

Era of Mages User Manual

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Notice:

This manual is currently being developed. The content is steadily changing and the final look of the manual has yet to be determined. The main reason for this manual to exist at present is as a background for the discussions taking place on the *Era of Mages* user mailinglist. Feel free to subscribe the list after having read this document; you can find details about the list at the *Era of Mages* list page¹

TODO: Rewrite everything to actually make it a good read ;)

Notes

1. <http://lists.sourceforge.net/lists/listinfo/eom-users>

Notice:

Chapter 1. Overview

What is *Era of Mages*?

Era of Mages is a realtime strategy game with roleplaying aspects. It is basically a combination of games like *Age of Empires*, *Warcraft*, *Starcraft*, *Diablo*, *Lords of Magic*. This manual will get you started playing the game and will serve as a reference to the many spells and units you will encounter in *Era of Mages*. For a quickstart to *Era of Mages* see the chapter *Getting started*.

Background story

TODO: Add detailed background story later

Here's a short introduction to the *Era of Mages* world:

The world is torn between mages specialized in the use of the different elements: *air*, *earth*, *fire* and *water*. Each mage is striving for perfection in their element, and all mages are at war. The mages serve as kings to the common people, so a mage builds cities and therefore gets warriors to assist in his battle against the other mages. But these warriors just aren't enough, and all mages possess powerful spells which enable them to summon the cruelest creatures hell can provide. Sometimes a magician loses control of a summoned daemon with catastrophic results: the daemon will take the mage back down to hell with it!

Chapter 1. Overview

Chapter 2. Game principles

General

In general the game is played in a style similar to *Warcraft*. You build-up your base and recruit units to smash your enemies. *Era of Mages* does have a few differences though: First off, the resource management is different from usual realtime strategy games (see *Resources*), and the game itself is much faster. A common RTS (realtime strategy game) takes up about 2-3 hours for a single game. In *Era of Mages* you can play several games in that time.

Most of your work during the game revolves around keeping your magician alive and battling with the other magicians. This sounds pretty simple but involves quite a lot of other factors. Your magician is your number one priority -- you will automatically lose the game if he dies. Of course you could think of hiding deep below your other units, but this isn't going to work either. Your magician (along with the enemy mages) is so powerful that you won't win many battles without his help. This is also a reason why *Era of Mages* games are pretty fast. You have to risk losing your magician to win! There is no time to build up a huge army as your opponent's magician will easily wipe it out when he's gathered more mana (see *Resources*). The fun part about it is that you will be stronger after each battle you win, as your magician will gain more experience (see *Experience*).

Expansion

The territory controlled by you is an essential part of *Era of Mages*. The main reason for expanding your territory is that you will gain more mana (see *Resources*), and of course you'll have more ground available to build upon and to launch attacks from.

TODO: add reference to outpost and terrainer description

The process of expansion itself however, is slightly more complicated. You need to build so-called outposts which will be equipped with terrainer units. The terrainer units will then automatically start converting the nearby terrain to your magician's element. Most battlegrounds in the *Era of Mages* world are mere deserts before the magicians arrive there. Now the magicians will convert the desert into a land friendly to their people, from which they gain mana and onto which new buildings can be placed. It gets interesting at the borders to other mage's territory though. After the terrainers converted all the desert they slowly start to attack the enemy territory and integrate it into their own. So all borders in *Era of Mages* are constantly moving.

You have two basic strategies now: attacking the enemy outposts or building enough outposts so that your terrainers convert the terrain much faster than the enemy. Either way will lead to a fast game; as soon as two borders meet this means an immediate war is ahead.

There is one important thing to note about the terrainers: These units are ghostly beings that cannot be hurt in any way. So you can't just attack a terrainer to get rid of it. The only way to kill a terrainer is to destroy its outpost.

Resources

The resource management in *Era of Mages* is much easier than in other RTS games yet involves a much greater degree of complexity. There is only one resource which is *mana* and you need supplies of this for everything you want to do. It's needed for attacking your enemies, for creating new buildings and for keeping your daemons under control.

