GENERAL

army lists wargaming

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Army Lists Wargaming: The Ultimate Guide to Building, Managing, and Mastering Your Forces

Wargaming has evolved from simple tabletop skirmishes to complex strategic battles that demand careful planning, tactical foresight, and meticulous army list construction. Whether you're a seasoned veteran of Warhammer, a newcomer to the hobby, or a competitive player looking to edge out rivals, mastering the art of **army lists wargaming**is essential. An army list is more than just a collection of units; it's a blueprint that defines your strategy, dictates your strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately shapes your battlefield experience. In this comprehensive guide, we'll walk you through every step of creating, refining, and deploying army lists that not only comply with the game's rules but also give you a competitive advantage.

What Is an Army List?

At its core, an army list is a formal declaration of the units, models, and equipment you will field in a particular game. It usually includes:

- Unit names and types (e.g., Infantry, Artillery, Mechanized)
- Unit statistics (movement, weapons, armor, special abilities)
- Point cost for each unit and any upgrades
- Faction or army affiliation (e.g., Orks, Space Marines, Eldar)
- Optional rules that apply to specific units or the entire army

Army lists serve several key purposes:

- Game balance – They ensure no single player can field an overwhelmingly powerful army.
- Strategic planning – They force players to consider terrain, objectives, and opponent tactics.
- Time management – They provide a clear framework for assembling and deploying forces.

Why Army Lists Matter in Wargaming

In wargaming, the battlefield is only as strong as the forces that occupy it. An army list is the first decision that shapes your entire match. A well-structured list can:

- Maximize the synergy between units.
- Minimize wasted points on redundant abilities.
- Adapt to the specific ruleset and opponent's army.
- Provide a clear narrative that enhances immersion.

Conversely, a poorly thought-out list can leave you vulnerable, unable to respond to enemy tactics, or simply unable to finish the game within the allotted time. That's why the process of army list creation is often the most critical phase of any wargame session.

Building a Strong Army List: Step-by-Step Process

Creating a solid army list is a blend of art and science. Below is a systematic approach that will guide you from initial concept to final list approval.

1. Understand the Core Rules

Before you even think about unit selection, you must be familiar with the core rules of the game you're playing. Every wargame, whether it's *Warhammer 40,000*, *Warmachine*, or *Heros of the Storm*, has its own set of mechanics that govern movement, combat, and special abilities. Take the time to:

- Read the rulebook thoroughly.
- Watch tutorial videos or attend workshops.
- Play a few practice matches to internalize the mechanics.

Having a solid grasp of the core rules will help you make informed decisions about unit capabilities and how they interact on the battlefield.

2. Define Your Army's Core Identity

Every faction has a unique flavor and playstyle. Whether you're fielding a disciplined Space Marine chapter, a chaotic Ork warband, or a stealthy Eldar harbinger, your army's core identity should guide your list building. Ask yourself:

- What is the primary role of my army (e.g., frontline, support, ranged)?
- Which units best represent the faction's lore and strengths?
- How can I leverage the faction's unique abilities for tactical advantage?

Answering these questions ensures that your army list remains coherent and thematically consistent.

3. Allocate Points Wisely

Most wargames use a point system to maintain balance. Each unit and upgrade has a point cost, and you're limited to a certain number of points per army. Here's how to allocate points strategically:

1. Determine your point budget. This is usually set by the tournament or game format.
2. Prioritize core units. Allocate points to essential units that form the backbone of your strategy.
3. Add complementary units. Include units that fill gaps or provide support.
4. Reserve points for upgrades. Leave room for optional upgrades or special rules.
5. Balance offense and defense. Ensure you have enough units to both attack and hold positions.

Remember, it's not just about spending points; it's about spending them where they matter most.

4. Test and Refine

Once you have a draft list, test it out in practice games. Pay attention to:

- Unit synergy and how they perform together.
- Point efficiency – Are you getting the most value for your spend?
- Adaptability – Can you adjust the list for different opponents or scenarios?
- Playtime – Does the list keep the game within a reasonable time frame?

After each practice session, tweak your list based on what you learn. This iterative process is key to producing a polished army list.

Core Rules and Common Pitfalls in Army List Creation

While the process above provides a general framework, each wargame has its nuances. Below are common pitfalls to avoid and core rules that can dramatically influence your army list strategy.

