

# UNHEROIC SAMURAI

One Brain Cell Rules for Fighting  
Undead Horrors in Classical Japan



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## One Brain Cell Rules for Fighting Undead Horrors in Classical Japan

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### In the Beginning...

These are rules for playing a wargame with toy soldiers. It is intended for several players - say 4 or more. Players control significant leaders – the key samurai of a clan, who in turn have contingents of fighters under them.

These brave samurai find themselves opposed by hordes of undead horrors – the O-yoma.

Why 'One Brain Cell'? Well, many sets of wargame rules these days are horrendously complicated, with thick rule books to read, dozens of additional books to get (at unreasonable expense) and exceptionally complicated rule mechanisms that take ages to work out.

My brain is too simple for this, so I tend to write rules that only require a single brain cell to use and understand. This tends to make games easy to learn and play, and, amazingly, are just as much fun as the dense and complicated game rules for which you have to pay a fortune. Odd, isn't it?

So read on, and, hopefully, enjoy.

Jim Wallman  
Streatham 2012



## Game Background And Assumptions

These rules are intended to allow you to fight battles between samurai and hordes of the undead.

There are many sets of rules that simulate the epic battles of the samurai, and a number of games about individual skirmishing. These rules are intended for situation in between these two scales with the added dimension of an enemy that does not fight honourably, and refuses to die easily (or sometimes refuses to die at all).

In this game, players are significant individuals – leaders with great martial skills – and they have a following composed of their friends, family, vassals and servants who are sworn to do their duty to their clan.

This means that the composition of the force controlled by a player can be highly varied.

The situation will be based on a scenario – and it is entirely possible that whilst the overall aim is to destroy the Undead Horrors, players might have individual objectives that do not preclude in-fighting or settling old scores between players.

The rules are written with 25mm-28mm scale figures in mind – but there is no reason why they can't be adjusted for other figure scales – or even played with cardboard figures or counters depending on the sort of resources you have at your disposal.



## Setting up the game

To set up a game you need a reasonable sized playing area. A large table or floor area is ideal. Depending on the story you have in mind, this can be laid out with terrain. A green cloth makes suitable ground. Model trees, lichen etc makes woods, hedges and undergrowth. Cottages, hovels, even mansions can be easily made out of cardboard.

This is the playing area.

Next assemble the toy soldiers (sorry, I mean finely crafted military miniatures...).

The players should have at least one leader each. They *can* take control of more than one leader each - but this might make the play more difficult in some ways.

Each player-controlled leader has a **contingent** of fighters that are their followers in the fight – the contingent is made up of a number of **elements**.

To make things easy, we mount groups of figures on bases – each of these groups being treated as an indivisible **element** of followers.

If you don't want to mount your figures on bases, you can just as easily move them around in clumps of separate figures – but you'll obviously find it takes a little longer to play the game as you'll be moving the figures individually.

It entirely possible, depending on the scenario, that the players could be representing village headmen leading their desperate armed villagers, or even bandit chieftains.

Types of elements that you will expect to see following a leader are as follows:

Element Type	Description	Typical representation
Leader	This is the player. There is just one.	A single figure on whatever base suits.
Clan Samurai	A group of clan samurai with little or no armour, usually just armed with personal swords.	4 figures on a base 2" x 2"
Armoured Clan Samurai	A group of clan samurai on foot arrayed for combat. They will have a mixture of swords, spears and bows depending on the personal preferences of the individuals making up the group. The player has no real choice in the matter.	4 figures on a base 2" x 2"
Clan Ashigaru spear	Hastily called out clan foot soldiers, who have grabbed their spears and joined the fight.	6 figures on a 3" x 3"
Armoured Clan Ashigaru spear	Clan foot soldiers arrayed for battle. They will have their armour and be better mentally prepared for fighting.	6 figures on a 3" x 3"
Clan Ashigaru Musketeers	Specialist foot soldiers with firearms.	6 figures on a 3" x 3"
Armoured Clan Ashigaru musketeers	Specialist foot soldiers with firearms who have got their armour and are well prepared for battle. They will have extra ammo and have higher morale.	6 figures on a 3" x 3"
Mounted Clan Samurai	Clan samurai who have grabbed a horse. The horse will have no armour. As above there is no choice as to how they are armed.	2 figures on a 2" x 2"

