Middle-earth™ House Rules
&
Procedures

or

How to get the most out of your journeys through Middle-earth

Version 22
Last updated: 6th October 2008

Recent Changes
Added Debit Cards to Credit Card Section (6th October 2008)
Removed US fax number (31st October 2007)
Addition to Ceasing Play section (30th March 2007)

Contents

1 – Our Contact Details

By Post
ME Games Limited; Office A, 340 North Road, Cardiff, CF14 3BP, UK

By Phone
UK players: 029 2091 3359
                            029 2062 5665 can also be used if the other line is engaged
Overseas players: 011 44 (0)29 2091 3359
(Please contact your local operator for dialling instructions and to confirm the country code to be used.)

Phone times: 10am-6:30pm (BST – British Standard Time); 5am-1:30pm (EST)

Via our Website
www.MiddleEarthGames.com

By Email
me@middleearthgames.com

Within our normal office hours (10am-6.30pm BST, 5am-1.30pm EST) we regularly check our email. Don't forget to put your name, your game and nation, and your account number with each enquiry sent to us, where such details are known.

Auto-response of emails
Our me@MiddleEarthGames.com email address has an out of office auto-responder, so within a couple of minutes of sending in turns you should get a reply. If you do not receive confirmation then we have not received your turn (often because the turn has been sent to a wrong email address - the most common mistake, so please check the address carefully). Note that only the *me@MiddleEarthGames.com* address offers this.

By Fax
UK players: 029 2062 5532
(Please contact your local operator for dialling instructions and to confirm the country code to be used if not faxing from the US or UK.)
Important: please note that confirmation of a successful transmission from your fax machine IS NOT confirmation that we have received your fax. If you wish to check whether we have received anything sent to us by fax, please contact us by email or telephone.

Turns will be sent on to us as soon as John receives them, and will forward postal results (sent from us to John by email) to players in North America. Please note that you will need to send your turns one day early so that John has enough time to get turns to us.

I would advise non-email players who are in a rush to fax us for speed. Better still email us...

2 – Processing times

Games are generally processed at 10am BST (British Standard Time) on the day after the due date. Please ensure that your turns reach us by that time at the very latest. So you will need to send your turn in before then to be sure that you allow time it to reach us – even emails take time to arrive. This can take several hours, or even, if the net is very busy, days. If you send in turns by email, you will receive a receipt from us, so if you have not received this receipt we have NOT received the turn, in which case please try again, else fax or ring your turn in to us. We also suggest that you keep your turn receipts, as this is your proof that we have received your turn. Faxes can be sent up until 10am, but emails are taken from the computer at 9am, so any turns sent to us via email after this time will not make the deadline. We are very strict on this. Also, please bear in mind that we are five hours ahead of North America, so allow extra time for this. Every effort will be made to ensure that the turns are posted or emailed on the day that they are processed – if you don't get your turn back by around 7pm BST then please contact us for a reprint.

3 – Online Turn Submission

We have a new turn submission service; you can find it at: www.meturn.com

The website allows you to send us your turn without needing you to open and use your mailing program. Please only use it if you don't get a receipt from us within an hour of sending in orders. Please don't send to both unless you have a problem, as we don't want to get swamped with duplicated turns.

Yahoo, Netscape, AOL users are welcome to use this instead of mailing to me@middleearthgames.com as it will send the attachment as an attachment rather than as text in the main body of the email. If you do use this service then please make sure that if you send in attached files from Automagic, you are using 2003e.2 or later - the one with the version numbers please. If you create your own turnsheets, then make sure that if you send updated versions then it is clear which is which, and what orders have changed.

4 – Funding your Account

Please ensure that your account is always in credit! If your account is not in credit, it is known as in a Low Funds state, and turns may be held back until payment is made (turns are still processed, but not sent out). Normally we only hold back the second turn that goes low funds, but we reserve the right to hold back the first low funds turn if we consider it necessary for consistent offenders. Please note that the correct balance is the one on the Front Sheet, not the one on the Result sheet. You should ONLY use the balance shown on your Front Sheet not on your Result sheet.

If you require a VAT receipt for a payment made to us, please ask.

