

# A treatment on Warmaster charges

An analysis of charge rules in Warmaster with regards to possible design flaws

By Gert Hansen

In this article I will discuss how the charging rules *should work* as compared to how they *do work*. I will do this with three problems that arise during play, as perceived by some players: 1) flanking is generally too easy, 2) overlong flank charges, 3) backtracking to get column charges.

The charge move in Warmaster is determined by the position and orientation of the charging unit relative to the position and orientation of the target unit (the defender). To investigate the various situations possible I've decided to set a number of geometric zones around the defender. These are defined by lines parallel to the defender's edges and by a 45 degree diagonal (See diagram 1). The geometry of the flank zone clockwise to the front is identical to the zone clockwise to the flank etc. This means that we only need to analyse 3 zones, which I have dubbed »Front«, »Front side« and »Front flank«.

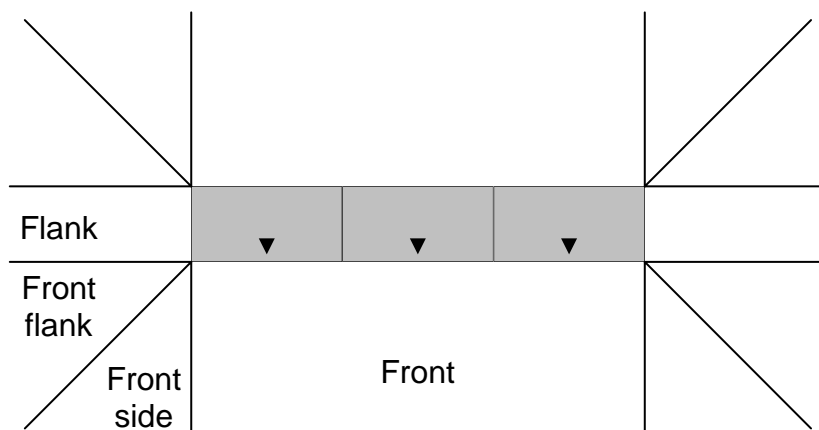


Diagram 1: Defender's zones

That should take care of the position of the charging unit, but we will also need to care for the orientation of the charger. As a charging unit must have the defender in its front 180 degree arc there are few possibilities: either the front edge, or one of the 4 corners are closest to the enemy, as illustrated in diagram 2. (The rear corners are rarely closest but it does happen).

How the charge rules currently work is given in the Warmaster book, but we need to define how they *should work*, i.e. how units should be moving during a charge. We do not normally think of this as we play, as the movement rules have abstracted from this level of detail. Still the rules are written to emulate the movement of big blocks of troops.

Troops move via a series of commands, basically forward movement (march), wheels, turns and reforms (all very familiar to players of Warhammer). As a charging unit must be able to see the defender, this suggests that a charging unit does not turn. A turn would change the

unit's facing and would therefore be able to charge a unit it could not see. Similarly a unit that charges must expand frontage with the target, which suggests that the only reform permitted during the charge is to maximise frontage with the enemy.

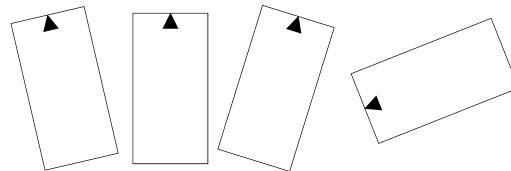


Diagram 2: Charge units'

This leaves us with forward movement and wheeling as the only methods (of movement) to use to charge. Then we must ask how freely we can make use of these. A charge is supposed to get the unit into combat quickly (to get the advantage of impetus), so the logical answer is a unit must move by the simplest way possible to make contact.

This generally means to first wheel to get a heading towards the enemy, second move straight ahead to meet the enemy (and third wheel again to align and max frontage). Another way of explaining this is that the charger attacks the side of the enemy unit, which first comes into view.

With position, orientation and methods of movement in place we can start analysing the charge situations.

