

## Rules and Guidelines for Play

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### Overview

*Siege!* is a game which allows for sieges from the late 16th to early 19th centuries to be played as a series of tabletop games. Many wargamers interested in this period may be familiar with the quote from the Earl of Orrery (1677): "*We make warre more like Foxes than Lyons; and you have twenty sieges for one battel.*"

Despite this historical reality, miniatures wargamers interested in this period of history have trouble finding systems that allow for the simulation of an entire siege. There are many good rules sets available today for this era, and some of them cover the skirmish-level actions which typify positional warfare. However, they do not provide an easy means of following the entire siege in the same way that rules sets for field battles allow the simulation of the entire event.

*Siege!* changes that. By abstracting many aspects of siege warfare during the period, and allowing for the fighting to be recreated as a series of tabletop actions, it provides a way for an entire siege to be played out in a small number of gaming sessions.

The idea is that the siege can be described as a narrative, with players taking the part of the commanders in the many smaller actions which take place over the course of days, weeks, or months. Players do not command the siege itself: instead, major events are reported, and orders issued from above. Players must then fight out these smaller actions on the tabletop and report the results. While there are many events outside of the players' control, the outcome of the tabletop actions are critical in deciding the fate of the besieged city.

This game uses a computer or handheld device such as a smart phone or a tablet to speed play, and to remove the logistical aspects of sieges which - while critically important - do not add much to the miniatures wargaming experience. Such devices are so common today that a computerized format for the rules makes more sense than a paper-and-dice system. You can think of *Siege!* as a mini-campaign system for stringing together tabletop games, so that these games are connected and become more significant. The events of the siege are interpreted as they would be known to an NCO or officer - the point is not to direct the siege itself, but to command your men in battle as they live through its significant events.

*Siege!* focuses only on the conduct of operations after a fortress has been invested, the point at which it begins. Thus, it could easily be incorporated into other campaign systems. It provides no mechanism for fighting the actual combat - this is left up to the player's discretion. Such rule sets as *The Pikeman's Lament* are perfect for this type of game, as they capture the feel of a war of outposts - games which are not man-to-man, but which do not involve entire armies. (It should be noted, however, that rules may or may not exist in your chosen set for such things as heavy artillery, mortars, siege ladders, petards, and so on. These may need to be added, as in the case of *The Pikeman's Lament*.) Other players may wish to use higher-scale rules, depicting larger actions. Both approaches work equally well.

The art of siege warfare remained basically the same from the later 16th century through the 19th, so this system is made to be as generic as possible. Players will need to design scenarios based on the suggestions given here, with the appropriate victory conditions. The troops involved and the scale of the actions is left entirely up to you. There is not even a requirement that all actions are fought using the same set of rules: players can decide for themselves whether a particular tabletop battle is a skirmish fought with *Pikeman's Lament*, a relieving action fought as a full-blown field battle using *In Deo Veritas*, or something in between, using rules like the popular *Pike & Shotte* or *Black Powder*.

