

𐌸𐌿𐌰𐌹𐌺𐌻𐌼𐌽𐌾𐌿𐀀𐀁𐀂𐀃𐀄𐀅𐀆𐀇𐀈

BATTLE OF THE RING

𐌸𐌿𐌰𐌹𐌺𐌻𐌼𐌽𐌾𐌿𐀀𐀁𐀂𐀃𐀄𐀅𐀆𐀇𐀈

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1.0 Introduction:

This is a game for two or three players, designed to simulate the wars illustrated in the book "Lord of the Rings" by J.R.R. Tolkien. This book has been described as 'a sort of science fiction, a fairy story, a saga', but whatever adjectives you like to use 'spell-binding' is probably the most appropriate. It is a book to be enjoyed by people of all ages. If you haven't read it yet, we urge you to do so: you are almost certain to become another ardent fan of the world of Middle Earth.

The board covers the area of Middle Earth, and all the major peoples mentioned in the book are included. However, since the literature on this particular war is obviously limited, the emphasis has been placed on speed of play and enjoyment, rather than on attempt to mirror the book. Nevertheless, the game includes the possibility of all the major battles mentioned in the book. A simple live or die combat table is used with no retreats, and zones of control and supply have no part in the game.



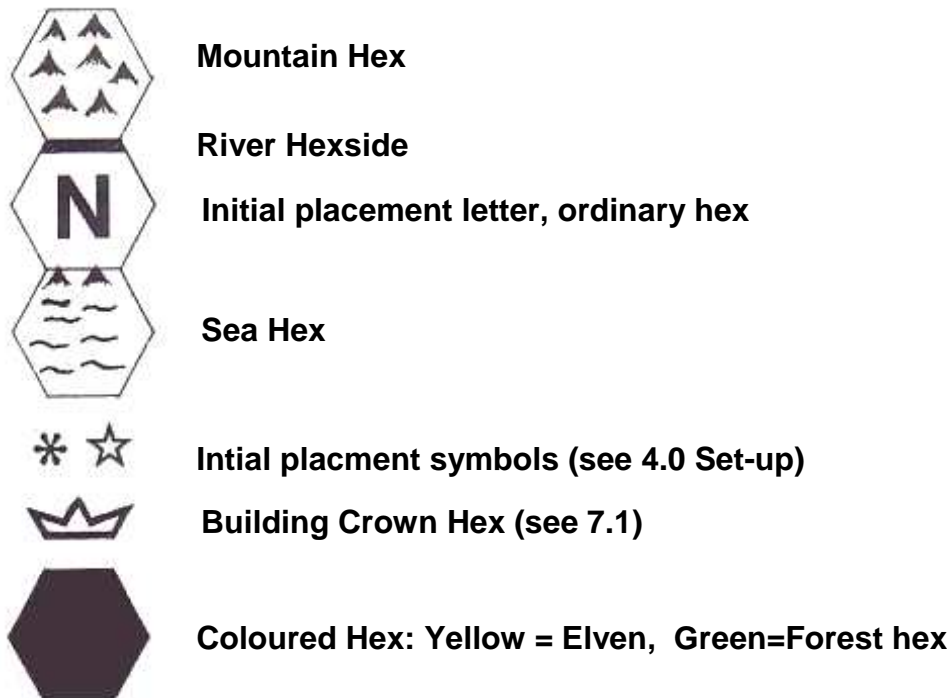
2.0 Components

One 24x27 hex map of Middle-Earth in the Third Age & 94 playing pieces

2 six sided dice are needed

2.1 Map

(Note: There should be water all around Dol Amroth – this is a publication oversight)



Hexes Underlined in RED = Cities (Fortresses)

Hexes underlined in ORANGE = Special hexes

2.2 Pieces

These represent armies of the various peoples of middle-earth, or actual characters, such as Gandalf or Aragorn. Also there are special pieces, such as the armies of the dead and the Ringbearer (These special counters are explained later on in section 11.0)



2.3 The single factor printed on them is the Movement allowance that each piece possesses.

2.4 An EYE symbol on a piece means it is a Mordor Orc army, and as such is controlled by the Sauron player. The WHITE HAND symbol likewise identifies a piece as a Man-Orc (Uruk-Kai) army controlled by the Saruman player.

