

DEAD MAN'S HAND

v0.6 (post 2nd playtest rules)

Getting The Show on the Road

This game is designed to play gunfights between two rival posses in the old west.

Grab a friend and some old west looking models and scenery (or stand-ins for such) and a pack of playing cards with a couple of jokers in it. A game should take half an hour or so, so have a game and then swap sides if you wanna be fair, or try out a Showdown.

The tables you'll be playing on should be 2' to 4' square for about 8 models per side. Might be needing more room if you have more models though. The only measurement used here is 'yards', so feel free to interpret that to suit the space. I use the length of a card, or approximately 3" or 10cm to mean 10 yards.

Always measure ranges from the center of a model's base. You can measure ranges any time you like (don't make decisions blind).

Models have a value from 2 to 10 and lower is better. Non-violent folk are around 10-8. Your average gunslingers will be 9-6. Feared individuals might have 6-3. Each model will have one or two weapons each in addition to normal brawlin' with their fists, and they might have a horse too.

The cards, as you might expect of a normal pack of playing cards, have a number from 2 to 10. The aces and picture cards have a special effect rather than a number value.

Decide atwixt you who will be playing as the red posse and who will be the black posse. Place the scenery in some kind of mutually agreeable and realistic fashion. I find arranging the buildings either side of a central road is easiest.

Draw a card, and the color that shows up shows who places a model from their posse on the table first, then the other player places a model from their posse and continue alternating until all the models are on the table. Models may be placed anywhere sensible (like, not in inaccessible places), but they must be put more than 40 yards from any enemy models and 20 yards from the center of the table.

The color of the card that was drawn also shows who gets to use a model first when the game starts.

Leon is playing as Apache, so he decides to be red, Stephen is playing Outlaws, and he is playing black. The card drawn is Red, so Leon places one of his Apaches as the first model, then Stephen places an Outlaw and they alternate until everyone is on the table. Then the game starts with Leon taking the first turn and using one of his Apaches, and then Stephen uses one of Outlaws, and so on.



Kicking up a Fuss

Once the game starts and all the models and scenery is on the table, players start taking turns to use their models, one at a time. Like checkers, you can use the same model over n' over if you like, once per turn every turn. Or you can take the time to move everyone, one model per turn. Up to you.

Every time it is Leon's turn he uses his best Apache sharpshooter to take a shot at an Outlaw. Stephen decides to move his whole posse, so each time it is his turn he moves a different Outlaw.



Each time a model is used it can move once and then, if its able, it can attack another model. Moves can be in any direction, including up ladders (unless you're on a horse!) and over fences (especially when you are on a horse!), but be minding that folk can't move through walls or fly through the air or anything silly like that.

After a move, the model can be faced in any direction they like, but if they attack they must always be turned to face their target.

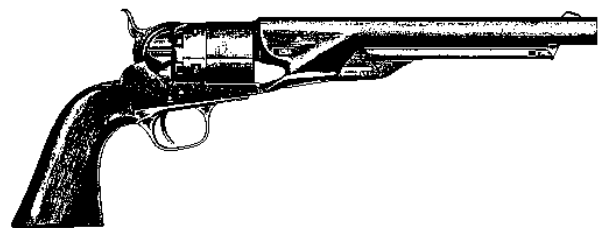
An Outlaw clammers over a fence that is about three yards high (this won't be unusual given the difference between model scale and ground scale), so he has to go up and down the fence, thus taking 6 yards off of his straight-line movement.

Generally, when a model is used they have the following options, movement-wise:

- **No Move.** Models that do not move at all (except to turn to face their target) can attack at Long Shot range (if it is available on the weapon they are using). Civilians who don't move can shoot at Normal Range.
- **Slow.** Models may move up to 10 yards and attack without penalty.
- **Quick.** Or they can move up to 20 yards and attack with a penalty.
- **Flat Out.** Or they can move up to 30 yards but they cannot attack at all. Unless they are on a horse, in which case they attack with the same penalty as if they just moved quickly.

