Routing

Every personnel unit in ASL has a Morale Level rating. This rating is a measure of how much punishment the unit can withstand before "breaking." When a unit fails a Morale Check (MC) and breaks, its will to survive overcomes its discipline: it ceases to be an effective combat unit and the player loses control of it.

A broken unit most commonly represents soldiers who have simply panicked, but other explanations are also possible. For example, the broken troops could just be "keeping their heads down" in the face of heavy incoming fire (the tendency of American soldiers to do this is the reason for their lower Morale Levels when compared to equivalent German and British squads). Or they could have stopped fighting in order to assist wounded squad members, or the soldier commanding the squad could have become a casualty, leading to some confusion until another soldier takes command of the squad, etc.

During the Rout Phase (RtPh) broken units may be forced to rout (run away) by the presence of enemy units, or in some cases they may choose to voluntarily rout. Many special rules come into play whenever broken units rout. These rules have proven to be difficult for beginning players to understand, so this article will attempt to explain exactly how the Rout Phase is played.

One thing to keep in mind, as a player, is that you have little control over your broken units. The Rout rules give you very few choices to make concerning your broken units, which is consistent with the idea that broken units are no longer responding to orders. Instead of telling you what you MAY do, the Rout rules usually tell you what your broken units MUST do.

I suspect that part of the problem in understanding the Rout rules is due to the sometimes nonsensical moves that they force your broken troops to make. But your imaginary soldiers have a much more limited view of the battlefield situation than you do as a player, and only two things concern them: moving away from the enemy, and getting into cover by moving into woods or a building. If you can put yourself into their shoes and try to see the battlefield from their perspective, the Rout rules will start to make more sense.

DESPERATION MORALE

When a unit breaks, it is always marked with a Desperation Morale (DM) counter. During the RtPh, only units that are marked with DM can rout. A DM marker does not by itself force a unit to rout, but a unit cannot move in the RtPh without one. (The only exception to this is an unbroken, unpinned leader stacked with a broken unit: that leader may choose to accompany the broken unit when it routs.)

This is why a broken unit with DM that is not currently in a woods or building hex will sometimes choose to keep the DM marker at the end of a Rally Phase instead of removing it: it accepts the +4 Rally penalty in order to continue to move towards cover in the next RtPh. Broken units in woods or buildings do not have this option; DM markers are always removed from them at the end of a Rally Phase unless they are adjacent to a Known Enemy Unit. This is an example of your lack of control over broken units... once they end a Rally Phase in cover, they will not move again unless enemy action forces them to.

Broken units without a DM marker can regain it in three ways:

- Whenever an enemy unit moves adjacent to a broken unit, the broken unit immediately regains a DM marker.
- Whenever a broken unit is hit by enough firepower to possibly cause a Normal Morale Check (NMC) – taking into account Terrain Effects Modifiers (TEM) and possible cowering – it immediately regains a DM marker (regardless of the actual result of that attack).
- Whenever a broken unit begins the RtPh in an Open Ground location in the normal range and Line of Sight (LOS) of a Good Order Known Enemy Unit that would be able to Interdict a unit routing through that location, it immediately regains a DM marker.

The application of Desperation Morale means that recovering from breaking is usually a two-step process: First, the DM needs to be removed so that the unit, while still broken, is no longer running from the enemy and no longer has the +4 DRM penalty to Rally rolls. Then the non-DM broken unit can be rallied. It is possible to do this in a single step and rally a unit still under DM, but this usually requires a good rallying leader, a broken unit with a high broken-side morale, and some luck.

THE ROUT PHASE

The ATTACKER conducts all of his routs first, one unit at a time. When the ATTACKER has completed all of his routs, the DEFENDER then conducts all of his routs, one unit at a time.

Units that are forced to rout, but have no legal rout path, are eliminated for failure to rout.

There is a problem with the wording of the rout rules in both the ASLSK #1 and ASLSK #2 rulebooks. These rules imply that a unit that is eliminated for failure to rout is removed at the END of the RtPh. This is probably an error in the rules, since when using the full ASL rules such units are eliminated immediately. If the ATTACKER has a broken unit that must be eliminated for failure to rout, leaving it in place until the end of the RtPh could, in rare instances, cause it to block the rout paths of broken defending units, causing them to be eliminated as well.

This will probably be fixed at some point, either in an official errata or in a future edition of an ASLSK rulebook. If both players agree, however, you could use the ASL rule and eliminate units as soon as you determine that they must rout but have no legal rout path.

Here then is a detailed description of how routing works, presented in a question & answer format. Examples are given to help you see the rules in action. You will need boards y and z, one German squad counter, and three American squad counters to set up the Examples.

Who May Rout?

Any broken unit currently marked with a DM counter may rout. ==Routing is always done one unit at a time, even if the broken units were stacked at the beginning of the RtPh.==

==However, an unbroken, unpinned leader that is stacked with a broken unit that is marked with a DM==

marker may accompany that unit when it routs. This is the only instance in which two units may rout together, and it is also the only instance in which a unit (the leader) may rout without being broken and under DM.