3.0 Player Forces & Objectives:

3.1 For three players forces and objectives are as follows:

- **Sauron:** All Orc armies and the Nazgul
OBJECTIVE: To possess the Ring in Barad Dur
- **Saruman:** All Man-Orc armies and Saruman
OBJECTIVE: : To possess the Ring in Isengard, or in the Shire, or for the Saruman piece to occupy the same hex as the Ring.
- **Alliance:** All other pieces.
OBJECTIVE: : To destroy the Ring in Mount Doom

3.2 For two players:

- **Sauron and Saruman** are counted as one force (the Evil Alliance)
OBJECTIVE: To possess the Ring in Barad-Dur.
- **Alliance:** All other pieces.
OBJECTIVE: To destroy the Ring in Mount Doom

4.0 Set-up:

4.1 The Sauron player:

- 25 Orc armies. 1 on each of the hexes marked with a black star (#) or a black crown. (Harad, Dol Goldur. Minas Morgul, Barad Dur) and the Nazgul piece on the hex marked N.

4.2 The Saruman player:

- 10 Man-Orc armies, one on each of the hexes marked with a red circle, and the Saruman piece on Isengard.

4.3 The Alliance player places:

- 2 Hobbit armies, 1 on each of the Shire hexes marked with a yellow dot;
- 3 Dwarvish armies, one on each of the Lonely Mountain and Iron Mountain hexes marked with a yellow dot or crown;
- 6 Elven armies, one on each of the six yellow hexes;
- 6 Rohan armies, one on each of the hexes marked with a green dot or crown;
- 8 Gondor armies, one on each of the hexes marked with a star or crown;
- Aragorn piece on the hex marked with A;
- Gandalf piece on the hex marked with G;
- Fangorn piece (F) on the hex marked with F;

- The two armies of the Dead on the Paths of the Dead.

4.4 When the game begins the dots, stars and letters on the hexes can be ignored; they are only relevant to setting up the game.

4.5 *To provide a better game for two players an option is to remove the Northernmost and Southernmost Man-Orc armies and the three North-Eastern Orc armies from play (although they should be available for building)*

5. Sequence of Play:

5.1 In any round the players have their turns in the following order:

- 1.Sauron,
- 2.Saruman
- 3.Alliance

In the two player game, Saruman and Sauron are combined to form the Evil Alliance, which plays first.

5.2 In any turn the player conducts the following operations:

- **Building Phase:** Build new armies
- **1st Movement Phase:** Move any or all pieces
- **Attack Phase:** Make any or all attacks possible
- **2nd Movement Phase:** Move any or all pieces

6.0 Stacking:

6.1 The stacking limit is one army or character piece per hex.

6.2 The only exceptions to this are Fangorn, which Gandalf or the Ring bearer can enter while the Fangorn army is already present, and the Paths of the Dead, in which the two Armies of the Dead start the game stacked, and which Aragorn can enter while the Armies of the Dead are already present.

7.0 Building Phase:

7.1 *No nation has any builds in the first round.* In all subsequent rounds:

- The Alliance may build 1Dwarvish OR 1Hobbit new army, 1Rohan new army and 1Gondor new army;
- Saruman may build 2 Man-Orc armies.
- In the second round Sauron may build 2 new Orc armies
In the third round 2 new Orc armies,
And in the fourth and all subsequent rounds 3 new Orc armies.

7.2 All army builds must be made on the appropriate crowned hexes or on the shire (see below), i.e. Mordor may build on Dol Goldur, Minas Morgul, Barad Dur and in Ilarad; Saruman may build on Isengard and the Shire if it is in his possession; Gondor may build on Dol Amroth or Minas Tirith; Rohan may build on Edoras or Helm's Deep, the Dwarves may build on the Lonely Mountain or the Iron Mountains; the Hobbits may build on the Shire if it is in their possession.

7.3 To be built upon, the CROWNED hex or SHIRE must not be occupied by any army or special piece of any kind. If an enemy piece has occupied the crowned hex in the past and it is now empty, this crowned hex *can* be used for building by the original owner, even though he has not re-occupied it.