Payments can be made through the following means:

By Credit/Debit Card

To pay via the secure server on our website, go to www.MiddleEarthGames.com , and head for the "add credit" link. You will get a World Pay transaction ID when you make a successful payment, so if you don't get this ID then your transaction has not been successful. Note that if you make a payment via this method, the money will not be added to your account until 9am the next working day (BST). So if, for example, you pay money at one minute past midnight BST on the 1st of the month, it will not reach your account until the start of the working day on the 2nd of the month. Making a payment then sending us your receipt will not help speed up this process, as we must wait until Worldpay releases the money to us the following day. So similarly, we can only release held back turns when we receive the payment details from Worldpay, not when you send us a receipt.

If you wish us to process the payment for you, phone, email or fax us giving the following information:
- ❖ your game account number
- ❖ your name
- ❖ the game that you play in
- ❖ your credit/debit card account number
- ❖ your credit/debit card expiry date
- ❖ your credit/debit card security number (the last 3 digits on the reverse of the card)
- ❖ the amount to be charged, and
- ❖ the name of cardholder if different to your own, or your name exactly as it appears on your card.

Please put any credit/debit card details in a separate email to your turn.

We also run a monthly payment scheme, whereby we charge your card a FIXED amount at the start of each month (as specified by you). Note that a position runs two and one eighth turns per month on average for a two week game, so please allow for this when calculating how large a monthly payment you wish to make this.

For UK players, there will be a 5% surcharge on payments made to us by credit/debit card, in addition to any charges your company may make. For non-UK players, this service is free.

By NOCHEX

In order to pay us by this method, you will need an account with NOCHEX, which can be set up free at www.nochex.com. When you have set up a NOCHEX account, you can then pay into our NOCHEX account by following the instructions on their website. To do this, you will need to enter our email address, which is me@MiddleEarthGames.com.

For UK players, there will be a 5% surcharge on payments made to us via NOCHEX, in addition to any charges NOCHEX may make. For non-UK players, this service is free. We will check our NOCHEX account at 8am (UK time) each working day, and add funds received at that time.

By Paypal

In order to pay us by this method, you will need an account with Paypal, which can be set up free at www.paypal.com. When you have set up a Paypal account, you can then pay into our Paypal account by following the instructions on their website. To do this, you will need to enter our email address, which is me@MiddleEarthGames.com. You will be given the option of providing a reference to accompany the payment. YOU MUST GIVE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER.

For UK players, there will be a 5% surcharge on payments made to us by Paypal, in addition to any charges Paypal may make. For non-UK players, this service is free. We will check our Paypal account at 8am (UK time) each working day, and add funds received at that time.

By Direct Payments

In order to pay money directly into our account, you will need to make arrangements with your own bank. These arrangements differ between banks, so please contact your bank to find out how to do this.

You will need some or all of the following information about our bank account:

Bank: The Co-Operative Bank
Sort Code: 089299
Account number: 69174922
Account name: M. E. Games Ltd

In addition, when you make a direct payment you also need to email us with the following information:

- ❖ your bank sort code
- ❖ the name and number of your bank account
- ❖ your name
- ❖ your Middle-earth account number
- ❖ the amount you have paid.

We will then be able to match direct payments received with your account. If you do not send an email, the money will not be added to your Middle-earth account until we can confirm that the payment is from you. This will take both you and us time and effort, and so we will charge an admin fee for this.

Paying by Direct Payment is free for both UK and non-UK players. We will check our account at 8am (UK time) each working day, and add funds received at that time. However, please be aware that making payments this way is not instantaneous. It can take up to 5 working days for money to be transferred between UK bank accounts, and up to 20 working days between a non-UK bank and our account. So please take this into account when arranging payments. As normal we will only release held-back turns when we actually receive the funds, not when you make payment.

By Cheque

If you are in Europe, then mail cheques to us as normal. If you are in North America, please send cheques via Epicmail. Wherever they are sent to, cheques are always to be made payable to "M. E. Games Ltd". Please write your account number on the back of the cheque.

By Cash or Postal Order

Mailed to us at your own risk.

5 – New Players

If you are a new player to the game, then please get in touch with us to tell us which nations you wish to play, if there is any specific game in which you wish to play, and if you wish to play as a team with friends. You don't need an account number in order to do this, for this will only be allocated to you when you actually start up in a game.

