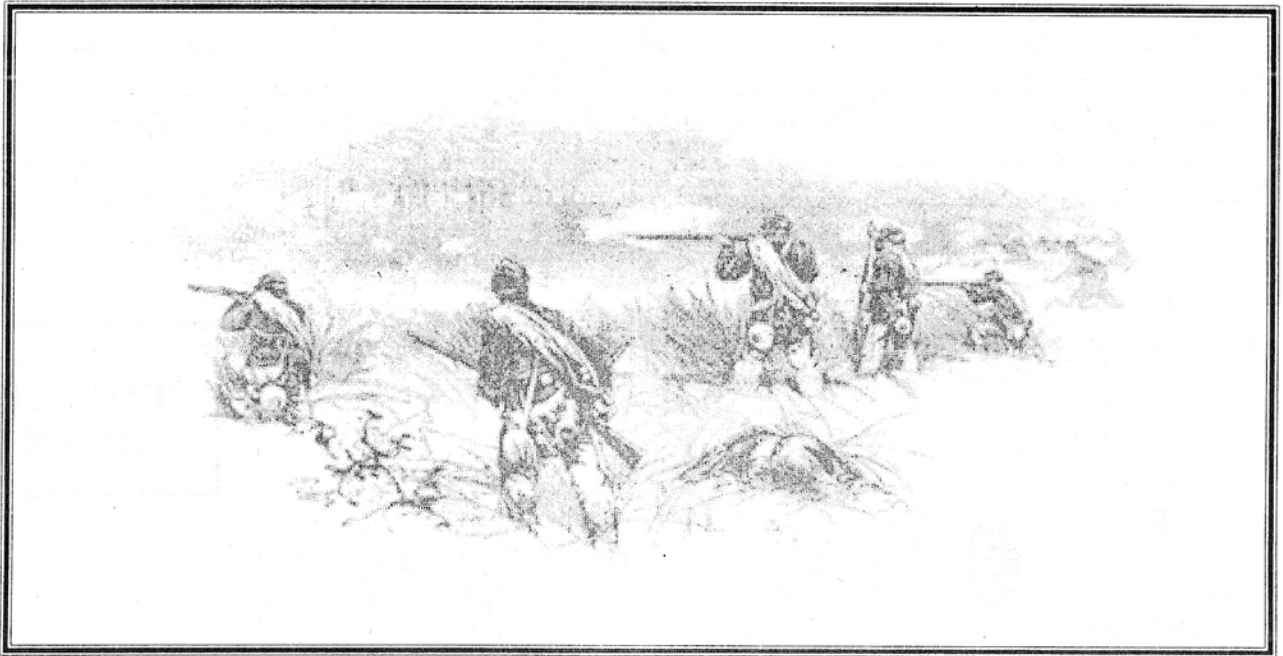


THE  
1st United States Sharpshooters  
Company C  
SKIRMISH PRIMER



The objective of forming a skirmish line is to present to the enemy a single extended line of men spaced roughly 5 paces apart. Moving from a column formed of two ranks into the skirmish line is the essence of the SKIRMISH DRILL.

Deploying into a skirmish line is the most striking and noticeable maneuver performed by the sharpshooters. Therefore, our competence and efficiency in skirmish drill is often the measure by which our unit will be judged. It is the responsibility of each sharpshooter to become adept at skirmish drill in all its evolutions and from every position.

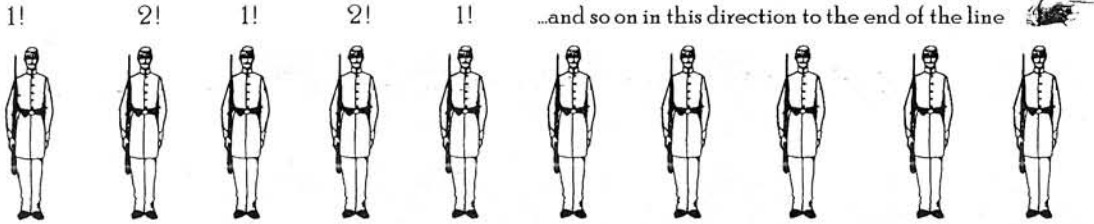
The sharpshooters may be deployed into a skirmish line while either stationary or moving. You must learn the difference in commands for each of these situations. Additionally, because the deployment into a skirmish line extends the length of our line many fold, the officer will decide whether we should extend our line to the right, to the left, or out on both sides from the center. To be a skilled skirmish you must learn to listen carefully to the portion of the command that determines this.