## Playing the Game

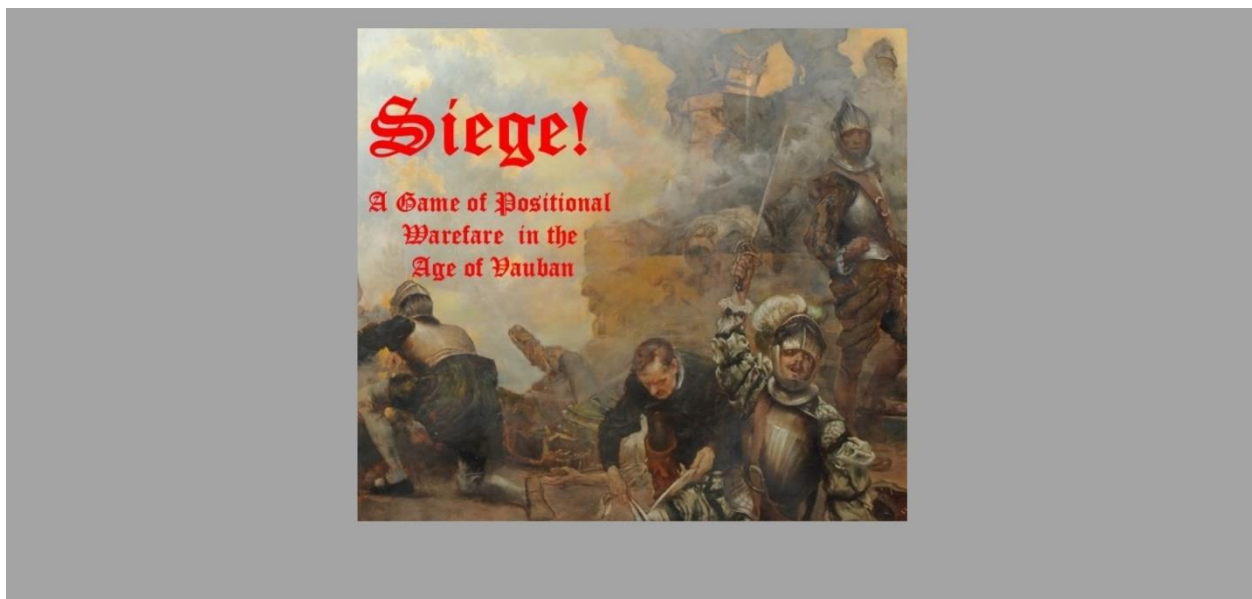
*Siege!* is an incredibly easy game to play. Thanks to the use of a computerized system, players need only be able to read, and to click the "Continue" and "Save Game" buttons. While there is record-keeping going on, and various logical dependencies being enforced, this is all handled behind the scenes. A saved game (usually because

players are busy fighting a tabletop engagement) is easily re-loaded, and the app continues with the narrative where it left off.

Players are given news of significant events as they occur, which may or may not require a tabletop engagement. The morale of the two sides (blue for besiegers and red for the besieged) is displayed after each significant event. After tabletop engagements, the outcome (always a win for one side of the other) is reported. Actual sieges in this period were conducted according to a known theoretical timetable (such as the one published by Vauban), with a set sequence of events. *Siege!* is based on this template. Time itself is abstracted. Keeping track of supplies and rosters over weeks and months is perhaps the least exciting aspect of gaming sieges (which could, in fact, take years to complete). This game covers only the highlights, with an emphasis on the tabletop actions around breaches, the storming of outworks, sorties, and escalades, organized into a plausible framework according to the theories of the time. The book-keeping is relegated to the background.

