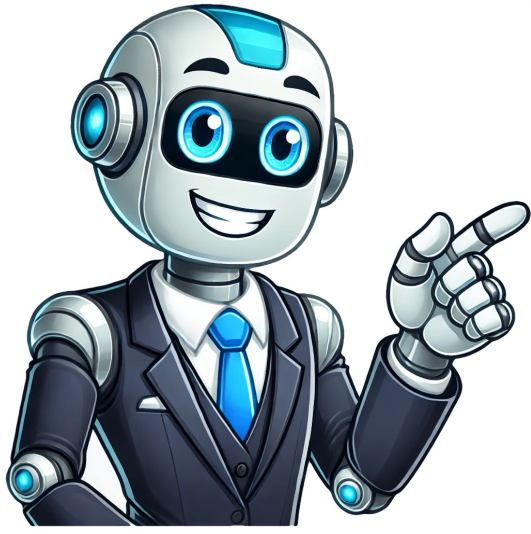


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BrittonAdam McCarthyComposer(s)Bill BrownJamie ChristophersonEngineSAGEPlatform(s)Microsoft WindowsXbox 360ReleaseWindowsNA: February 28, 2006UK: March 3, 2006Xbox 360NA: July 5, 2006UK: July 14, 2006Genre(s)Real-time strategyMode(s)Single-player, multiplayerThe Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth II is a 2006 real-time strategy video game developed and published by Electronic Arts. The second part of the Middle-earth strategy game series, it is based on the fantasy novels The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien and its live-action film series adaptation. It is the sequel to Electronic Arts' 2004 title The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth. Along with the standard edition, a Collector's Edition of the game was released, containing bonus material and a documentary about the game's development. The story for The Battle for Middle-earth II is divided into Good and Evil Campaigns. The Good Campaign focuses on Glorfindel, an Elf who is alerted to a planned attack on the Elven sanctuary of Rivendell. With help from the Dwarves and other Good forces, the Elves attempt to eliminate Sauron and his army to restore peace in Middle-earth. In the Evil Campaign, Sauron sends the Mouth of Sauron and the Nazgûl to muster wild Goblins. With his army, Sauron moves forward with his plan to destroy the remaining Good forces in the North. The Windows version of the game was released in March 2006 and the Xbox 360 version was released in July 2006. The Battle for Middle-earth II received generally favorable reviews from video game critics. Reviews praised the game's integration of the Lord of the Rings universe into a real-time strategy title, while criticism targeted the game's unbalanced multiplayer mode. The Battle for Middle-earth II received numerous awards, including the Editors' Choice Award from IGN. At the end of March 2006, The Battle for Middle-earth II reached fourth in a list of the month's best-selling PC games. A Windows expansion pack for the game was released in November 2006, called The Rise of the Witch-king, which features a new faction known as Angmar, new units, and several gameplay improvements. The official game servers were shut down for Windows in 2010 and Xbox 360 in 2011; however Windows users may still play online using unofficial game servers. The mini-map is shown in the bottom-left corner, while the player's hero units are shown in rows next to it. Gandalf is the selected hero; his abilities are seen next to his portrait. The Battle for Middle-earth II is a real-time strategy game. Similar to its predecessor, the game requires that the player build a base with structures to produce units, gather resources, research upgrades, and provide defenses. Units are used to attack the enemy and defend the player's base. Players win matches by eliminating all enemy unit producing structures.[1][2] Unlike the first game, the player can build an unlimited number of structures anywhere on the map, allowing for more freedom in base building and unit production.[3] Players can build walls to defend their bases; however, the walls can only be constructed within a certain proximity to the player's fortress. They can also construct arrow and catapult towers on building plots around a fortress to provide defensive support and basic protection.[1][2][3] Along with this, each faction's fortress is uniquely equipped with a special power: research only by purchasing necessary upgrades. The game's HUD, called the Palantir, shows the player's hero units and their abilities, a mini-map, and objectives.[4] Units are classified into one of several classes: infantry, ranged,[4][5] pikemen,[5][6] cavalry,[4] or siege.[6] Each unit class has unique strengths and weaknesses, emphasizing the importance of properly matching up units in battle to increase their effectiveness.[6] Hero units are unique in that only one of each can be created; they consist of characters from the novel, such as Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Saruman, Nazgûl, Mouth of Sauron, Arwen, the Witch-king of Angmar, and Shelob, characters created for the game like Gorkil the Goblin King and Drogoth the Dragon Lord, or are created via the game's Hero Creator (only accessible via the PC version).