Please note that the skirmish line deployed on flat, open fields will present a straight and orderly appearance. When deployed over varied terrain or when suitable cover is present, the skilled sharpshooter is expected to make use of any available cover even if this causes some irregularities in the line.

# FORMING TWO RANKS

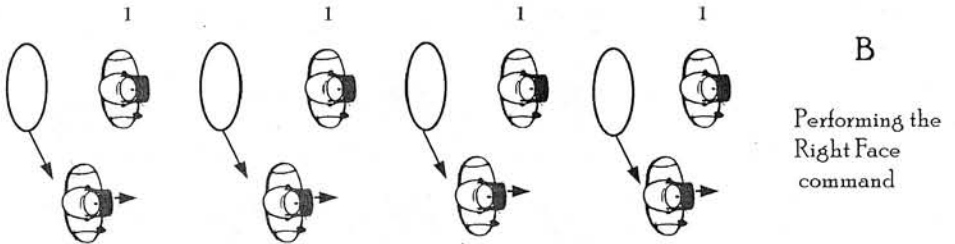
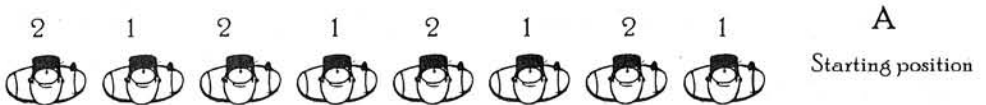
1) To form into two ranks requires that the sharpshooters number off by ones and twos. Counting will begin on your right and proceeds to the end of the line. **Remember your number.**


The command is **COUNT OFF!**




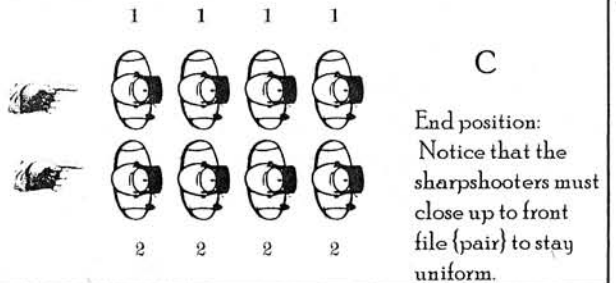
2) The next command is **RIGHT FACE!** Here is where the counting off becomes important. If you are a 1, you simply turn in place to your right. If you are a 2 you must turn to your right and then step forward and to the right of the sharpshooter directly in front of you thus forming the second rank. This is all done in one fluid movement but is shown below in three steps for clarity.

Command is:  
**RIGHT  
FACE!**



Notice that all the ones are now on this side 

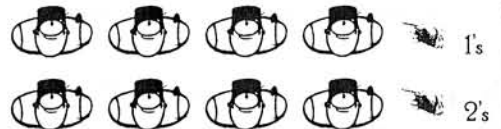
Notice that all the twos are now on this side 



3) Although the sharpshooters may march off in this position, many times we will be expected to resume our original facing to the front. The command is **WITHOUT UNDOUBLING, FRONT!** Upon this command, each sharpshooters turns in place to the front.

Command is:

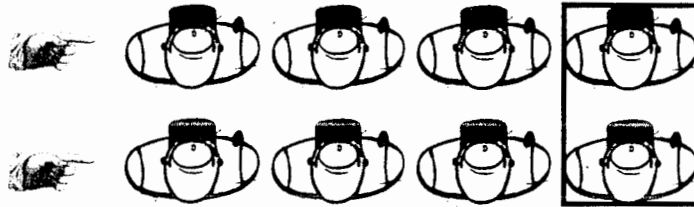
**WITHOUT UN-DOUBLING  
.....FRONT!**



Note that now all the ones are in the front rank, twos in the rear rank.

4) **Rank, Files, and Comrades of Battle**- While positioned in two ranks, some new terminology is in order. Easiest to understand is the **rank**. The sharpshooters in the front row are the front rank.