Who MUST Rout?

A broken unit is forced to rout in two situations:

- If it is adjacent to an unbroken Known Enemy Unit.
- If it is in an Open Ground location in the normal range and LOS of a Good Order Known Enemy Unit that would be able to Interdict a unit routing through that location.

Examples of units that CANNOT force a non-adjacent broken unit in Open Ground to rout include leaders without a SW, CX units, pinned units, units in Melee, and any unit whose LOS to the Open Ground location passes through any Hindrance. In ASLSK #2, Guns that would have to change CA to fire at that location, or that are more than 16 hexes away, also cannot force a broken unit to rout.

However, all of the units mentioned above WILL force a broken unit to rout if they are adjacent to it.

How Far Can I Rout (And What Can I Take With Me)?

All routing units have 6 MF except for wounded leaders, who have 3 MF. These movement values can never be increased.

When routing, MMCs must abandon any SW whose PP exceeds 3, and may carry only 3 PP total, abandoning any excess. Routing leaders may only carry 1 PP, and may not assist a routing MMC in carrying anything. In other words, routing troops will abandon anything that would slow them down, but will otherwise carry as much as possible... even if you would prefer them to leave it behind so an unbroken unit could pick it up!

Where Do Routing Units Go?

Units that rout must leave their current hex and move to the nearest (in MF) building or woods hex that is a legal rout destination. If there is more than one hex that is a legal rout destination, and they are all the same distance away, the routing player may choose which one he will use as his rout destination.

What Is A Legal Rout Destination?

A woods or building hex is a legal rout destination if it can be reached by the routing unit in the current RtPh. For most routing units, this means the destination hex must be one that can be reached using no more than 6 MF, but for wounded leaders a destination hex can be no more than 3 MF away.

There are a number of conditions that can prevent a woods or building hex from being a legal rout destination:

1. A routing unit will NEVER move closer to a Known Enemy Unit, even if that Known Enemy Unit is broken. In addition, once a routing unit is aware of a Known Enemy Unit, it remains aware of it throughout the RtPh, even if its rout path takes it out of the LOS of the Known Enemy Unit. Any potential rout destination hex that would require the routing unit to move closer to a Known Enemy Unit at any point along the rout path is not legal and must be ignored.

EXAMPLE #1:

Place a broken German squad in yBB8
Place American squads in yZ5 and yCC8

The potential rout destinations here are yZ7, yZ8, yZ9, and yAA10, all 3 MF away. But yZ7 and yZ8 are not legal rout destinations, because they cannot be reached without moving closer to the Known Enemy Unit in yZ5. Notice that yAA9-yZ8 is not legal, even though yZ8 itself is no closer to the Known Enemy Unit than the broken unit's starting hex, because in moving from yAA9 to yZ8 you would be moving closer to the Known Enemy Unit (from 4 hexes away to 3 hexes away). Even if no LOS existed between yAA9 and yZ5 the routing unit would still "remember" the Known Enemy Unit in yZ5 from seeing it from yBB8 and would not be allowed to move closer to it by entering yZ8.

The German player must select either yZ9 or yAA10 as his rout destination.

2. A routing unit may not move adjacent to a Known Enemy Unit.

<mark>The only exception to this is the very rare situation in which a routing unit is leaving a hex that also contains a Known Enemy Unit, in which case it must move adjacent to the Known Enemy Unit in order to be able to move at all (that is, in moving adjacent to the Known Enemy Unit, it is actually moving AWAY from it by leaving its hex).</mark>
In all other cases, any potential rout destination hex that would require the routing unit to move adjacent to a Known Enemy Unit is not legal and must be ignored.

EXAMPLE #2:
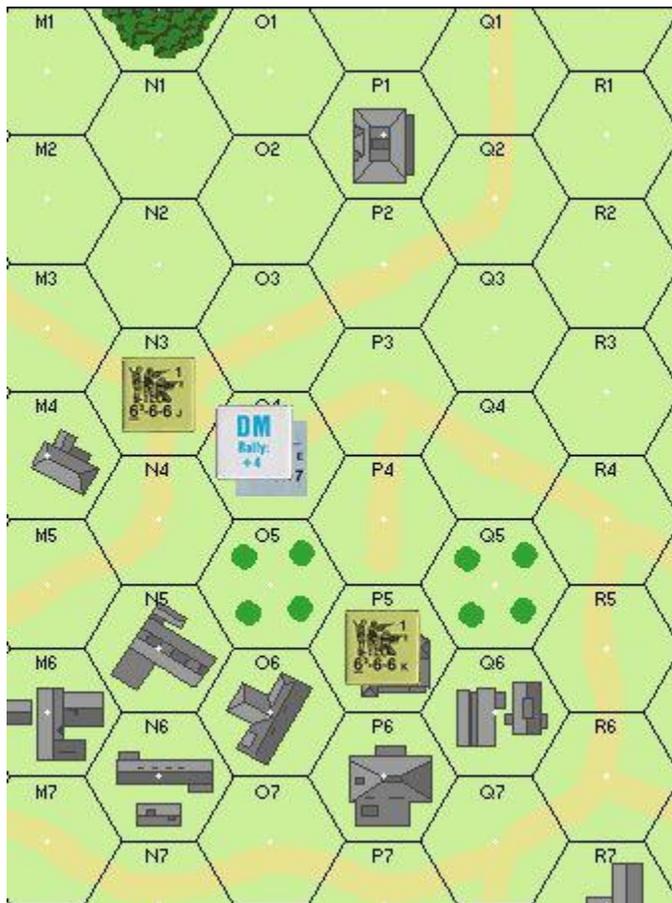
Place a broken German squad in yO4
Place American squads in yN3 and yP5

