World War I
Combat
The Automatic Machine Gun
These mounted guns fired a rapid, continuous stream of bullets, and made it possible for a few gunners to mow down waves of soldiers. 90% of bullet casualties in WWI were from automatic machine guns.
Poisonous Gas
Gases were lobbed into enemy trenches causing choking, blinding, severe skin blisters, or death. Gas masks lessened the deadliness of poison gas.
Tanks protected advancing troops as they broke through enemy defenses. Early tanks were slow and clumsy.
Submarines
German U-boats destroyed Allied shipping, and brought the US into the war after sinking the *Lusitania*. The typical WWI German U-boat had a crew of 30 and could dive to 300 feet.
# Allied & Neutral Ships Sunk in WWI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1915</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1917</th>
<th>1918</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>By Submarines</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>2,439</td>
<td>1,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By Mines</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By Surface Craft</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By Aircraft</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5,515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100%
An Allied surface vessel drops depth charges at a German U-boat. A depth charge is like a giant grenade that lets off a “charge” at the desired “depth.”
At first, planes were mainly used for reconnaissance, but later flying “aces” engaged in air combat. Propeller planes were equipped with a machine gun and bombs.
The German flying ace Manfred von Richthofen, also known as “The Red Baron,” had over 80 kills in air-to-air combat, or “dogfights” before he was killed.
Artillery
Cannon fire became deadly accurate in WWI, and made battlefields look like the face of the moon.
The Germans had “Big Bertha,” a cannon that could shoot 9 miles. By the end of the war, the Germans were shelling Paris from 70 miles away.
Heavy fighting took place along the western front, which was a 600 mile stretch of land in France where the troops dug trenches for protection. For four years neither side could make any significant gains, and millions were killed.
Aircraft can warn of the build-up of enemy troops before an attack.

Concrete block house for a machine-gun.

Reserve trench.

Support trench.

Front-line trench.

Communication trenches allow reserves to be brought forward without exposing them to enemy fire.

Barbed wire: metres deep and an impassable obstacle for any troops able to reach it.

No Man’s Land (the stretch of land between the trenches of the opposing sides) has already been churned up by shell fire. In wet weather it becomes a mass of mud, making it even harder for troops to cross.

Front-line dug-outs provide protection but not against a direct hit from an artillery shell.

A deep dug-out. German ones could be 15 m below ground and too well constructed to be damaged by shell fire.

Long-range artillery is placed about 10 km behind the front line. These guns fire at advancing enemy troops.
A “dug-out” was used to avoid being killed during shelling. A dug-out was usually 15 feet deep and could hold over a dozen soldiers. German dug-outs were usually deeper.
British trench

Fire-step

Sandbags used as 'tamping'. These sealed the end of the tunnel and forced the effect of the explosion upwards

British mine (tunnel)

British sappers digging the mine

German counter-mine

Fire-step

British soldiers laying explosive charges
"Over the Top" into "No Man's Land"
Trench Foot
An infection caused by cold, wet, unsanitary conditions. Feet would go numb, the skin would turn red or blue, and eventually gangrenous. Amputations were common.

The Remedy
Change your socks and keep your feet dry.
“Your feet swell to two or three times their normal size and go completely dead. You could stick a bayonet into them and not feel a thing. If you are fortunate enough not to lose your feet and the swelling begins to go down, it is then that the intolerable, indescribable agony begins. I have heard men cry and even scream with the pain, and many had to have their feet and legs amputated.” Sergeant Harry Roberts
The Human Cost of WWI

Dead: over 8.5 million  Wounded: over 17 million

Also, there was widespread disease, famine and destruction.