7.4 A nation cannot build on another nation's crowned hex at any time (except for the Shire) even if the two nations are being played as one force, if a nation cannot build because its supply centres are occupied then these builds are lost: they cannot be accumulated from round to round.

7.5 The SHIRE is a special 'crowned' hex, being capable of supplying builds to either the Hobbits or to Saruman, depending upon who is in possession. It starts the game in the possession of the Hobbits and it continues in their possession even when unoccupied until one of Saruman's pieces has entered it and remains there at the end of a Movement Phase. To regain it, the Alliance player must occupy it in a similar manner. Only the Hobbits or Saruman can make builds in the Shire; no other nation may, even if they capture it. However, if a third nation does occupy the Shire, he must, on withdrawal, state which of the two, Saruman or the Hobbits, now owns it.

7.6 Character pieces and Elvin armies cannot be rebuilt if lost.

7.7 A nation cannot have more armies on the board than there are pieces to represent those armies.

7.8 If a nation is eliminated it can return to the game if one of its crowned hexes is left unoccupied.

8.0 First Movement Phase

8.1 A player may move as many or as few of his pieces as he wishes, there is no restriction to the number of pieces that can be moved (except for the Fangorn army and the Armies of the Dead). Each piece has a limited movement ability in every movement phase (*this is printed on each piece*):

- Armies of Gondor, Sauron, Dwarves and Hobbits: up to 2 hexes.
- Man-Orcs, Rohan, (Fangorn Army) and the Ring bearer: up to 3 hexes.
- Saruman and Aragorn: up to 4 hexes.
- Gandalf and Nazgul: up to 6 hexes.

8.2 A piece may not move over an opposing piece unless permission is given, although they may move over friendly pieces at any time.

8.3 No piece may cross or occupy mountain hexes or hexsides, or sea hexes, or forest hexes, or the Entwash. Movement is not restricted when entering or leaving cities (fortresses) or crossing rivers.

8.4 While there is an Elven army remaining, no pieces except those given permission by the Alliance player may cross or occupy Elven hexes. In addition the Ringbearer may only occupy each of these hexes for two rounds before moving out; and once the Ringbearer has left that hex, it can never return, although it may still occupy other Elven hexes for two rounds each. When all the Elven armies have been destroyed the Elven hexes become ordinary hexes.

8.5 The hexes of Moria, Isengard, Fangorn, the Paths of the Dead and Mount Doom are all special hexes, and can only be occupied by certain pieces.

9.0 Attack Phase:

9.1 To attack, the attacking and defending units must be in adjacent hexes not separated by a mountain hexside.

9.2 Pieces in Elven hexes and Isengard *can* attack and be attacked as on ordinary hexes.

9.3 It is *not* possible to attack or be attacked by pieces in Mount Doom, Fangorn, the Paths of the Dead or Moria.

9.5 Each piece can only attack once per round, but a piece can be attacked many times in one attack phase.

9.5 The attacking player states which piece of his is attacking which opposing piece and rolls two dice. He consults the combat results table according to the position of the defending piece (the position of the attacking piece is unimportant) and the strengths of both attacking and defending pieces.

9.6 A defending piece can have one of four positions: it can be on open ground, i.e. only a normal hexside separating defending piece from attacking piece; it can be in a city/fortress; it can be across a river from the attacking piece; or it can be in a city/fortress that is also across a river from the attacking piece (Cair Andros or Dol Amroth).

9.7 *A piece can have one of two strengths; ordinary or Elven.*

- The Elven armies, the Fangorn army, Gandalf and the Nazgul have an Elven strength *all* the time,
- Aragorn, Saruman, Gandalf and the Nazgul can give Elven strength to ordinary armies on *adjacent* hexes.
- Gandalf and the Nazgul can give Elven strength to any friendly adjacent pieces (including Saruman and Aragorn)
- Aragorn can only give Elven strength to Gondor armies and the Armies of the Dead, and Saruman only to Man-Orc armies.

NOTE: *An intervening Mountain hexside prevents one unit giving Elven strength to another.*

9.8 The combat results table gives, in the appropriate box, two sets of numbers. If the die roll is equal to a number in the 'D' column, the defender is eliminated, if equal to a number in the 'A' column, the attacker is eliminated. If the die roll is equal to no number in either set there is no result

10.0 Second Movement Phase:

This is conducted in exactly the same way as the first Movement Phase.