[5][6][7] If the player kills Gollum, a non-player character, they are rewarded with the One Ring. The item can be used to summon one of two ring heroes for a price of 10,000 resources, Galadriel and Sauron, depending on the player's faction. Ring heroes have extremely strong armor and powerful attacks, making them among the game's most over-powered units.[8][9] The War of the Ring mode combines turn-based strategy elements with real-time skirmishes. Middle-earth is divided into territories; players can construct buildings to produce troops only in a claimed territory. During each turn, the player can move their armies into neutral and enemy territories to take control of them. While neutral territories are conquered by simply entering them, enemy territories must be wrested from the other player by defeating them in a skirmish. Troops can be garrisoned in conquered territories to defend against enemy attacks. When the player chooses to attack another territory, or one of their territories is being invaded by an enemy, they can either simulate the match and let the computer determine the outcome, or play the match by commanding the units in real time. The winner of the skirmish gains the territory, and all surviving units gain experience points. To win the game, players must either control the enemy's capital territory, or take over a given number of territories in Middle-earth.[1][12][19] The Battle for Middle-earth II introduces three new factions with unique units and heroes: Goblins, Dwarves, and Elves. Rohan and Ents are combined into one faction called Men of the West. Along with Mordor and Isengard from the first game, there are six playable factions. The troops of Gondor provide a solid offense and defense with standard infantry and archers, and the Rohirrim of Rohan act as elite cavalry. The Elven archers are effective at inflicting damage from a distance, and their support units, the Ents, can perform a combination of melee and siege attacks, they are often considered the strongest defensive faction due to their strong missile units and powerful 'silverthorn arrows'. Although slow and expensive, Dwarven infantry, pikemen, and axe-throwers are very powerful and well-armored allowing them to prevail in even the longest clashes with enemy troops. A collection of wild creatures and beasts of Middle-earth make up the Goblin faction, this includes Goblins, Trolls (particularly Cave Trolls, Attack Trolls, Mountain Trolls, Drummer Trolls, and Half-Troll Marauders), Giant Spiders, Mountain Giants, Dragons, and Fire Drakes, which are effective in large numbers. Their only advantage is that the goblin archer and soldier units are cheap to make at only 75 resources and build faster than other basic infantry. Isengard troops are highly trained Uruk-hai under Saruman's command. Berserkers are used by Isengard as one-man armies that move extremely fast and deal significant damage (particularly to enemy buildings and heroes). Additionally, Isengard is the only Evil faction that can build walls. Mordor forces are a mixture of Orcs, Men, Trolls, Mûmakil, and Sauron's lieutenants. Mordor Orcs have tough armor, making them useful for absorbing enemy damage while stronger units attack enemies. Trolls contribute greatly to the Mordor offensives, having strong melee attacks and the ability to throw boulders or wield trees like weapons.[3][6][10] Set in the regions of northern Middle-earth, the game focuses on the events of the War in the North.[11] In the sake of gameplay, the game takes several liberties with Tolkien's books and the film trilogy. Some characters were altered in their appearances, abilities, and roles: for instance, a combat role in the game is given to Tom Bombadil, a merry and mysterious hermit who appears in The Lord of the Rings but does not take part in it. In the novel, Tolkien's earlier novel The Hobbit lends several elements to the game, including characters such as the Giant Spiders from Mirkwood.[13][14] The story for The Battle for Middle-earth II is divided into Good and Evil Campaigns. Both campaigns focus on the battles fought by the newly introduced factions: the Elves, Dwarves, and Goblins.[3] The player goes through nine fixed missions on either Easy, Medium, or Hard difficulty mode.[15] Narrated cutscenes provide plot exposition between missions.