

English translation of the Rules for Les Poilus

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April 20. 2015

Aligns with Version 1.1 of the French rules

Thanks to: Steve Blackwell ([mudshark_baby](#)) and Seb J ([Grumbaki](#)) for translations.

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2nd August 1914 - In the main square of the village, a group of inseparable friends contemplate, incredulously, about the General Mobilisation order, posted at the town hall. In the last weeks, reading the news had become increasingly worrying, but the brutality of the announcement surprised everyone. Without having the slightest idea of the hell which they were about to be put in, they promised to stay together, to return whatever happened. Unfortunately, the reality that they were about to face would be completely beyond their worst fears.

Like literature and film, gaming is a cultural medium, and is undeniably participative. There is no subject that can't be covered. Some subjects are more difficult to cope with than others, and in particular the life of the French infantrymen of the Great War – **Les Poilus**. Guided by the deepest respect we hold for the suffering endured by these men, we have worked hard to design and set a game with this in mind. In this collective madness, we have chosen to put them in front of their concerns, their daily fears.

The only way out for these men was their solidarity, their brotherhood and their ability to help themselves to rescue one and all. Without ever addressing fighting, **Les Poilus** offers each player the chance to experience some of the difficulties experienced by the soldiers in the trenches. The atmosphere around the table will often not only be intense but also emotional as well. The path to victory may seem difficult, but do not be discouraged. Press forward and get through the Great War!

Contents



6 Poilus cards (*Lucky charm* on face up side)

59 Threat cards (divided into 20 *Hardship cards* and 39 ordinary *Threat cards*, some *Threat cards* also have a *Trap symbol*)

16 Support tiles (6 left, 6 right, 2 double left, 2 double right – this is an errata)

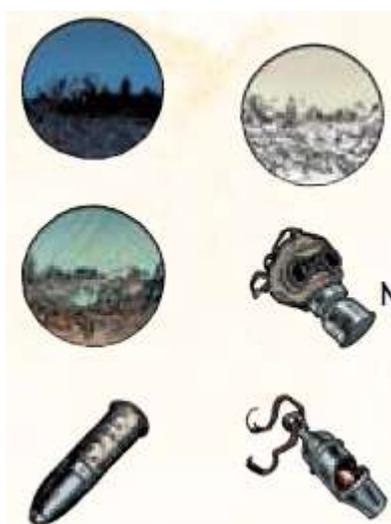
5 Speech tokens

1 Mission leader token

1 Gaming aid

1 Peace card

1 Monument card



There are six different kinds of threats depicted on the ordinary *Threat cards* (some cards may depict more than one type):

Night

Snow

Rain

Gas (mask)

Artillery (shell)

Whistle (The signal to attack – to go over the top)

Set up

Each player chooses a Poilu/Soldier, places the *Poilu card* in front with the *Lucky charm* side face up, and receives 3 random *Support tiles*.

- In a 2 or 3 player game the *Support tiles* with double arrows are not used.

Shuffle the all the *Threat cards*.

- Place 25 *Threat cards* on top of the *Peace card*, to form the *Trials deck*.

- The rest (34 cards) goes on top of the *Monument card* and forms the *Morale deck*. Once the last card from *Morale deck* is drawn and the *Monument card* is revealed, the players immediately lose the game.

The *Speech tokens* are placed in a common pile between the *Trials deck* and the *Morale deck*.

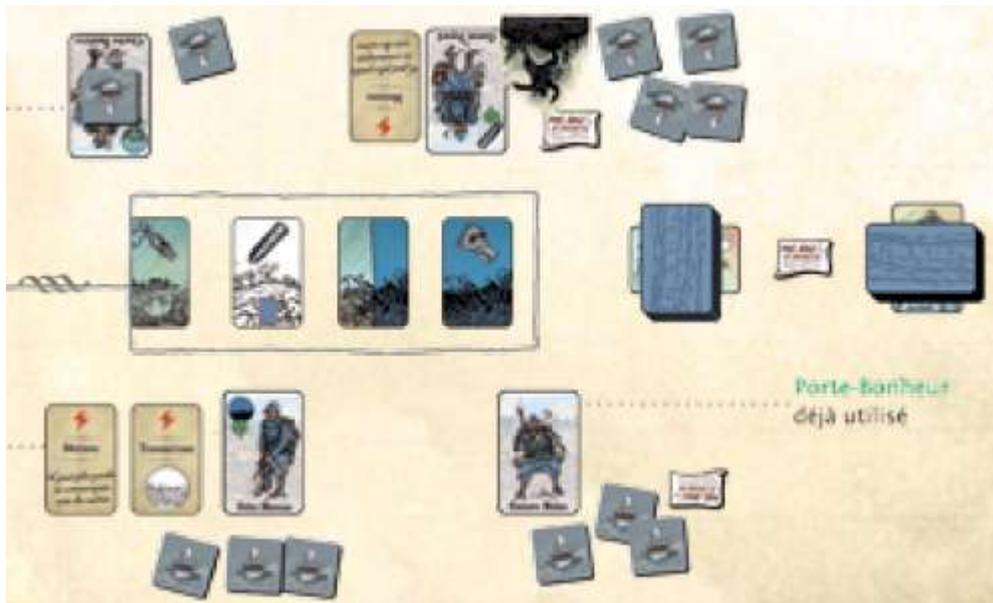
- In a two or three player game use five *Speech tokens*.

