

Battlefront: First Echelon Helicopter Rules v1.1



Helicopter Types

Observation Helicopters (OHs)

These fill the role of air observation posts, carrying FOs and FACs, as well as seeking out targets and acting as command helicopters for their Attack Helicopter (AH) brethren. Where there is a mixed team of OHs and AHs, the OH must always be the Team Commander. OHs are also used for liaison – carrying a commander or small unit from point A to point B. OHs can also be armed, enabling them to function as light attack helicopters when necessary (weaponry often comes at the expense of transport capacity due to weight or space considerations). OHs are often highly agile, which offers them a degree of protection compared to some other helicopters, as they are better able to dodge enemy fire and get out of trouble quickly.

Attack Helicopters (AHs)

These are arguably some of the most potent weapons on the modern battlefield – often armed to the teeth with guns, rockets and ATGMs, able to strike swiftly and withdraw just as quickly. They usually have a greater degree of protection than other helicopters – sometimes in the form of armour and sometimes in the form of defensive aids such as chaff, flares, threat detectors and IR baffles on the engine exhausts.

Utility Helicopters (UHs)

These are medium-weight helicopters, each able to carry roughly a squad of troops, or maybe an under-slung heavy weapon or small vehicle. They can also often carry weaponry; usually a door-gunner or two, though with some UHs serving double-duty as AHs when necessary. The Soviets in particular, believed in the concept of the 'Assault Transport', which was a combination of AH and UH, being able to soften up the Landing Zone (LZ) with fire, before landing troops and then hanging around to provide fire support.



Transport Helicopters (CHs)

These are large, heavy helicopters, designed to transport large numbers of men, heavy weapons and vehicles by air to the battlefield. Armament is minimal and often non-existent.

Where 'transport helicopters' are mentioned in the rules below, this can also be taken to mean OHs, UHs and AHs that are capable of carrying Troops.

Helicopter Weapons

Door-Gunners

UHs and CHs often have MGs mounted in the side doors or rear door, manned by a crewman. These are usually defensive weapons that can be used to suppress enemy defences during insertion and extraction operations. The unit card states which sides of the helicopter door guns are mounted on (left, right and/or rear) and each door gun has a 180-degree arc of fire, as for vehicle-mounted fixed weapons. As with vehicles carrying multiple weapons, only one target may be engaged in a turn. Door gunners have a ranged attack, as they are able to track targets and compensate for the helicopter's movement. Note that helicopters listed as having a door-gunner capability are not always fitted with door guns, or might have only one fitted. I leave this to the scenario-designer's discretion.



Fixed Machine Guns & Cannon

These weapons require the helicopter to fly directly toward a target and often overfly it. These attacks are therefore handled using the 'Strafe' procedure exactly as laid down in the *Battlefront: WWII* rulebook. Note that the heavy MG mounted on the chin turret of the Soviet Mi-24 'Hind' AH also comes under this category, as the Hind's turret has a very limited arc of fire.

Turret-mounted Machine Guns and Cannon

These weapons may conduct ranged attacks in the same manner as vehicle weapons and helicopter Door-Gunners (above), due to the fact that the gunner can actively aim the weapon and compensate for the movement of the aircraft. These are only found on a few specifically-designed attack helicopters (such as the Cobra, Apache, Rooivalk and Havoc). These weapons may engage targets within the front 180-degree arc, as for fixed vehicle weapons.

Rockets

These are dual-purpose; being used both for Tank-Busting attacks as per the *Battlefront: WWII* rule book and for area effect using the 'Rocket' factors listed on the unit card. As with fixed guns, unguided rockets require the pilot to fly directly towards the target and often overfly it, thus exposing themselves to point-defence fire from the targeted unit and its immediate neighbours.

ATGMs

These are long-range weapons used against armoured vehicles or soft targets, using guided missiles. ATGM ammunition will normally be limited. These weapons may engage targets within the front 180-degree arc.