6 – Account Numbers

Please quote your account number, together with your name, game number and nation in all correspondence.

When you first start in a game, you will be allocated a unique 6 digit account number, which you will keep throughout your time with us, and which account is used to fund all the games you play in. To avoid confusion, please ensure that whenever you contact us you include this number (or, if you telephone us, that you have the number to hand).

7 – Bulletin Boards

These are available via www.middleearthgames.com Click on the "I want to communicate with other players" link. Please be polite: use of these often soothe a heated discussion ☺

ME Forum

Visit the PBM Forum at www.halo5.net/meforums. Click on the link "PBMForum", click on the Create Account "Click Here" button, then post messages on this Message board, web based system.

MEPBMlist

Subscribe to the MEPBMlist directly by putting your email address in the box called "enter email address" and click on Join Yahoo List. You will be sent emails each time someone posts on the List. This is the most efficient way to get regularly updated information from us.

Please note we do not answer rulings on these lists. So if you want a ruling confirmation, or to query a game mechanic, please contact us directly.

8 – Address changes

Please inform us of any changes in your address (both email and postal).
Since having your turn mailed or emailed to the correct address is crucial, we suggest that you notify ME Games Ltd as soon as possible whenever you change, or are about to change, your address. If possible, this should be done separately from any turn that you may be sending, so that the change does not get misplaced amidst other turns.

9 – News from Bree

The free, in-house Middle-earth newsletter is looking for contributions - please help if you can. We give a free turn for each article of a page in length or more used. It is sent out free of charge to all active players, unless you specify that you do not want it.

10 – Joining New Games

Please do not try to join a new game using the 'start-up' credit card option on our website – this is intended for new players only! Instead, simply contact us directly via email with the following information:

* ❖ The number of the game you wish to join (if known)
* ❖ Scenario type (1650, 2950, 1000 or variant, together with turnaround required - either one week, two week or three week). Variants include Gunboat (2 nation a player), 12v12 Grudge games and War of the Ring (upgraded pcs/armies) amongst others.
* ❖ Your name and Account number,
* ❖ Whether you need a copy of the rules or map
* ❖ Your preferred nation (and at least 3 back-up nations, Alignment or no preference)...check out the Front Sheet, Message Board and Message List for available nations in up-coming games.
* ❖ Any players that you are joining with as a team. Or, if you are not joining with anyone, please state that. (If you are playing as part of a "Grudge Game" - i.e. as a full team of 10 or 12 - we also need the Team Contact, the person we contact when we wish to contact the team as a whole, or deal with generic enquiries, which helps us cut down on answering and asking the same question ten times)
* ❖ Whether you wish to play by post or by email
* ❖ Whether you wish for small or large formatted turns
* ❖ Contact details if changed (otherwise we'll use your current ones). Note if you want anything other than your Email (or Address as a Postal Player) you'll need to inform us.
* ❖ Any funds that you want to add (with payment details)
* ❖ Any other salient details – such as "I will be away on Holidays from June 3rd until June 19th" or "I don't want to play with certain players"

New game information is regularly updated on the Front sheet, and sent to the MEPBMlist and MEPBM Message board twice a week.

We accept set-ups for all three scenarios - 1650, 2950, 1000. However, we only fill one game from each scenario at a time. Teams (up to five aligned players) are allowed in these. We run alternate games of Postal & Email, and Email only games of 2950 - so game 235 might be P&E, game 236 Email only, etc., and we also run all email 1650 and 1000 games from time to time - these will be marked on the Front Sheet.

It takes roughly 2-4 weeks to fill a normal 2 week-turnaround game of 1650, 6-8 weeks for 2950 2 week-turnaround games, and 2-3 months for 2 week-turnaround 1000 games. 1 week and 3 week turnaround games are always 1650, and these typically take around 2-3 months to fill. "Grudge games" are the exception to this, in that if you have a grudge game team (a full side of 10-12 player) we will try to find opposition for you whilst also filling normal games. We will also occasionally advertise variant games, details of the rules for such games which will appear on your Front Sheet and the various Lists. Please check those details for such games as they will vary from time to time and will save players a lot of heartache when they realise that something that was the case in one game is not the case in a different or later variant of the same game. We will not be able to fix errors that occur due to a player not understanding a variant rule.