- In a four player game use four *Speech tokens*.

- In a five player game use three *Speech tokens*.

The *Mission Leader token* is given to the player with the bushiest beard.

The goal of the game is to reveal the *Peace card* by emptying the *Trials deck* before the *Morale deck* runs out and reveals the *Monument card*.



Example of playing area:

The four players has a *Poilu card* each (one used a *Lucky charm*), a couple of *Support tiles*, and two players received *Hardship cards*.

The area in the grey box denotes the *No man's land* where ordinary *Threat cards* are placed when played.

Phases of the game

Each round is called a mission and is divided into four phases:

1. **Preparation:** In turn order players draw cards from the *Trials deck* to exhaust it.
2. **Actions:** In turn order players chooses and carries out an action
3. **Support:** Players attempt to support one of their companions
4. **Moral drop:** If the war isn't over, the *Morale* drops

Victory condition:

The players are victorious if:

- At the beginning of the **Morale Drop phase**, the *Peace card* is revealed and no players have cards in their hand.

Defeat conditions:

The players are defeated if either of two conditions are fulfilled:

- After the **Support phase**, the *Monument card* is revealed.
- One or more players have four *Hardship cards* in front of him.

Missions Proceedings

Phase 1: Preparation

Mission Intensity: The *Mission leader* chooses a number of *Threat cards* that each player will have to draw from the *Trials deck*. Players add those cards to their hands. The *Mission leader* must choose at least one card, and usually 2 to 3 are recommended.

La Fleur au fusil: The intensity of the first mission of the game must always be at least three cards.

Phase 2: Actions

In this phase players will try to play as many cards as possible from their hand to the *No man's land* in the mission tableau. The mission immediately stops if there are three *Threat cards* with an identical kind of *Threat* in *No man's land*.

Starting with the *Mission leader*, in turn order players will take turns choosing **one** action among the following four:

1. **Play a Threat card.** The player plays a *Threat card* from his hand. If the card is a *Hardship card*, it must be placed next to the player's *Poilu card*. Otherwise, it is added to *No man's land*.
2. **Fall back and support:** The player won't play anymore during this mission. He chooses one of his *Support tiles* (if he has any left) and places it face down on his *Poilu card*, without showing it to the other players. He keeps any cards in his hand.
3. **Make a speech:** If the player has a *Speech token*, he discards it and chooses one kind of *Threat*. Each of the other players still in the mission can discard one *Threat card* of the same kind from their hand. The *Speech token* is removed from the game when used. The *Speech action* even allows a player to discard a *Trauma* or *Phobia* kind of *Hardship card* with the associated kind of *Threat* on it from their hand.
4. **Use his Lucky charm.** Each *Poilu*, with his *Poilu card* still face up, has a *Lucky charm* that allows him to discard one *Threat card* from *No man's land* with the same kind of *Threat* as depicted on his *Poilu card*. Turn over the *Poilu card*.

The mission only stops if all players fall back or if it fails. The mission fails if there are three identical threats in the *No man's land*.

Trap card

When a player plays a card with the *Trap symbol*, he must draw a card from the *Trials deck* and play it immediately. If it has another *Trap card*, ignore it. If it is a *Hardship card*, he puts it next to his *Poilu*.

End of Mission

Once every player has taken the *Fall back and support* action, any cards in *No man's land* is put aside. Players keep their cards in their hand (these are carried over to the next mission).

Mission Failure

As soon as three identical *Threat* type icons are played into the *No man's land* or as *Phobias* and *Traumas* from the *Hardship cards*, the mission is a failure and players move to the next phase.

Threat cards in *No man's land* are shuffled back among the *Trial deck*. *Hardship cards* remain assigned to players.

