

'Stratagem'

'Stratagem' is a multi-player internet game in which you lead your army through ever greater battles in the constant struggle to be the best. As a semi-realtime game, 'Stratagem' is designed to eliminate the impact of network lag on gameplay and can run up to thirty-two players at once on a single map. The command method is simple, making it instantly playable (although there are cunning shortcuts and tactics which players will easily master after only a few games) and its vast diversity of troops, strategies and scenarios lend it an originality and lasting appeal which makes it unique amongst other internet games.

System Requirements

486 DX4 100 MHz or greater IBM-compatible computer
Recommended Pentium 90 MHz or greater.
Windows 95.
8 MB of RAM.

Mouse Controls

Your cursor will turn into a magnifying glass when you hover over a person you can select.

To select or give commands use left-click. Right-click will de-select a person. You can also left-click on a waypoint or a command to cancel it and, if you hold down control whilst clicking on a waypoint, it will delete all waypoints from that one onwards. A quicker way of deleting commands given to a group is to hold down control whilst selecting the whole group. This will delete all their commands.

A crossed circle error sign means you have given an invalid command or tried to move to a place it is not possible for you to reach at the time.

If you click on an action and then move the waypoint to an area, the selected troop(s) will move to that area and perform that order.

There are various keyboard shortcuts available for experienced users. Each command or action has been numbered or given a letter (for spellcasting, see 'Magic-Users; Spellcasting') and you can press these to give faster orders, eg. 'a'=attack. These shortcuts are shown on the left of the event bar at the bottom of the screen, when you hover the cursor over an icon.

In-Game Chat

You can speak to other players whilst playing any scenario. The text will appear on screen on top of the running game and will be visible to all players.

How to:

To speak to another player, press <enter>, type your text and then press <enter> to send.

Coloured text:

You can also speak in coloured text. This is useful if everyone types in an agreed colour, as a way of recognising who is speaking at a glance. The colours are; F1=white, F2=red, F3=green and F4=blue and <shift>F1=white, <shift>F2=yellow, <shift>F3=purple, <shift>F4=brown.

Your Army

Races:

When you begin the game, you may choose to lead an army of either humans or gobgoyles. There are various advantages and disadvantages to each race;

Humans:

Humans are not as physically strong or tough as gobgoyles so have less hit points and do less damage. However, they are allowed to wear armour and hit more accurately. They are also very disciplined and will fight in tight formations without breaking ranks when attacked.

Gobgoyles:

Gobgoyles are physically stronger and tougher than humans, having more hit points and doing more damage, but are less accurate. Therefore, humans will hit an enemy more often but do less damage, while gobgoyles will do more damage but occasionally miss. Gobgoyles are also rather unruly and will break formation if they see an enemy to attack.

Troops:

As general of your army, you give orders to a variety of troops and even to the king!

King: The king is the ruler of the human army and is the strongest and toughest individual within each level. Your king is the heart of your fighting force and, whilst an army carry on without him, he is irreplaceable. may

Emperor: The emperor is the ruler of the gobgoyle army and is, like a human king, the strongest and toughest member within each level. An emperor is also irreplaceable. The only differences between human kings and gobgoyle emperors are the racial ones (see 'Your Army; Races.')

Knights: After the king, the knights are the strongest warriors in the human army. Once you have several of them they can be a truly formidable force or will strengthen a formation of soldiers.

Murderers: Murderers are the gobgoyle elite fighters and are every bit as essential to an effective fighting force. Both knights and murderers are stronger and more resistant to different forms of attack than other troop-types. The only differences between knights and murderers are the above racial ones.

Soldiers: Soldiers are basic fighters and will often make up a large part of a human army. After fifth level, soldiers become knights.

Thugs: Thugs are the gobgoyle soldiers and, after fifth level, become murderers. The only differences between soldiers and thugs are racial ones.

Archers: Human archers are a more accurate shot but do less damage than their gobgoyle counterparts. At later levels they get armour-piercing and flaming arrows.

Lobbers: Gobgoyle lobbers throw skulls and miss more often than the human archers but they do more damage when they do hit. At later levels, Lobbers get poison-filled skulls to hurl.