This is the  
FRONT RANK



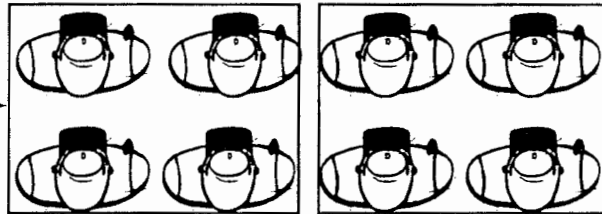
This is the  
REAR RANK

Next is the **file**. The file is simply the pair of sharpshooters consisting of a one and a two as shown above. The two sharpshooters within the box are called filemates. Pay attention to who your filemate is. In the example above there are two ranks (a front and a rear) and four files.

This is a FILE

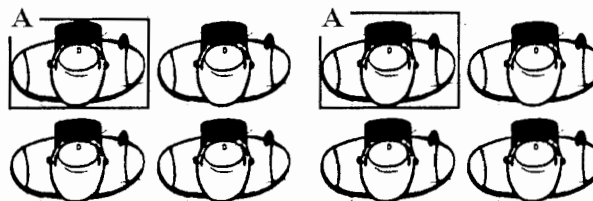
5) **Comrades of Battle**-Essential to skirmish drill is the concept of the **Comrades of Battle**. The Comrades of Battle is a group of four sharpshooters comprised of two files as shown below. The comrades of battle will be used in skirmish formations so before taking the field, acknowledge who your "comrades" are.. Pay special attention to the your relative position within your comrades of battle.

This is one  
Comrades of  
Battle



This is one  
Comrades of  
Battle

Of the four sharpshooters that form each Comrades of Battle, the position marked "A" below is usually given to the sharpshooter with the most experience at skirmish drill. This is because the sharpshooter in this position has the responsibility of providing a rallying point, leading his four in a particular direction and at a suitable pace upon command. This position is called the anchor or the pivot.



These are the first 5 basic concepts in our company drill that you will need to master. Always listen as to your comrades and they will give you cues if you get lost. Don't be offended if you get pushed slightly into position as it just the simplest way of helping to maintain the formation.

Once you are proficient at steps 1-5 we can proceed to Skirmish Drill.

# THE SKIRMISH LINE

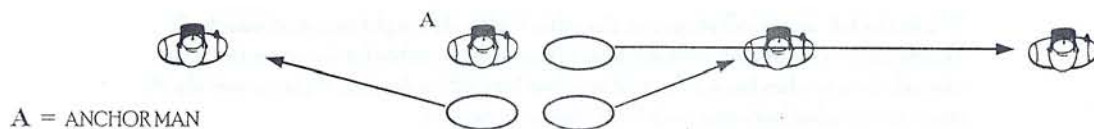
What it is & how it is formed from the Comrades of Battle

6) Deploying and Assembling the Comrades of Battle—The purpose of skirmish order is to establish a line with the company that extends over a long front. This extended length is achieved by placing the sharpshooters a 5 pace intervals as shown above. Skirmish drill is designed to move us from two ranks to this formation. We will cover the commands later. For now, study the diagrams that follow.

THE DEPLOYED SKIRMISH LINE LOOKS LIKE THIS

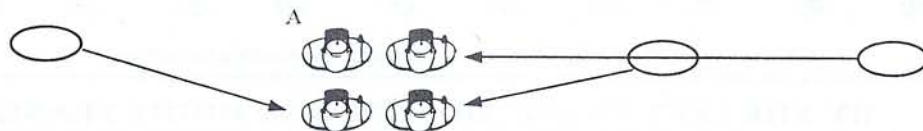


Deploying or moving from a formation of two ranks into a skirmish line is one of the most important skills of the sharpshooter. As with many of the sharpshooter movements, this is based on the Comrades of Battle. We will start with one set of four. The basic movements of the Comrades of Battle into a skirmish line are shown by the arrows below. Note that the rear rank sharpshooters end up at 5 yards on either side of the anchor. The sharpshooter on the extreme right must place himself 10 yards away from the anchor. Once each sharpshooter reaches his position, he takes one knee.