11.0 Special Hexes and Pieces:

11.1 Moria: This hex can only be occupied by Gandalf. However, when Gandalf is in occupation any Alliance piece can move from one side to the other, counting Moria as one hex.

11.2 The pieces of Saruman and Sauron only can pass through when Gandalf is not in Moria, but must have permission when he is.

11.3 If Alliance pieces have passed through Moria in a Movement Phase, Gandalf must remain on the hex at the end of that phase. When in Moria Gandalf cannot attack or be attacked and cannot give Elven strength to adjacent ordinary armies.

11.4 Isengard: Isengard can only normally be occupied by Saruman or Man-Orc armies, but pieces on it can attack and be attacked as on an ordinary hex. However, when the Fangorn Army is activated it moves immediately to the Isengard hex and destroys its special status, making it an ordinary hex.

11.5 Saruman can still use it as a build centre if he recaptures it, or if it is left empty, but it cannot regain its invulnerability to invasion.

11.6 Fangorn: Fangorn is occupied by the Fangorn army at the start of the game, which cannot attack or be attacked while in Fangorn.

11.7 The Fangorn army is activated by the Ringbearer or Gandalf moving on to the Fangorn hex and ending the Movement Phase there. When this happens the Fangorn army moves immediately across the mountains to Isengard. It destroys any piece that is on the hex and turns it into an ordinary hex. Thereafter the Fangorn army has Elven strength and can attack and be attacked. Once destroyed it cannot be rebuilt.

11.8 The piece that activated the Fangorn army must leave Fangorn as soon as an empty hex is in movement range, after which the hex is closed to all pieces.

11.9 When in Fangorn, Gandalf cannot attack or be attacked, and cannot give Elven strength to adjacent ordinary armies.

11.10 The Paths of the Dead: This hex is occupied by two Armies of the Dead at the start of the game, which cannot attack or be attacked while in the Paths of the Dead.

11.11 These armies are activated by Aragorn moving into the hex from the North or South, and ending the Movement Phase there. In the next movement phase Aragorn and the two Armies must leave through the South or be destroyed. Thereafter the hex is closed to all pieces, and the Armies of the Dead behave as ordinary Gondor armies, except that they cannot be rebuilt.

11.12 Mount Doom: No piece except the Ringbearer can occupy or move across this hex. *When the Ringbearer reaches this hex the Alliance player has won.*

11.13 The Ringbearer: The Ringbearer is a special piece and has NO attacking or defending strength. However, it cannot be destroyed (except in Mount Doom) but can change hands several times in a game.

11.14 To capture the ring simply move the capturing piece onto the same hex as the Ringbearer, remove both Ringbearer and capturing piece, and place the Ringbearer of the capturing player on the hex. An escape move of 3 hexes can be made after the capture, regardless of the Movement phase.

12.0 Designer Notes: Origins and Game strategy

The game started its life from two sources, long before I ever saw a hex wargame! Risk was one source; the other was, of course, the book. I unconsciously set myself two targets at this stage: to try to include all the main aspects and characters of the book, and to make an enjoyable game. However, the Risk set-up didn't quite produce the results required, so a combat system similar to the present one was adopted, and a square board tried. This board, as I remember was an enormous 22 in. x 28 in., and included sections of the map to North, South, and West that were hardly ever used. It was also a Five player game. However, this version had its flaws, too. It took too long to play, the victory criteria were wrong and - most important - it couldn't sustain interest. So it was back to the drawing board again.

This time I consciously set myself some targets: the game had to ensure that all players were involved at all times; there had to be fluidity of alliances between players; victory criteria must be found that gave all players an approximately equal chance of winning; a simple, quick combat system had to be found (I settled for the one then in use, altered almost to its present form); and the game had to be capable of being finished in 3 hours (real time, not S.P.I. time).