Variant rules that have caused some "annoyance" include Gunboat and 12v12 pre-aligned Neutral games – so please check these in detail as we are very strict in these situations.

If you have £5. in your account on the day that the game is set up (i.e. the day the positions are sent out), then you will be charged £5., which covers your first 2 turns. If you do not have £5. in your account, you will pay for your first turns at the full cost. Note that there are additional charges for setting up Variant and Grudge games (detailed at the end of these rules), and these are charged before the £5. setup charge.

11 – Game Winners Certificates

We no longer honour GSI/DGE's Game Winners Certificates. The new Middle-earth GWCs are now in use but have no monetary value.

12 – Your Contact details

If you wish your contact details to be made known to other players on your team, please mention this with your request to join a game. If you do not then we will assume that you would like to keep them private, with the exception of your email address if you are playing by email, and your postal address and phone details if you are playing by post, which will automatically be made known to your team mates unless you specifically request otherwise. Please be aware that we take no responsibility should we send out these contact details and you only later inform us that you would like them kept back. We do not give out Neutral contact details.

13 – Ceasing Play and taking over Dropped Positions

If ceasing play, please let us know as soon as possible.

If for some reason you wish to drop a position in any of our games, please inform us and your team-mates as quickly as possible, so that other players in the game do not suffer. It only takes a minute and helps those who want to play on – players dropping without warning or letting us know can cause great damage to the games. Refunds of any remaining credit are available.

We will first contact your team-mates for substitute players, then offer the position on the Front Sheet, giving the scenario, the nation and approximate turn number: e.g. 1650:Witch King (mid). If the nation has missed a turn (which is to say it gets Special Serviced) then we'll give whoever picks up the position a free turn, if you are not in that game already.

Sending your turn onto your team-mates can be a great help here as well.

Dropped positions are converted to Inactive status so that their economies and characters are not affected by the program (although players might well have an impact!) Positions that are inactive for over 4 turns will be converted to Expired and are considered no longer playable.

If a player misses a turn, we will attempt to contact that player and see if they wish to continue. If we hear nothing back in a 2-6 week period (2 turn deadlines) we sometimes allow other players on the team to put in a Shadow Turn. If a player misses 2 turns in a row then we reserve the right to transfer that position to another player, and drop the former player from the game so that the rest of the team is not penalised. It only takes a minute for players to contact us, even in very busy periods of their life, and we find that if players miss one turn they are much more likely to miss the second turn, and if they miss the second turn then they are *very* likely to miss subsequent turns.

14 – Corrections to Turns

Please ensure that these are clear and easy to read.

If you need to make a correction to a turn that you have sent in, please ensure that you make clear what change needs to be made (a character id. followed by the new instructions). Unless the turn is completely different, do not send in all of the turn again. Instead, only tell us what changes need to be made, remembering of course to give us your account number, turn due date, game number, nation number and security code.

> *For example:*
>
> *Subject line*
> *ME29/12 Correction to turn*
>
> *Main body of email*
> *ME29/12 Fred Bloggs 101234 Due 29th October*
> *Can you change the following orders please?*
>
> *Murazor (muraz) @3242 (Com)*
> *810 (MovChar) 2342 – old order remaining unchanged*
> *435 (ArmyMan) – changed order*

15 – Shadow Turns

In order to minimise harm caused to a side by a player who does not send in orders, we allow team-mates to send in orders on their behalf. If you do have not heard from a member of your team within a reasonable length of time, then on request we will forward a copy of the uncommunicative nation's turn (a reasonable length of time being one week for a two week game and a couple of days for a one week game). The team is then allowed to send in a Shadow Turn (orders). This is a turn that we will run if the owner of that nation does not get at turn in themselves. If, however, the owner of the nation does get a turn in, then we will use that in preference to the Shadow Turn. If sending in a Shadow Turn, clearly mark it as one in the subject line.

If you do not want your team-mates to receive a copy of your turn in this manner, we urge you to make sure you stay in communication with them. We will, on request, put a note on your account not to send on Shadow Turns to team-mates, but be aware that due to the team-nature of the game, missing a turn can be disastrous for the game, so please make every effort to send in turns, or contact us and/or your team-mates if you are unable to do so.

