

Crosshairs Deluxe

A game of WW1 aerial combat by Stephen Tavener

Introduction (by Stephen Tavener)

Crosshairs straddles the line between abstract strategy game and wargame. I have attempted to capture the essence of an aerial dogfight in a game with no random elements or hidden elements; so hang up your assumptions at the door, and go along for the ride. Combat is simple - if a plane is within line of sight of two enemy planes, it is shot down. A player is eliminated if they are reduced to one plane, and can therefore no longer shoot the enemy.

Components

- 1 game board
- 20 cloud tokens
- 6 planes per player
- 30 altitude discs per player
- 9 Achievement cards per player.

Two-Player Setup

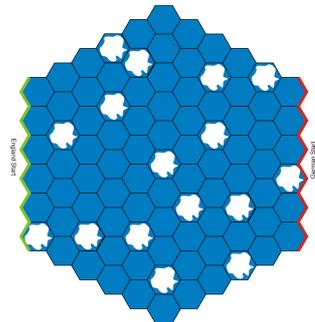
Players choose opposite sides of the board; these are their starting hexes (see *The First Few Turns*).

Take 6 planes of your colour. All planes start off the board.

Take 8 clouds each. Starting with the first player, take turns to place the clouds on the board. Do not make clouds bigger than two hexes.

Hint: for your first games, try to block all the rows and columns on the board. Long, clear lines of sight can be deadly to the unwary.

Sample starting position



Game Play

Basic concepts of movement

The Planes

Planes have two basic attributes:

- Height, which can range from 0 to 6 (represented by a stack of counters under the piece).
- Direction: planes must always face one side of their current hex. This is the direction they will move next step.

Legal moves

- Planes may not occupy the same space or move through each other, regardless of height.
- Clouds do not hinder movement, but do prevent combat.
- Once on the board, planes may not leave the playing area.

Movement Order

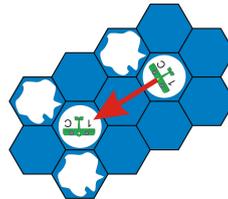
Once all planes have entered the board, a player **must** move all of their planes each turn. There are no restrictions on the order in which the planes move; however, **one plane must finish movement before another can start**.

Movement

Each turn, a plane **must** perform exactly one of the following actions:

(a) Climb

- (required) Increase the height of the plane by one (if it is already at height 6, it stays at height 6).
- (required) Move one space forwards
- (optional) rotate 60°



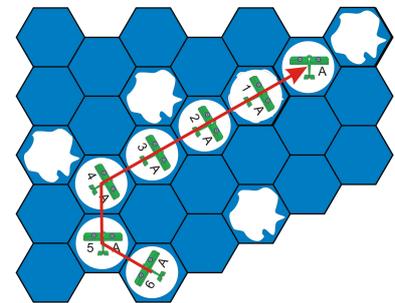
(b) Level Flight

- (required) Move two spaces forwards
- (optional) rotate 60°

(c) Dive

A diving plane may make a series of *manoeuvres*, losing height with each one. Each *manoeuvre* consists of one of the following:

- Power dive (turn without moving)
 - (required) Decrease the height of the plane by 2.
 - (optional) rotate 60°
- Swoop
 - (required) Decrease the height of the plane by one
 - (required) Move one space forwards
 - (optional) rotate 60°



Note: a plane may make any number of swoops and power dives in any order, so long as it loses height with every step.

(d) Crash

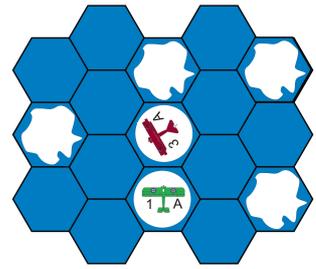
If a plane can neither move nor dive, it crashes into the ground and is removed from the game.

Note: this will only occur if the plane cannot move forwards and is at height 0 or 1, so that it cannot power dive. Reminder: planes cannot leave the playing area, and cannot move into a space occupied by another plane.

Combat

Line of Fire

- Planes can shoot directly forwards only.
- They are not limited by range.
- They may not shoot through other planes.
- They may not shoot into, through, or out of, clouds.



Green plane, to move, must crash.

Caught in the Crosshairs

A plane may be shot down if it is in the *line of fire* of two or more enemy planes.

Players may shoot:

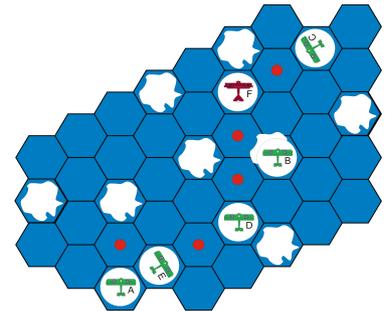
- at the start of their turn
- after each move; this includes individual manoeuvres within a dive sequence

Players may **not** shoot:

- during their opponent's turn
- between the move and rotation parts of a manoeuvre
- friendly planes

Notes:

- *height is not a factor when shooting*
- *shooting is optional (but recommended, except in very rare circumstances)*
- *if you shoot down a plane, check again immediately to see if any more planes can now be shot.*



Dots show hexes in in line of fire. Red F will be shot down by C+D. B is in a cloud, and cannot fire.

Game End

When a player is reduced to one plane; they are eliminated from the game. When there is only one player (or team) remaining, that player (team) wins.