Element Type	Description	Typical representation
Mounted Battle Samurai	Fully armoured and mounted samurai ready for the most extreme combat. As above there is no choice as to how they are armed.	2 figures on a 2" x 2"
Warrior Monks	A group of militant monks with little or no armour, usually just armed with staff or naginata.	6 figures on a 3" x 3"
Battle-ready warrior monks	A group of armoured militant monks with some armour, usually armed with naginata or spear	6 figures on a 3" x 3"
Armed Peasants	Local farmers encourage to take up bamboo spears and defend themselves.	6 figures on a 3" x 3"
Bandits	Rag-tag bunch of variously armed and armoured ruffians.	6 figures on a 3" x 3"
Mounted Bandits	An element of mounted bandits can't effectively fight on horseback – it will always dismount to fight – replace it with a bandit base when dismounted.	2 figures on a 3" x 3"
<b>O-yoma (Zombies)</b>		
The living are, of course, faced by various threats from the undead horrors. The larger the group, the more aggressive and dangerous is is.		
<b>Infestation</b> of O-yoma (zombies)	Small isolated group of zombies. Pretty easy to defeat.	3 figures on a 2" x 2" base
<b>Gathering</b> of O-yoma (Zombies)	Mildly aggressive zombies.	5 figures on a 3" x 3" base
<b>Horde of O-yoma</b> (zombies)	A larger group of zombies – that is correspondingly more aggressive and dangerous.	10 figures on a 4" x 4" base
Armed Horde of O-yoma (zombies)	Holding some sort of residual knowledge of their past life, this horde carries weapons which makes them more dangerous. These are rare.	9 figures on a 4" x 4" base



## Actions

In each game turn every **player** gets to perform **Actions**.

All actions are assumed to happen simultaneously. If there is any doubt, players can note down their action on a bit of paper or a post-it note if they want. If you want to be really flash you can write some cards with the actions on them.

**The sequence of action** in each turn goes like this:

1. Players declare what ACTION they are doing (see below)
2. Players can move their personal figure and any elements under their command in accordance with the ACTION they said they were going to do.
3. If movement brings elements into weapon range then work out who killed who. Work out archers and musket effects first. Then work out melee.
4. At the end of the turn, all elements that have been fighting have to take a test to see how they are feeling (called the *Morale Test*)

These are the **actions** you can do:

- **Hit Someone** (usually another specific named Player). If you choose this you cannot move your elements around that turn because you are too busy concentrating on your immediate enemy to tell them what to do.
- **Shout "BANZAI!"...and charge** Personally lead your elements towards the enemy (assuming that's where you're heading). All your elements within 12" of your figure will follow you by the most direct route to the limit of their movement distance (See **Movement** below)
- **Inspire Your Followers**. Sometimes your following elements might get a bit downhearted (especially if they've been taking casualties and their morale is low). You can make them happier by stopping what you are doing and giving them a stirring speech (See below for **Morale Test**).
- **Regroup your followers**. This removes the effect of one **Distraction** counter (see below).
- **Converse, Send or Receive a message**. Sometimes you need to tell someone something, or send a message. **If you are not within 8" of that person then you can't talk to them**, you must write a note – yes, *really write* with a pen and paper. This is an **action**. The message does not have to be in Japanese.
  - The note is then transported using a messenger from your followers to the person its meant for. Reading the note is an **action** too, so they might not have time to read it when it gets there!
- **Shout "Attack them!"** This is where you can send your following elements to attack a specific, named, enemy element. You don't have to accompany the attack. All your followers move towards the enemy you pointed at as fast as they can move until they get within weapon range - then they fight. If you are not with them they might not fight as well though (see **Morale Test**).
- **Issue an Order**. Give a more complex order like – “stay here and shoot at the enemy”, or “Defend the bridge”. If you are not present and leave your contingent, then they will be less effective. Don't forget that all your elements amount to a single contingent so directing elements off to do separate and independent tasks is not very realistic. If an umpire is running the game, the umpire will always be the final arbiter as to how detached or abandoned elements act in a given situation.