Helicopter Organisation

1. Most helicopters will operate as Flight-sized Manoeuvre Elements of **x2 to x4** helicopters, with one helicopter in the Flight designated as the Flight Commander.
2. Where there is more than **x1** helicopter present, they **MUST** be grouped as Flights of at least **x2** helicopters.
3. Where there is an OH present in the Flight, this will always be designated as the Flight Commander (AHs commonly operate as 'Pink Teams', being mixed with OHs to provide command, control and target designation functions).



Helicopter Mission Duration

1. Helicopters must either arrive on table according to a pre-determined, written schedule (e.g. "Turn 1 – OH arrives, Turn 2 – 2x AH arrive, Turn 3, 4x UHs arrive..."), or they must be called in by a FAC or Battlegroup Commander using the normal Tactical Air Support procedure (whole Flights and even Squadrons of helicopters may be called in by a single FAC roll if permitted by the mission briefing).
2. Once on board, helicopters may 'loiter' on table for up to six turns. This may be extended by one turn to allow a landed aircraft to load up and depart. Any helicopters still on table after this must Return To Base (see rule 5 below).
3. A good tip is to place a D6 on the flight stand of each helicopter. Starting with '1' on the turn it arrives, flip the D6 to the next number at the start of each Close Air Support Phase. If the D6 already shows '6', the helicopter must immediately Return To Base.
4. Any 'Suppression' or 'Disorder' inflicted by anti-aircraft fire will affect the helicopter in the same manner as other units and may be rallied off during the Manoeuvre Phase.
5. Any 'Panic' result during a Manoeuvre Check will force the helicopter to immediately Return To Base (see below).
6. Helicopters forced to Return To Base must fly in a straight line, directly toward the friendly table edge at their maximum speed. The helicopter may also make an optional drop in altitude from Low-Level to NoE as a free action at the start of this move, but may not land. If it does not make it to the table edge during the turn, it will continue to move during the next turn and may not return to play. It may be continue to be engaged by the enemy at any time during this withdrawal. Helicopters forced to Return To Base do not count as a loss for VP purposes.



Helicopter Actions

1. Helicopters may conduct a single free action and conduct an attack during the Air Support Phase, simultaneously to all conventional air attacks.

2. Helicopters have the opportunity to move again during the Manoeuvre Phase, rolling for Manoeuvre in exactly the same manner as ground vehicles (though with a different set of available actions).
3. Note that Command Helicopters have a 20-inch command span.
4. Helicopters may not gain a Command Manoeuvre Modifier from any ground-based commanders.
5. Actions available to helicopters during the Manoeuvre Phase are:
 - a. **Hold Position/Hover** (may also change facing – only action permitted if the helicopter or an embarked Troop unit called for fire or laser-designated a target during the turn.)
 - b. **Move** (may move 30 inches per action if flying at Nap-of-Earth or 60 inches if flying at Low-Level - see detailed helicopter movement rules below)
 - c. **Change Altitude Band** (may include Landing or Taking-Off and the Embarkation or Disembarkation of **Troops** – see detailed helicopter movement rules below)
 - d. **Declare Overwatch** (only action permitted – requires two actions.)
 - e. **Mount or Dismount Vehicles or Guns** (if already landed – see detailed Embarkation/Disembarkation rules below)
 - f. **'Hull Down' Check** (i.e. use terrain to mask the helicopter and conduct 'pop-up' attacks – see detailed Helicopter 'Hull-Down' rules below.)
6. Helicopters that get an involuntary **'Hold Position'** result during the Manoeuvre check may drop an Altitude Band from Low-Level to NoE as a free action. They may not land or change facing.
7. Helicopters that get a **'Fall Back'** result during the Manoeuvre check may drop from Low-Level to NoE as a free action before making their Fall Back move. They may not land. The Fall Back move ends with the helicopter's facing unchanged.
8. Any **'Panic'** result during a Manoeuvre Check will force the helicopter to immediately Return To Base. If the helicopter does not finish its RTB move in one turn, it finishes the move facing the friendly table edge.
9. Helicopters that voluntarily elect to **Hold Position/Hover** may also change their facing. However, changing facing will remove a helicopter's **Hull Down** marker (see below).
10. Provided that they have conducted an **Overwatch** action, helicopters may conduct **Overwatch Fire** following the enemy's **Defensive Fire**. This may only be conducted using ranged weapons; i.e. ATGMs, turreted guns and door-gunners. Overwatch Fire may not be conducted while the helicopter is Landed.
11. Helicopters may also conduct **Opportunity/Defensive Fire** with ranged weapons during the enemy turn – ATGMs, turreted guns and door-gunners. If the helicopter is landed, Opportunity/Defensive Fire may only be conducted with door-gunners.