## Starting the Siege

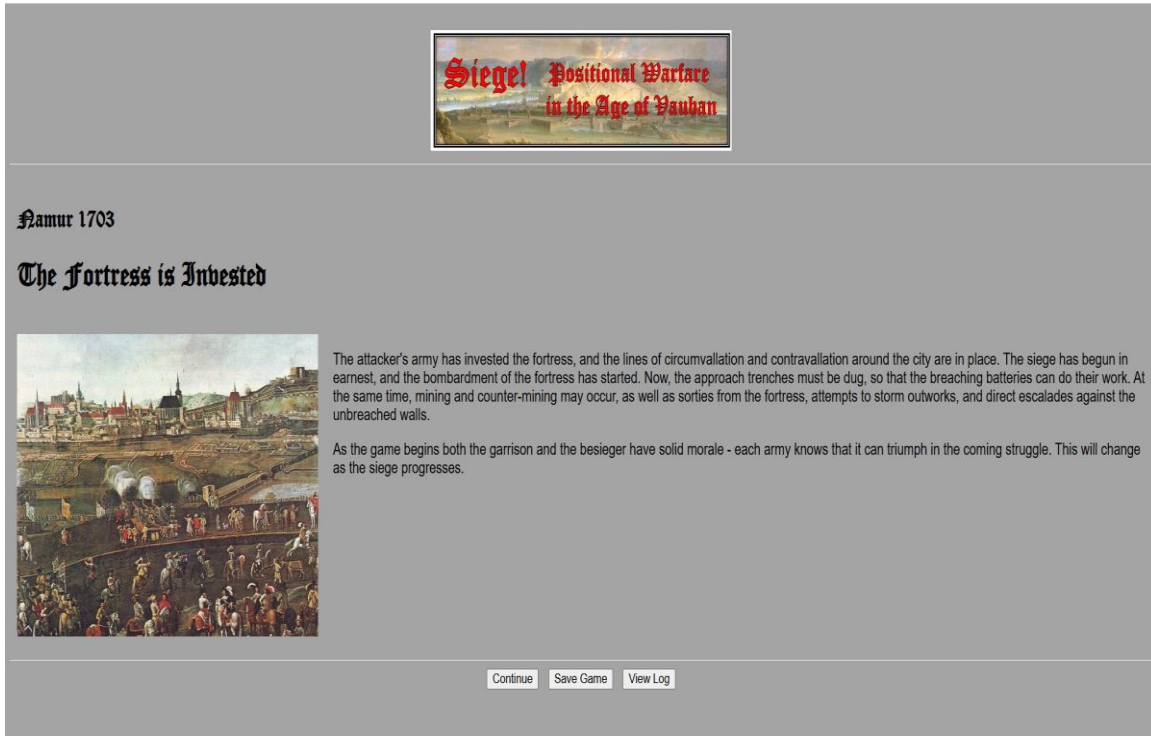
When the game begins, players will see this screen:



Click anywhere on the image, and the siege will start in earnest! You will see a prompt asking if this is a new game, or a continuation of an older one. Click "OK" to start a new game, or "Cancel" to continue with a game already in progress. If it is a new game, you will be asked to fill in the name of the siege (we use the fortress or city plus the year, but you can do whatever you like). Avoid using special characters in the name, since this will be used to create saved files - letters and numbers only!

If you start a new game by accident, close the browser, and then re-start from the page where you saved it - see instructions for saving the game below. If you want to start a

new game but load an old one by accident, reload the page and start again from the beginning. (You will know you have an old game because you will not be prompted to give the siege a name.)



**Siege! Positional Warfare in the Age of Vauban**

**Namur 1703**

**The Fortress is Invested**

The attacker's army has invested the fortress, and the lines of circumvallation and contravallation around the city are in place. The siege has begun in earnest, and the bombardment of the fortress has started. Now, the approach trenches must be dug, so that the breaching batteries can do their work. At the same time, mining and counter-mining may occur, as well as sorties from the fortress, attempts to storm outworks, and direct escalades against the unbreached walls.

As the game begins both the garrison and the besieger have solid morale - each army knows that it can triumph in the coming struggle. This will change as the siege progresses.

[Continue](#) [Save Game](#) [View Log](#)

This is the first screen shown at the beginning of the siege. It describes the start of the action, as the lines of contra- and circumvallation are completed to surround the besieged fortress or city. Players may wish to use a large display screen so that all participants can read the screens at the same time. The "Continue" button is clicked to see the first significant event.

The screen below shows a typical event - the besieger is working to tunnel under the walls (termed "sapping"). This event has no huge impact on the morale of the defender or the attacker, but other events will (running short on supplies, the outbreak of disease, harsh weather conditions for the besieger, etc.). These events do not cause tabletop actions, but tell of significant events or gradual progress (or denial of progress) by the combatants. When enough sapping has been completed, for example, the besieger can set off an explosive mine, causing a stormable breach in the defensive walls. If there is a tabletop action, there will be a screen which instructs players to fight it out (see below).



Hamur 1703

### The Sapping Proceeds



The besieger has engineers and workmen tunneling under the walls, with the goal of setting off a mine underneath them to cause a breach. This is a long and inexact process, but the master engineer says he is making good progress.