[3] The Good Campaign opens after the Fellowship of the Ring has set out on their mission to unmake the One Ring of Power, with Elrond and Glóin planning the War in the North. The Elven hero Glorfindel discovers an impending attack on the Elven sanctuary of Rivendell. Thanks to the early warning, Elrond's forces in Rivendell manage to repel the Goblins' attacks. Following the battle, Elrond realizes that the Elves and Dwarves must join forces to purge the threat of Sauron's forces in the North. The next battle takes place in the Goblin capital of Ettenmoors, where the Goblin fortress is destroyed and Gorkil the Goblin King is killed. After their victory, the heroes are informed that the Goblins on Sauron's command enlisted the service of a Dragon named Drogoth who is laying waste to the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains. The heroes make their way to the Blue Mountains and help the Dwarven army defeat Drogoth and his Goblins.[6] The Grey Havens, an Elven port on the western shores, is attacked by the Corsairs of Umbar, allies of Sauron. The Dwarves, who have been reluctant to ally with the Elves, eventually decide to come to the aid of the Grey Havens. With the Goblins defeated and all of Eriador pacified, the Dwarven-Elven alliance is tested by Sauron's forces. Mordor's overwhelming forces besiege the Lake Town of Esgaroth and the Dwarven city of Erebor. The Dwarven king Dáin leads a small group of Dwarves and men of Dale to defend their homeland and manage to eliminate the Mordor presence in Esgaroth but are forced to retreat back to Erebor to defend themselves against an overwhelming army led by the Mouth of Sauron. After a battle against the Mouth of Sauron, Elven reinforcements from Mirkwood led by the Elven king Thranduil arrive and save the Dwarves, defeating the Mouth of Sauron and his army. Elrond sends the first attack, but Sauron's forces are able to take Erebor and the Mouth of Sauron sends the Mouth of Sauron and the Nazgûl to the North to muster wild Goblins. His lieutenants lead the Goblin army and the Trolls and launch an assault on the Elven forest of Lórien while freeing three trapped Mountain Giants. Despite heavy resistance, the forest is overrun with Celeborn slain and Galadriel having fled to Rivendell. Even Caras Galadon collapses under the sheer force of the massive invasion. The Mouth of Sauron preps eagerly into the captured Mirror of Galadriel for his next attack as his Goblins celebrate their triumph over the Elves amidst the ruins of the once-mighty ancient stronghold. Another group of Goblins led by the Goblin King Gorkil attacks the Grey Havens by land and sea. The Elven port is destroyed and captured, and the march across Eriador begins. The Hobbits of the Shire are chosen as the next target. Gorkil's horde manages to crush the Hobbits and burn their country to the ground, but Saruman's servant Grima Wormtongue suddenly appears with a large army of Isengard Uruks and claims the land for his master. The Goblins annihilate the well-trained army and kill Wormtongue, taking the Shire for themselves while enslaving the Hobbits.[6] Gorkil continues marching west and besieges Fornost, the fortified ruins of the ancient capital of Arnor. The defenders, consisting of the Dúnedain and Dwarves led by Glóin, crumble under the relentless Goblin attacks, and Eriador falls under Goblin control. Sauron launches a concurrent campaign east of the Misty Mountains. The orcs from Dol Guldur eliminate the Elves and the Ents that guard the Forest Road in Mirkwood, defeating the Elven Lord Thranduil. After the fall of Mirkwood, the Mouth of Sauron leads his horde to Withered Heath, where he calls the Mouth of Sauron and the Nazgûl to the North to muster wild Goblins. Sauron sends the Mouth of Sauron and the Nazgûl to the North to muster wild Goblins. 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Elrond leads the first attack, but later, Thranduil, Glorfindel, Glóin, Arwen, and King Dáin all unite under the Dwarven-Elven alliance, aided by the Ents and Eagles. Mordor, to counter the threat, attempt a counterattack from the forest and summon various creatures, including a Watcher, a Dragon, and even the Balrog. Despite these powerful comebacks, the Good forces and its three combined armies overcome the defenses. Using various ancient Elven and Dwarven powers (including horse floods, earthquakes, and sunflares), the army of the Free Peoples destroy the fortress, eliminating the last threat in the North.[1] The Evil Campaign follows an alternate version of the War in the North. Sauron sends the Mouth of Sauron and the Nazgûl to the North to muster wild Goblins. His lieutenants lead the Goblin army and the Trolls and launch an assault on the Elven sanctuary of Rivendell and leads his remaining Elven armies to alert Elrond. 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