy may look at her. Your side alone learns her rating; hers, which Cutter looked.
- **Hold.** The ship stays, as does any ship without an order.
- **No shuffling.** After three rounds running back and forth between the same two squares, a ship may not go back again.

COLLISIONS

When Ships Meet

Order of entry: higher rating first, then lower seat (agreed before play).

- A ship entering a square another is leaving sails in behind her. Entering a square whose ship stays, she attacks her.
- Ships swapping squares fight; the winner takes the other's square.
- Ships entering one square fight one at a time in order of entry: the first fights the ship that stays there (if none, the second to enter), then the survivor fights the next.
- Of two moving ships, the first in order of entry attacks; equal ratings sink both, Admirals too. A ship that fights stops for the round.
- **An Admiral never attacks.** She may not be ordered onto an enemy, and if any ship stays in the square she sails for, she holds.
- **Friends** (your ships and your partner's) **never fight**, and in the truce, round 1, ships meet as friends do. A friend that stays blocks; of friends entering a square only the first goes in; swapping friends pass.

RUNNING OUT THE GUNS

Combat

The two captains in a fight and their partners see both ships; the rest learn only where it was and which ships were struck (removed).

- **Bigger number wins.** Equal numbers: both ships are struck.
- **Fireship (X).** Any ship that attacks her burns, except a Boarding Party (3), which sinks her.
- **Privateer (1).** Attacking a First Rate (7), she wins; a First Rate that attacks her, or meets her under way, sinks her.
- **Admiral (A).** Any attacker captures her, for 8. Lost to the storm or in meeting an enemy Admiral, she costs her captain 8 and is revealed.

Fireships and Admirals never attack. A ship that wins a fight stays secret from all but the two captains in it and their partners.

Combat table. Attacker down the side, defender across; green wins, red loses.

Att. ↓ Def. →	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	X	A
7	both	win	win	win	win	win	win	lose	cap
6	lose	both	win	win	win	win	win	lose	cap
5	lose	lose	both	win	win	win	win	lose	cap
4	lose	lose	lose	both	win	win	win	lose	cap
3	lose	lose	lose	lose	both	win	win	win	cap
2	lose	lose	lose	lose	lose	both	win	lose	cap
1	win	lose	lose	lose	lose	lose	both	lose	cap

POINTS

Scoring

Event	Points	To
Stand on a harbor at round end	1	Your fleet
Most ships in the Capital at round end	2	Your side
Capture an enemy Admiral	8	The captor
Strike an enemy ship in combat	half her rating, rounded down	The winner
Your Admiral afloat at the end	4	Your fleet
Your Admiral lost without capture	minus 8	Your fleet

A Fireship scores nothing for the ships she burns, nor does striking one. In Allied Fleets partners add their points together.

WEATHER

The Storm

After rounds 13, 18 and 22 the next ring of squares from the edge is lost to the storm, the harbors with the last, and any ship still there is struck. Only the front row of each anchorage never closes: an Admiral set up behind it must sail out and be defended on open water (the storm taking her costs her captain 8), and a Fireship there goes down with her ring.

No stalling. Six quiet rounds running (no fight, no harbor or Capital changing hands) bring rings three or more rounds off a round early.

WINNING

Ending the Game

The game ends after round 24, or after any round in which one side has captured every enemy Admiral: that side wins, whatever the points. With two captains it also ends, on points, once neither can capture the other's Admiral (she is gone, or no ship that can attack is left).

Otherwise most points wins. On a tie, more harbors held in the last round wins, then more enemy rating struck, else the result is shared. A captain whose Admiral is captured sails on and keeps every point won.

More ways to play (other endings, options and Pirates!) are on the companion sheet, rules-more.pdf.

THREE GAMES ON ONE CHART

Ways to Play

Duel (2)	The 10 x 10 duel chart, or opposite edges of this one. Capturing the Admiral wins at once. Best for learning.
Allied Fleets (2v2)	The standard four-captain game. Partners sit side by side, see each other's ships and orders, and share one score. Capturing both enemy Admirals wins at once.
Open Water (4)	Every captain for themselves. Until the end you see only your own score, and whether each other captain is leading, close (within 5 points of the leader) or trailing.
Scaled Orders	Partners do not see each other's ships or orders, only what each learns in fights and by spyglass.

FOR NEW CAPTAINS

A Few Words of Advice

Move a Cutter as if she were a First Rate and the enemy will believe you. Count the ships you have seen struck: what is left is what you face. Spend a Boarding Party where you think a Fireship hides. Leave home early: the harbors pay every round, and the storm forgives nobody who waits.