

Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession

Like all the best adventure games, SSI's *Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession* is fairly intuitive to play -- with a bit of experimentation you should be able to get around any problems you encounter fairly easily. However, we do feel a few brief notes to help you get going would be a definite Good Thing, so, to that end, welcome to the *CD-ROM Today* beginners' guide to *Strahd's Possession*...

The bulk of the actions you're going to undertake in *Strahd's Possession* fall into one of three broad categories -- **Combat**, **Spellcasting** and **Adventuring**. We'll deal with each in turn...

A few things you should know about Combat

Enemies can attack you at any time during the game -- you're going to have to be prepared for a fight at all times. Often, running is not an option -- yes, you can move your startled adventurers when under attack in the normal way (by left clicking with the mouse on one of the arrows centered at the bottom of the screen), but you'll rarely be able to escape your enemies this way. Fighting is often the only option.

To attack an enemy, your characters must all have their weapons "in hand" and "ready." To do this, place your mouse cursor over one of the character portraits at the bottom of the screen and left-click with the mouse. The inventory screen will appear and the game will pause. Items owned by your characters, including weapons and armor, will now appear -- if the standing figures are holding weapons in their hands, they are "in hand" and you're all set. If not, look for weapons in the inventory slots at the bottom of the screen and, by left clicking with the mouse, move it to your character's hand. Left-click again and it is "in hand." Armor and clothing can be moved to the appropriate areas on the character's figure in the same way.

By "ready," the game means that the weapon is in usable condition -- if it is not it will be shaded out on the adventure screen. Two-handed weapons demand both hands are free to use it before they're "ready" -- place the weapon on one hand but leave the other empty and you'll be fine. Once you're all set, a right-click returns you to the adventure screen, ready to fight.

To fight, place the mouse cursor over the weapon you wish to use and left-click. Now place the cursor over the attacking enemy or beast. If your characters are close enough to engage the enemy, the cursor changes into a targeting circle and sword. Now, by left clicking, you can make each character attack once with each hand.

That's basically it, but there are a few complications you should be aware of. Remember, for instance, that thrown weapons must be retrieved after a fight and made "ready" again -- they don't magically return to your hand like Captain America's shield or something. Similarly, ranged weapons (bows, slings etc) need ammunition -- arrows can be found in your character's quiver, while rocks for slings can be stored anywhere in inventory (both must be retrieved if you want to use them again). You can

fire these by left clicking on a ready weapon on the adventure screen.

Things you should know about Spellcasting

To spellcraft, you first need a mage or priest (cleric) in your party. A mage has a golden spell book displayed, centred above his or her portrait on the adventure screen, while a priest is indicated by a golden holy symbol. Characters who have both possess both types of skill. To chose a spell, move the mouse cursor to the top of the screen. A menu list will appear with choices such as REST, PRAY, MEMORIZE etc. To choose a priest's spell, left-click on PRAY (use MEMORIZE for a mage). Do this and the spell screen will appear. (We'll use a mage for the purposes of this example, but controlling a priest works broadly similarly.)

On the spell screen, there's a list of spells, the number available to each level of his experience clearly indicated. To decide which spells are to be readied for use, place the cursor over the [-] or [+] signs next to your choice and left-click. For instance: If you've got three level-1 spells available, you can decide that they'll all do the same thing, or that two are of one sort and the third does another, or that they all do different things.

If more than one mage is with the party, icons bearing their individual names appear at the top of the spell screen. Simply click on the name of the one you wish to memorize spells, and then on the "done" icon when you're finished.

In order to use the spells chosen, however, your character(s) must REST (this is the first choice on the left when you move your mouse cursor to the top of the adventure screen). This option is only available if there are no monsters nearby, giving your party time for your magic wielders to prepare their skills for use. If characters with healing ability are in your party, a window will now appear to ask if you want to use the rest period to have them cure one of your party too. Remember though -- you can be disturbed by intruders at any time!

Your mage or priest is now ready for battle. To use him in action, place the cursor on the spell book or holy symbol and left click to reveal all level-1 spells. Buttons labeled "2nd," "3rd," etc., allow you to access more powerful magics. Pointing the cursor at the name of the spell itself and left-clicking activates it -- you'll need to point the cursor at your target and left-click again for any spells which have to be projected over distance. Spells requiring you to touch your opponent are shown by a change in the hand symbol above the character's portrait -- left-click on this to use the spell.

Once used, you'll need to rest before a spell can be utilized again, and go through the whole MEMORIZE/PRAY process to choose new ones. New spells can be found on your journey in the form of scrolls which can then be added to the mage's spell book.

Things you should know about Adventuring

Pretty much everything else you'll need to do in *Strahd's Possession* is accessed through the adventure screen. We'll go

through movement and dealing with Non-Player Characters (NCPs) separately. Other things you may find you need to do in the game -- look at a sign or writing for instance, or open doors -- we won't be looking at here in detail, though in most cases they'll be easy to work out. Remember -- in *Strahd's Possession*, a single left-click on your mouse goes a long, long way.

Movement Generally, moving your characters should be easy -- just place the mouse cursor over the directional arrows at the bottom of the screen and left-click to move. The arrows are: Forward, "double-time" forward, backward, side-step to the right, side-step to the left, turn right, turn left. Movement continues as long as the left mouse button is held down, and stops when the button is released (or your party hits a wall or other solid object).

If you're not happy with this method of movement, however, there are other options. One way is to hold the left mouse button down and move the cursor to the top of the screen -- it now becomes an arrow, and your character will move in whichever direction you point it. Pushing the arrow right to the top of the screen gives you "double-time" movement.

Alternatively, try hitting the space bar, then moving the cursor around the screen -- this too gives movement, and can be exited from by hitting the space bar once again. Another way of doing it -- step movement -- can be accessed by clicking on the compass located above the directional arrows.

NCP Encounters You can converse with non-hostile NCPs by placing the cursor over them once you're close enough. Left-click and you get a close up of the character, plus a list of questions you can ask them. Highlight and left-click to continue, then right-click to exit. NCPs can be added to your party quite easily, and any picked up this way (though not either of your two original characters) can be dropped to make room for new party-members at any point.

And that's it -- that's all we're going to tell you. (There's got to be something left for you to discover in the game, after all.) Have fun with the game, and remember -- if in doubt, try clicking on something with that left mouse button!