Continue Save Game View Log

## Seeing the Status of the Siege

As the game progresses, events will occur which use one or more screens, depending on whether they involve a tabletop action or not. After each significant event in the siege, a screen like the one below will appear:

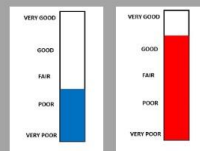


Metz 1673

### The Siege's Progress



#### Morale Levels



The attacker's morale is flagging.  
The defender's confidence is high.  
There is currently no mining activity.  
The breaching batteries are firing.  
The fortress walls have not been sufficiently breached for an assault.  
No word has been successfully sent to forces outside the city to send supplies or a relieving army.

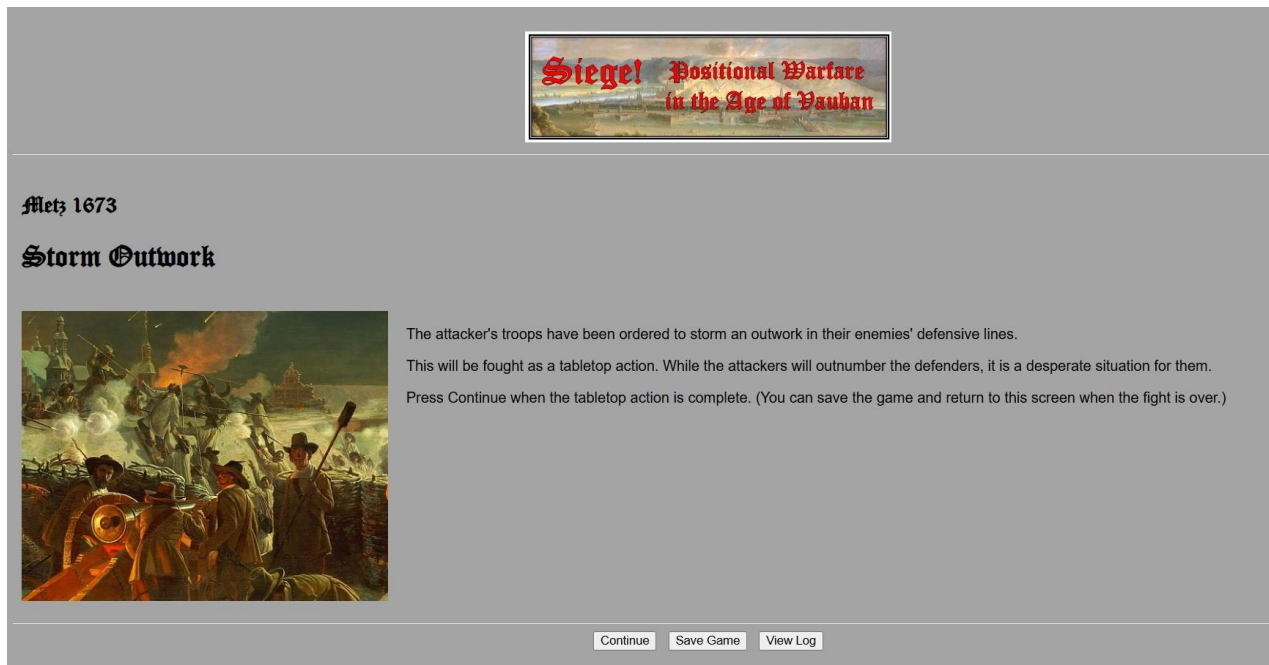
Continue Save Game View Log

This screen shows the status during play - a similar screen will appear after each event, whether it involves a tabletop encounter or not. The blue bar shows the besieger's morale, and the red bar the defender's. The notes below keep a running account of the different details of the siege as it progresses.

After players have read each screen, simply click "Continue to go to the next one.

