

y Scott Love

Anyone who isn't frustrated by the final assault on Stormwind Keep is either immune to the emotion altogether or has (perhaps intelligently) melted their CD into a small puddle of plastic mush after having tried the scenario once. WarCraft is a challenge.

This wonderful game of tactics thrives on a simple interface and real-time play. While the pace is fast, it's not impossible (and can be slowed down to a mere crawl), and players will focus on managing just two resources -- lumber and gold -- rather than dealing with the minutia many war games force into the forefront. This lumber and gold produces buildings and these buildings, in turn, produce various kinds of troops. The game is fantastically accessible and easy to learn but, as will become readily apparent to anyone who plays through the first few scenarios, will present puzzles and frustrations worthy of the most adept gamers.

[Stop Poking Me!!](#)

The Orcs have good personality and will attract most players... but the humans are slightly easier to play. Their archers have a bit more range and their magic is more useful than that which the Orcs possess. When choosing which side to play, consider whether or not you wish to play an easier campaign or not.

However, since the scenario paths of both campaigns are quite similar, you may wish to play the two games simultaneously by alternating between the two as you advance. For after having triumphed over one campaign, the other will be much simpler given your now extensive experience at WarCraft.

[Peons and Peasants a Victory Do Not Make](#)

One of the first important lessons WarCraft teaches is one of delicate balance. The desire to delve into the SimCity-esque pursuit of expanding one's town may lead a player to churning out dozens of Peons. Their broken bodies make a nice garnish for the burned out shells of your perhaps quite impressive spread of buildings. An easy mistake of logic advocates that a Peon will pay for itself in four trips to a gold mine, so why not crank out as many as possible? The missing element here is time. You won't have much of it.

Depending on how far away your current mine is, a Peon will require a certain amount of game time to pay for itself. An attack may occur during that time and you may sorely miss the additional Grunt you might have produced instead. You need troops and you'll never have too many Spearmen.

When a scenario first starts, expand your village by producing a few Peons. You need enough gold coming in to keep your barracks busy most of the time. Once you have four or so Peons making trips to a mine close-by, then you've enough to concentrate on other matters.

[The Best Defense is a Good Fence](#)

As all players soon discover, the computer is aggressive. Before you're ready you'll have Raiders coming to visit and bashing all the Peasants you just spent so much money creating. If you, in turn, create Footmen or Knights and send them out to ward against these intrusions, you'll simply play a game of exchanging dead for dead. You need to set up a strong defense to give your Peasants time to prepare your resources for war.

WarCraft follows a simple principle: strength lies in numbers. A simple defense involves winning in math. If you have more troops than your enemy, typically you'll win a fight. Start by building a wall of Footmen. Four Footmen can make short work of a Raider.

Then you'll discover that your enemy has a few more tricks up its electronic sleeves. Footmen alone, actually, make a poor defense. They're too weak and you'll lose too many as your opponent sends wave after wave of assaults. The best way to keep your wall of Footmen alive is to kill enemy troops before they get anywhere near your wall.

That's where Romans come in. The phalanx revolutionized warfare in the first century and WarCraft begs to repeat this lesson in history. Line your wall of Footmen with Archers behind it. Eight Archers will shred a Raider before it can swing its sword even once. If you position your phalanx strategically on the entrance to a bridge or between a break in trees, you'll force your enemy into this gauntlet every time it wants to attack.

Building this solid defense determines which buildings you should concentrate on in the early stages of your game. If you don't have one, spend your initial purse of gold on a barracks. Then, after you've enough gold coming in (via Peasants) build a lumber mill. This will allow you to train Archers. Later in the game, spend your gold on upgrading your Spear or Arrow technology far before you bother with Ax, Sword, and Shield strengths. If you've strong Archers in place, you won't need better Swords.

One last addition to your walls of death: catapults. In order to make them virtually impenetrable, you'll need to place two or three catapults behind your lines in strategic locations. Show some foresight and build a blacksmith's shop as soon as you can.

[Why Walls Don't Work -- Sometimes](#)

Here's where WarCraft gets frustrating... and fun. Lining up all your Grunts tightly with Spearmen and adding Catapults behind makes wonderful targets for enemy catapults. One blast can destroy up to six or even nine soldiers. That makes maintaining a proper defense quite difficult and costly. You'll need to build a strategy early on to deal with approaching catapults.

Knowing a catapult is on its way is the first step. Use your Necromancer's 'dark sight' ability to clear a region in front of your main line of defense so that you'll be able to see oncoming attacks. Once you've seen a catapult appear (hopefully before you hear it's fatal launch)

choose a method for destroying it.