The opposite of deploying into the skirmish line is assembling. Although the skirmish line can be moved about the field, there will be times when the company must return to close order. The next movement is how to return into the Comrades of Battle.

Assembling or reforming from skirmish line back into the Comrade of Battle is just a reversal of the deploying movement with the rallying point being the anchor. In other words, the anchor man does not move, but waits for his comrades to form up next to him. When the command to assemble is given, the anchor man stands fast and the other comrades form on him.



Once you have mastered the art of deploying and assembling within a single Comrades of Battle (CoB's), the next step is to learn how several CoB's can be deployed at once. When multiple CoB's are formed up in close order, they must be able to gain enough space for each to deploy. The next section of this primer deals specifically the movement of multiple CoB's into a position where they can deploy simultaneously into a skirmish line.

# DEPLOYING BY THE FLANK

## SKIRMISH ORDER ON A STATIONARY LINE

Deploying "by the flank" is used to extend intervals and deploy into a skirmish line **without any forward movement**. This can be done by extending intervals to the left, to the right, or both left and right. Keep in mind the general rule that the CoB's remain intact until the very last movement.

Below is a group of 3 CoB's which will deploy to the right along a stationary line into a skirmish line. Follow steps 1—4 below. This is called deploying by the **RIGHT FLANK**.

1.



Starting position

The command is:

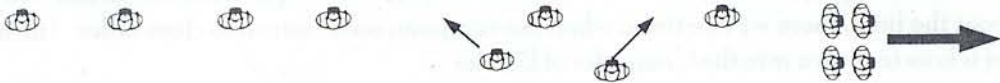
**AS SKIRMISHERS,  
BY THE RIGHT FLANK,  
TAKES INTERVALS,  
MARCH!**

2.



While the left most CoB stays put, the other CoB's do a right face and march off. The Anchor or Pivot man from each set of four is responsible for determining when enough distance has been achieved to allow his CoB to deploy. Approximately 20 paces are needed between each CoB. they can deploy

3.



Here the left most CoB has been the first to deploy as the other CoB's moved off

Here the next CoB has moved far enough to begin it's own deployment.

This CoB continues it's flank movement until the Anchor determines the moment to deploy.

4.



Here is the skirmish line deployed and ready for action.