16 – Missing Turns

We aim to send out all turns by 5pm UK time (mid-day EST). Some turns will be sent out earlier, but we cannot guarantee this, so please be patient. If you have not received your email turn by the next day, however, on request we will reprint and send that turn by email to you free of charge. However, if you request this on the evening of the process date, we will charge a reprint turn-cost of £2.00/US$3.00/AU$6.00. Once again, please be patient – emails can take a little while to get through the servers – we have no control over that. We start processing turns at around 10am – starting with those games with everyone in and then working through the other games until all are out. If a game is going to be delayed we'll contact you.

17 – What is your Front Sheet?

This is one of the pages found with your turn results. It can be found in the main body of the email with the Result sheet that you receive if you play by email, or with your turn if you play by post. It lists your contact details that we have on record for you, your details that you are sending out to team-mates, your account balance, games that you are playing in, current GM messages detailing new games, special scenarios, general information, a section for contacting everyone in that particular game that you are in, and the contact details for your team-mates. Although there is no need to check it every turn, at the start of the game I would strongly advise players to read through it, and keep an eye on it for developments. For example, it will show when a player has been forced out of the game (put Out of Play), if a position has changed hands (with new player taking over the nation), if a position no longer being played but still available (no information), if a Neutral nation has joined your team, or a player has missed a turn (Special Service). Early turns also list the special rules that apply to the game here (and often attached to your 1st turn's email).

18 – What is the XML file? What is Palantir? What is Automagic? What is MEOW?

XML

XML contains information which can be imported into a number of programs, including Automagic, MEOW and Palantir, to save you entering this information by hand.

Automagic

Automagicis an Excel program that reads in the XML that we send out. It checks for valid orders and informs you if there is an error in them. It also creates a file containing your orders that we can use at our end so that we don't have to input the orders by hand. This virtually eliminates input errors. It also has a combat program (not supported by us), an economic program (also not supported by us), which have been created by players for their own use. Programmed by Mike Mulka with our assistance.

MEOW

MEOW (Middle-earth Order Writer) is a java application presently in development. It, similarly to Automagic, enables you to create a turn to send to us, but is designed to be cross-platform. Programmed by Jason Bennett with our assistance.

Palantir

Palantir is the mapping program. It reads in the XML that we send out to players and automatically updates the map with this, including information for armies, pcs, characters, spells etc. You can also import team-mates' data using their XMLs At present it does not read all the information from your PDF, but we have still found it very useful.

19 – Diplomatic Messages

We are able to forward messages to players. Please send these in a separate email to your turn, or on a separate sheet of paper if you are playing by post. We then simply forward the email or letter to that player, so if you want any information removed – such as your email address - please CLEARLY state this. As per usual, your name, account number, nation and game are needed, but if you don't want us to forward any of those details to the player concerned, please inform us.

For example:

Subject line
ME 29/3 for nation 14, 16, 17

Main body of the email
Hya Clint can you pass this onto the following players. 14,16,17
John Roberts, Act 109999, but please do not give out this information!

START
Dear Cloud Lord – you will die a most horrible death

Da Free Peeps
Contact us via : fictitiousemail@emailsrus.com

END

We can also send 'diplos' to ALL players in the game via the Front sheet. That way some sort of dialogue can be established. Please note, however, that these methods of communication are slow, in that we only send out diplos on the day the turn is run. Though we can send diplos out to the opposition sent in before the game starts with the start turn. Contacting the player concerned directly (if you know their contact details) or sending something to the MEPBMlist/Forum is a quicker method of establishing contact.

20 – Playing more than one position

At the start of a new game, no player can play more than one position (unless otherwise agreed with both us and the players). Please do not use a pseudonym to run multiple positions – we run plenty of variant games where you are able to run two nations if you wish to. However, if a player drops out, then we will often consider allowing an existing player on that team to take over the position, so that the game will not become unbalanced. Although since this system is clearly open to abuse, we reserve the right to judge each case on an individual basis.