A decoy method works well for destroying catapults. Send out a fast, single troop into the firing radius of the catapult. It'll fire at the first enemy to enter its range. Keep the decoy troop flirting with the catapult (the troop should have enough time to move away from the explosion before it hits) while you pull a catapult or group of Raiders forward to attack the catapult. If you can avoid having the attacking catapult fire at your line of defense or at one of your own catapults, you'll be in good stead to decimate it with a catapult blast of your own.

Sometimes you'll have the opportunity to move your decoy troop into a cluster of enemy troops. If you don't mind the sacrifice, think about it. Most humans and the computer AI won't react quickly enough to stay the hand of their catapult... and will watch helplessly as it destroys their own troops.

Another way to kill catapults is to use your Wizards to cast either Firestorms or Poisonous Clouds over the heads of the enemy catapults. They don't move quickly and suffer most from these spells. Again, you'll need a decoy to divert attacks away from your troops and/or Wizard, but this method tends to incur less wrath on the part of the computer AI.

Harassment Has Never Been So Much Fun...

Once you've defended well, you're almost ready to get offensive. But not quite yet. Don't jump the gun. It's easy in WarCraft to forget how strong your enemy is and to underestimate how many troops it will take to level his, her, or its town. The computer tends to hold back, waiting to throw the bulk of its forces against you when you're foolish enough to get near its town. For that reason, stay away. It's better to explore the map with the help of your Far Seeing spells rather than unwittingly unleashing a juggernaut.

But if you leave your enemy completely undisturbed, you'll likely find yourself facing an extraordinarily strong opponent in the end game. You need to keep your opponent guessing and, frankly, you need to keep killing off its troops without sparking an all-out confrontation.

There are a number of different ways to harass your enemy. Sending a Raider or two up into the ranks of its Peasants is an easy way to knock off a few enemy troops. Diversions work best with this strategy... send one Raider up near the enemy town and, once it has captured the attention of the enemy troops in the area, lead them off and away from the town. Now send two or three Raiders up (with perhaps a Spearman or two) to kill off as many Peasants as possible. Maybe you'll get lucky and wipe out a catapult while you're still alive.

While this suicide strategy works fairly well, there's an even better way to shred enemy forces. Draw them into traps. First build a V of Spearmen or Archers at the gate of a bridge or clearing between forests. Line the inside of the V with Grunts. Now place a catapult or two near the tops of the respective V wings. When you're ready, send a Raider into enemy territory. As soon as an enemy troop responds, turn around and flee. Lead the pursuing forces into the mouth of the V you've created and watch how quickly they die.

There's really no comparison to the well-set trap, but once you develop your game to the point of building Towers and Wizards, be sure to crank out as many Wizards as you can afford. Rather than sending Raiders up into enemy territory, Demons and Spiders serve much better. They don't cost money to create... which means they're much more expendable. Once you've four or five Wizards sitting behind your defensive line, you can rotate among them and send Demon after Demon into your enemy's territory. Spiders are great for misdirecting enemy catapult fire as well.

If you're playing the humans, you've a real advantage in this stage of the game: invisibility. Cast it on a Water Elemental or a Knight and send them behind enemy lines into the midst of the Orcs' Peons. Before the Orc player can respond, every Peon they have will be dead. If you cast it on a catapult, you can position it behind enemy lines, directly in range of your opponent's town, and attack from a rear, perhaps even protected, position.

By the way, defending against the invisibility spell is a real trick. You need to find that place on the map where you can build a complete wall. Across a bridge or in the gap between two forests, you'll need to quickly find a place to shut off all access to your side of the map. If the human player is smart, they'll be cutting down trees to create new paths into your territory -- look for them. Nothing will end a game more quickly than losing six or eight Peons once a Water Elemental pops into sight.

Finally, there's one last trick you can pull to keep your enemy scrambling. Use your Peons to dig a path deep into a forest near your enemy's town, or near the place where its troops congregate, but not completely through it. Now roll a catapult into your new cul-de-sac and let the fireballs fly. Every time your opponent manages to build a catapult in response, it'll be forced to cover this vantage rather than being free to roll to the front lines.

[It Is A Good Day To Die](#)

Timing, rather than resources, is the key to WarCraft. When your harassment forces penetrate deep into enemy territory, the time may be ripe for your final assault. Build troops for your attack... you'll need a few more Knights than your defensive walls required and you'll want to have at least four Wizards fully rested. As you launch your offensive, have your Wizards cast their major summoning spells. Four Water Elementals will do wonders for an attack. Be sure to move catapults forward to make quick work of your opponent's town. Be sure to target its barracks before going after farms.

If you find stiff resistance to your final assault, you may have jumped the gun. Retreat. Don't just sacrifice your army because it's fun to watch. Try to turn a losing battle into a chance to trap and spear to death your enemies.

But, if you've played your game well, this final stage will be as simple as moving all your troops into your enemy's town and watching them slaughter the remaining hapless souls left. Enjoy.

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