

# Trench Warfare in the First World War <sup>(1)</sup>

When the Germans attacked in Belgium they quickly beat the armies defending the borders and managed to get into France very quickly. The British and French generals, uncertain about how to stop the German advance decided to 'dig in' and ordered the construction of Trenches to act as a barrier against the attack.

The soldiers dug a hole about a metre wide at the bottom and two metres deep. Boards were placed on the ground to act as drainage. On the side of the trench facing the enemy a 'fire step' was cut into the wall. This was for soldiers to shoot from. Sandbags were placed at the top of the trench. This would stop the trench caving in if a bomb went off nearby. It also provided more protection from bullets. In front of the trench Barbed wire was rolled out. This was to stop soldiers being able to charge at the trench. The diagram below shows you what a trench might have looked like:

**The Trench: Important points**

Advantages: easy to make, easy to defend, cheap to build, don't need lots of men to defend them.

Disadvantages: wet, cold, hard to get in and out of without being seen by the enemy. Trenches were very dirty and unhygienic as there was no running water or flushing toilets.

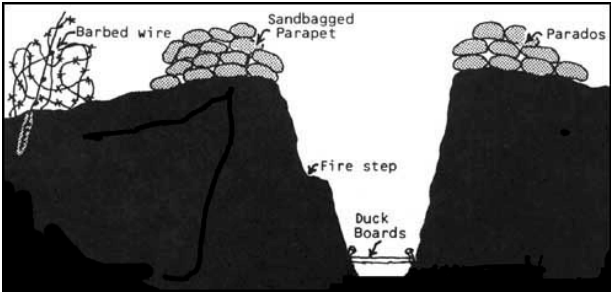


Diagram of a trench

The trench would be equipped with men armed with rifles and bayonets. At regular intervals along the trench there were machine gun posts.

**Activities**

- Copy the diagram of the trench into your exercise book. Label it clearly using the second paragraph to help you.
- Write a brief paragraph explaining why the Generals ordered the construction (building) of trenches.
- Copy the columns from below. Now look at the **diagram of a trench** and the **important points**. Find 5 things that ordinary soldiers might like and dislike about the trenches. Enter these into the appropriate column. In future lessons you will find out if you were right!

What soldiers might have thought about trenches	
Things they might like	Things they might dislike