Initially you don't even have to run around and get mana easily. It comes to you right from your element. As all the terrain you've converted into your territory is changed to your element you will receive more mana. Each single maptile you have under control means more power for your magician, and letting your enemy freely expand his territory is going to be one of the last things you want to do!

There are some concentrations of mana spread throughout the desert. They usually have the form of trees, and your terrainers cannot convert them directly. You control a tree only when you control all the terrain around it. As we're talking about powerful objects here it is pretty obvious that many battles will be fought in and around these trees!

Buildings

The buildings in *Era of Mages* are constructed by your magician's power and act as a small city for your people. You can build taverns, churches, residences and many more types of buildings. After you've read through the above these buildings might seem to play an unimportant role in the game, but actually they are your source of human warriors. Many tavern visitors (for example) will be pleased to help you in your efforts. Of course these human fighters aren't as strong as your enemy's daemons, but they are the cheapest units available to you. You don't need mana to get them and you don't need mana to support them.

Human warriors can be used as a defense, or in attacks to weaken the enemy daemons. They also make great explorers, and if your city has attracted many people there will also be some great heroes among them who can help you with their superior skills. Heroes can even wipe out some weaker daemons.

There is also one special building in *Era of Mages* which is your magician's home castle. It's another big source of mana and the center of your realm.

TODO: Decide whether a destroyed home castle ends the game

Spells

The spells of your magician determine the game from the start to finish, with each falling into one of three spell classes: *creation*, *summon* and *destruction*.

The creation spells are used to build up a town for your people as well as constructing some defensive buildings.

The summon spells can summon the darkest creatures and make them fight on your side. These are the most powerful spells available, but you have to be powerful to use them. If you don't possess enough mana to keep the summoned daemons under your control they will start rampaging and could destroy your whole realm.

The destruction spells can do huge damages (though not as much as a powerful daemon could do) and they're the most direct use of your power against enemies. You'll find yourself use these spells quite often as summoning daemons takes some time. In many battles you win because you chose the right spell at the right time.

As the spells are a major part of *Era of Mages* there is a massive amount of them available (see *Spell reference*). Each of the four elements has a unique collection of spells. The creation spells used for building the cities are the same throughout the elements, but each has different defensive buildings, different daemons to summon and different spells which cause destruction.

Experience

The experience of your magician is the main indicator of his strength. The more experienced a magician, the more powerful his spells are (you gain more experience for every enemy mage you destroy).

Take care that you choose your opponents according to their experience!

Before starting a game you can see what experience your enemies have. It doesn't make much sense to play against a magician who is more experienced than you -- he will easily wipe you off the map with a few minor spells. As these kinds of games aren't much fun you also won't gain any experience from beating enemies that are far less powerful than yourself.

Note that a battle can provide you with more experience/power even though you lost: your magician cannot die, he will survive to fight again in the next game -- but for every magician you killed before your death you are still rewarded with experience points. These points can be distributed on your spells after the game.

By assigning experience points to your spells you can learn new spells and improve your old ones. At first you may want to learn more and better spells, but at a later point in the game it becomes more and more important that you improve your spells. An improved spell usually requires less mana to cast and its effect is also affected by its so-called spell level.

Chapter 3. Getting started

Requirements

- Python 2.x
- Pygame 1.2+
- SDL 1.2.x
- (PyOpenGL)
- Might be useful to have *Era of Mages* available

TODO: Add screenshot of startmenu

To start *Era of Mages* you just need to change into the installation directory. For example:

```
sh$ cd ~/eom
```

Then start the client:

```
sh$ python client.py
```

You will be presented with the start menu that allows you to choose one of your existing characters, or to create a new one. You can skip the next section if you've already created a character.

Creating a character

TODO: Add screenshot of character creation

When you play *Era of Mages* for the first time you will need to create a character. You can name it anything you like, but read the next section if you encounter problems with the chosen name.

Next you can choose your magician's element from the four available. This is the most important part of your character creation as it will determine which spells, units, buildings, etc you will have available in the game.