## Saving the Game to Fight Tabletop Encounter

At various points during play, the narrative will call for a tabletop action to be fought (see the list of possible scenarios, below). The design of scenarios and choice of rules is left up to players (some advice is given below) but it is often the case that players will wish to save the siege at this point. The screen below shows how this is done (it is the same for saving from any screen):



The screenshot shows a game interface with a title bar at the top that reads "Siege! Positional Warfare in the Age of Vauban". Below the title bar, the text "Metz 1673" and "Storm Outwork" is displayed. To the left of the text is a small illustration of soldiers in 17th-century attire. To the right of the illustration, there is a block of text: "The attacker's troops have been ordered to storm an outwork in their enemies' defensive lines. This will be fought as a tabletop action. While the attackers will outnumber the defenders, it is a desperate situation for them. Press Continue when the tabletop action is complete. (You can save the game and return to this screen when the fight is over.)" At the bottom of the interface, there are three buttons: "Continue", "Save Game", and "View Log".

The center button is labelled "Save Game". If you click this, an HTML page named after the siege will appear in your "Downloads" folder (browsers send it there for security reasons). If you save the game more than once, these pages may be numbered - use the one with the highest number. Once you open this page you will see something like what is shown below:



## Namur 1674

### **Entry: The Fortress is Invested**

The attacker's army has invested the fortress, and the lines of circumvallation and contravallation around the city are in place. The siege has begun in earnest, and the bombardment of the fortress has started. Now, the approach trenches must be dug, so that the breaching batteries can do their work.

### **Entry: Work on the Approach Trenches Proceeds**

The attacker works on the approach trenches while his guns bombard the enemy fortress.

The attacker is confident of victory.  
The defender is certain the fortress will hold.  
There is currently no mining activity.  
The approach trenches are slowly making progress toward the fortress walls.  
The fortress walls have not been sufficiently breached for an assault.  
No word has been successfully sent to forces outside the city to send supplies or a relieving army.

### **Entry: Storming the Outworks**

The attacker's troops have been ordered to storm an outwork in their enemies' defensive lines.

This gives a running account of the siege to date, but at the top there is a "Return to Game" button. If you click this, it will take you back to your game on the *Application of Force* site. When you start the game, you need to indicate that you wish to continue with an existing game by pressing "Cancel" when it asks if you want to start a new game. If you make mistake, close the browser and go back to the page in your Downloads folder, and re-load the game from there.

## **Viewing the Log**

If you click on the "View Log" button, a new window will open in your browser with a running account of the siege to date, exactly similar to a saved game, but without the "Return to Game" button. This is very repetitive, but it can be used to produce a more interesting account if you copy and paste it out of your browser and into Word or some other editing program, and do a little creative editing. You should close this window after each time you check the log - every time you click the button a new window opens, and they are hard to tell apart!

## **Tabletop Scenarios**

The game app will call for a number of different scenarios. While it is up to players to specify the exact conditions, there are some basic assumptions about each type of tabletop game. Notes on each type of action are given here. It is the case that every scenario must have a clear winner and a clear loser - the game app does not support draws or inconclusive results. Victory conditions should be established for each scenario to reflect this requirement.

The scenario descriptions below suggest relative force ratios, and the notes may indicate a relative degree of difficulty for the different sides. It is up to players to interpret what this means for the rules system they have chosen to use. There is no provision in

the game for keeping a running tally of units, but players are free to do so. Thus, as more casualties are taken, the available forces may start to be diminished. There are events in the game which might also be interpreted as the arrival of reinforcements, which could be factored in. Likewise, some events indicate the outbreak of disease. This is left entirely up to the players: by default, force levels are abstracted into the morale rating of each combatant.

It is recommended that you do a number of test runs using the system, where you click through sieges and simply use a competitive die roll (a die for the attacker, one for the defender, high score wins and ties are re-rolled) to determine the outcome of tabletop actions. This way, you can familiarize yourself with how the system works, and how the different scenarios will affect the outcome. This kind of a test run will generally only take a few minutes.

Access to a 3D printer is to be desired when preparing terrain for these actions - there are a number of different Vauban-style fortifications available as models. In 25mm, perhaps the best one is the [Vauban Fortress](#) set from Laser Dream Works. There are several other options from Thingiverse and elsewhere, depending of course on the scale of miniatures to be used.

