

WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH!!!!

The key to winning WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH is not found in a book of combat strategy.

Despite the presence of large troop formations, it is wasteful to spend time trying to hone military tactics to razor sharpness. In the long run, the key to victory is how well the player manipulates the individual characters in the game.

Study of J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings is certain to improve performance in this computer game.

Since the time crunch and a shortage of units are against the player, there's little room for miscalculation. Monitor the enemies movements and locate the various gifts and objects needed in the quest. The robot adversary is somewhat predictable, and the alert player will note weaknesses in one session that can be exploited during the next run through the program.

The Nazgul are Mordor's most potent weapon. Always note where they go, and estimate their further movements once they go invisible. Protecting your character from the Nazgul is the prime objective in the opening stage. One good strategy is to delay sending the heroes toward Mordor for the first few turns. Split up Frodo, Sam and Pippin and send them further into the Shire rather than towards Bree. This keeps them safe from the Nazgul and provides needed objects.

Character activation is another important aspect of play. An inactivated hero is useless to the computerist. Failure to get important ones like Aragon into the fray can cost the Fellowship the game. Fortunately, inactivated characters move on a rigid schedule. So if Aragon has already left Bree, look for him at Weathertop. 'Lord of the Rings' can be used to predict these routes.

Also, you should knock out Saruman early to bring the Riders south for the real onslaught. It is prudent to keep some forces in Hornburg because Saruman doesn't die easily.

The northern troops are handy for mopping up the mountains and holding Thranduil's palace and Lorien. The southern hordes always take the same roads, so they are vulnerable to a small force (2000 men or so) behind fortified walls along the path. The rest of Gondor's forces must mass at Minas Tirith to hold off what seems like 20 billion orcs coming out of Minas Morgul.

Lingering images on the animation level occasionally prevent a character from picking up an object. If it happens, go up a level, return to the animation screen and try again. Bringing another character to the same spot, so the screen is refreshed, also works.

Never lose sight of the goal: The One Ring must be thrown into Mt. Doom. Sooner or later, the gamer will have to sneak or escort the Ring Bearer to Mt. Doom, and wisdom and experience recommend the former method.

That's what worked in the trilogy, and it is just as effective in WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH. A bold dash to the mountains only causes the evil defense forces to flock to the east. If Mordor's minions are waiting at Mt. Doom, the cause of Good is not likely to triumph.

Burning up troops to divert Sauron too early in the game leaves the player without enough units to adequately defend him. Once the Ringbearer gets close, every move should have only one purpose: to neutralize any obstacles that impede further progress toward the volcano.

Despite the triple tiered construction and number of individual units, WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH is not especially difficult. Careful observation of the computerized foe and a working knowledge of the trilogy will enable the gamer to break the Dark Lord's power by destroying the One Ring.