How a model moves can effect attacks in other ways too, as follows:

- **Rifles.** Rifles can only ever be fired when the shooter hasn't moved, so they always use their Long Shot range. Civilians still get a reduced range but it is noted under Civilian range to avoid confusion.
- **Moving Target.** Models that move more than 20 yards should have a little marker placed next to them until the next time they are activated, because they are harder to hit on account of shiftin' so quick.



Leon's Apache sharpshooter doesn't move at all, and so he can fire his rifle, and uses its Long Shot range. One of Stephen's Outlaws moves about 15 yards, so he can still fire with his pistol, but it will be at a penalty. Another of Stephen's Outlaws has a horse and a shotgun, and rides 30 yards, and he can still fire, but with a penalty, but as a fast moving target anyone shooting at him will receive a penalty too.

Puttin' Holes in Folk

If a model is able to attack, it can do so against a target model so long as the target is in range of the gun they are using and they can draw line of sight to them. Measuring can be done at any time.

Be wary that civilians ain't so good with some weapons as practiced folk, and so they don't use the Normal range, but the Civilian range instead. If Civilians take Long Shots, they don't use the Long Shot range, but the Normal range.

If an attack is made, then the attacker must turn to face their target. Draw as many cards as the weapon's power, modified as below.

- **I got your back!** An extra card if friends of the attacker are within 10 yards of them.
- **Unsuspecting Target.** An extra card if attacking a target's back (attacking from more than 90 degrees away from where the target is currently facing).
- **Cover.** One less card if the target is in cover (at least a quarter of the model is obscured by scenery from the attacker's view point).
- **Moving Target.** One less card if the target moved more than 20 yards the last time it was activated.
- **Quick shot.** One less card if the attacker has just moved more than 10 yards.

After all the cards are drawn, the shooter must choose one of them, and this is the **result card**.

If the attacker does not like the cards drawn, they can instead take a gamble and go **all in** and draw a card in addition to these and then choose the result card. But, if the target is still alive and capable of attacking after an attacker has gone all in against them, then they may (if they wish) take one of the other cards drawn and treat it as an additional result card. Going all in leaves you open to folk getting the bulge on you.

Leon's Apache sharpshooter is using a rifle (power 2) to shoot at an Outlaw. The sharpshooter has an Apache ally nearby as well (+1) and he's fortunate enough to have got the Outlaw in the back (+1) but there are some barrels partially blocking the shot (-1), so Leon draws 3 cards total to attack.

Leon draws two cards in the Outlaw's color of Black, a Queen and a Two, and one card in his color of Red, a Three. None of these cards will hurt the sharpshooter too much, but they won't hurt his target either. So Leon goes all in and draws another card and gets a Red Ace. This is much more useful so he decides to use this as the result card. But because Leon went all in and the target is still alive, Stephen now gets to pick from the remaining cards, and chooses the Black Queen, since the Two wouldn't do anything at all.

Don't worry if you didn't understand what the cards mean, that's gonna be covered in the next section where this example continues.

The ranges and power of the weapons are given on the play sheet, but special rules that apply to them are summarized as follows:

- **Rifle.** Can only be fired using Long Shots, so you can't move and fire.
- **Dual Pistols.** Cannot be used by Civilians. Comes with a free Pistol. This means if they are removed by an Ace, you still have a Pistol.
- **Derringers.** Will be removed if they fail to hit due to a Lower Number result.
- **Thrown Tomahawk.** Cannot be used by Civilians. Comes with a free Big Blade. Removed if they fail to hit due to a Lower Number. But if removed (by a Lower Number or an Ace) the Big Blade remains.
- **Bow.** Cannot be used by Civilians.
- **Brawling.** All non-Civilians automatically have brawling, but it can still be removed by an Ace result.

Twiggin' the Card

The outcome of an attack is decided by the result card. Look up what happens here.

Same Color as Attacker. If the result card is the same color as the attacker, then the attacker wins and the effects are applied to the target.

Same Colour as Target. If the result card is the same color as the target, then the target wins and any effects are applied to the attacker, providing that the attacker is in Normal range of one of the target's weapons (or Civilian range if the target is a civilian). Long Shot range is never used, so target's cannot use Rifles in this way. If all this is fine, then turn the target to face the attacker.