Common Pitfalls

- Overloading on a single unit type. A balanced army usually requires a mix of unit types to handle varied threats.
- Ignoring terrain and objectives. Some lists perform well in open spaces but struggle on complex terrain.
- Neglecting special rules. Every faction has unique abilities that can be game-changers.
- Underestimating opponent's strategy. A good list anticipates common counter-strategies.
- Failing to manage time. Overly large lists can lead to long, tedious games.

Core Rules That Influence Army Lists

Below are some general rules that often appear in wargames and can affect how you build your list.

- Unit Strength and Size. Larger units often have higher hit points but may be slower.
- Weapon Range and Damage. Ranged units can soften up enemies before they get close.
- Special Abilities. Abilities like "First Strike," "Fortify," or "Cloak" can change the tide of battle.
- Terrain Interaction. Some units can use terrain for cover, while others can traverse difficult ground.
- Command Points or Leadership. Units that require a commander may need a dedicated leader on your list.

Army List Examples for Popular Wargames

Below are sample army lists for three popular wargames. These examples illustrate how to balance units, allocate points, and incorporate special rules.

Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine Chapter

Point Limit: 1,200

- HQ (300 pts) – Ultramarines Captain (Leadership 8, 2x Assault, 1x Power Sword)
- Troops (300 pts) – 5x 20mm Assault Squad (Movement 6, 2x 20mm, 5mm armor)
- Elites (200 pts) – 2x 20mm Terminator Squad (Movement 4, 3x Power Sword, 6mm armor)
- Fast Attack (200 pts) – 4x 20mm Scout Squad (Movement 8, 2x 20mm)
- Heavy Support (200 pts) – 2x 20mm Leman Russ (Movement 6, 3x Assault, 7mm armor)
- Flyer (200 pts) – 1x 20mm Stormwing (Movement 10, 3x Assault, 5mm armor)
- Dedicated Upgrades (100 pts) – 2x 20mm Dreadnought (Movement 6, 3x Power Sword, 7mm armor)

Warmachine: Ironjawz

Point Limit: 1,200

- HQ (200 pts) – 1x Ironjawz Warlord (Leadership 8, 2x Ironjawz Axe)
- Troops (200 pts) – 3x 20mm Ironjawz Golem (Movement 4, 3x Ironjawz Axe)
- Elites (200 pts) – 2x 20mm Ironjawz Hammer (Movement 6, 3x Ironjawz Hammer)
- Fast Attack (200 pts) – 4x 20mm Ironjawz Skirmisher (Movement 8, 2x Ironjawz Axe)
- Heavy Support (200 pts) – 2x 20mm Ironjawz Goliath (Movement 4, 3x Ironjawz Axe, 6mm armor)
- Flyer (200 pts) – 1x 20mm Ironjawz Warbird (Movement 10, 3x Ironjawz Axe)
- Dedicated Upgrades (200 pts) – 1x 20mm Ironjawz Juggernaut (Movement 4, 4x Ironjawz Axe, 8mm armor)

Heros of the Storm: Dragon Lords

Point Limit: 1,200

- HQ (200 pts) – 1x Dragon Lord (Leadership 8, 2x Dragon Sword)
- Troops (200 pts) – 3x 20mm Dragon Knight (Movement 6, 3x Dragon Sword)
- Elites (200 pts) – 2x 20mm Dragon Warden (Movement 4, 3x Dragon Sword, 6mm armor)
- Fast Attack (200 pts) – 4x 20mm Dragon Scout (Movement 8, 2x Dragon Sword)
- Heavy Support (200 pts) – 2x 20mm Dragon Siege (Movement 4, 3x Dragon Sword, 7mm armor)

- Flyer (200 pts) – 1x 20mm Dragon Wyrm (Movement 10, 3x Dragon Sword)
- Dedicated Upgrades (200 pts) – 1x 20mm Dragon Colossus (Movement 4, 4x Dragon Sword, 8mm armor)

Balancing Your Army List for Competitive Play

Competitive play demands more than just a fun or thematic army. It requires a list that can stand up to the best in the field. Here are key strategies for balancing your army list.

1. Diversify Unit Types

A balanced army should include:

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