Scouts: Scouts are the investigative part of a human army. They move faster and more stealthily than other troops and can also hide if they see an enemy approaching (as they have better eyesight.) At later levels, scouts use poisoned daggers.

Assassins: Assassins are gobgoyle spies. Like their human counterparts, they move faster and more carefully than other troops and can also hide. At later levels they also use poisoned daggers. The only differences between scouts and assassins are racial ones.

Wizards: Wizards are human magic-users and wield great power. They cast spells using mana, which is depleted as they do so, and which gradually returns while they rest. A wizard, as well as using offensive magic, can also use his magic to heal his comrades.

Necromancers: Necromancers are gobgoyle magic-users and have a similar range of spells to wizards but they are unable to use healing magic. However, necromancers draw their magical energies from the ordinary people around them and so, as long as they have people nearby they can cast infinite spells.

Peasants: Peasants of both races are not really a troop type and do not attack. Peasants must be recruited from farms (see 'Recruiting.') and only peasants of your race may join your army.

Peasants can be given orders to farm land, which produces food and makes more peasants. They are also responsible for keeping down the sheep population (which they do

automatically)so if you recruit too many peasants from one area at once, you may find your land overrun with sheep!

Human peasants live in wooden farmhouses and gobgoyle peasants live in stone huts.

Movement

Selecting:

You can either click on a single character or drag-select a group when you want to move them. When you select a group, you can then click on a formation if you want them to move in a strict fashion. Once the group has formed up, a crown icon will appear over one the leader (see 'Formations.') From now on you can just click on the leader to give movement or attack commands instead of having to drag over the whole group.

Waypoints:

When a move command is given, you can add waypoints to make sure your troops go exactly where you want them to. These are useful for going round corners and for taking a different, or more complicated route to the one which the computer would automatically choose for you; being the most straightforward one it could find. At each waypoint you may add an action which will be carried out when the character reaches that point; such as fighting, hiding or spell-casting.

Wait and Prod commands:

The wait and prod commands are used together. You may put in a command for your troops and, adding a waypoint, tell them to wait. They will wait at that waypoint until you send another troop to 'prod' them, at which point they will continue to carry out the commands you gave them earlier. There is also a wait command for wizards which will order them to cast a spell and then wait at that waypoint until they see an enemy, upon whom they will then release the spell (see 'Magic-Users.')

Formations

Moving and fighting in formation can be a great advantage in terms of speed, attack and defense. There are several formations to choose from and you can change formation at any point. You can also pick up stray people on your way and order them to join the formation. A formation's speed depends upon the people it is made up of; a group consisting entirely of scouts would be very fast whereas a group of knights and wizards would be rather slow because the formation will always move at the speed of its slowest member.

How to:

To create a formation, drag or click-select all the troops you want to be included. At this point a new list of command icons will appear, allowing you can choose a formation. Once you have done this, the group will form up at the next replay mode. The person of the highest rank will become the leader and is marked by a crown icon. It is also possible to change the leader of your formation at any point. From now on all commands may be given just to the leader and the whole formation will follow.

Types available:

Humans are very disciplined and have, therefore, more formations available to them, whereas gobgoyles are unruly and are not able to understand some of the more complicated groupings. Each formation has different uses; formations like the wedge are very effective in battle where there is strength and protection in such an attack, ones like 'follow my leader' are very useful for journeying along a narrow pathway where a random group would mill about and get in each other's way while some might even go a different way around and get entirely lost! There are also formations which are particularly suitable for archers.

Recruitment

How to:

Initially, to increase your manpower you will want to recruit peasants. You may only recruit peasants of the same race as you. To do so you must send a knight, soldier, low-level scout (higher level scouts use poisoned daggers so the whole exercise becomes pointless) or the king to walk over to them and then attack them. They are essentially beating them into submission so characters like wizards and archers, who do not fight hand-to-hand, can not do this. Once you have done

this, the peasant becomes part of your army and you may give him orders like a normal troop. A peasant is not a troop-type, as such, and can not be trained until he has been given a profession (see 'Training.')