The German squad cannot rout towards the Known Enemy Unit in yP5, and it cannot rout to yN5 because it is not allowed to move adjacent to the Known Enemy Unit in yN3 by entering yN4. The only legal rout destination for the German squad is yP1.

3. <mark>A building/woods hex may be ignored as a rout destination, at the discretion of the routing player, if it is no further from a Known Enemy Unit than the broken unit's current hex.</mark>

EXAMPLE #3:
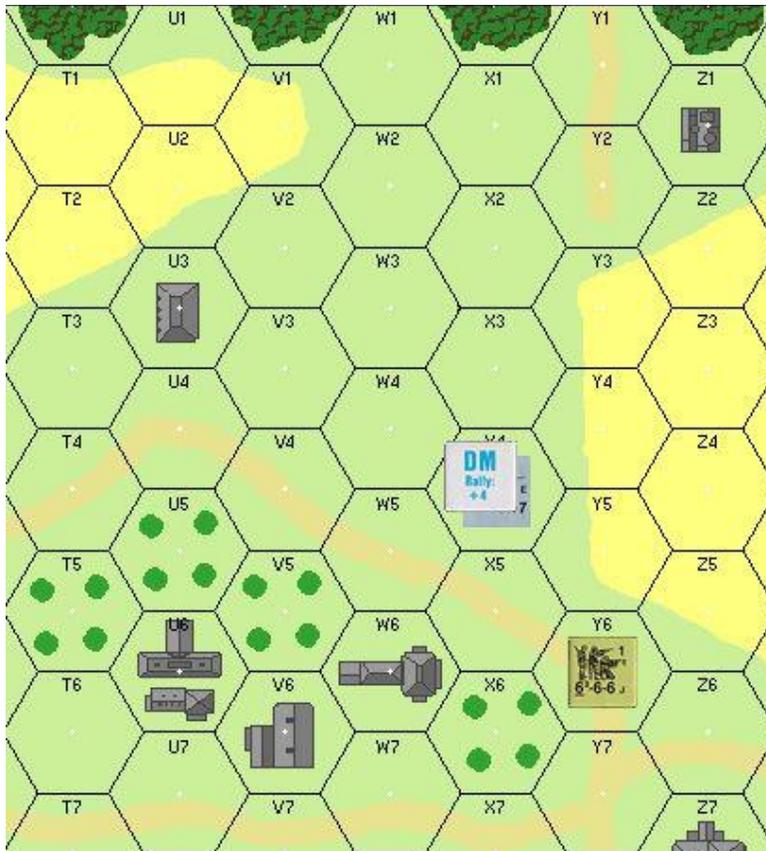
Place a broken German squad in yX4
Place an American squad in yY6

The nearest woods or building is yW6, which can be reached via yW5-yW6 for 3 MF. But yW6 is two hexes away from the American squad, and the broken unit's current hex is also two hexes away from the American squad. The German player can choose to ignore yW6 and select a different rout destination, because yW6 is no further from the Americans than his current hex.

In this situation, the German player may select yW6 as his rout destination, or he may ignore it and select either yU3,

yU6, or yV6 as his rout destination, which are all 4 MF away.

4. And finally, if a woods or building hex cannot be entered because of **stacking limits**, it cannot be selected as a rout destination.

What If I Don't Have A Legal Rout Destination?

If there are no woods or building hexes within 6 MF (3 MF for a wounded leader) of a routing unit, or if none of the woods and buildings within range are legal rout destinations due to the reasons listed in the previous section, then the routing unit does not have a rout destination.

A routing unit that does not have a rout destination can rout to any hex it wishes, as long as it obeys all of the other routing rules (it cannot move towards a Known Enemy Unit, it cannot move adjacent to a Known Enemy Unit, etc.). It does not have to move towards a distant woods/building hex, nor does it have to use all of its available MF.

