

Jeff Stahler's ASL Tutorial Lesson 1

LESSON 1: The Basic Infantry System

We start with that familiar first scenario from SQUAD LEADER, "The Guards Counterattack", as updated into ASL Scenario A in The GENERAL¹. It is short, straightforward, and fun. It is the first scenario that I played as a playtester for SL, and the first scenario that I played using the new ASL rules. It is, in fact, the first scenario that most of us played way back when, and I think that much of SL's popularity arose from this simple scenario getting people hooked on the tactical system. It uses only half of Board 1, having only four types of terrain with which to be concerned: open ground, roads, woods and buildings. It introduces the basic infantry units: squads, leaders and machineguns (although half-squads may appear during play as a result of casualties).

I am purposely keeping this first lesson as easy as possible by temporarily ignoring some of the complexities introduced in ASL, but it remains the biggest chunk of rule to digest at one sitting. Even if you are a SQUAD LEADER expert, I suggest that you first read all the rules sections listed below. Much is familiar, but much has changed. Then play the scenario, read the rules sections again (the rules will now make more sense, and you may note a few things that you did wrong the first time), switch sides, and play the scenario one more time. The it is time to move on. I also strongly recommend that you really do skip the rules sections not mentioned or that I ask you to pass over; there is plenty to learn in Lesson 1 without being overwhelmed.

Start with the following rules:

Introduction

See what Don Greenwood has to say about his creation.

A.1-A.18

These are general rules about the game with a few new concepts and a few old ones. Skip A.6, which refers to Depressions not found on Board 1; A.14, which is not needed until vehicles are introduced much further down the road; A.16 and A.18, which only apply to rules which won't be introduced until later. SQUAD LEADER players will note that A.7, A.8, A.9, A.11 and A.15 introduce new terms and concepts.

A1.1-1.5

Meet the troops. Squads and leaders are familiar from SQUAD LEADER. Heroes were introduced in COD; but the scouts are gone. Half-squads first came with GI. Skip 1.123 since crews won't make their debut for a while, and skip 1.31-.32 to keep things simple in this first lesson.

A2.1-2.3; A2.8-2.9

This section introduces you to the mapboard. Skip the sections relating to mapboard entry, exit and overlays - none of which apply to Scenario A. Rule A2.8 brings an important ASL concept. And regarding 2.9, to keep things simple squads may not be deployed in Lesson 1.

A3.

The Basic Sequence of Play is virtually the same as that in SQUAD LEADER, but pay attention to the abbreviations and to the Movement and Defensive Fire phases. These reflect the biggest changes from the original SL system. No longer is there

any tracking of moving units. Infantry is fired upon as it moves, the same as vehicles always were.

A4.1-4.13

Infantry movement is about the same as in SQUAD LEADER. I am skipping many of the sections that add detail to the infantry movement system. We will experience them in the next lesson.

A4.14

Enemy units still block movement. Ignore the exceptions for now.

A4.2

The "Mechanics of Movement" are the same as in SQUAD LEADER, but spelled out more precisely here.

A4.4-4.44

Portage and possession of support weapons. This is a refinement of the rules introduced in GI.

A4.6-4.61

The movement modifiers to Defensive Fire replace the old -2 DRM for moving in open ground. Assault Movement was first introduced in GI.

A4.7

Advance Phase. Note that units no longer can advance into a building and then upstairs in one bound. Skip A4.71 since there is no armor in sight yet, and A4.72 because Board 1 has no Difficult Terrain.

A5.1-5.11; A5.4-5.5

Stacking limits are virtually the same as in SQUAD LEADER. Overstacking is now allowed, however, but with a penalty imposed.

A6.1-6.11; A6.2; A6.6

The Line of Sight (LOS) rules are the same as in the original system. For this first lesson, all buildings will be treated as having a ground level only, so you can ignore the references to Blind Hexes. Board 1 has no half-level obstacles, depressions, or any terrain that provides for LOS Hindrance.