## O-Yoma (Zombie) Actions

Zombies are not played by players. In this game the players cooperate (more or less) to eliminate the threat from Undead Horrors.

However, the O-yoma have some rules for how they behave.

O-yoma are attracted by loud noises such as muskets going off, stirring speeches or cries of 'BANZAI'. Any loud noise will attract O-yoma within 24”.

### Attractiveness Range

O-yoma are attracted by the living. Any group of living will attract them – the size of the group being a key factor.

The range of attractiveness is the number of figures in the group in inches. This is halved if the target group is out of line of sight.

So a group of 7 Samurai in the open would attract any Zombies within 7". To count as part of the same group elements need to be within 3" of each other.

Casualties on the ground also count for attractiveness.

### Hiding.

Small groups of O-yoma can lie under the earth – which they do when there is no food source nearby.

Thus Infestations and Gatherings can be hidden anywhere underground except on roads (where the disturbed earth would be obvious). Under the floors of buildings, under the water in paddy fields, under a grassy knoll - these are all good hiding places. The hidden group is activated as soon as something attractive passes within attractiveness range.

If you have an umpire running your game, then they can have a map of hidden O-yoma for players to encounter. If there is no umpire, then get a number of counters, maybe 2 or 3 times the number of hidden groups and place them on the playing area in likely spots. Then when humans move near a counter, roll dice to see which (if any) of the the hidden groups they have encountered.

### Fighting

O-Yoma are trying to eat the humans, mainly. So their attacks are always melee attacks. They never use ranged weapons.

They will move as fast as they can towards the most attractive target in sight (or that they have detected by noise, if not in line of sight).



## Movement

Each individual element moves as directed by their leader, up to the following maximum distance each turn:

Type	Distance (inches)
Clan Ashigaru or Warrior monks	8"
Clan Samurai	12"
Armoured samurai, ashigaru or monks	8"
Mounted	18"
Carts and other slow stuff.	5"
O-yoma Infestation	5"
O-yoma Gathering	10"
O-yoma Horde	15"

Obstacles can't be easily crossed.


If crossing a low wall or hedge, take one move delay.

Wading through a ford or shallow stream, lose half the movement distance.




## Distraction and Hits on Human Elements

Because each element in a player's contingent represents many individuals, and because I don't want to detach figures from the base to represent casualties, the effect of combat/losses on a base is shown in two ways.

 **a. Distractions.** This is a representation of how nervous, distracted or upset they are. It affects their ability to close on the enemy and their ability to shoot straight.

These are represented by Green Counters placed by (or on) the base. A base can receive any number of Green 'D' Counters.

 **b. Hits.** This might be people killed, or wounded, or merely scratched. Its a vague indication of the actual level of injury or death sustained by the group. These are indicated by yellow counters placed on or near the base. An element can receive up to 4 Hit counters and still fight on.

On receiving the **fifth hit** counter the element is unable to fight on and will attempt to leave the battle area as quickly as possible.

In addition to marking the hit on the unit – a CASUALTY MARKER is placed on the table. This remains in place. There are two types of casualty markers – RED indicating the casualty was caused by O-yoma, BLUE indicating the casualty was caused by human weapons. You might like to use small pictures of fallen samurai as casualty makers.



## Shooting :

**Archers:** Bows are the weapon of the samurai class – so any base of samurai *might* contain one or more archers.

At the start of the game roll 1d3 per element of samurai for the number of bow-armed samurai it contains. (You'll need to keep a note of this).

If using separate figures, then the models you have will represent the number of archers, but no more than 3 per element is allowed.

Roll 1d6 per samurai base shooting to score a HIT

+1 per bow-armed samurai present.