### BY THE LEFT FLANK, OR LEFT AND RIGHT FLANK

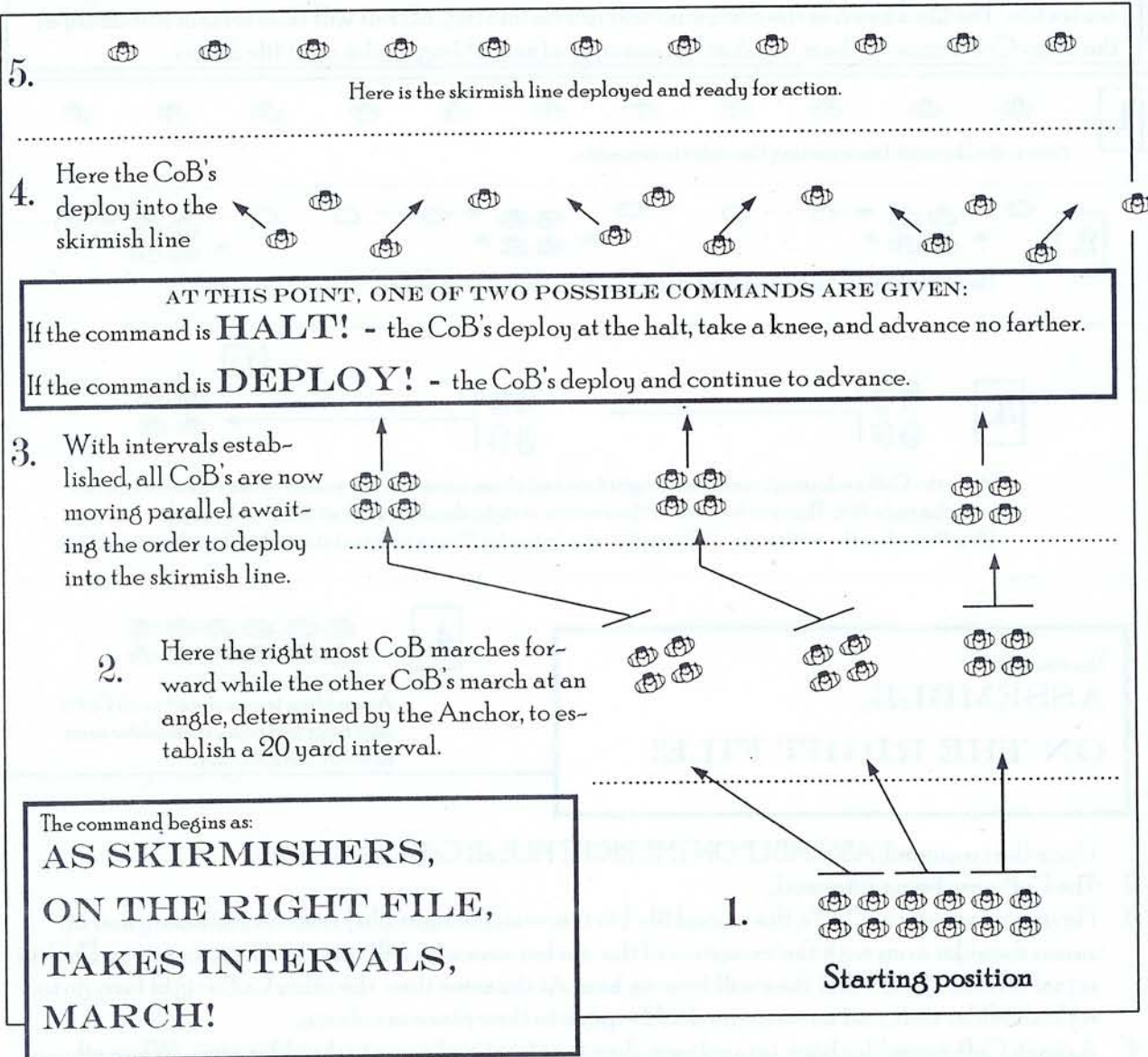
The deployment by the flank may be used to extend left rather than right. The command, **BY THE LEFT FLANK**, tells the right most CoB to remain stationary while the other CoB's left face and move off in the same manner as shown above.

To extend in both directions at once, the command is, **BY THE LEFT AND RIGHT FLANK**. This command tells the center CoB to remain stationary while the other CoB's face outward from the center file and move off in the same manner as shown above either to the left or right.

# DEPLOYING ON THE FILE

## SKIRMISH ORDER WHILE ADVANCING

Deploying "on the file" is used to extend intervals and deploy into a skirmish line while moving forward. This is the most common method of deploying into the skirmish line. As with deploying by the flank, this can be done by extending intervals to the left, to the right, or both left and right. Keep in mind the general rule that the CoB's remain intact until the very last movement. Note that the diagram below shows the starting position at the bottom of this page and proceeds upwards to the final position.



The deployment on the file may be used to extend right rather than left.

The command, **ON THE LEFT FILE**, tells the left most CoB to march forward while the other CoB's move off at an angle to establish the 20 yard interval.

To extend in both directions at once while moving forward, the command is, **ON THE CENTER FILE**.

**WHEN IN THE FIELD, ALWAYS LISTEN CAREFULLY TO COMMANDS AND BE SURE YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DEPLOYING ON THE FILE OR ON THE FLANK!**

# ASSEMBLING ON THE FILE

FROM A SKIRMISH LINE BACK INTO COLUMNS OF TWO

Taking the deployed skirmish line and reassembling back into the original column is often done to move the Sharpshooters to a new position in the most compact and efficient manner. Assembling is done by reforming Comrades of Battle first before moving the CoB's back into column. Assembling is done without forward or rearward movement of the line. Note that the diagram below shows the starting position at the top of this page and proceeds downward to the final position.

