The Schlieffen Plan
Focus Questions

1. What was the Plan?
2. How was the plan implemented (changes)?
3. Why did it fail?
• In 1904 France and Britain signed the **Entente Cordial** (friendly understanding).

• The objective of the alliance was to encourage co-operation against the perceived threat of Germany. Negotiations also began to add Russia to this alliance.

• As a result of these moves the German military began to fear the possibility of a combined attack from France, Britain and Russia.
Alfred von Schlieffen, German Army Chief of Staff, was given instructions to devise a strategy that would be able to counter a joint attack. In December 1905, he began circulating what later became known as the Schlieffen Plan.

Schlieffen argued that if war took place it was vital that France was speedily defeated. If this happened, Britain and Russia would be unwilling to carry on fighting. Schlieffen calculated that it would take Russia six weeks to organize its large army for an attack on Germany. Therefore, it was vitally important to force France to surrender before Russia was ready to use all its forces.
• Schlieffen plan involved using 90% of Germany's armed forces to attack France.

• Fearing the French forts on the border with Germany, Schlieffen suggested a scythe-like attack through Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg.

• The rest of the German Army would be sent to defensive positions in the east to stop the expected Russian advance.

• It was a recapitulation of the double envelopment strategy used by Hannibal at Cannae (216 BC)- lure the French in and circle them from the west and eventually from behind.
The Plan-1905
• When Helmut von Moltke replaced Schlieffen as German Army Chief of Staff in 1906, he modified the plan by proposing that Holland was not invaded.

• The main route would now be through the flat plains of Flanders. Moltke argued that Belgium's small army would be unable to stop German forces from quickly entering France.

• Moltke suggested that 34 divisions should invade Belgium whereas 8 divisions would be enough to stop Russia advancing in the east.
von Moltke
• On 2nd August 1914, the Schlieffen Plan was put into operation when the German Army invaded Luxembourg and Belgium.

• However, the Germans were held up by the Belgian Army and were shocked by the Russian Army's advance into East Prussia.

• The Germans were also surprised by how quickly the British Expeditionary Force reached France and Belgium.
The Execution of the Plan

Phase I
Phase II
• Due to the failure of the plan, WWI degraded into trench warfare. Casualties were high as tactics struggled to catch up with technology.

• http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=lJXAcl8D51Y