-1 if the base moved this turn

-1 per 'D'

-1 per HIT

BOWS	Range:	Up to 18"		Up to 36"	
Vs target	Effect:	1 Distraction	1 hit and 1 Distraction	1 Distraction	1 hit and 1 Distraction
Unarmoured on foot		3,4	5,6	4, 5	6
Armoured on foot		4	5,6	5	6
Unarmoured Horseman		3,4	5,6	4	5,6
Armoured horseman		5, 6	6	6	-
O-Yoma		-	4, 5, 6	-	5, 6

**Muskets:** The musket is the weapon of the common ashigaru (it is regarded as only suitable for the lower orders and samurai would rarely use it). An element of ashigaru cannot be mixed, they are either all musket or all spear.

**Muskets may not fire if they moved.**

Muskets take one turn to reload (this can be done on the move)

Muskets generate a lot of smoke, so use cotton wool puffs to show smoke. Musket smoke remains for two turns after shooting.

Roll 1d6 per base shooting

-1 per D -1 per hit

-1 if target obscured by smoke

MUSKETS	Range :	12"		24"	
Vs target	Effect:	1 Distraction	1 hit and 1 Distraction	1 Distraction	1 hit and 1 Distraction
Unarmoured on foot		2,3,4	5,6	4,5	6
Armoured on foot		3,4	5,6	4,5	6
Unarmoured Horseman		2,3,4	5,6	4,5	5,6
Armoured horseman		3,4	5,6	5,6	-
O-Yoma		-	3, 4, 5, 6	-	5, 6

**Hitting Leaders :** When shooting at a Player/Leader figure, the target can ignore D results and still takes 5 Hits to kill. (He is the Hero, after all).



## Morale test

Events and circumstances can make your followers less keen to fight.

The entire contingent (that is all the elements led by a single Leader) is affected by the morale rules, whatever their type.

Roll 1d6 when:

- The contingent loses a base
- The contingent is surprised or the first time it sees a group of O-yoma
- If the player in command wants the contingent to take a test
- Ashigaru, peasants or bandits on their own are being threatened by Samurai or O-yoma for the first time

Add or subtract the following factors:

- 1 for each Hit this turn
- 1 for each element lost in game
- 1 visibly outnumbered.
- 2 saw a friendly casualty rise from the dead.



+2 having a stirring speech from a friendly leader this turn. The umpire (if present) might increase this if the player actually gives a *real* stirring speech that is...er..stirring.  
-1 if the contingent's leader is not present (in sight and within 18")  
-1 Higher class enemy troops moved closer to you this turn.

The check the result in this table:

**Result**

Score	Outcome
<b>3+</b>	<b>FIGHT ON</b> Morale is fine - carry on as desired.
<b>0-2</b>	<b>HOLD BACK</b> Contingent may not move closer to any enemy forces. It has to pass a morale test next turn to move closer to the enemy.
<b>Under 0</b>	<b>RUN AWAY!</b> Contingent must move away from the enemy as quickly as possible. It must pass a morale test next turn to stop running away.

The figure representing the leader/player leading the contingent is not bound by these results and may fight or run away as desired.



**Melee (or hand TO HAND COMBAT)**

**STEP ONE:** Break the combat up into 'fights'. A fight is one element vs one or more enemy elements.

**STEP TWO:** For each 'fight' roll 1d6 per side, add the factors below and compare the scores.

Factors in Melee :

Peasant	-2
Musket armed ashigaru	-1
Spear armed ashigaru, Warrior monk or bandit	0
Clan Samurai	+2
Leader	+4
On horseback	+1
Outnumbered 2-1 by unengaged enemies	-2
Outnumbered 3-1 by unengaged enemies	-3
Outnumbered 4-1 or more by unengaged enemies	
For each D on the base	-1
For each HIT on the base	-1
O-yoma Infestation	-2
O-Yoma Gathering	0
O-Yoma Horde	+1
O-Yoma Armed Horde	+2