The list of scenarios called for in the game app is given below. Players can be creative, and substitute other scenarios as agreed, but should first understand how each of the standard ones below fits into the game (some are game-ending, like an escalade up the walls with ladders, or taking a city from within with the help of a traitor; other scenarios require a breach in the walls, which is an event tracked by the game app; etc.)

### **Storm Outwork**

It was often the case that outlying fortifications needed to be eliminated to permit breaching batteries to be established where they could fire on the main walls of the fortress. In this type of action, an outwork is being directly assaulted by the besieging player. This would be a *ravelin*, *demi-lune* or a redoubt of some form. The scenario should pit the assaulting player against a fortification, but one which is less difficult to overcome than the main fortress walls. Generally speaking, it should be possible (although not easy) for the besieger to get behind the outwork and attack from there, through whatever entry might exist. A direct assault up the walls of the fortification would also generally be possible, if potentially deadly.

### **Sending Word to the Outside**

This is a scenario where the besieged player has to try to get a messenger off the far side of the table from the fortress, across enemy lines (think of the scene from the *Last of the Mohicans* movie and you can't go far wrong...). This will be assisted by a sally from the fortress to distract the enemy. The victory conditions should be the exit of the messenger off the far side of the table, not the body



count between the two sides. In general, this should not be a difficult scenario for the besieged side to win.

### **Scaling the Walls**

This is a direct assault on the main fortress, and it was often a desperate option for the besieger. Consequently, the scenario should make this difficult for them. It will involve an assault using ladders or other, similar means to approach and take the ramparts of the fortress by crossing the glacis and ditch, all the while taking enemy fire. If the besieger wins this scenario, the game is over and the city will be sacked!

### **A Relieving Army**

In this scenario, the besieger has a force from outside the walls coming to relieve the siege. This was a common source of field battles during the period, as generally the action took place beyond the immediate area of the siege. This scenario should be a straight-up field battle, and is well suited to larger-scale rules. Note that a successful relief effort will end the siege, as it generally made continuation of it untenable for the besieger (even if the immediate siege lines were safe, failure often meant that the critical supply lines could no longer be protected.)

### **Treachery Within**

This scenario depicts a situation where a small group of attackers has secretly gained access to the fortress, and must seize a gate or destroy a critical part of the defenses using surprise. These games should take place inside the fortress walls, and will generally have a small number of besieged troops at the start of the scenario, with the number increasing gradually until victory is no longer possible for the besieger. (This effect can also be realized using a turn limit of some kind.) Although this was often done on a fairly small scale, making for a good skirmish game, there are certainly examples of larger, battalion-size forces being infiltrated into a fortress (look at [Cremona in 1702](#)).

### **Sortie against the Lines**

Sieges often featured minor attacks on the besieger's works, generally in an effort to buy more time for a relieving force to come and lift the siege. This scenario requires the besieger to be on the attack. It might be fun to include some mechanism for determining the extent of surprise the besieged player's forces achieve when they sally out, as such attacks were often unexpected.

## **Supplies for the Garrison**

This scenario involves running a supply convoy into the fortress. This could be done using a convoy of horses, mules, and wagons, or could be done via a waterway with a boat of some kind. These actions should not be too difficult for the besieged forces to win, as stopping such attempts often failed historically. The scenario may combine a sally out of the fortress with the approach from the supply convoy coming from outside the besieger's lines.

## **Storm Breach**

This scenario is famously deadly for the first troops to go into the breach, but in truth should not be as hard for the besieger as a direct assault on the main fortress walls. The center of the action should be the breach in the walls of the fortress, but the defenders will know what is coming and will have prepared breastworks and defenses of a lesser form to help them defend their city. If successful, the siege will be over (and really nasty things will generally be done to the populace!) If the attacker can establish a solid foothold inside the walls through the breach, then they should be given victory. You may wish to put a limit on the casualties the attacker is willing to sustain before conceding.

## **Conclusion**

We hope you find this mini-campaign app to be a fun way to re-fight sieges without the hassle of book-keeping. If you have comments or questions, please feel free to contact us at [ilg21@yahoo.com](mailto:ilg21@yahoo.com).

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