Joker. If the result card is a Joker, then no one wins. Both take a hit.

Higher Number. If the result card has a number, and it is at least equal or higher than the winner's value then the loser is hit.

Lower Number. If the result card has a number and it is lower than the winner's value then nothing happens, probably because everyone missed. Except though, if the weapon used by the winner was derringers or thrown tomahawks, then they lose that weapon permanently, because they have run out.

Ace. If the result card is an Ace then the loser loses a weapon. Remove the weapon used to attack, or if the target was the loser (and therefore did not attack), then the loser picks one of the model's weapons that is in range of the winner if possible, or any other weapon otherwise. They've wasted their bullets, or you've shot the weapon from their mits. If Dual Pistols are removed, they will still have a Pistol left, and Thrown Tomahawks will still leave a Big Blade.

Jack. If the result card is a Jack then the loser cannot move the next time they are used, and they no longer have a horse if they had one, probably because it is dead. Perhaps they're just pinned down, or perhaps they're boogered up a bit.

Queen. If the result card is a Queen then the loser cannot attack the next time they are used, and they cannot apply result cards to any attacker against them until after the next time they are used. They need to reload, or the passing fire has stumped them such they can't shoot straight.

King. If the result card is a King then the loser is dead. Probably before they hit the floor.

If a model is hit, then they are badly hurt or killed. Regular folk take one hit and go down directly, just remove them from the game. A curly-wolf gunslinger might take two or three hits before they go down. Record how many hits a model has left with some kind of marker next to them, or mark it on the play sheet.

So, with Leon's sharpshooter's attack on Stephen's Outlaw, the result card chosen by Leon was a Red Ace. Since Red is Leon's color, he gets to apply the Ace effect on his target, and Stephen has to remove one of the Outlaw's weapons, removing one of the ones in range of the sharpshooter if possible. Stephen's Outlaw has just one weapon in range, a pistol, so he has to remove it.

Now, since Leon went all in, Stephen got to choose another result card, a Black Queen, and since Stephen is playing Black he could apply the Queen effect to Leon's Apache sharpshooter. However, since his pistol was removed he no longer has a weapon in range, and so he can't apply the effects of any result card at all.

The Dramatic Showdown

Games can be over in a single hail of bullets. To make setting up worth the bother play best-of-three games with the following rules.

Your starting posse is eight characters strong. One character starts with two hits and a value of 6. Everyone else starts with one hit and a value of 8. Give them a name to help identify the figure. If you have no way of showing the name on the model then name them to refer to what the model looks like, for instance, Slim, Quickdraw (for a guy reaching for his gun), Man with No Hat, Strong Man, Crouch (for a guy who is crouching), Archer, etc.



Use up to 40 points to buy some plunder, and split it between your posse as you like. In addition, all non-Civilians will have Brawling.

Horse	6 points
Rifle	6 points
Pistol	3 points
Dual Pistols	6 points (includes Pistol)
Shotgun	3 points
Sawn-Off	3 points
Derringers	2 points
Tomahawks	2 points (includes Big Blade)
Bow	3 points
Big Blade	1 point

Any members of your posse can be Civilians and you get 3 extra points to spend for your trouble, but they pay 9 points for a horse. They don't get Brawling for free either, but you can pay a point to give it to them.

The first player who wins two games wins over all. Each game follows the standard set up procedure. You can change the terrain between games or not as desired.

When there is only members of one posse on the table, then that player has won the game.

Characters that are still walking and talking by the end of a game gain an extra hit and their value is reduced by one (making it better, o' course!).

Characters that are taken down in the game (ie. reduced to 0 hits) are placed on the card that took their final hit (their **coffin card**). After the game, draw a card for them, and if its value equals or exceeds the value of their coffin card or if it's a Jack, Queen or King then they recover and take part in the remaining games.

Drawing any other card means they are stone dead, and if their coffin card was King or a Joker then they are stone dead anyway. Any weapons or horse they had is lost.

Since it pays to conserve men, you can keep them alive even if you are losing by moving them off the table and thus removing them from the game.