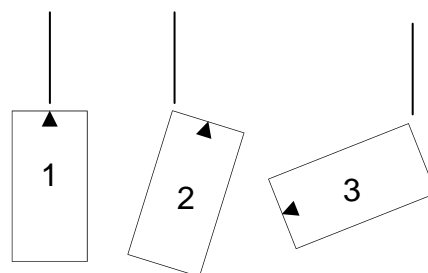


Diagram 3a: Chargers in Front zone

### Case 1: Chargers in Front zone

The first example (diagram 3a, unit 1) is as simple as they go. The charger should move straight ahead. Units 2 and 3 both should wheel until headed towards the defender's front. The result can be seen in diagram 3b. All three units should go to the defender's front and (luckily) this is what the current rules dictate. The closest point on the defender is on its front edge, so this receives the charge.

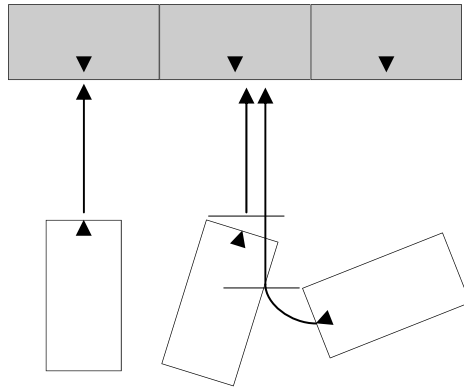


Diagram 3b: Movement in Front zone

### Case 2: Chargers in Front side zone

Diagram 4a shows 4 possible positions in the Front side zone. Unit 1 has both front corners equidistant from the enemy's front corner. This instance allows the player to choose either flank or front (which is all fair right, not?) Units 2 and 3 each have left front and right front corner closest. Unit 2 should get the flank and unit 3 should get the front, as this requires the simplest movement. Unit 4 is a variation on unit 3 and also should wheel to get to the defender's front.

Again we have a series of situations where the rules dictate the same movement as we find the rules *should*. (Units 1, 3, 4 to the front and unit 2 to the flank as shown in diagram 4b).

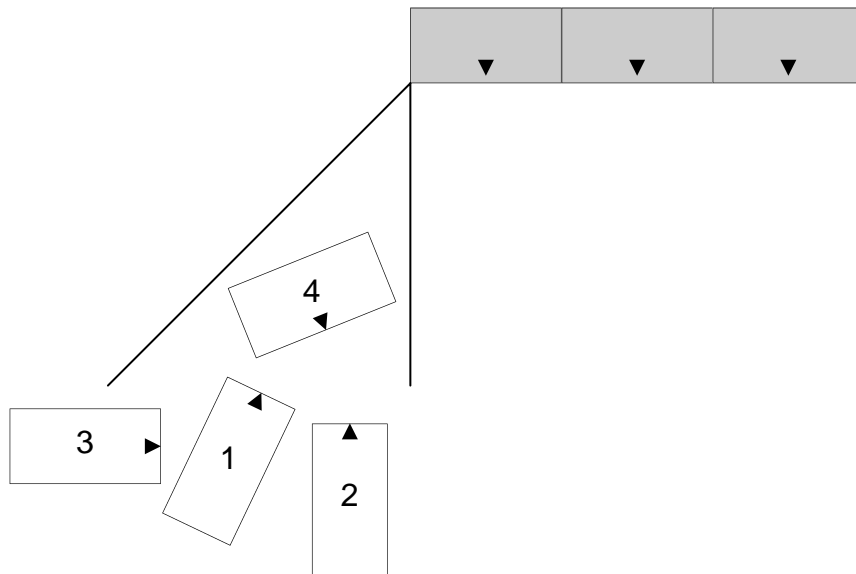


Diagram 4a: Chargers in Front side zone

### Case 3: Chargers in Front flank zone

We can do another analysis on chargers in the Front flank zone, but the situations are the same as in diagram 4a, except unit 4 would be rotated to have the opposite rear corner closest to the enemy. The result is also the same, i.e. units move as they *should*.

