

Criteria for Building an Army

A well-balanced army is specifically designed to take on multiple tasks, depending on who your opponent is and what the circumstances of the battle are. There is a theory in the tournament circuit these days that, to win, you want to have an army that dominates one particular aspect of the game. For example, one that will dominate in the shooting or magic phase. This may be true, but such an army may not be prepared to deal with certain scenarios, it isn't as fun to play, it will not score in army composition and you won't have much fun doing anything with it other than playing tournaments.

This is why I created the scoring system that takes into account the price of the army and army composition.

Now that we understand the theory, what is a balanced army and how do we go about making one? Below is a checklist of what I go over whenever I am making an army. It is this list that I used in assembling all of the armies in this section.

1. 2 – 4 throw away units. Throw away units are units you use to rush the Empire Helblaster, lure out Night Goblin Fanatics or draw away that insidiously hard unit that would otherwise roll up your battle line. They are the cheapest unit in your army that you can assemble and, most of the time, they are Core Unit choices so that you don't tie up valuable Special Unit slots with them. 2 is the minimum, but keep their total value below 225 points (10% of your total force). If you can make 4 for this price, then do so.
2. A minimum of 6 Power Dice for the magic phase. Magic is a fickle thing and having it at the right place at the right time comes in handy. The versatility of the wizard allows you to make up for units that are out of position or circumstances that you did not otherwise prepare for.
3. A minimum of 4 Dispel Dice. In the case of non-magic using armies like the Dwarfs, I try to bolster this to 6 dice since they have no counter-wizard fire (where a wizard has the ability to counter one on the opposing side). Along with these 4 dice, I recommend having either 2 dispel scrolls or a +1 to dispel ability.
4. 2 War Machine hunter units. Although I call them War Machine hunters, these can also be called "March Blockers." The purpose of these units is to get around behind your opponent and have enough strength to kill off his war machines. For this purpose, scouting units, Flyers and skirmishers all work. Ideally, though, you want to be able to be in place to attack on Turn 2. Characters mounted on a flying monster can also fulfill this role.
5. 1 – 2 or more Fast Cavalry units. (1 if the unit is a Special choice and 2 if they are Core choices). Fast Cavalry are a dual purpose unit (functioning as war machine hunters or missile troops), but they also serve other purposes such as trapping enemies who attempt to flee, luring out enemies to be counter-charged or flanking enemy formations.
6. 2 Bolt Throwers or other firing war machines. The purpose of this entry is to deal with characters on big scary monsters (which are very vulnerable to bolt throwers). However, template war machines come in handy against armies who choose to be stationary (like a Dwarf gun line) or large, swarming armies that have a lot of troops concentrated into a specific area. Barring Bolt Throwers, I recommend cannons.
7. A minimum of 40 missile shots. It sounds worse than it is. Count war machines that fire templates or bolt throwers as 5 shots. Weapons like the Helblaster count 5 shots for each

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artillery dice being rolled (thus, a Helblaster counts as 15). Ratling Guns count as 10 each. Again, the idea is to deal with an opponent who may choose to keep is distance, not engage you or opposing shooty armies.

8. Shock Troops: The remainder of your army should be dedicated to shock troops. Shock Troops are usually a Special Unit choice with high armor save and some kind of psychological advantage. They will be the hard center of your army. However, a unit of <20 is not very effective. If you cannot field a unit of 20, then go with the cheapest unit you can and try to deploy a swarm army instead. If you cannot deploy 2 units of 20, then deploy 1 unit and then deploy cheaper models in the second unit. Follow the pattern?
9. The “Must Have:” Many armies have a “must have” unit that just screams to be deployed. These are the “one hit wonders” or beardy units that Games Workshop has ramped up in order to get you to buy the models. Typically, they are units that have been upgraded and made tougher from earlier editions while, at the same time, they are now cheaper points-wise. Never overlook these units, especially as a Shock Troop choice.

None of these bullet points should be taken on their own without consideration for the others. Shock Troops, in particular, are a difficult thing to nail down. You don't want any close combat units going forward unsupported. Therefore, some other units need to be assigned to guarding the flanks of these units. These can be the Fast Cavalry or they could even be missile troops who are equipped to serve a multi-purpose role.

Again, this is all speculative and certain armies may not fit this template once they get to the game table. As a rule in the new Army Builder Tournament, whichever force suffers 3 losses will be reconfigured for the next time around.