Of course, if you cannot get someone off the table, but you do not want to prolong the inevitable, then models can surrender, in which case they are taken prisoner or executed, either way they can take no further part in subsequent games.

Spots o' Ruckus

Equal sides should be fun, but mixing things up can add some interesting situations. Here's some simple examples.

Take that Bastard Down!

1 Hardbitten Gunman vs. 7 Town Militia.

Maybe the gunman is an outlaw, or maybe he's just being hunted for a crime he didn't commit. Either way, the militia or no match for him alone, but together, he's in trouble.

Name	HARDBITTEN GUNMAN	Value	3
Weapons	TWIN PISTOLS	Hits	4
	SAWN-OFF BRAWLING	Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Name	TOWN MILITIA	Value	8
Weapons	RIFLE	Hits	1
	BRAWLING	Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Skirmish on the Plains

6 Apache Raiders vs. 6 Riflemen.

A highly mobile raiding party could slaughter the entrenched soldiers, but only if they can get close enough.

Name	APACHE RAIDER	Value	6
Weapons	SHOTGUN	Hits	1
	TOMAHAWKS	Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Name	RIFLEMAN	Value	6
Weapons	RIFLE	Hits	1
	PISTOL	Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

He's Coming Right for Us!

1 Rampaging Bear vs. 2 Hunters.

Some beastie has escaped, and someone is gonna have to hunt it down.

Name	RAMPAGING BEAR	Value	4
Weapons	BIG BLADE	Hits	6
		Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Name	HUNTER	Value	7
Weapons	SHOTGUN	Hits	1
	BRAWLING	Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Duel between Rivals.

1 Big Oaf vs. 1 Sly Shooter

A duel in the streets between rivals of opposite fighting styles. Who will win between brains and brawn?

Name	BIG OAF	Value	9
Weapons	PISTOL	Hits	3
	BIG BLADE	Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Name	SLY SHOOTER	Value	4
Weapons	PISTOL	Hits	1
	DERRINGERS	Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Defend the Wagon!

6 Settlers vs. 6 Robbers.

How long can the wagon train hold out against determined highwayman?

Name	SETTLER	Value	8
Weapons	SHOTGUN	Hits	1
		Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Name	ROBBER	Value	7
Weapons	PISTOL	Hits	1
	BRAWLING	Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Jailbreak!

2 Sharpshooters vs. 5 Convicts

All that stands between the cons and freedom is a couple of riflemen, how hard can it be?

Name	SHARPSHOOTER	Value	5
Weapons	RIFLE	Hits	2
	BRAWLING	Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

Name	CONVICT	Value	6
Weapons	BIG BLADE	Hits	2
		Civilian?	Yes / No
		Horse?	Yes / No

In these kinds of 'unfair' games, feel free to break the set up rules. Deploy everyone in the centre of the table, or too close to each other or whatever else fits. If you want to be a bit fairer, then play twice, swapping sides between and make sure setup is the same.

Fighting Canny

Rifles are the safest thing to use. Their range means that you can shoot, and the target will not be able to hit you back even if the cards go against you. Otherwise shooting someone in cover or while moving quick will usually mean you are in danger as much as they are.

Guns are deadly, so terrain is very important for closing the distance. If you cannot break line of sight, run flat out through cover to get rid of two cards against you. Give any shootist a tempting target so that they turn away, then flank them to get rid of their cover and get that extra unsuspecting target bonus. Well, it sounds good in theory.

There's a lot of high powered, short range weaponry available. If you have civilians, get them in close to fight on more equal terms. Its messy though.

Its tempting to get a guy in position and then use him over and over, but remember that extra card just from being near friends. And if your guy gets blown away, you have someone in position to get revenge. Never let a rifleman sit alone.

Always go all in if the extra card won't make much difference to you. Your color cards, low cards and the Queen or Jack are all worth risking if you really need to get the target, and remember you have nothing to fear if the target is out of range or is disabled by a Queen result. If and when all the cards you've drawn are already lethal to you, the extra card could save you.

Draw the cards one at a time, nice and slow, as a cheap way to ramp up the tension. These are life-ending bullets you're loosin' after all!