Helicopter Movement



1. Helicopters may operate in one of three Altitude Bands and this must be clearly marked at all times, either with a marker or with different sizes of flight-stand. In game terms it takes one action, with the helicopter remaining stationary, to transition from one Altitude Band to another (note that it is possible to transition from Low-Level straight to Landed in one action and vice versa):
 - a. **Landed** (may only be conducted by helicopters in order to load/unload ground units.)
 - b. **Nap-of-Earth** (very close to the ground and able to use cover and line-of-sight in the same manner as ground units – abbreviated as NoE. Helicopters carrying underslung loads may not fly at Nap-of-Earth.)
 - c. **Low-Level** (the same altitude as Low-Level fixed-wing aircraft, which enables faster movement and better observation, though greater vulnerability to anti-aircraft weapons.)
2. Helicopters of all types may move 30 inches per action at Nap-of-Earth and 60 inches per action at Low-Level.
3. Unlike fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters may conduct any combination of turns during their move, following ground features to take advantage of the cover they provide. They may then change their facing to any direction at the end of the action.
4. Although it's easiest to think of helicopters at Nap-of-Earth as very fast ground vehicles, they clearly cannot fly through certain types of terrain and may only fly over or around them. A helicopter does not have to change its Altitude Band in order to fly over terrain – it simply sits immediately above it. (e.g. think of a helicopter flying at Nap-of-Earth above woodland or a Built-up Area as being the same for purposes of observation as a ground unit sitting on top of a Level 1 hill)
5. Helicopters may not voluntarily fly through Indirect Fire, Bombing, Strafing or Rocket templates, though they may attempt to fly out of one, should they find themselves caught within such a template.

Disembarking/Embarking Transported Ground Units

Disembarking ground units from a helicopter or embarking units onto a helicopter is normally a very quick business, in order to minimize the helicopter's vulnerable time on the ground:

1. In order to land, each helicopter requires a Landing Zone (LZ) equivalent to the size of a Small Indirect Fire Template, which must be of a suitable terrain type (see table below). Note that due to scale incompatibility, it may be necessary to replace the model helicopter with a suitable LZ marker (e.g. a picture of the top of the helicopter model scaled to the same size as a small IDF marker) when landed.
2. During a helicopter's Landing action, transported **Troop units** may immediately be placed either within, or **outside and** immediately conformed to the edge of the LZ marker.

3. A heavy CH carrying internally-loaded Vehicle or Gun units will require a full action on the ground in order to disembark them. Underslung Vehicle or Gun units may be disembarked during the Landing action, **as for Troops**.
4. During a helicopter's Take-Off action, any Troop units within or immediately conformed to the edge of the LZ marker at the start of the action may immediately embark.
5. Gun and Vehicle units, whether underslung or carried internally, require the helicopter to remain landed for a full action in order to embark.
6. Units disembarking from Suppressed or Disordered helicopters must roll on the Bail Out Table. Embarked units may **voluntarily** roll on the Bail Out Table if a landed helicopter comes under fire before take-off.
7. If a helicopter is KO'd in the air, embarked Troop units must roll on the Bail Out Table, as there is a slim possibility that the helicopter might make a successful forced landing (-3 modifier on the Bail-Out Table). If the helicopter comes down over terrain that is unsuitable for landing there is an additional -1 Bail Out modifier. Troops that successfully bail out are placed on the table at the point at which the helicopter was Knocked Out (place an LZ marker at that point and all surviving units must be placed within or conformed to the edge of the marker). Guns and Vehicles are automatically lost with the helicopter, as are any Troops that come down in terrain that is impassable to Troops (e.g. large bodies of water).
8. Note that scenario-designers should feel free to come up with their own ideas for suitable LZs. For example, a unit might be trained to fast-rope into Woods or other terrain-types that might otherwise be impossible to land in. A Built-up Sector might have sufficient flat roofs to allow the landing of troops or a certain type of small helicopter might be able to land in Streets, which would otherwise be too narrow for other helicopter types.