EXAMPLE #4:
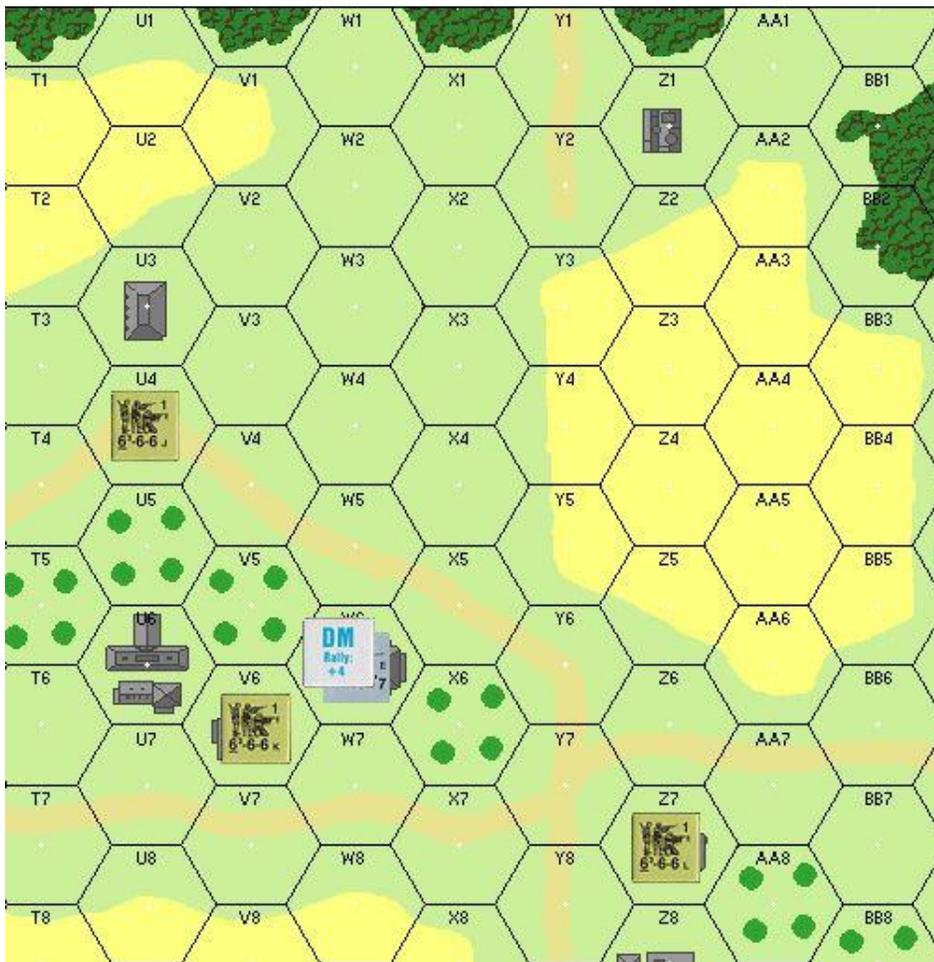
Place a broken German squad in yW6
Place American squads in yU4, yV6, and yZ7

There are no possible rout destinations within 6 MF of the broken German unit. The closest woods/building hexes that it could reach are yX0 and yZ1, both 7 MF away.

Because it does not have a rout destination, the broken unit has quite a lot of freedom as to where it can rout. Initially, it can only rout to yX5, as any other move is illegal (moving towards or adjacent to a Known Enemy Unit). It could then end its rout in yX5, or continue on to either yX4 or yY5. From these two hexes there is a large section of the map that it could legally rout to, and it could end its rout at any point it wishes.

What If I Discover That I Cannot Reach My Rout Destination?

If a routing unit has a legal rout destination, it MUST move to that destination hex in that RtPh. The only time this is not true is when the routing unit is using Low Crawl (which will be explained in detail later).

However, a routing unit will occasionally discover during its rout that it can no longer legally continue to move towards its rout destination. When this occurs, a new rout destination must be immediately selected, based on the unused MF that the routing unit has remaining. The routing unit must then rout to this new rout destination.

If a routing unit discovers that it cannot legally reach its rout destination, and it has no other legal rout destination, it then may continue its rout without a rout destination, as described in the previous section.

EXAMPLE #5:

Place a broken German squad in yR7 Place American squads in yO6 and yR6

The German squad must rout to yP6. Assume that it will take the shortest rout path, which is yQ8-yP7-yP6.

Upon entering yP7, the routing unit will suddenly see the American squad in yO6, which immediately becomes a Known Enemy Unit. This new Known Enemy Unit will now prevent the routing unit from entering yP6, because you cannot rout towards a Known Enemy Unit.

A new rout destination must immediately be selected, and the building in yO10 is now the nearest woods/building hex. But the routing unit has already used 2 MF to reach yP7, so it only has 4 MF remaining. Routing to yO10 requires 4.5 MF (yP8-yP9-yO10), so the routing unit does not have enough MF remaining to reach this potential rout destination in this RtPh.

Because no woods or building can now be reached in this RtPh, the broken squad can use its remaining MF to rout to any hex that does not violate the basic Rout rules. One good option would be yP8-yO9 to get next to building yO10, so that you could rout into yO10 in the next Rout Phase.

What Is Interdiction?