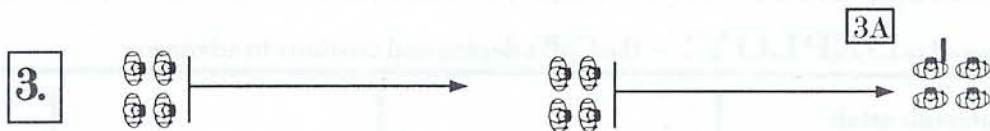
As with deploying into skirmish, the command for assembling will make reference to a left, right, or center file. The file named in the command will reform into its CoB but will then remain stationary as the other CoB's come to them. Look at the example of assembling on the right file below.



Here is the skirmish line awaiting the order to assemble.



Here the skirmish line reforms into CoB's, each on its own anchor man.



With the CoB's reformed, each does a right face and closes up on the file named in the command. In this case, the right file. This is to be done at the position of right shoulder shift, at the double quick.

{3A} Note that the stationary CoB's anchor man raises his Sharps to signal this is the file to be assemble on.

The command is:

**ASSEMBLE,  
ON THE RIGHT FILE!**

4. 

Assembling is completed as all CoB's face front and come to shoulder arms to await further orders.

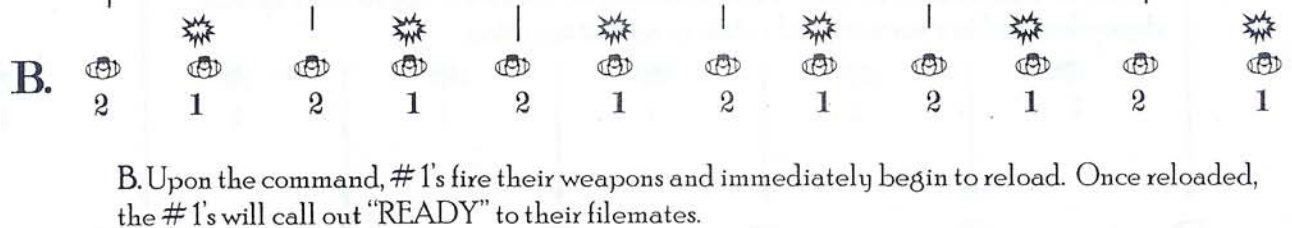
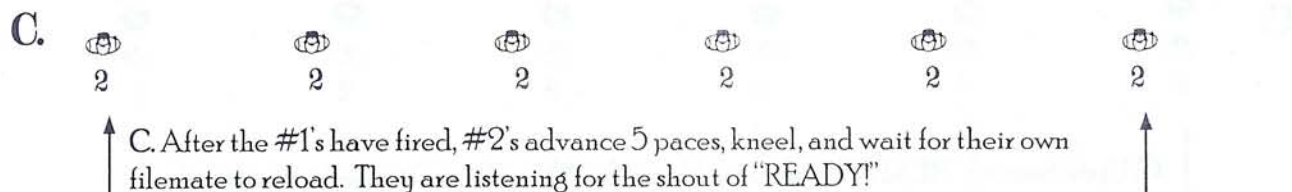
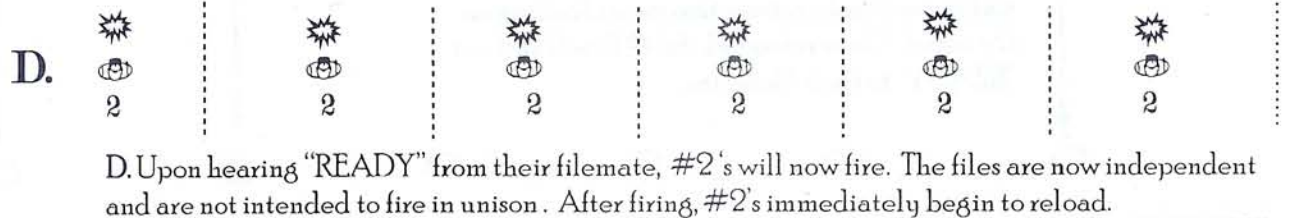
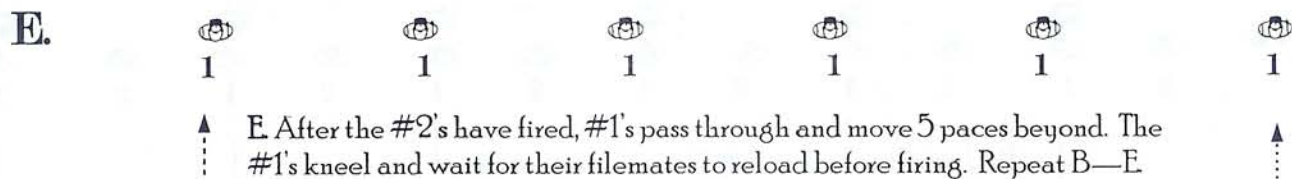
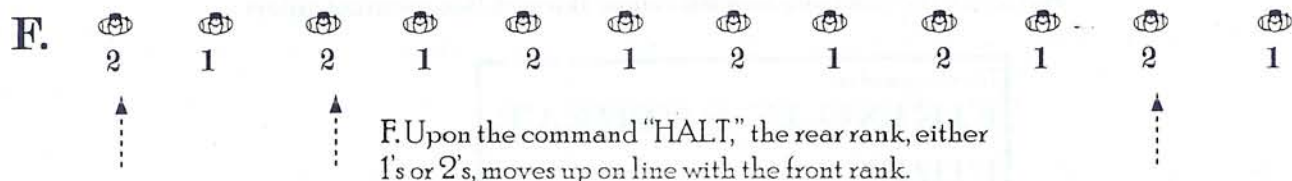
1. Upon the command, ASSEMBLE ON THE RIGHT FILE, all CoB's are to reform.
2. The CoB's are being reformed.
3. Having reformed our CoB's, the named file { in this case, the right file } remains stationary and assumes shoulder arms with the exception of the anchor man who will raise his Sharps straight up {3A} to signal all other CoB's that they will form on him. At the same time, the other CoB's right face, go to right shoulder shift, and move at the double quick to their place in column.
4. As each CoB assembles back into column, they face front and come to shoulder arms. When all CoB's have returned to column, the anchor man on the named file assumes shoulder arms.