Of course you can create multiple characters. We actually encourage you to do so as playing with a different element makes for a totally different game! And remember: whenever an enemy attacks you with a great spell, you can have that spell with another character.

After you've created your character (or chosen an existing one) you will get to the connection screen.

Connecting to a server

To play *Era of Mages* you will need a server hosting games. There are no official servers available at this time, but the server software is included in each download so that everyone can setup their own server. The details of configuring your server

are covered in a different manual. For now we're just assuming you already know of an existing server to connect to.

TODO: Add screenshot of connection dialog

The connection dialog will expect a host address (preferably an IP address) and a port to be input. Usually you just need to know the host as there is a default port already specified. Hit the connect button when you're finished.

Now several things can happen when connecting to the server. For one the server may not respond. You'll have to choose another one if this is the case. Alternatively the server may be full, thus not accepting any more client connections. You'll have to wait and try again later in that case.

The third possibility is that another user is already logged into the server using your character's name. If this happens, you cannot join the server with this character until the other user has left.

TODO: Decide about renaming characters

Joining a game

After successfully connecting to a server you will be placed into the global lobby where you will meet all the other players who aren't currently playing a game. You can chat with them and you can join newly created games or create your own.

TODO: Add screenshot of global lobby

Joining a game means simply clicking onto its button in the left bar. You will get an error message telling you that you can't join the game under certain circumstances (for example when your character is too weak to participate in that game. See *Game parameters* for more information on this)

To create a new game, just hit the button in the lower left corner and specify a name for your game. You will then automatically join the game and from here, you can then change the in-game parameters.

TODO: Password authenticated games?

Game parameters

TODO: Add screenshot of game lobby

On joining a game you'll be taken to the lobby, along with the other players and you'll be able to change the game parameters. Once you agree with the current settings you can accept these and when all players have accepted the settings the game will start.

The settings you can change are:

- Maximum number of players
- Minimum experience required
- Maximum experience allowed
- Mapsize

TODO: more options?

If someone else wants to join your game his character is first matched against the criteria outlined earlier. If you're playing *Era of Mages* for the first time you may want to set the maximum experience level to 5 or 10 to make sure your opponents are beatable. This will prevent a player with a magician of level 20 from joining your game.

Chapter 4. Interface

Statusbar

The status bar is a valuable source of information. It is used for controlling your action (see *Controls*) and it displays several important pieces of information:

- A miniature map of the battlefield
- The state of your currently selected unit(s)
- Your current mana reserve
- Your current mana in- and outcome
- Your city's resident status

Most parts of the status bar display information but don't perform any actions. However, you can click on the minimap to instantly scroll to that position of the battlefield, or click your selected unit's icon to center in on that unit. When you select a single unit (or building) you will find a collection of control buttons will be displayed. For example: you can select your magician and then have access to his spellbook (this is a slow way of casting spells though. See *Units* for a better way to access our spells)

Battlefield

The battlefield is viewed from above so you won't get lost, and can see the effects of spells.

TODO: Add in-game screenshot

The battlefield itself does not provide much functionality. You can click on units to select them, or draw rectangles around several units to select a group. (see *Units* for more selection modes)

You can also scroll the battlefield using the cursor keys. Note that the battlefield initially starts off as a big black area as you haven't discovered any of the terrain yet. When you send a unit into the black area it will discover the terrain for you and you'll be able to see deserts, trees and enemies. But be aware that when your unit leaves the area you don't see any changes that may be happening there, in particular: enemy movements will not be visible (the so-called *fog of war*).

Options

TODO: discuss list of in-game options

Chapter 5. Controls

Units

Controlling your units is the key to success in *Era of Mages*. Therefore you need to know some of the easier ways to control your units than just selecting one after the other!

TODO: more controls?

Selection

You can select a unit by simply clicking on it or you can select multiple units by drawing a rectangle around them. You can also assign numbers to groups of units (0-9) by hitting **Ctrl**-{0-9}. If you want to re-select the same group later you can just hit the number you assigned it.