Panicked troops in a reckless, disorganized retreat are highly vulnerable to even sporadic fire from anyone who happens to see them running across a field. ASL calls this situation Interdiction. Whenever a routing unit enters an Open Ground hex that is in the LOS and normal range of an enemy unit that is not broken, pinned, CX, or in Melee, it may suffer Interdiction.

In the previous Example, the routing unit would be interdicted in yQ8 by the unit in yR6, and again in yP7, which is visible to both enemy units.

A routing unit that is interdicted must make a NMC. If it fails this NMC it suffers Casualty Reduction, but any remaining HS may continue to rout. A routing leader wounded by a failed Interdiction NMC may continue to rout if he has not yet spent 3 MF. If the interdicted unit is pinned, it must immediately end its rout in that hex. A routing unit can undergo only one Interdiction NMC per Open Ground hex entered, regardless of how many enemy units might have a LOS to, and be in range of, that Open Ground hex.

An interdicting unit can use either its inherent FP and range, or the FP and range of any SW it possesses, so a MMC with a MG will be able to Interdict routing units at a much greater range than a MMC without a MG.

Units that wish to Interdict must be able to fire upon that Open Ground hex with at least 1 FP and with no Hindrance modifiers. Leaders without a SW, or a single leader with a MG, cannot Interdict. Weapons that fire using the To Hit process can also be used to Interdict, out to their normal range or 16 hexes, whichever is less, as long as they do not have to change their CA in order to aim at the Open Ground hex. There is no limit to the number of Interdictions a single unit can make.

Although Interdiction is technically shooting, since it is based on range and FP, it does not count as an actual shot. No IFT or To Hit rolls are made, and no Residual FP is left in the Interdiction hex. Units can Interdict even if they have exhausted all of their normal firing opportunities, and they suffer no penalty for interdicting (that is, there is no chance of a weapon breaking down, etc.).

This is a key point for the routing player to consider! Allowing your routing unit to be interdicted is essentially giving your opponent a FREE shot: he gets a guaranteed NMC result at absolutely no risk to himself.

The way to avoid being interdicted is to use Low Crawl.

What Is Low Crawl?

Instead of simply running away and leaving itself vulnerable to Interdiction, a routing unit can instead choose to use Low Crawl. When Low Crawl is used, the routing troops are laying flat on the ground and slowly crawling away from the enemy.

Low Crawl is a rout of one hex that requires all of the routing unit's MF, regardless of the terrain in the hex entered. A routing unit that uses Low Crawl cannot be interdicted.

Low Crawl follows the same rules as a normal rout: you must select a legal rout destination, if possible, and move towards it if you have one; and you cannot move towards or adjacent to a Known Enemy Unit.

Although Low Crawl is commonly used to avoid Interdiction, it can also be used even when there is no possibility of Interdiction. Low Crawl is an option available to every routing unit except one that is routing out of an enemy-occupied hex.

When Should I Use Low Crawl?

Whether or not to use Low Crawl is a judgment call that can only be made in the context of the overall situation in the game.

Low Crawl is a completely safe rout, but it will often leave your broken unit in a highly vulnerable position. Using a normal rout and risking Interdiction can easily turn out badly, but it can also possibly get your broken unit away from the enemy, which makes an elimination for failure to rout less likely, and a successful rally in the future more likely.

What Is Elimination For Failure To Rout?

Whenever a broken unit is forced to rout, but has no legal rout path at all, even with Low Crawl, the broken unit is automatically eliminated for failure to rout.

If a routing unit ends its rout adjacent to an unbroken Known Enemy Unit, it is also automatically eliminated for failure to rout.