Training

Its effects:

On many maps in 'Stratagem,' particularly the larger ones, training can mean the difference between victory and obliteration. Training advances the level of your troops and, therefore, increases their strength, spells and other abilities; all troop-types become a little stronger and physically tougher as their level advances but soldiers, knights and the king become very much more so, archers become more accurate and gain armour-piercing and flaming arrows, scouts are more stealthy and use poisoned daggers, and wizards gain access to more powerful spells. When told to train, troops will do so until they have advanced one experience level. However, if you click on train more than once a number will appear on the action box under that person and they will then train to as many levels as you wish.

How to train; in groups:

Once you have recruited peasants (see 'recruiting') you can send them over to an individual or group of the desired troop-type and tell them to train with them. Once the replay mode is over, the peasant will have been initiated into that profession and will be a level one character. He may then be trained normally as one of that troop-type. To train a group they must all be of the same troop-type. You then select the whole group and tell them to train. Training within all troop-types is only possible if there is at least one character of a higher level. Training in groups which are all of the same level is impossible as they have nothing new to teach each other.

How to train; with equipment:

If there is only one individual of a certain class in your army, training may still be possible. Training equipment is available on some maps; archery targets allow a single archer to train, mounted, rotating shields are for the use of knights and soldiers and there are research towers for wizards to train in. Scouts may only train with other scouts and the king, whilst he will spar with knights and soldiers, is teaching rather than learning and so his level advances much more slowly than a regular fighter.

Magic-Users

The human wizards and the gobgoyle necromancers have various differences in the way they cast spells and which ones they cast (see 'Your army; Troops.') They all progress through three levels of spell books; Apprentice, Wizard and ArchMage, which they gain access to as their level increases. Each spell book contains better spells than the last as the wizard becomes more capable of harnessing the more powerful magic. A magic-user will begin with the Apprentice's spell book, will be able to cast spells from the Wizard's spell book at second level and will have the ArchMage's spell book at fourth level. A magic-user can train with other magic-users of the same race and of a different level or, on some maps, there are research towers available which may be used by up to four wizards at once.

Spell Casting:

How to:

To cast spells, click on the desired spell book and the icon list will change to show the available spells in that book. If you hover the pointer over the icons, the spell name will be shown on the left of the event bar at the bottom of the screen. Click on the spell you want to cast and your pointer will change to show a circle of the area of effect for that spell. Place this circle over your desired target/s and left-click. A magic-user can be ordered to cast several spells in a row and to move about in between casting. The magic-user will cast each spell in the order it was given to him.

Delayed casting:

You may tell a magic-user to walk to a certain place and cast a spell. It is also possible to tell him to wait in a certain place and to cast the spell on the next enemy he sees by clicking on the relevant icon.

Shortcuts:

There are shortcuts available for casting spells once you get the hang of it or if it is a spell you cast very often and you know its position in the book. The books are numbered one to three, in order of difficulty and the spells within each book are numbered in the order in which they appear. Therefore you can select your wizard and type the book number and then

the spell number to cast the spell more quickly. The shortcut numbers are shown on the event bar when you hover over an icon.

Artifacts

About artifacts:

There are many artifacts hidden in 'Stratagem' for the enterprising adventurer to discover. Some artifacts are there to be discovered and used as part of the conditions for winning a scenario, whilst others are there simply to provide useful powers or to enhance powers you already have. Not every scenario will have an artifact whilst some may have several, or revolve entirely around the item.

However, artifacts are not there simply as toys. Their powers are far greater than ordinary magic and must not be taken lightly, as some artifacts may have detrimental effects as well as great benefits. With great power comes even greater responsibility and woe betide the hapless adventurer who treats such items lightly! Often artifacts may be protected by an un-aligned guardian whom you will have to defeat to gain control of the particular item.

Artifact list:

Some artifacts which may appear in a scenario are listed below, but you will have to discover their powers for yourself!

The Tome of Destruction
The Broadsword of Blood
Foranir's Blade
The Holy Grail
The Staff of the Heavens
Puck's Wand
The Ruling Crown
The Hourglass of the Ancients
The Holy Handgrenade
Platemail of Resistance
The Bow of Power
The Magic Spoon

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