**The highest score wins**



**Results**

AGAINST	WIN BY	RESULT
Any troop type	DRAW	Humans receive a DISTRACTION. No effect on O-yoma
O-yoma	3 or more	Score 1 HIT for every 2 points difference in score above 2
Any human troop type	1	No loss - humans receive a DISTRACTION and are pushed back 3".
Unarmoured peasants, bandits or ashigaru	2 or more	Score 1 HIT for every point difference in score above 1 Humans pushed back 3"
Unarmoured samurai (mounted or not). Armoured ronin, ashigaru, bandits or warrior monks.	3 or more	Score 1 HIT for every point difference in score above 2 Humans pushed back 3"
Battle Samurai (mounted or not) and any LEADER	4 or more	Score 1 HIT for every point difference in score above 3 Humans pushed back 3"

If an outnumbered element wins, it can HIT *only one* of its enemy elements that turn. Winner chooses which one.

This seems complicated, but is, in fact, very simple.

**Field Defences** : Elements wholly behind field defences or defending buildings can ignore push-back results.



**Personal Combat**

Leaders are special cases.

**This section is in case human players end up fighting each other. O-Yoma will NEVER indulge in personal combat.**

If they fight just the followers of other leaders, or the O-yoma, then use the melee rules above, treating the leader as element in his own right.

If they fight other Leaders – i.e. people of standing, then the following rules apply.

Leaders **never** outnumber other leaders. In the event of a multiple fight between leaders, those not involved will watch and from the sidelines until their turn comes.

Personal combat starts with an 'INTENTION' – decided secretly by placing d6 covered with they player's hand. The options are:



general an

similar

cheer

**1 = Fight** – if the opponent breaks off do not follow.

**2 = Pursue** – if the opponent breaks off, you can follow.

**3 = Stay your hand** – if the player wins he doesn't score HIT but can negotiate with his enemy (or call on him to surrender).

**4 = Break off** and move out of combat

Each player chooses an INTENTION out of sight and reveals at the same time.

If a player has chosen BREAK OFF and his opponent has not chosen PURSUE then there is no combat round.

Then - each game turn of combat is three rounds of paper - stone - scissors.

The player with the best of three inflicts one HIT on their enemy (Unless they have chosen an INTENTION of 'stay your hand', of course).

Distractions and HITS are ignored.

Leaders may break off combat and try and run away - but then that wouldn't be very heroic would it? Whatever would their followers think?



## UNDEAD RISING

Casualties caused by O-yoma are likely to rise again.

Roll 1d6 per turn per casualty caused in melee by O-yoma. Score 1 to rise and join the nearest O-yoma group.

O-yoma groups can get bigger as a result of either the newly-undead joining them, or by smaller groups combining to form larger groups. Newly risen O-yoma can also re-fill the ranks of a nearby O-yoma group, allowing it to remove HITS.

This can happen when multiple elements congregate to attack a single location or contingent. Or, if they fall into company whilst moving towards something – though they may not be moved to deliberately cause this to happen. O-yoma will always use the most direct route to their objective.

- An infestation is formed of 3 newly risen.
- A Gathering is formed of 2 infestations
- A Horde is formed of 2 gatherings or the equivalent.

Armed hordes are never formed by this means – they are scenario-specific. Ordinary Hordes can never become armed Hordes.

## EXAMPLE ACTION CARDS

You might find these helpful for players to place an action card face-down indicating their action in the turn – thus making coordination more of a challenge.

<p><b>HIT SOMEONE</b></p> <p>Engage in personal combat</p>	<p><b>SHOUT 'BANZAI!'</b></p> <p>Lead your force against a specific enemy</p>	<p><b>INSPIRE FOLLOWERS</b></p> <p>Help your followers with their morale</p>
<p><b>CONVERSE</b></p> <p>Or send / receive a message from another player</p>	<p><b>REGROUP</b></p> <p>Remove one <b>DISTRACTION</b></p>	<p><b>SHOUT "ATTACK THEM"</b></p> <p>Send your followers against an specific enemy</p>
<p><b>ISSUE ONE ORDER</b></p> <p>to your followers.</p>		