About then I bought my first hex wargame (D-Day). I enjoyed it, I went out and bought another and another So the next 'Ring' board was in hexes. From there it was a slow process (about 2 years) through successive designs of boards, variations in the combat table, alterations to victory criteria, changes to forces balance, etc. The final alteration was the reduction to 3 players from the original 5. Throughout this period 'Ring' was playtested by people around me. With a new game (unless it is very simple in concept) this is extremely important, and without it a decent game just wouldn't have emerged. For this I have to thank a long list of friends who plodded their way through version after version, criticising, praising and offering suggestions, but always willing to try the next version regardless of how disastrous the previous one was.

Several people have complained that the two player game is rather unsatisfactory. My fault, because the game was basically designed for three players and the two player version got insufficient playtesting. One way to overcome this problem is to remove the Northernmost and Southernmost Man-Orc armies and the three North-Eastern Orc armies from play, although they should be available for building.

But now a few suggestions on three player strategy, because the game works best in this version. Although all the players' objectives concern the one piece (the Ring) their strategy must be completely different. The Mordor player must attempt to defeat the Gondor armies fairly swiftly, while depleting the Allied armies in the North. Killing Elves is never a bad idea, but Mordor must wait for the ring to come close. At some stage the Allied player must make a dash to reach Mount Doom, and for this Mordor must be ready. This is really

the only chance Mordor has to win so long as the Allied player is not too foolish or does not have extraordinarily bad luck.

For the Allied player there are three stages to the game. The first is to get the ring into the East, out of the reach of Saruman, as quickly as possible. The next is much more difficult. Saruman should be stopped, if possible, from breaking through on the Rohan front, Gondor should be held against Mordor, and a large force of Dwarves built up in the North. Obviously, the Paths of the Dead and Fangorn should be activated, and the Elf-making abilities of Aragorn and Gandalf should be used, but the preservation of these pieces is more important than their use at this stage. If it's possible, Saruman should be encouraged to fight Mordor, but at all costs the Saruman piece must be kept in the West. Finally there is the Rush on Mordor. This should be done from both the West and the North, but the ring must be kept close to throw into Mount Doom when a gap occurs. And remember, it's seldom that the Allied player gets a second chance.

Saruman has the most difficult game. In the beginning he must choose whether to try to intercept the ring or to go for the Shire. If he succeeds in intercepting the ring he has usually won, but if he doesn't he can have a very difficult job capturing the Shire, and without that he can't build up quickly enough for the middle game. In the middle game Saruman should not interfere with the main action in Gondor and the North unless one of the opponents gains a noticeable advantage, and should content himself with the defeat of Rohan.

When the allies make their rush it is usually possible to make a flank attack to seize the Ring. Well, that's my view of the game. I hope you enjoyed the game, and will continue to enjoy it in the future.

-Martin Edwardes



Rules amended and formatted from the article published in the Wargamer magazine issue #1. The Q&A and Designer notes are taken from subsequent articles from the same magazine.

Game designed by Martin Edwardes, with assistance from Brian Burt, Peter Walschmidt and others. Copyright subsists with Martin Edwards, of 17 Disraeli Road, Forest Gate, London, E7, March 1977.



WORLD WIDE WARGAMES



Q & A

Q. Should there be water all around Dol Amroth?

A. Yes. Sorry we missed it off the map.

Q. Does an intervening mountain hex side prevent one unit giving elven strength to another?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the piece (for example, the Nazgul) capturing the ringbearer lost forever?

A. Yes. This rule was introduced to achieve play balance.

Q. Are fortresses those towns underlined in red?

A. Yes.

Q. If Fangorn is activated at the end of the first movement phase, can it attack out of Isengard in the combat phase immediately following?

A. Yes.

Combat Results Table

TYPES OF ARMIES→	Ordinary attacking Ordinary		Ordinary attacking Elven		Elven attacking Ordinary		Elven attacking Elven	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
TERRAIN								
On open ground	2	10	2	10		7 10	2	10
		8 11	3	11		8 11		11
		9 12		12		9 12		12 9
Into Fortress OR Across River	2	10	2		2	10	2	10
	3	11	3	11		8 11	3	11
		9 12	4	12		9 12		12
Into Fortress AND Across River	2	10	2		2	10	2	
	3	11	3		3	11	3	11
	4	12	4	12		9 12	4	12
			5					