So the conclusion on this first part of the article is that current rules work perfectly, in the sense that they achieve what they should achieve. We must then find the cause of the

problems previously mentioned somewhere else, (they are not caused directly by dysfunctional charge rules).

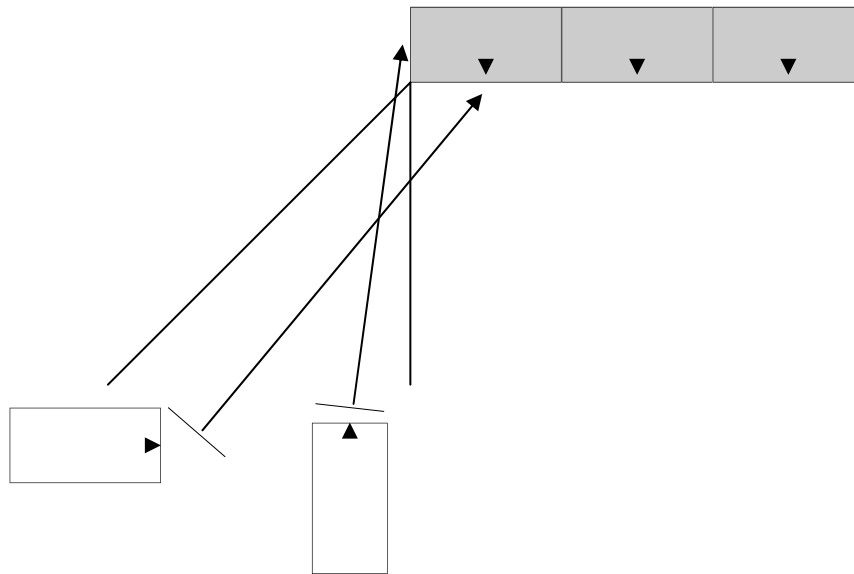


Diagram 4a: Movement in Front side zone

The first problem is some people feel that flank charges are too frequent or too easy to obtain, and yes – they are quite easy if you know how to place your units. However I'm inclined to say that it's something you must get along with as the rules work fine. And Warmaster is about manoeuvring correctly anyway. (We will come to a possible remedy a little further down the text, so hold on).

The second problem is that of the overlong flank charge. Cavalry and especially flyers seem to have an unfair advantage. If a flying unit charges from 100cms away it can get to flank by positioning as little as 1cm outside the defender's Front zone (or 1cm to the side combined with a 1 degree rotation). In these cases, where the flank edge of the defender is barely visible, the flank charge is perfectly legal (and mandatory), but not necessarily *fair* in my opinion.

### **Close and far charges**

So I propose a change to the charge rules. We should differentiate between two types of charges, the »close charge« and the »far charge«. But what is »far« in Warmaster then? Well all units have a 20cms Initiative zone (or zone of control), in which you can Initiative charge, evade, and get a -1 penalty to commands. So by design 20+ cms is »far« in Warmaster terminology.

We found earlier that the current rules work fine, at least when we are »up close« - so we need no change there.

When you're far from a unit, you often only see a little of one side and a lot of another. In the case of a flyer 1cm off the front, you would probably have say 5 degrees of your arc of view covered by the enemy's front and only ½ degree visible of the flank. I find logic dictates that you charge the side most visible to you, i.e. the »widest« in your field of vision.

This can be easily formulated with a bit of geometry, where we set 4 zones relative to the defending unit. These zones are defined by diagonals passing through the corners of the unit, see diagram 5.