21 – Aliases

Aliases, unless you have specifically been given permission, are not allowed. Some players have used this to enable themselves to play more than one nation under assumed names. We leave it to your own honour and sense of fair play to police this. But if we catch you we will penalise you.

22 – Prisoners

We have prisoners playing in our games. Any game with prisoners playing will be described as such. If you do not want to play in the same game as a prisoner then you will have to join a different game - we allow anyone to join our game, with the only exceptions being players who bring the game into disrepute or break the rules.

We have approximately 15-25 prisoners playing. As a GM I have found them to be both polite and communicative (albeit slowly, as they only have access to post not email). Most seem to be aware that they are receiving a privilege and are careful not to have that removed from them whilst they are in jail. However, that said you should bear in mind that some have been incarcerated for very serious crimes. 2950 postal 2 week-turnaround and 1650 3 week-turnaround games are the standard games with prisoners playing, and I will mark such games on the Front Sheet as being available for Prisoners to join.

23 – Rulings

Occasionally we come across a game situation that we have not encountered before. In such cases calm discussion means that we are able to help, and sometimes change our rulings. If you feel that there is a circumstance or ruling that should be changed please bring it to our attention and we can investigate the pros and cons of such changes. However, it helps if this is done before the situation comes up as the heat of the moment can make such discussion awkward, so if you think you are about to find yourself in such a situation, we advise you to get in touch.

24 – Special Service Turns

A Special Service turn is where a player misses a turn, and the computer creates simple orders on their behalf. All games started with us will automatically have the Special Service option on, and we do not allow the service to be switched off, but note we do not charge for this. If you miss the first turn in a game we will write one for you should time allow, but in this case you will not be able to get back to us with orders that you would have preferred to have run. As always, we advise you to get all your turns in well before deadlines!

25 – GM Players

We run Middle-earth primarily out of a sense of love for the gaming hobby. We're all keen gamers, and so play in many of the games. But an individual GM will never referee a game they are playing in, or have any access to the game turns or database. We'll mark on the Front Sheet when a GM will be playing in that game, but will not tell you which nation (or even allegiance) that GM is.

26 – GM Interference

Sometimes, a situation will arise where we may have to interfere in the running of a game. This is very, very rare, but we do reserve the right to do so where necessary. There is only one instance in the last three years that I can think of where this has occurred.

27 – We work ceaselessly on your behalf

Whilst the post office does not work on bank holidays, we do (except Christmas and Boxing day), so please take this into account when sending in turns, else you may miss a deadline. We do, however, sometimes take a week off around the Christmas/New Year period, and will inform you of how you will be affected each year.

28 – But mistakes will happen

In a perfect world, errors would not be made. But we are only human, and acknowledge that on occasion, mistakes will be made. If you think that there has been an error in your turn, please do not panic, as we can sort out nearly any problem or mistake that may have occurred. Simply contact us as quickly as possible (if you leave it too late then we might be unable to fix the error and you will lose out). Please give all the relevant information, including who you think it will impact upon, and we will do our best to resolve the matter. If it's our error, we'll fix it and contact the appropriate parties with the amendment to the turn.

> *For example:*
>
> *Subject line*
> *Potential Edit for game 82/6*
>
> *Main body of the email/letter*
> *Game 82 nation 6*
>
> *Dear GM*
> *Unfortunately, last turn you input Vagaig doing an 850 (Move Army) instead of 860 (Force March) and he stopped short of moving to Morannon 3221. This means that the Dark Lieutenants will no longer be facing my army @3220. I have checked my orders and found that the DS @3221 need to be informed.*

The method we use to perform an edit is to take a back-up disk (the game information before it was processed), input the corrected orders on the back-up disk, and re-run the Process program. We then check the result: if the corrected order is successful we edit the information onto the real disk. We then will inform all the appropriate parties with the updated information. We don't send out the new turn, as it will have information on it that would not otherwise have been known - such as Locate Artefact attempts that failed first time, but succeeded second time around, etc - but do inform all parties of all relevant information changed.