Assembling on the left file simply places the leftmost CoB in a stationary position and all others form as before and move to that file. Assembling on the center file freezes the centermost CoB and brings both ends towards the middle in the same manner as described above.

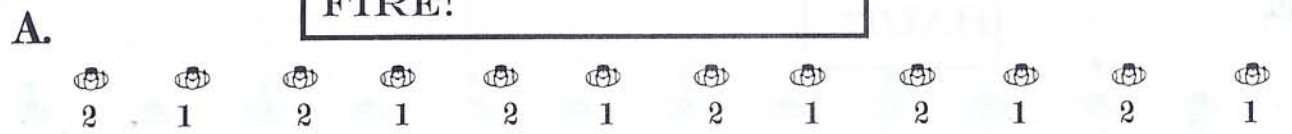
# FIRING IN ADVANCE

Attacking with a deployed skirmish line while keeping half of the company's rifles loaded at all times.  
 FOLLOW THE EXAMPLES STARTING AT THE BOTTOM

The command is:  
**HALT!**



The command is:  
**FIRING IN ADVANCE,  
 FIRE!**



A. Here is the company on a stationary skirmish line awaiting orders

NOTE: Shamshooters are to maintain a general line but are expected to take advantage of cover and features of terrain.

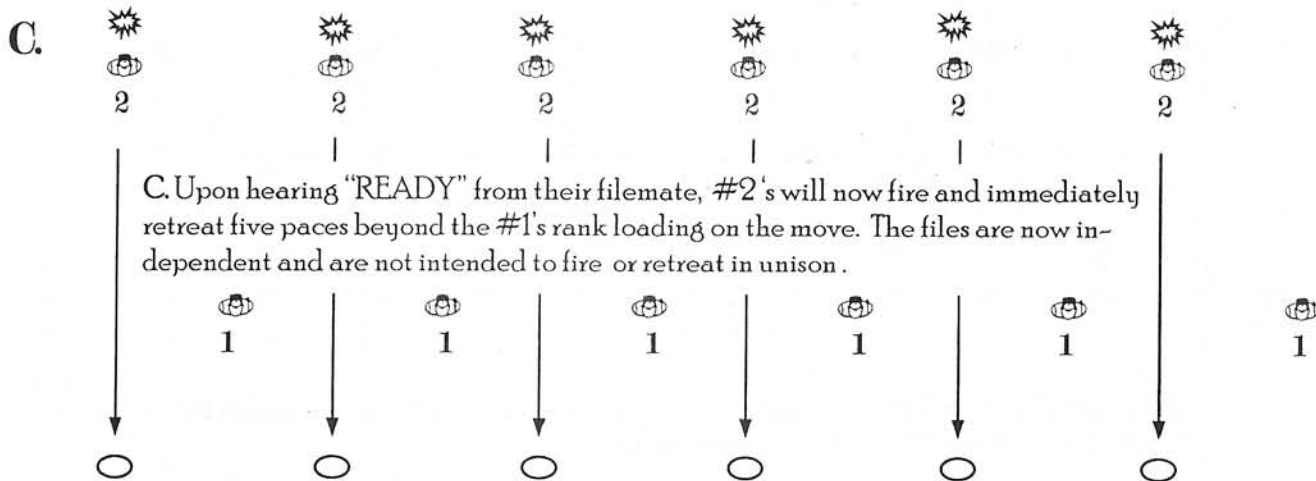
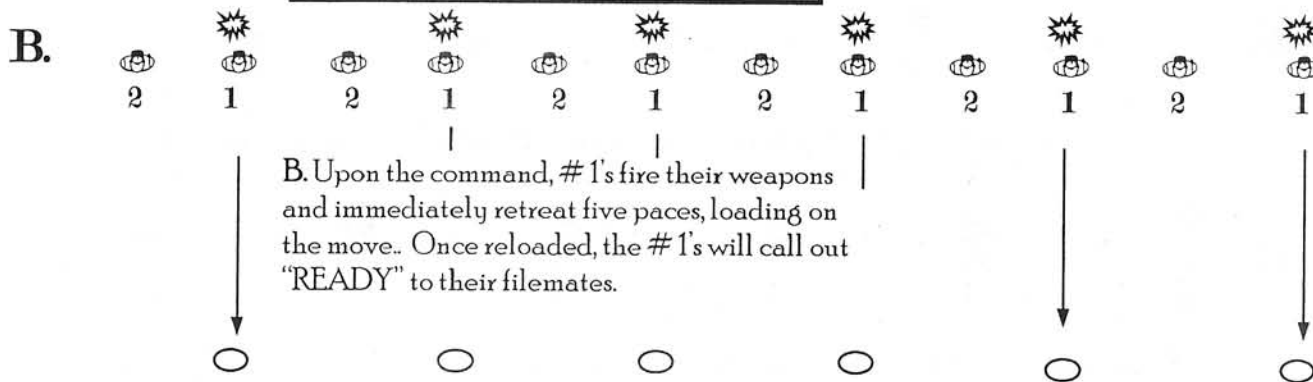
# FIRING IN RETREAT

Retiring the skirmish line while continuing to engage the enemy and keeping half of the company's rifles loaded at all times.  
 FOLLOW THE EXAMPLES STARTING AT THE TOP

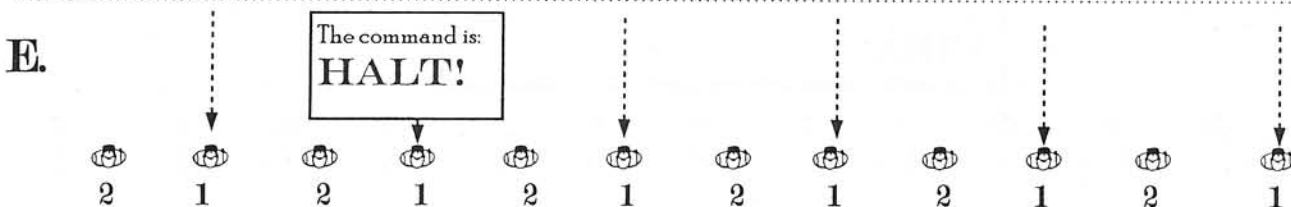


A. Here is the company on a stationary skirmish line awaiting orders

The command is:  
**FIRING IN RETREAT,  
 FIRE!**



**D.** D. A—C repeat until the command to "HALT" has been given.



E. Upon the command "HALT," the front rank, either 1's or 2's, retreats to the line formed by the rear rank.