Phase 3: Support

Once the mission is over, players reveal the *Support tile* they might have played on their *Poilu*. They then give it to the player designated by the arrow. The supported player keeps the *Support tile*. The player who gets **the majority** of *Support tiles* can choose one of two options:

- get rid of up to two *Hardship cards* previously received (on his *Poilu*, not from his hand)
- get his *Lucky charm* back

If there is a tie for most *Support tiles* received, no one gets this support bonus.

If the mission fails, players tally the supports already played. The player with the majority can only get rid of one *Hardship card*.

After the Support phase, if at least one player has 4 *Hardship cards* in front of him, the group immediately loses the game.

If not, and the *Peace card* is revealed while players do not have any *Threat cards* in their hands, the group wins.

Phase 4: Morale Drop

Transfer, from the *Morale deck* to the *Trial deck*, as many *Threat cards* as the total number of cards in all player hands, though always a minimum of three *Threat cards*.

If the *Monument card* is revealed, the group loses the game. If not, the current *Mission leader* gets a *Speech token* from the common pile, and then passes the *Mission Leader* token clockwise and a new mission starts.

Variants for new or experienced players:

Discovery Play: Ignore the *Trap card*.

Veteran Play: Start with 30 *Threat cards* in the *Trials deck*.

FAQ:

- If a player takes a *Falls back and Support action*, his *Trauma*, *Phobia* and *Hardship cards* don't influence the current mission anymore.
- If a player has no cards in hand, he can always take the *Fall back and Support action*, even if a *Hardship card* would prevent him from doing so.
- The Merry Christmas card can be played to remove a *Hardship card* from any player.
- If there are conflicting effects between two or more *Hardship cards* from the same player, the oldest one applies.
- If there are conflicting effects between two or more *Hardship cards* from different players, the one from the active player applies.
- *Hardship card* Clumsy: If a trap is drawn, it is not activated.
- *Hardship card* Fragile: Doesn't apply anymore once the player has taken the *Fall back and Support action*.
- *Hardship card* Mute: The player can't play the *Speech action* but can take *Fall back and Support action*.
- The effect of *Hardship cards* can force a player to take the *Fall back and Support action*, preventing him from taking any further actions in this mission.
- Once the *Trials deck* is empty, ignore all effects that would make you draw cards (i.e. Traps).
- **Players need to keep their hand secret!**

FAQ II:

- Cards on the table next to a *Poilu* (e.g. *Hardship cards*) are not "in your hand", and are thus not necessary to get rid of in order to win.
- Lucky Charm: Discard a played *Threat card* from *No man's land* (that matches the kind of *Threat* on the *Poilu card*). *Phobia* and *Traumata* that are attached to a *Poilu* cannot be discarded.

- If a player with the Orgeilleux *Hardship card* has no cards left in his hand, he may/must take the *Fall back and Support action* as usual. So he can only not withdraw as not-last player when he still has cards in his hand.
- All players draw an equal number of *Threat cards* (as chosen by the *Mission leader*) in the Mission intensity step.

Hardship cards summary

Summary of the *Hardship cards* and their effects:

- Egoïste (Selfish): Always keep the *Support tile* you played.
- Mutisme (Mute): May not take the *Speech action* nor communicate with others.
- Démoralisé (Demoralised): In the *Morale phase*, draw one extra *Threat card* card (thus a minimum of 4 cards)
- Peureux (Afraid): On your turn, you must take the *Fall back and Support action* if there are at least two *Threat cards* of the same kind in *No man's land*.
- Entêté (Stubborn): May not take the *Fall back and Support action* with 2 cards or more in hand.
- Maladroit (Clumsy): When taking the *Fall back and Support action*, you must draw and play one random card.
- Orueilleux (Proud): You cannot choose to take the *Fall back and Support action*, if you are the only player remaining in the mission.
- Fragile (Fragile): Other players may not take the *Fall back and Support action* as long as they still have cards in their hands.
- Tyrannique (Tyrannical): Immediately take the *Mission leader* token, and keep it.
- Frénétique (Frenetic): At the start of a Mission, you must draw two extra *Threat cards*.
- Etourdi (Stunned): When taking the *Fall back and Support action*, you must remove one *Support tile* permanently from the game.
- Paniqué (Panic): When taking the *Fall back and Support action*, the *Support tile*, if any available, is drawn at random.
- Blessé (Wound): Counts as two *Hardship cards*. Thus the game ends if a player has the Blessé card and just two further *Hardship cards* beside his *Poilu card*.
- Joyeux Noël (Merry Christmas): Remove one *Hardship card* from any player.