There are also more advanced methods available to select your units. You can add a unit to a selection by holding the **Shift** key down while clicking on it. By using the **Alt** key you can subtract them from the selection group.

You can also add and subtract whole groups with **Shift**-{0-9} and **Alt**-{0-9}. Try these methods to control your units more efficiently.

Commands

When you select a single unit you will see a collection of buttons displayed in the statusbar. These help you command the unit. The available commands differ from unit to unit, a detailed explanation is in the individual unit descriptions.

TODO: Decide on common commands

Buildings

The buildings belonging to your city are mostly uncontrollable. For certain buildings you will find an explanation of available controls in its detailed description. However, usually when you control buildings it's your defense structures that need guidance.

Some advanced defense structures are linked with the magical power of your mage so that they can use his mana to cause havoc in the enemy lines. But sometimes you need to be careful with your mana resources and restrict them (this prevents wasting valuable resources on minor enemy units). To do this, select the structure and use the command button to stop it from accessing your mana, and therefore attack enemies in a slightly weaker way. (Don't forget to re-enable the structure when you have enough mana later!)

TODO: Add screenshot of this command button

Defense structures can also be controlled by assigning a primary target to them. Sometimes the structures just attack the closest enemy, although you'd like them to

attack and weaken a horrible daemon just arriving at the horizon. When this is the case you need to select the appropriate structures and click on the desired target.

TODO: More options for buildings?

Spells

Having your spells under control is probably the most important skill if you want to be successful in *Era of Mages*. The most straight-forward way to access your spells is to click one of the three spell type icons that appear in the statusbar. Your magician will then automatically be selected and you can choose from his spells using the command buttons in the statusbar. When you've selected a spell to cast your mouse cursor will change and you will see a target indicator when moving the cursor over the battlefield. Just left-click on your target and unleash the power!

However, in time critical battles this isn't going to be fast enough. Therefore you can assign certain spells to your function keys. When your mouse is over one of your spell command buttons (in the statusbar) just hit the desired function key to bookmark the spell. Later in a battle you just need to hit the key and click on your target. (This is obviously the fastest way to get rid of one's mana :)

TODO: mouse movement controlled spells?

Chapter 6. Strategies

TODO: Play the game often enough to actually find some working strategies

Air mages

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Earth mages

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Fire mages

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Water mages

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Chapter 7. Reference

Building reference

City buildings

Tavern

The city tavern is used to attract people to your city and from times to times a courageous warrior leaves the tavern and joins your army.

Table 7-1. Building details

<i>Building name:</i>	Tavern
<i>Mana needed:</i>	0
<i>Damage:</i>	0
<i>Distance:</i>	0
<i>Size:</i>	2x2
<i>Healthpoints:</i>	X
<i>Special options:</i>	None

Air buildings

Earth buildings

Fire building

Water buildings

Unit reference

Human units

Warrior

A common warrior from among your people.

Table 7-2. Unit details

<i>Unit name:</i>	Warrior
<i>Unit type:</i>	Human
<i>Damage:</i>	X
<i>Distance:</i>	0
<i>Healthpoints:</i>	X
<i>Mana upkeep:</i>	0
<i>Size:</i>	1x1
<i>Specials:</i>	None

Air units

Earth units

Fire units

Water units

Spell reference

City creation spells

Tavern

Spell used to create a tavern for your people.

Table 7-3. Spell details

<i>Spell name:</i>	Tavern
<i>Spell type:</i>	Creation
<i>Mana needed:</i>	X
<i>Damage:</i>	n.a.
<i>Distance:</i>	X
<i>Duration:</i>	X
<i>Size:</i>	2x2

Air spells

Earth spells

Fire spells

Fire bolt

A simple yet effective fire bolt

Table 7-4. Spell details

<i>Spell name:</i>	Fire bolt
<i>Spell type:</i>	Destruction
<i>Mana needed:</i>	X
<i>Damage:</i>	X
<i>Distance:</i>	X

<i>Duration:</i>	0
<i>Size:</i>	1x1

Water spells