

## ***Hammers Slammers: The Crucible How does the game play?***

Well it's designed for games that are, typically, of two players with between one and three detachments a side. You can have more players and greater or fewer detachments – we often play 4 handed games where each player runs one or two detachments.

### ***Equipment for Play***

A tape measure with centimetre divisions and a bunch of D6 dice. Models in your chosen scale and lots of terrain are useful.

### ***Forces***

A standard unit for one player for a game is a Detachment. Since [Supplement 4](#), there has been provision for a half sized unit called a Troop.

A detachment is between 8 and 30 Tactical Units (TUs). A Troop is between 4 and 15 Tactical Units. The variation in number depends on the quality of the troops. There are four quality levels (Elite, Veteran, Trained and Untrained) and they field 8, 10, 15 and 30 TUs per detachment respectively (4, 5, 8 and 15 for Troops). A TU is one vehicle or one stand (or group if they are individually based) of infantry. A stand/group is generally 4 figures.

So a single Veteran detachment of 10 TUs might have 6 vehicles and 4 stands (say 16 figures) of infantry as a small force, led by a Lieutenant.

A larger force might have 2 Veteran detachments of 20 TUs might have 12 vehicles and 8 stands (32 figures) of infantry as a medium sized force, led by a Captain and a Lieutenant. The two detachments usually operate as separate elements.

The game hinges around the **quality level** of the troops fielded and this is further moderated by their **equipment, defensive values** and **weaponry**. Weaponry is further divided into several factors: number of shots in a turn, effectiveness (called Fire Power or **FP**) against both vehicles and infantry, and firing arcs.

A good example would be the Slammers themselves. Troop quality wise, they are Elites (8TUs per detachment) with high quality arms and equipment. They have Elite commanders and so have a higher chance in any one turn of generating a larger number of Leadership Points (LPs) than lesser quality troops. LPs are the 'currency' of a game during play. To fire a TU costs *nothing*, but to move, fire more effectively (ie your commander might shout at his men over the radio), to move faster than you normally should (*more shouting*), to traverse tricky terrain, to recover troops who are suppressed by enemy fire and to use some specific skills available in the optional rules – all of these require the expenditure of LPs within a game turn.

### ***Scales***

The game is playable in 6mm, 15mm and 25/28mm and the rules are useable in all three scales with **no adaptations** save changing the ranges and movement. Specific Hammer's Slammers Crucible Vehicles are now available from [Ainsty](#) in **15mm** scale and from Old Crow in **6mm and 28mm**. The cards and play sheets in the book are produced in the *largest* scale but are downloadable, ready configured in **all three scales**.

Ranges – in all three scales – stretch up to ‘NA’ which means, effectively, **Not Applicable**: ie there is **no maximum range** – it’s as long as your table! This is because, in reality, some weapons have very long ranges and this game is configured for 1:1 scale gaming: 1 man and 1 vehicle represent just that, in all scales. So - on the gaming table - they have often have realistically long ranges and some are effectively infinite. Obviously, other ranges are less than infinite, and these too are represented.

## **Ranges**

There are 6 range bands in the game although the first two - **Point Blank** and **Close** – are generally reserved for specialist weapons (mines and the like). To give an example, the range bands in 15mm are:

<b>Point Blank</b>	<i>Up to 3cm</i>
<b>Close</b>	<i>3cm to 8cm</i>
<b>Short</b>	<i>8cm to 30cm</i>
<b>Medium</b>	<i>30cm to 120cm</i>
<b>Long</b>	<i>120cm to 250cm</i>
<b>NA (infinite)</b>	<i>Over 250cm</i>

## **Method of play**

A function of the detachment’s leadership is a bonus for initiative and the order for play in that one turn is generated by a die roll with this bonus added to it. Players bowl for initiative and usually move and fire an **entire single detachment (or troop)** before play moves onto the next detachment. If the game has two players with a detachment each, then – obviously – that means the other player.

If the players are fielding multiple detachments – say two detachments a side – each detachment makes an individual bowl to determine its initiative. Generally speaking better troops will usually gain the initiative, although a lucky roll, or a poorly trained group with an inspirational leader will often change that. The order of play may change as it is decided on a turn by turn basis – it’s diced for at the beginning of each turn.