The First Few Turns (Two-player)

All planes start off the board.

When you move a plane onto the board, place it in any of your starting hexes with a height of 0, facing in any direction. It cannot move again this turn.

- Turn 1: *The first player* moves 1 plane.
- Turn 2: *The second player* moves 2 planes
- Turn 3: *The first player* moves 3 planes
- Keep increasing the number of actions each turn until all planes move each turn.

Note that in the first few turns, it is not necessary to bring on all of your planes before you can move a plane again.

Strategy and Tactics

Height is power

Height gives you extra movement and attack options. If you have no more pressing moves, Climbing is almost always the correct move.

Try to exchange your low pieces for your opponent's high pieces.

Note that a plane's height shows how far it can move by Swooping, but don't forget it can always move a minimum of two spaces (Level Flight).

Use cloud cover effectively

Try to line up your planes along open lines on the board to maximise your attack options, while using the cloud cover to prevent your opponent from getting a second line on your pieces.

A piece in the clouds cannot attack, and is a great blocking opportunity – place a plane in front of an opponent in the clouds, and you will force them to lose two height (Power Dive).

Plan Ahead

You may have a great position this turn, but next turn each of your planes must move at least one space forwards. The final direction of your pieces will have a great effect on your options next turn.

In particular, do not leave two of your planes facing each other at a distance of 1 or 2, and do not face off the edge of the board.

Do not engage too early

The first exchanges of fire can be decisive. It is often worth circling the edge of the board to gain height before launching your attack.

Divide and conquer

You can often maximise your attacking options by splitting your planes into two groups, with the intention of catching the opponent in a pincer movement.

Control long sightlines

Facing long lines that are not blocked by clouds allow you to attack from a distance, with less chance of being captured in turn.

Multiplayer Rules

There are several options for multi-player games. The following additional rules apply regardless:

- **No friendly fire:** two players on the same team cannot shoot at each other.
- **Hostile fire:** if a plane is in the crosshairs of two enemy planes, it is shot down. This applies even if they are on different teams.
- **Complete turns:** each player must move all of their planes, in any order, before the next

player moves their planes.

- **Friends near:** unless otherwise stated, at the start of the game team members should start on adjacent sides of the board.
- **Enemies far:** unless otherwise stated, at the start of the game, enemy players should be as far apart as possible.
- **Clouds setup:** players take turns to place the clouds on the board before the game starts. Do not make clouds bigger than two hexes.

Game Types

Circle of Death

The number of planes per side depends on the number of players. With three players: 6, four players: 5, five or six players: 4.

A plane is shot down only if at least one of the attacking planes belongs to the player to the right. The first player to eliminate (reduce to 1 plane) the player to their left wins the game.

1 vs 2

One side (A) takes 5 planes; the other two players (B,C) take 3 planes each and play as a team. Players start equally spaced around the board. Turn order is as follows:

- A moves 1 plane.
- B and C move 1 plane each.
- A moves 3 planes.
- B and C move 2 planes each.

From this point, each player moves all of their planes each turn.

1 vs 3

One side (A) takes 5 planes; the other three players (B,C,D) take 2 planes each. Turn order is as follows:

- A moves 2 planes.
- B, C, and D each move 1 plane.
- A moves 4 planes.

From this point, each player moves all of their planes each turn.

2 vs 2

Each player takes 4 planes. Turn order is as follows:

- A and B (team 1) each move 1 plane.
- C and D (team 2) each move 2 planes.
- A and B (team 1) each move 3 planes.

From this point, each player moves all of their planes each turn.

Free-For-All

Each player starts with 6 planes; there are no alliances. When a plane is shot down, the active player takes the token – it counts as 1 point. Once a player is reduced to 1 plane, they are eliminated from the game; the active player takes the remaining plane as an additional victory point. their remaining plane is removed from the board immediately. When only one player remains, the player with the most points wins.

Other Variants

Handicap Rules

If one player is less experienced/weaker than the other, they may bring their planes onto the board with one or more additional height tokens.

Turbulence

A player entering a cloud immediately loses 1 height.

Concealed Fire

Players may shoot out of, but not into, clouds.

Aces

Once an active plane has shot down an enemy, it becomes an *Ace* – it can now perform the Immelmann manoeuvre: when performing a power dive, it may rotate either 60° or 180°.

Achievement Cards

Achievement cards are intended for use over a match (series of games).

In each game, the medal cards are laid out face-up, by type.

As soon as a player meets the conditions for a medal, they claim that medal and place it in front of them; they may not claim the same medal more than once per game.

When a player wins a game, they score 1 point plus the face value of any medals attained. The loser scores nothing.

The first player to score 10 points wins the match.

FAQ

Q. Can a plane shoot a plane which is at a different height?

A. Yes. In Crosshairs height is only used for manoeuvring. You'll find that's quite enough of an advantage.

Credits

Crosshairs is © Stephen Tavener, 2010-2020.

Thanks to Hank Panethiere for suggesting the name Crosshairs, otherwise you may have been playing 'Camel Fokkers' or 'Spad Fokkers' instead.

Thanks to my long-suffering play testers, especially John Bickell, Graeme Forbes, Clive Palmer, and Nigel Buckle.

Thanks to Nigel Buckle, John Bickell, Russ Williams and Clive Palmer for proofreading.