A7.1-7.33

Fire attacks should be familiar to any who have played SQUAD LEADER. Skip A7.211 and 7.307-.309 since there are no vehicles introduced yet. To keep things relatively simple, I am skipping many of the fire attack options here and in the next rules section. Don't worry; we will get to them in Lesson 2.

Note that Opportunity Fire and Pin Task Checks are ASL innovations.

A7.35-7.353

Support weapon usage is slightly different from what you may be used to.

A7.4

Target determination is the same as in SQUAD LEADER.

A7.5; A7.52-7.531; A7.55

These rules all concern Fire Groups.

A7.6

TEM and LOS Hindrances. TEM is the same as in SL, but LOS Hindrance is a new concept that will be important in future lessons; since it figures prominently and is an adjunct to TEM, you may as well assimilate it now.

A7.8-7.81; A7.83-7.831

"Pinning" was introduced with COI. This is expanded upon

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now with the possibility of a Pin Task Check (PTC) on the IFT.

A8.1-8.14

The way we handle First Fire is the most important single major change in ASL. This section will have the biggest effect on play of all the deviations from SL.

A8.2-8.221; A8.23; A8.26

Residual Fire is brand new with ASL.

A8.3-8.31; A8.4-8.41

Subsequent First Fire, Final Protective Fire, and Final Fire complete the new First Fire rules. This is undoubtedly the most complex, innovative, and important section in Lesson 1. It is worth a second reading, and careful examination of the examples.

A9.1-9.2

Machineguns have multiple Rates of Fire (ROF), which replaces the old Penetration rules from SL. Machineguns seem to keep on firing forever in ASL.

A9.3

Sustained Fire goes hand-in-hand with the First Fire rules found in A8. This is very different from "Sustained Fire" in COI and GI.

A9.7-9.74

Support weapons break down, but you can fix them. Nothing lasts forever.

A10.1-10.72

Morale, Rout, Rally, and Leadership. This is another involved but critical section of rules. Skip 10.533 until Concealment is introduced later. Note changes to the rout restrictions and the new ways to become DM. There are a couple of new concepts here, including interdiction, low crawl, and a terrain bonus for Rally attempts.

A11.1-11.16

This introduces the basic infantry Close Combat procedures. More details will be added later.

A17.

A leader who is Casualty Reduced becomes wounded instead of eliminated. This concept was introduced with COD.

A21.1-21.12

Use this section should you capture an enemy MG in Scenario A.

A26.1-26.13; A26.4

Hex and building control Victory Conditions are what you need to do to win the scenario. Note that, if you don't win, your opponent does.

You have now read almost enough to play Scenario A. There are only a few remaining rules in Chapter B that apply to Board 1. These are essentially the same as the corresponding terrain rules in the first SQUAD LEADER:

B.1; B.2; B.7

These are some general terrain rules you should be familiar with.

B1.1-1.11; B1.2-1.3

Open Ground. Pay attention to those three lines dealing with FFMO.

B3.1-3.4

Roads. The road bonus introduced in COI is retained in ASL.

B13.1-13.2; B13.4

Woods. There are a few trees in Stalingrad.

B23.1-23.2; B23.3-23.31; B23.4

Buildings. For simplicity's sake, treat all buildings in your first playing as having a ground-level only. It will get more complicated soon enough.

Congratulations! You have now ingested the biggest block of rules in ASL. And you are now ready to play ASL Scenario A. For those of you who don't have Scenario A, simply modify Scenario 1 from SQUAD LEADER as follows: Remove one LMG from building I7. To "completely occupy" a building, it must be Controlled as per A26.12.

If you are using the published Scenario A, disregard the Balance Provisions, ELR, SAN and Special Rule #2. In either case, treat all buildings as having ground levels only, ignoring the stairwells. They lead to places that will just confuse you at this point.

Play ASL Scenario A once; re-read these rules sections; switch sides and play it again. Then you (and your opponent, of course) will have mastered the basics of ASL and you will be ready for:

[Lesson 2:](#)

[The Advanced Infantry System](#)

¹ The old Squad Leader scenarios updated for ASL discussed in this article (Scenarios A-E) are available in [Classic ASL](#).