Designer's Notes

The goal here was to make a quick, lethal, dramatic but tactical game that only used figures, a small table with card buildings on it and a pack of ordinary cards.

Weapon ranges are as accurate as I could make 'em based on a couple of hours of web research. Though, I was fairly conservative since shooting range conditions and gunfight conditions ain't too similar, and obviously I rounded things to the nearest 10 yards to make measuring and remembering easier.

The exact date of the setting is left to your imagination. Not even being close to a historian of the period, my knowledge is firmly planted in movies and the like.

For myself, I use Artizan Design figures <http://www.artizandesigns.com/> These free buildings (with minor alterations). <http://home.iprimus.com.au/shadowolf/>

But Circa Games have an extensive list of useful manufacturers and information: http://www.circagames.com/Resources/old_west.html

And Gisby has a great resource on buildings: <http://www.mts.net/~gisby/owbuild.htm>

Especially check out the Whitewash print-and-build-it-yourself PDFs: <http://www.erichotz.com/whitewash.html>

Of course, if you actually play this game or use ideas from it, let me know! Since this is unfinished, I'm particularly looking for critical feedback. Have I met my goals? Is it fun to play? Anything feel wrong, broken or unbalanced? Got any ideas on stuff I've missed?

riclacy [a t] hotmail . com is my MSN ID.
Cheers for looking!

DEAD MAN'S HAND PLAY SHEET

Moving

No move, then shoot at Long Shot range, or at Normal range if you're a civilian.

Up to 10 yards, shoot normally.

Up to 20 yards, shoot at a penalty.

Up to 30 yards, no shooting unless you're on a horse and then still at a penalty.

Weapons

	Long Shot	Normal Range	Civilian Range	Power
Rifle:	100 yrds	n/a	50 yrds	2
Pistol:	60 yrds	40 yrds	20 yrds	2
Dual Pistols:	n/a	40 yards	n/a	3
Shotgun:	n/a	30 yards	30 yards	3
Sawn-Off Shotgun:	n/a	10 yards	10 yards	4
Derringers:	n/a	10 yards	10 yards	3
Thrown Tomahawk	n/a	10 yards	n/a	3
Bow	60 yards	40 yards	n/a	2
Brawling	n/a	5 yards	5 yards	2
Big blade	n/a	5 yards	5 yards	3

Most folk have brawling and a gun or two.

Derringers and thrown weapons run out quick. Rifles cannot be fired while moving.

The Result Card

The color of the result card marks the winner.

The other guy is the loser. Check card:

Number equal or higher than the winner's value, then the loser takes a hit.

Number not higher than the winner's value, then nothing much happens.

Ace, then the loser loses a weapon, the one they are using or could use if possible.

Jack, then the loser can't move next time they're used, and any horse they have is dead.

Queen, then the loser can't shoot next time they're used.

King, then the loser is stone dead.

Joker, then you're both hit.

POSSE NAME:

Name	Value
Weapons	Hits
	Civilian? Yes / No
	Horse? Yes / No

Name	Value
Weapons	Hits
	Civilian? Yes / No
	Horse? Yes / No

Name	Value
Weapons	Hits
	Civilian? Yes / No
	Horse? Yes / No

Name	Value
Weapons	Hits
	Civilian? Yes / No
	Horse? Yes / No

Name	Value
Weapons	Hits
	Civilian? Yes / No
	Horse? Yes / No

Name	Value
Weapons	Hits
	Civilian? Yes / No
	Horse? Yes / No

Name	Value
Weapons	Hits
	Civilian? Yes / No
	Horse? Yes / No

Name	Value
Weapons	Hits
	Civilian? Yes / No
	Horse? Yes / No

Drawing the Cards

Add or take these numbers from the weapon's power, then draw that many cards to attack.

+1 if you're within 10 yards of friends.

+1 if shooting a target's back.

-1 if target is in cover.

-1 if target last moved more than 20 yards.

-1 if you just moved more than 10 yards.

Add one extra card if you want to go all in.

But if the target can still shoot after the result card plays, they can take another result card from one of the other ones you've drawn.