Leadership points for the turn are determined for each detachment and these are generated via another die roll with a leadership bonus added: better commanders are more effective and get more leadership points.

Although most movement and fire and close assault with infantry take place in order of this initial, initiative roll, some actions are resolved *outside* of this sequence: for example, incoming missiles and mortar rounds (and their possible interception) are simultaneously dealt with at the end of the turn, as are incoming artillery strikes (although they are actually inherited from the previous round because they take time to arrive). Some optional rules – like calling in artillery strikes – use LPs that are put into a pot which is carried over from turn to turn, representing the commander’s attention being diverted to making requests for support to HQ.

Some removal of infantry suppression markers is also dealt with at the end of the turn (although some may be removed earlier on if a commander is prepared to spend precious LPs doing this (ie ‘encouraging’ his men: more shouting at them on the radio...)).

## **How do I pick my forces?**

There are around 40 in the book to choose from, pretty much all available in 28mm, most in 15mm and – starting February 2011 – some in 6mm.

All forces are outlined in the book, but further information – with guides to buying forces from Ainsty and GZG, along with other manufacturers – are available from the [web site](#).

More forces are available from the [web site](#) and in the first supplement, published in [Miniature Wargames](#) magazine. A second, third and fourth supplement are now available - all are on the web site free to download either separately or as one big [download](#). The rules are fully supported by the publishers with articles, scenarios and supplements from time to time in [Miniature Wargames](#).

The supplements contain new, canonical forces (ie forces from David Drake's Slammers books) along with some extra rules, which are not required to play the game but are 'optional extras'.

**Hammer's Slammer's: The Crucible** is probably unique in the SF gaming world in having specially licensed vehicles in three scales for one set of rules.

## **Types of forces**

The Slammers Universe is almost entirely populated by humans and so all bar one force in the rule book are human. The Aliens used – the Molts – are a race of teleporting creatures which demonstrate their mastery of asymmetrical warfare techniques using hit and run tactics and light weapons. Figures have been sculpted for these in 28mm and are available from GZG.

## **Balanced Forces**

Aside from varying amounts of background history and organisational and equipment detail, in **The Crucible** all forces are given a Detachment Guide and Points-Costs – effectively an army list. Some detachments cost much more than others: for example, four mixed Slammer's detachments might cost almost 7000 points, but 4 detachments of Sincanmo Militia – with an inspirational leader – will cost only half that. To achieve a balanced game, in those circumstances the player with fewer points could have some allied troops. This is why – in David Drake's books - forces like the Sincanmo hire mercenaries like the Slammers to support their own units: they know that – toe to toe – they cannot beat an elite force and so they would hire a couple of detachments of Elites – or maybe three veteran units – to bolster their own troops.

So balance *can* be achieved (if desired) with the points-costs as guidance. Alternatively, scenarios can be altered to give different victory conditions for weaker forces, and maybe optional 'Elite skills' can be added to a weaker force giving them some scenario based advantages.

## **Optional Rules**

Some rules in the book are mandatory, some are *optional*. The core rules with minimum optional rules – off table artillery, snipers and the like – are only 20 pages long. There is a section in **The Crucible** on extra rules - like Elite Skills - which can be added to the core rules

but, again, this is just a few pages. The core rules are pretty much covered in any one scale on one double-sided play sheet plus the few TU cards for a particular force.

For example, a Slammers force - of whatever size - might use the two-sided play sheet plus between 4 and 6 TU cards which give 95% of the information needed to play the game without reference to the rule book (depending on which, if any, optional rules were in use).

As another example - and one featured in its entirety as a force on the website - is the [Lightning Division \(post 340TW\)](#). This force might use between 4 and 5 TU cards plus a play sheet whereas a group like the Sincanmo Federation use only 2 TU cards and a play sheet. As an alternative to individual cards, all forces in all scales now have the option of a "Big Detachment Card" with all of the specific information pertinent to that force on one - free - downloadable sheet.

### ***How Long?***

Games with two players who are familiar with the rules with a detachment each per side, on a suitable sized table generally take between 1 and 2 hours to play out, depending on troop types and the number of optional rules employed.

Games with four players and with one or 2 detachments each, on a suitable sized table generally take between 2.5 and 4 hours to play out, depending on troop types and the number of optional rules.

The scale of miniatures employed does not unduly affect game play speed.

***John Treadaway***