Helicopters Going 'Hull-Down'

1. Helicopters at Nap-of-Earth and conformed to Linear Dense Concealment such as Tall Hedges and Crestlines, or to the outside edge of Deep Dense Concealment such as Woods or Built-up Sectors, may attempt a Hull-Down Check in order to make best use of the cover and to observe and shoot over it.
2. Note that this ability is normally restricted to OHs, AHs and UHs fitted for the AH role. CHs (and UHs carrying passengers **other than FOOs/FACs**) may not attempt to go hull-down.
3. Helicopters with mast-mounted sights (very rare in the 1980s – pretty much only the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior) have bonuses printed on their cards for the Hull-Down check and their armour rating when hull-down.
4. If successful, the hull-down helicopter has a Hull-Down marker placed in front of it and gains the benefit of a -1 Cover modifier against any Direct Fire directed against it.
5. If successful and conformed to Linear Dense Concealment, the hull-down helicopter is classed as observing/being observed through the terrain feature, so is classed as being at the same elevation as the terrain feature.
6. If successful and conformed to an area of Deep Dense Concealment, the hull-down helicopter is classed as observing/being observed over the terrain feature, so is classed as being one elevation higher than the terrain feature.



7. Hull-Down helicopters are always classed as being on the edge of Dense Concealment.
8. If the helicopter subsequently moves or changes facing or altitude, it will immediately lose the Hull-Down marker.
9. If the helicopter is conformed to Linear Dense Concealment and fails its Hull-Down check it will still be able to observe and shoot through the terrain feature, it will still benefit from the Concealment, but will not gain any Hull-Down Cover benefit.
10. If the helicopter is conformed to an area of Deep Dense Concealment and fails its Hull-Down check, it will not be able to observe, shoot or be observed through the terrain feature.

Close Combat Against Landed Helicopters

1. Landed helicopters may be engaged in Close Combat while landed, may not initiate close combat.
2. Door-gunners may conduct Defensive Fire prior to combat.
3. The standard Close Combat factor for landed helicopters against all unit types is -1. This increases to +0 versus Troops and Soft Vehicles if the helicopter has a door-gunner and +1 versus all unit types if the door gunner has a heavy machine gun or cannon (12.7mm or heavier).
4. The helicopter is classed as 'Outflanked' in the combat if it is attacked from a flank not covered by the arc of a door-gunner. If a helicopter has 360-degree door-gunner coverage (albeit only able to fire on one side), it cannot be Outflanked. If it has no door-gunner it will always be Outflanked.
5. The helicopter is automatically Knocked Out if it does not win the combat (i.e. beat the attacker by +1 or more).

Spotting To/From Helicopters

1. If a dedicated OH within a Helicopter Flight ME spots a target, the target will also be automatically spotted by all other helicopters in the Flight.
2. Helicopters at Nap-of-Earth and Landed spot and are affected by lines of sight and elevation in exactly the same manner as ground vehicles and are spotted in exactly the same manner, being classed as Large Vehicles.
3. Helicopters at Low-Level spot and are spotted in the same manner as fixed-wing aircraft.



Helicopter Attacks

1. As with conventional aircraft attacks, the helicopter is moved, using the movement rules above, to the position from which it will launch the attack. In the case of Strafing, Rockets and Tank-Busting, this will be **conformed to** the aiming point of the target, **as per the standard rules for air attacks**. In the case of Door Gunners, Turret-mounted Guns and ATGMs, this will be at some distance from the target.