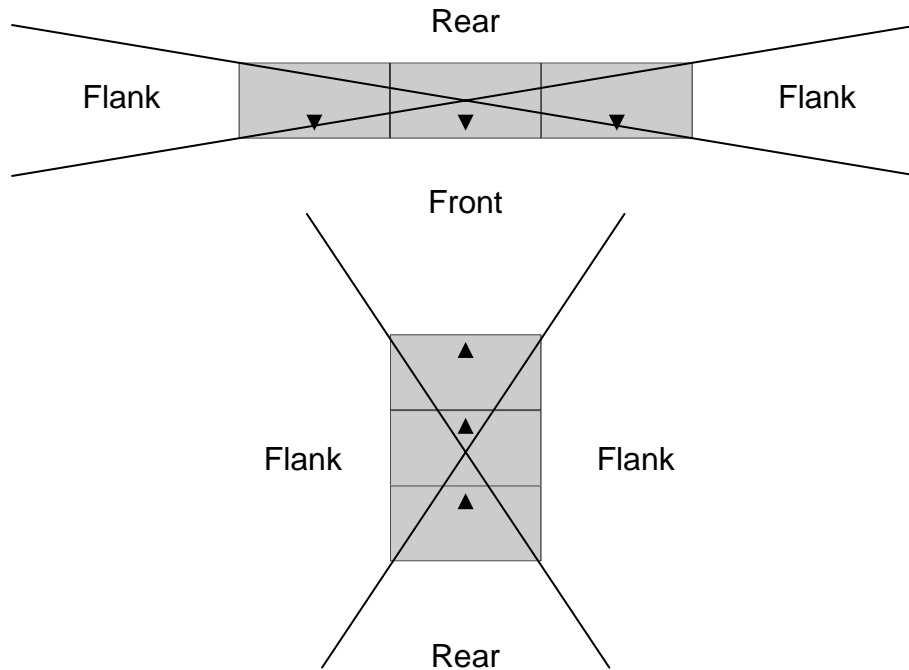


Diagram 5: Variable diagonal zones

So the rule I propose is something like this: »If a unit charges from more than 20cms away it must move into contact with the side of the enemy unit, in which zone it begins«.

What impact will this have on the game? Well first flank charges will become less frequent, except where the front is blocked by a second charging unit. (This is may be a fix for problem 1). It also fixes problem 2, the overlong flank charge.

It beckons two new possible problems, however. First it changes the flow of the game as units will have to »detour« to get a flank, either by moving within 20cms distance or by moving out into the flank zone. The second possible problem is derived here from, and is also related the original problem 3, which we will discuss shortly. Some people will question the rule »why should I resort to a detour to get what I want (the flank charge)?« In other words this new rule *may* just appear as a new design flaw to players.

### **Freedom has a cost**

The third and final problem to discuss in this article is that of the »backtrack to get a column charge«. The situation arises when a unit first moves away from the enemy to get in a position where you can not expand frontage and will charge in a column, e.g. infantry moves to a position 19cms from the enemy, and takes a second command to charge. It is again a case of »why should I resort to a detour to get what I want (the column charge)?«

I have come to this proposal to these problems: »If a unit can see two sides of an enemy it may choose which side to charge. If it charges a side which normally is prohibited, the unit loses bonus attacks for charging and cannot give/receive support in the first round of combat« and »If a unit wishes to charge in column formation, it may choose to do so, but the unit will lose bonus attacks for charging and cannot give/receive support in the first round of combat.«

The loss of charge bonuses seems fair as a unit makes use of particular movement, with less impetus or more time consuming. (A unit in column, would probably not have run as fast as a unit spreading out into a line).

These solutions do not prohibit people from doing the backtrack and detour, but they will allow the player to act freely at a cost.

Now I seem to have reached the end, so I'll just add that I'd value every bit of feedback from play testing of these rules proposals.

### **Conclusions in short**

- ✓ Current charge rules work great for charges from within 20cms distance
- ✓ Edge charged from more than 20cms, should be determined by diagonals
- ✓ Column charges may be done, with the loss of charge bonuses
- ✓ Edge charged may be determined by charger, but with loss of charge bonuses

## **Sidebar**

You see in the above article that some of my reasoning is based on the techniques used in Warhammer Fantasy Battle. I do not like the flank charge rules in Warhammer particularly, as I have seen too many awkward charges (both awkward looking and contra player logic), all based on Warhammer's 45 degree rule.

I would propose to the current Warhammer design team, that they adapt *either* current Warmaster flanking rules *or* the variable diagonals proposed in diagram 5 into Warhammer.

Both solutions are more logical and will, in my opinion, work better than the 45 degree rule.