EXAMPLE #6:
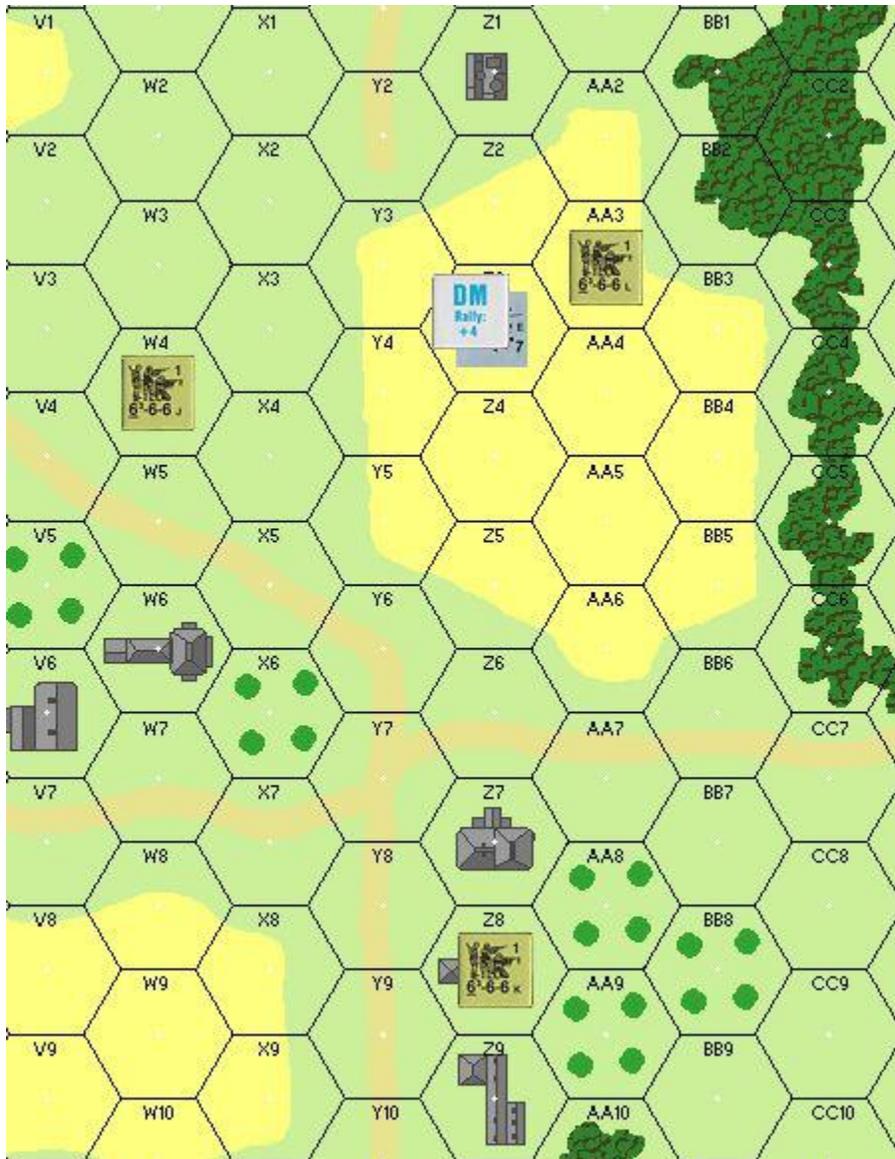
Place a broken German squad in yZ3
Place American squads in yW4, yZ8, and yAA3

The only legal rout destination for the German squad is yZ7, exactly 6 MF away. But if the squad routs to yZ7, it will end its rout adjacent to the previously unknown American squad in yZ8 and be eliminated for failure to rout, because it has no MF remaining which could be used to rout away. The only way to keep the broken squad alive is to use Low Crawl to rout to yZ4.

Now look at the same situation, but put the squad in yZ8 into yZ7 instead. The broken unit cannot rout at all, because any move it makes will either be towards or adjacent to a Known Enemy Unit. The broken unit is thus eliminated for failure to rout... it has no place to go.

What Happens If I Rout Adjacent To A Previously Unknown Enemy Unit?

A routing unit CAN move adjacent to an enemy unit, if that enemy unit was unknown to it. When this occurs, the routing unit must immediately rout away from this new Known Enemy Unit or be eliminated for failure to rout. This will almost always involve selecting a new rout destination.

This highlights some of the difficulty encountered in learning the Rout rules: you're told repeatedly that you cannot ever move adjacent to an enemy unit... and then you're suddenly told that you can! It all depends upon whether it is a Known Enemy Unit or not. If your routing troops don't realize that the enemy unit is there, they will run right up to it... and then immediately turn and run in some other direction.

EXAMPLE #7:
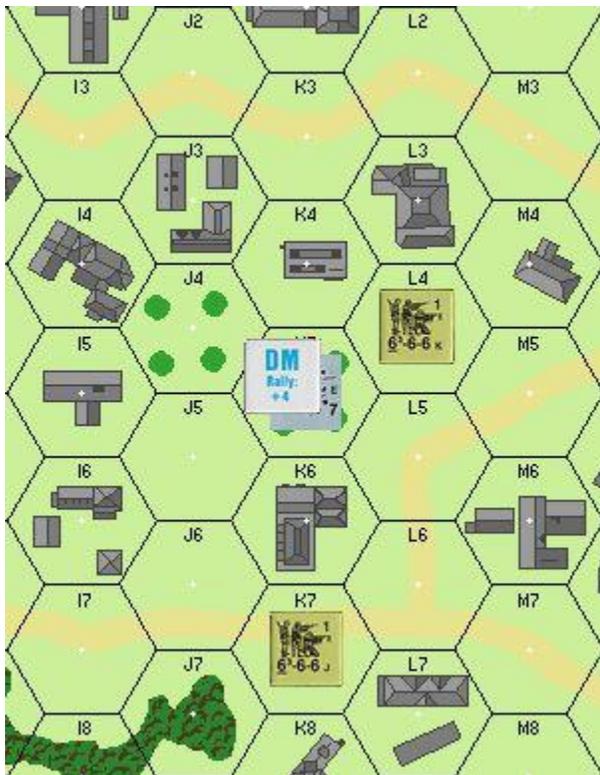
Place a broken German squad in yK5
Place American squads in yK7 and yL4

The only legal rout destination for the Germans is yK6. But as soon as the routing unit enters yK6, it finds a (now) Known Enemy Unit adjacent to it in yK7, so it must rout away. From yK6 it must choose either yI5 or yI6 as its new rout destination, and rout there. It will be interdicted in yJ5 by the enemy unit in yK7.