2. Once all helicopters and aircraft have been moved, antiaircraft fire is resolved as normal (though as discussed above, terrain features may block line of sight to helicopters).
3. Once antiaircraft fire has been resolved, the helicopter resolves its attack using the normal Air Support rules, modified by the Helicopter Weapons rules above.
4. Helicopter Direct Fire attacks from Nap-of-Earth altitude are resolved using the Direct Fire part of the Fire Combat Table, therefore attacking the armour aspect presented by the target (i.e. front armour or flank armour). Helicopter ATGM and Tank-Busting attacks from Nap-of-Earth may therefore be affected by Chobham and Reactive Armour.
5. All helicopter attacks from Low-Level altitude are resolved using the Air-to-Ground part of the Fire Combat Table, thereby attacking the target's flank armour, regardless of target facing.
6. Area-effect attacks, such as unguided Rockets, always use the Air-to-Ground part of the Fire Combat Table.

Ripple-Fired ATGMs From Helicopters

Some laser-guided 'fire & forget' ATGMs (i.e. only the Hellfire ATGM during the 1980s) may be ripple-fired. In this manner, a whole column or formation of armoured vehicles can be destroyed in a matter of seconds, with an Attack Helicopter's entire load of missiles in the air simultaneously.



1. An Attack Helicopter (i.e. only the AH-64 Apache, OH-58D Kiowa Warrior and AH-1W Super Cobra during the 1980s) with Ripple Fire capability may fire up to all its ATGMs in a single Air Support phase against a group of targets.
2. The group of targets must be grouped within an area defined by 4x Large IDF templates laid 2x2.
3. Ripple-fired ATGMs suffer a -1 modifier on their listed attack factor due to the complexity of the operation and workload on the helicopter's gunner.
4. The target for each missile must be designated at the start of the attack and before the attacks are resolved. More than one missile may be designated onto a single target – any Disorder result caused by the first missile would then give a +1 bonus to the second missile and so on.

Artillery Effect on Helicopters

1. Helicopters flying at Nap of Earth may not normally fly through an Indirect Fire template.
2. The only exceptions to this are where they are forced to fly through a barrage as part of a Fall Back or Panic/RTB move and where they are subjected to Indirect Fire during the enemy's turn and are exiting the template. In this instance, they may not voluntarily remain within the Indirect Fire template.
3. Helicopters are not valid targets for Indirect Fire and may not be directly targeted in such a manner. However, they may of course catch some Indirect Fire aimed at neighbouring ground units.

4. If subjected to Indirect Fire during the enemy's turn, helicopters flying at Nap of Earth will gain a -3 'cover' modifier.
5. Landed helicopters are treated as Soft Vehicles and may be targeted by Indirect Fire as normal.
6. Helicopters flying at Low-Level are not affected by Indirect Fire but will still avoid flying voluntarily through IDF templates.

Effects of Terrain on Helicopters

This is an appendix to the Battlefront: WWII Terrain Chart, detailing the effects on helicopter operations. This of course is open to interpretation by scenario-designers; for example, Built-up Sectors with flat roofs may be perfectly suitable for helicopter landings, or units might be equipped to fast-rope into trees or urban terrain.

Terrain Feature	Suitable for Landing?	Suitable for Hull-Down?	Terrain Feature	Suitable for Landing?	Suitable for Hull-Down?
Crestline	Y	Y	Streets	OH only	N
Open Ground	Y	N	Rubble	OH only	Y
Rough Ground	Y	N	Built-up Sector	N	Y
Deep Snow	Y	N	Low Hedge	N	N
Soft Ground	Y	N	High Hedge	N	Y
Muddy Ground	Y	N	Bocage Hedge	N	Y
Rocky Ground	Y	N	Low Wall	N	N
Marshy Ground	N	N	High Wall	N	N
Sea/Lake	N	N	Low Bank	N	N
Gentle Slope	Y	Y	High Bank	N	Y
Steep Slope	Y	Y	Barbed Wire	N	N
Sheer Slope	N	Y	Shallow Gully	Y	N
Cleared Woods	N	Y	Deep Gully	N	N
Woods with Underbrush	N	Y	Wide & Deep Gully	Y	N
Thicket	N	Y	Shallow Stream	Y	N
Brush	Y	N	Wide or Deep	Y	N
Swamp	N	Y	Wide & Deep	N	N
Orchard	N	N	Paved Road	Y	N
Tall Crops	Y	N	Unpaved Road	Y	N