

# THE LAW OF THE GUN

## SKIRMISH RULES FOR THE OLD WEST

BY CHRIS PEERS



To give an idea of how “The Law of the Gun” actually plays, let’s run through a quick example.

### THE MAN WITH NO MATES

The “Man With No Mates” has ridden into town and gotten himself a whisky in the saloon. This is risky as he is not popular in these parts; he is faster and meaner than a rattlesnake, and has a price on his head for a spate of killings. As his name suggests he is a single-figure gang, a Gunman, with the Marksmanship, Fast Reactions and Nerves of Steel skills. He is armed with two revolvers. On his way back out into the street he is confronted by a group of local roughnecks, keen on getting the reward. There are four of them, all Fighters, two carrying a revolver each, one a Winchester repeater, and one a shotgun. The two sides are about six inches apart at this point. Both are taken by surprise and go for their guns, but in the game they need to take their moves alternately. The Man goes first as he is a higher class than his opponents. He does not need to recover from any near misses, so he throws his action dice – seven of them; five for being a Gunman, plus two as a single-figure gang; with Fast Reactions.





He gets an action for every 6 he throws, but he is unlucky and does not get any this time. Darn it! Maybe it's the effect of the whisky! So he cannot carry out any diced for actions, which includes aimed shooting, but he can still undertake a free action. After briefly considering running away, he decides instead on Wild Firing. In other words, he fans the hammer of the revolver in his hand and blazes away without stopping to aim. This gives him seven dice (the usual two plus two for the Marksmanship skill and three for Wild Firing), needing 6s to hit, and this time he gets lucky. He throws 6, 6, 6, 5, 5, 4 and 2. Three hits. As he is Wild Firing he can only inflict near misses, but he can allocate these as he wishes as long as all the subsequent targets are within four inches of the first. The inexperienced roughnecks are bunched tightly together, so the rifleman, the man with the shotgun and one of the pistoleros each collects a puff of cotton wool dust as a near miss marker, which effectively suppresses them and restricts them to free actions only until the markers are removed.

### THE ROUGHNECKS TURN

Now it is the roughnecks' turn. The gang does not need to take a morale test as it has not suffered any actual casualties, but the guys with near misses must dice to try and remove them. Each man gets three dice, as they are Fighters, needing a 6 to succeed as usual. The one with the shotgun succeeds, so two of the gang can undertake any action the player wishes this turn, provided they pass their action dice throw. As Fighters they throw four dice, but yes, one of them is a 6, giving the two unsuppressed guys one action each. The pistolero decides to take an aimed shot, but he only gets two hit dice at this range and neither of them is a 6, so he has missed. The roughneck with the shotgun gets four dice, scoring 6, 4, 2 and 1. This is a hit on The Man, so the shooting player rolls the wound dice to find out where he has got him. A chest wound. This looks promising, but at six inches range the shot from a shotgun is starting to spread out, so we deduct two from the next throw, which tells us how bad the damage is. The dice score is 3, reduced to 1, which is only a graze – in

other words a small hole in The Man's coat, treated as a near miss. The other two roughnecks could fire wildly, but the best they could get is another near miss, which will have no effect on The Man as they are not cumulative. The player elects for them to stand their ground in the hope that they can shoot next turn, if they survive the inevitable retaliation.

### THE MAN'S TURN AGAIN

It is now The Man's turn again, and we will see why nobody has managed to claim that reward yet. First, as a Gunman with Nerves of Steel he throws seven dice to recover from the near miss, and gets a 6 which allows him to act as normal. Then he throws another seven action dice, which come up 6, 6, 5, 4, 2, 1 and 1. Two 6s give him two separate actions. For the first one he decides to take an aimed shot at the punk with the shotgun. Four dice (basic two for aimed fire with the pistol, plus two for Marksmanship) give him 6, 3, 3 and 2. A hit! The wound dice tell us it is a head shot, which a damage dice throw of 5 converts to an outright kill. That will teach these thugs to mess with The Man! But he still has another action to go, so he takes a second shot at the next most dangerous opponent, the pistolero who is not suffering the effects of a near miss. Four more dice, scoring 6, 6, 4 and 4. Two hits this time, but only one counts. If he was shooting at close range with a revolver the Man could count them both, but six inches is long range so he only hits once. But again he is lucky, hitting the guy in the right hand and then throwing a 5, which means he must drop his gun.



The roughnecks now test their morale, throwing once for their dead comrade and needing to beat a 3 on a D6 to carry on. But they cannot have liked him much, because they get a 6. So they now dice for the two men still suffering near misses to recover, but get no luck. They then throw their four action dice and get one 6, but what are they going to do? Two members of the gang are still trying to recover from near misses, while the only one who can do much has just had his only weapon shot out of his hand. Sensibly the player decides they will dive behind the corner of a nearby building for cover. This is a free action so they can all do this. The Man now has the choice of getting out of town pronto, or going after them. The game continues...



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