This illustrates the frustration you can feel during a RtPh: as a player with a full view of the map, you would like to simply rout to yI4 via yJ4 with no Interdiction because of the orchard. But the Rout rules won't allow you to do this. Your panicked troops see yK6 as being much closer than yI4, so that's where they go... only to discover their error too late.

This is a situation in which Low Crawl is useless. If the broken unit Low Crawls into yK6, it will end its rout there and be eliminated for failure to rout; and once it routs into yK6 normally, it can no longer use Low Crawl, so it must suffer Interdiction as it runs away from yK6 through yJ5.

Must A Routing Unit Always Take The Shortest Path To Its Rout Destination?

No. As long as a routing unit reaches its rout destination, it is not required to use the shortest path.

EXAMPLE #8:
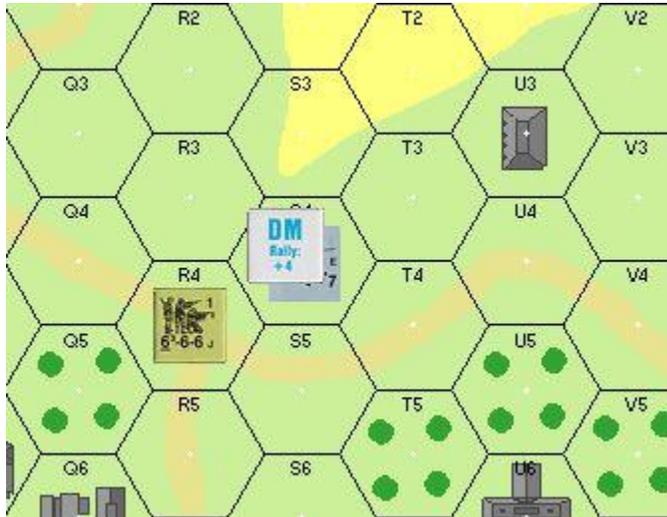
Place a broken German squad in yS4
Place an American squad in yR4

The routing unit's rout destination is yU3, which is 3 MF away. But if it routs directly to yU3 it will be interdicted in yT3. To avoid this, it can choose to rout to yS3-yT2-yU3 for 5 MF, avoiding Interdiction because the grain fields are not Open Ground, while still having enough MF to reach its rout destination.

If it uses Low Crawl, it must move to yT3. A Low Crawl must always be made towards the unit's rout destination (if there is one), so a Low Crawl to yS3 is illegal because it does not bring the routing unit closer to its rout destination.

Note that if the broken unit here was a wounded leader, the only options would be to either run directly to the building (suffering Interdiction) or use Low Crawl. A wounded leader only has 3 MF, which is not enough to allow him to run through the grain fields to reach the building.

Do I Have To Stop My Rout When I Enter My Rout Destination?

No. Once a routing unit enters its rout destination, it may continue to rout, but only to adjacent woods/building hexes.

In other words, once your broken troops successfully reach cover during a RtPh, they will not voluntarily move back out into the open... but they can continue to rout through other woods and building hexes.

EXAMPLE #9:
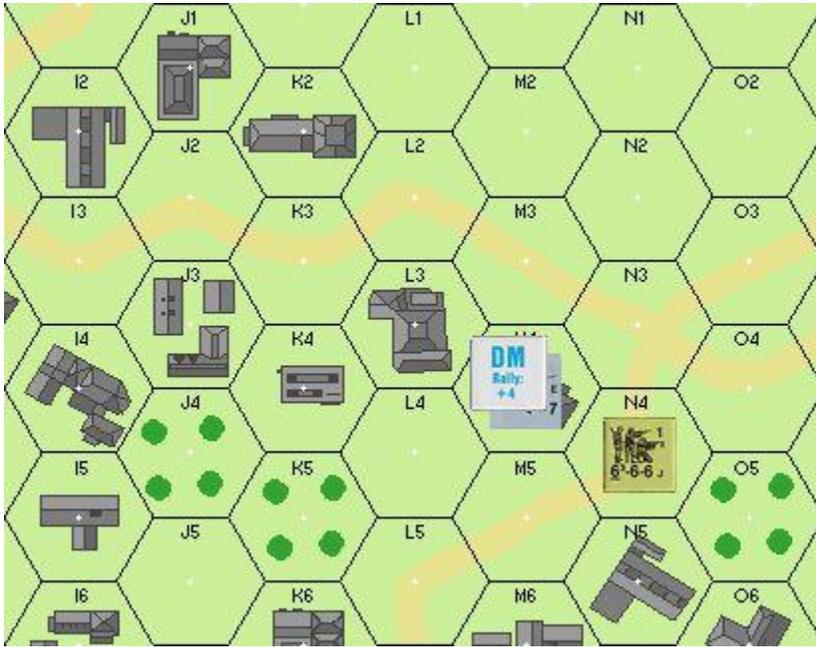
Place a broken German squad in yM4
Place an American squad in yN4

The routing unit's rout destination is yL3, which it enters for 2 MF. Because it still has MF remaining, it may continue to rout to yK4 and even yJ3. The routing unit can choose to end its rout in any of these three hexes.