In the case of the above example, then, we would do the following:

Firstly, we check the turn sheet to make sure the player is not mistaken (some apparent edits are due to a mis-reading of the rules, an error behalf the player when writing his turn, etc.). Then we perform the edit using the above process. If the move is now successful, the results then go out to the Dog Lord and the Dark Lieutenants explaining that they can now see a Large Army under Vagaig at 3221, and that there is no longer a Free People icon @3220. A similar report will be sent to the owner of the North Gondor. All nations who can see 3220 and 3221 will be informed as well to the extent that they would be aware of the change, in this case that an army icon has moved.

Random elements

Random factors in the Process program – such which army moves first – mean that we cannot always emulate the exact situation which occurred the first time when running a corrected process. But everything is set to exactly the way it was when the game originally processed before the process is run, except that the correct orders are in.

Market errors

These are about the only errors that we are unable to easily correct. We are physically unable to modify the price or availability of items on the market. And so work around this should a 315/325 (310/320) order not be input correctly. In

the case of a 325/320 error we simply remove the items from your stores and give you the gold equivalent. But in 310/315 cases we have to use a slightly more obscure method...We re-run the edit as explained above, and see what the price changes in market are. We then contact the players informing them of the new cost of items on the market (buy/sell price), and inform them that if there is a player that is selling the item next turn that they need to clearly indicate that this is so. Then, at the start of the next turn, we give the difference in gold to the nation, and allow the order to go through.

Alternatively, our latest method is to find out the difference in price between the original process results (run with the error), and the Reprocessed version (with the correct Market orders input), then refund the difference to the players who have purchased that commodity so that if they were to have sold the goods next turn they would have the same amount of money. The loss of money made from selling from their stockpile is compensated somewhat by the effective increase in Market sell limit.

This effectively allows us to correct errors in such circumstances, allows the players to manipulate the market to get extra funds out of it, and deals with 99% of the problem. It's not perfect I know, and we're still working on this so if you have any useful ideas then please contact us.

Oh, and if the above makes little sense, please do not worry – in the unlikely event of such an edit affecting you, we will go through it all with you.

29 – So please keep calm

Nearly any problem you may have can be resolved. However, this is made far easier for all concerned by keeping calm. We recognise that when something goes wrong it is understandable that you may be annoyed, but by remaining calm, we can best identify the problem and deal with it efficiently. Also, please be aware that a word spoken in anger is easily forgotten, but putting it into writing - either by letter or email - gives it more weight than might have been intended. Email is particularly open to misrepresentation. Every day we recive an angry worded email or two, and sometimes even an apology for the harsh words a few days later. So please try to keep polite - we're all doing this for fun, and it detracts from the experience for us all when emotions run high.

30 – Contacting Players who have made Errors

As part of our service, we do out best to get in touch with players who have made simple mistakes in their turns (for example, a 325 Natsell order with no product given) before the turn runs. However, we can only do this if you send your turn in by the morning of the due date printed on the turn sheet, which is to say the day before the game runs. Note also that we do not work on weekends, so if your game is due to run on a Monday, you would need to get your orders to us by Friday morning to take advantage of this service.

We also need an email address to contact you on.

We are unable to help with 'judgement calls', such as character IDs given, riddle answers, etc. Further, whilst this is a service we do our best to provide, if a mistake made by you slips through, we cannot accept responsibility for this. Also, please be aware that if, due to a player error, we have had to judge what was intended but get this wrong, again, we cannot accept responsibility. In short, we'll do our best to catch your mistakes, and guess what was intended if there is not time to contact you, but cannot guarantee it. So do your best not to make mistakes!

31 – Turn Writing - What to do, and what not to do

❖ We strongly advise you to use our automated software to write turns, either Automagic or MEOW.

❖ When playing by email, please order your characters in alphabetical order. This makes turn inputting much easier for us, and minimises the chance of errors occurring. (If we miss it then we won't correct it after the turn is run).

❖ The rulebook states that you can give either number codes or letter codes for orders. However, as a rule we work from the numbers, checking them against the letter codes if there appears to be a discrepancy. If possible then we appreciate it if you use numbers codes, and would recommend that you use both to minimise errors (if you do not use both, that means we have no way of checking your orders). All things being equal, if there is a discrepancy we will use the number code. If we notice that one appears to make more sense than the other, we will of course use it, but generally, the number code will take precedence.

