

strategy & Tactics: **Populous II**

by Scott Love

One of the added bonuses of being a computer gamer is the chance to disprove all that junk parents used to say. Things like, “Do you think the world revolves around you?” may now be happily answered with a resounding, “Yes!” Playing God could never be better. Someone disagrees with you? ZAP. Someone builds a house with the wrong color flag? FLAME.

Populous II allows players to indulge their narcissistic impulses and wage holy war against all the gods of the Greek pantheon, leading finally to a great confrontation with Zeus himself.

One admission in the spirit of journalistic integrity: while the manual refers to the computer’s side as “evil” and the human-played side as “good,” the actions advocated below will definitely shed doubt on how “good” a god you will be if you follow said advice. In fact, strong evidence could lead others to conclude that you are, in fact, a vengeful, aggressive god with no quarter to give for mercy.

The godly advice below actually assumes that one wishes to become the greatest Greek god and advances that goal while trampling on such anachronistic sentiments like mercy, love for mortals, and fair play.

Designing Gods

Your first task as a God is to create yourself — altogether too appropriate. In distributing experience, in this first step and throughout the game, try not to evenly apportion your power among all abilities. Focus on one or two abilities and weight them in your overall growth. The early game benefits from strength in the “people” element, but later in the game a strong offense may be bolstered with strength in some of the more “offensive” elements. Fire will serve well through at least the first 10 worlds you conquer. Nothing works like a good fire storm, though one can never turn down a good earthquake either.

The computer’s A.I. seems to play a more aggressive game if you select an aggressive looking god. Faced with a mild or wise looking god, the computer does more building and resource acquisition. The games are different but only in flavor. Find a personality that suits you.

Early Games — two minutes or two hours?

The first three or four worlds are painfully simple to win. The ability to raise and lower land in your enemy's territory makes it possible for you to destroy any flat areas the computer creates and allows you to isolate the evil peoples from their holy symbol. When water becomes fatal (in the third or fourth game), it is actually possible to conquer the world in a few moments: simply drown the three or four enemy mortals (this is where the definition of a "good god" gets a bit fuzzy) before the forces of evil have a chance to establish any kind of strength.

While it is tempting to win these first games quickly, be patient. In fact, drag the games out. Separate your peoples from enemy held continents and allow both populations to grow. Send many effects to the continents of evil but don't destroy your enemy's population completely. Avoid waging war. If the peoples of evil try to invade, drown them. Allow the evil god to rebuild after attacks. Spread your people across the map so that no ocean shows. When you win, you'll win well. And when experience is doled out at the end of the game, you'll have a better chance to garner more of those precious lightning bolts.

Friendly Tools of Destruction

Growing trees and planting flowers is all very nice, but the way to destroy the forces of evil is to invoke the more deadly effects in your arsenal. Fire Columns don't require much Mana and can do significant damage (be careful though — fire columns don't discriminate between good and bad). Fire storms are wonderful; as your fire experience increases, so will the effects of these powers. Swamps are fun. Earthquakes are great — but don't forget to seal them before your people show up (or you'll watch your own people fall into the chasms you've created). Volcanoes are fabulous ways to end games and tough to defend against. Plagues are great to watch in heavily populated areas. One tip: lower the land on an infected enemy settlement. A walker will appear and potentially spread the plague further.

Timing is important with Populous. Be sure to be the first god to invoke an effect of destruction. Keep evil on the defensive throughout the game. Conquering a world depends on momentum — and effects are the tools which will create momentum.

Try to jump between spreading your population and sending effects into enemy territory. Create heroes as often as possible when you're attacking, and don't forget to use the "gather together" command. A strong population is important. You'll need it to win the impending war.

Genesis

The first stages of every game require that you establish a strong territory for your people. Don't work too hard to centralize this area — that just gives your enemy one big target to aim for. Definitely separate your territory from that of the evil mortals; once the computer contacts your peoples it becomes more aggressive. Prevent your peoples from fighting while you're establishing your territory.

Send effects as soon as possible into enemy populations, but don't wage war — yet. Try to work on destroying your enemy's areas of strength. Use fire storms, earthquakes, lightning storms, swamps, and plagues to poison the heart of the computer's empire. Earthquakes are great — not only do they destroy land and settlements, but they leave behind gaping chasms into which evil walkers fall.

Be sure to move your holy symbol (papal magnet) into your own territory as soon as you've

the Mana to do so. Nothing will cripple you more than not being able to create leaders and heroes. With that in mind — if you've a chance to isolate the evil papal magnet, do so for as long as possible, but be extremely careful. You may goad the forces of evil to build a land bridge and attack before you're prepared.

In later games (after your eleventh or twelfth) start to establish your lands at a uniform "two" or "three" altitude. This will ease your defenses in a number of ways. It will hinder tidal waves, and will allow you to build trenches quickly in times of defense against volcanoes. You could do the same with hills, but hills are easily flattened. And the joy of a trench comes with tidal waves and volcanoes: direct the water and lava through your territory with a trench and, provided the effect lasts, into your enemy's territory. Nothing is more satisfying than watching a volcano's lava scorch the evil peoples of the enemy who created the volcano in the first place. It's a tricky operation, but works well. Beware: building at higher altitudes requires more Mana and also means you'll be hit harder by earthquakes.

Sprogging: the manual mentions sprogging a number of times for a reason. Sprogging is vital, especially in the genesis stages of your game. Spread! Grow! Populate! Sprog!

Time for War

When your peoples have reached a comfortable level of strength (check the stands of the coliseum to gauge how your population compares to that of your enemy's) then prepare for war. Make sure they've done some combining so that individual settlements and walkers are tough. Then place your papal magnet at the edge of your territory, near your enemy. Send your people to combine at the papal magnet and start making heroes. Heroes are the best way to win the game. Don't join your land with your enemy's until you're ready with a few heroes and many strong walkers.

Build land bridges into your enemy's land and allow your heroes and people to attack. Try to aim for your enemy's papal magnet to prevent the computer from creating more leaders. Repair land you've conquered and make it your own. Sprog a great deal. Repair land with dangers to walkers: the chasms left over from earthquakes should be sealed. Swamps should be raised. Destroy any baptismal fonts left lying about.

War tactics don't much come into play in Populous, but it does help if you divide the enemy territories. It also helps if you increase the size of your settlements on "the front."

And don't forget to keep attacking the evil population's rear with effects!

Tricks of the Trade

Roads draw all walkers. Build a road through your enemy's territory and, at its end, place something deadly like a plague, swamp, or baptismal font. Using a road like this during war requires that you pay attention: don't let your peoples fall into such a trap.

Roads block the spread of fungus and facilitate the spread of plague.

Whirlpools eat land: lower the land in an enemy territory and plant a whirlpool in the center. No settlement nearby which would allow you to lower the land? No problem: use a baptismal font.

Place baptismal fonts around your enemy's papal magnet. Then watch.

Drowning: slow & steady — lower land around enemy walkers and settlements. Drowning is slow, but works well. Try it on Achilles.

Use walled settlements to protect yourself and also keep the enemy's weaker walkers from entering your territory.

Combine batholiths with volcanoes. Tough to beat.

Combine wind and fire effects and watch.

[Victory too soon?](#)

If you're about to win, it's hard to call off heroes and such, but isolate enemy lands and allow your enemy to rebuild if you'd like. In the end you'll get more experience.

[Enjoy](#)

Have fun playing God and tell your parents that you rule worlds. They'll be so proud.

Please feel free to contact Scott Love with questions or comments.
eWorld: Scott Love (preferred)
CompuServe: 72511,442
Internet: SLove@zmac.ziff.com