The routing unit CANNOT rout to yL3 and then continue to rout to yK2, even though it has enough MF to reach it, because it would have to enter a non-woods/building hex.

When a Unit in a Multi-Hex Building Routs, may it Leave that Building?
Yes. A broken unit in a multi-hex building may ignore all other hexes of that building when choosing a rout destination.

The idea here is that, if one part of a building is no longer safe for the broken squad, running into an adjoining room and slamming the door shut is unlikely to make them much safer. They would be much more likely to abandon that building altogether. The Rout rules give them that option, although they are not required to leave the multi-hex building.

EXAMPLE #10:

Place a broken German squad in zC7
Place American squads in zB7 and zE9

Normally, the broken squad's rout destination would have to be zD6 which is 2 MF away. And once the routing squad enters zD6 it would have to stop, because there are no other adjacent woods/building hexes that it could continue to rout to.

But, because zD6 is part of the multi-hex building that the routing unit occupies at the start of the RtPh, the routing unit has the option to ignore zD6 and choose another rout destination. In this case, that would be zD4 or zE5, both 4 MF away.

Assume that zE5 is selected as the rout destination. If the broken unit routs directly to it via zC6-zD5-zE5, it will be interdicted twice. But if it spends 5 MF to rout via zD6-zE6-zE5 it reaches its rout destination safely with no Interdiction. The routing unit is allowed to leave zD6 and enter a non-woods/building hex in this instance, because its rout destination (zE5) is outside of the building it started the RtPh in.

When I Rout, Do I Have To Leave My Starting Hex?
Yes. You cannot rout "in place" – if you choose to rout, or if you are forced to rout, you must leave your hex and go somewhere else.

When Can I Rout From An Enemy-Occupied Hex?
Broken units under a Melee counter may not rout, so the only time you can rout from an enemy-occupied hex is when the hex contains only broken units from both sides. A Melee condition exists as

long as there is at least one unbroken unit, from either side, in the hex.

SUMMARY

I used to think that the Rout rules were pretty straightforward. Sure, lots of weird things can happen in the Rout Phase... but really, how hard could it be to write a simple explanation of how the rules work?

Heh.

This article was much more difficult to write than I ever imagined! To cover all of the different things that can occur in the Rout Phase, and to explain them in a way that might actually make sense to people, was a challenge.

Please let me know if you spot any errors, or if you have any suggestions as to how this article might be improved and made more useful. I will update the article as necessary.

FULL-THROTTLE ASL

Those of you who are not interested in full ASL can skip this last section. 🙂

The Rout rules in the Starter Kits and the Rout rules in full ASL are almost identical. As an aid for ASLSK players who are planning to move up to full ASL, and to make this article more useful to ASL players (who can have just as much trouble understanding the Rout rules as ASLSK players), I will briefly discuss what changes occur in routing when you play with the full ASL rulebook.

The biggest single difference is that ASL includes surrender rules: if a broken unit is adjacent to a Known, Good Order, armed enemy infantry/cavalry unit, and is unable to rout away from it without being interdicted, and without using Low Crawl to avoid that Interdiction, that unit will surrender instead of routing. Under the ASLSK rules, such units will always rout.

What this means is that, if the only path away from an adjacent unit is an Open Ground hex that can be interdicted, the broken unit will throw down their weapons and surrender rather than be gunned down when they run away across the open field. I think the reasoning behind this is that Interdiction at point blank range is going to be difficult to survive, and Low Crawl cannot protect you when the enemy is right next to you... you must have some distance between yourself and the enemy before Low Crawl can make you harder to hit.

Other things that change under the full ASL rules include:

- DM is placed on broken units that are attacked by CC/WP.
- Concealed Units are not Known Enemy Units, even if you have a LOS to them.
- Under certain conditions, units may voluntarily break at the start of the RtPh in order to be able to rout in that RtPh.

- A routing unit is not always required to move to its rout destination. For example, if the only way to reach its rout destination in 6 MF or less would require moving through a known minefield hex, or a hex being fired upon by off-board artillery, the routing unit is allowed to take an alternate, safer path, even if that means it will not reach its rout destination in the current RtPh. Your troops might be panicked, but they are not suicidal!
- As long as a routing unit follows the shortest path to its rout destination, it may use shellholes, entrenchments, and pillboxes to avoid Interdiction... even if doing so means that it cannot reach its rout destination in the current RtPh.
- A rubbled building is no longer a building.
- There is no absolute stacking limit in full ASL, so a woods/building hex cannot be ignored as a rout location simply because of the number of units already in it. But as the number of occupying units increases past a certain point, the MF cost to enter that hex also increases... and if the MF cost increases too much, that could make the hex ineligible to be a rout destination.

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