❖ 4th Age start-ups require players to give three possible locations for their capitals, which must each be ten hexes away from the others. If they are closer together, we are forced to choose which locations to leave out, which can lead to disappointment.

❖ The new 4th Age start-up form (available from our website or on request) asks which type of 4th Age game you wish to play - we would advise that for a speedy start you tick all that you can.

❖ The 260 Siege Pop Center order does work for navies, and they do not anchor ships, but do need to be able to anchor ships..

❖ The 630 Rescue order will release a character in one of seven randomly chosen hexes - the hex the hostage is in and/or one of the hexes surrounding his current location. The rulebook is incorrect when is states the hostage will be released in the location where he is rescued.

❖ If a character attempts to do two 705 orders (research spell) for two different spells, the computer randomly selects which goes first. If then you attempt to research two spells, one of which is the prerequisite for the other, there is a 50% chance that they will be researched the wrong way around, so that you do not have the appropriate prerequisite for the higher level spell.

❖ Order 725 (create character) gives a maximum of 30 points to spend on a character's skills.

❖ Orders 728, 731, 734 and 737 allocate 30 points to the appropriate skill (which can rise to a maximum of 40 if the nation has an appropriate special ability at the rank of the character that does the naming). For example, if you have the ability to name Emissaries at 40, then if you use a 37 Emissary he will create a 37 rank new Emissary.

❖ 770 order (Hire Army) requires both Mounts and Leather at that location for cavalry armies.

❖ 948 orders are often mixed up. To clarify: order 947 collects a percentage of goods from all your population centres and deposits this into one population centre. The order 948 moves a specific amount of a store type from one population centre to another, including centres belonging to other friendly nations. This also works for gold, but since gold can only be kept at a capital, the order can only be used to move gold from one capital to another (non-hidden) pop centre (and then gets transferred to the friendly player's capital).

32 – Sample Email Order Format

The clearer your orders are, the easier they will be for us to enter, and so the chance of inputting errors occurring will be minimised. Below is an example of what for us is the ideal email turn format. We would ask, then, if you could do your best to emulate this as closely as possible. Better still – use Automagic or MEOW to send in orders as it will check these details for you.

Subject line: ME29/24
(replace ME29/24 with your game number and nation number)

Then in the main body of the email (or attached .txt file):
ME 29 Player: 24 Security Code: 1234 Due Date: 15th July 2002
Fred Bloggs A/c: 109999   Turn Number: 15
(replace these details with your details for this game)

Alfred (alfre) @1234 (Com,Age,Emi)
810 MovChar 1235
900 FindArt 86

Beattie (beatt) @ 2345 (Com)
947 NatTran 1234 le 100
948 TranCar 2345 4321 go 10,000

And so on. Basically, please do your best to set out your orders as clearly as possible, with characters in alphabetical order (we won't fix it afterwards if a player error occurs here and we don't notice it) and without the orders either too close together, or too spread out.

33 – Tariff

	GBP	USD/AUD
Start-up pack (folded map, rulebook, start-up and 2 free turns)	£10.	$19.
Folded Map	£5.	$9.50
Rulebook	£5.	$9.50
Start-up and 2 free turns (funds MUST be in account at time of game start)	£7.	$12.90
Minimum additional extra Start-up fee for Special Variant or Grudge Game	£7.	$12.90
Turn – Submitted with Automagic/MEOW	£4.50	$7.90
Turn – Submitted via Email	£4.90	$8.50
Turn – Sent through the Post	£5.20	$9.00
Turn re-sent	£1.	$1.90
Turn re-sent if not received due to error by ME Games	free	free
Phoned-in orders	£2.	$4.
Initial Low Funds charge if balance is negative when game processes	£1.	$1.80
Charge per turn run following initial charge if balance remains negative	£0.50	$0.90
Charge for payments received under GBP£10., USD$16., or AUD$30.	£1.	$1.80
Charge for credit card payments received	5%	free
Charge for NOCHEX payments received	5%	free
Charge for Paypal payments received	5%	free
Charge for direct payments into bank account	free	free
Charge for cheques received in USD$	free	free
Charge for cheques received in GBP£	free	free
Charge for cheques received in other currencies	£5.	$10
Charge for cash or postal orders received in GBP£	free	free
Charge for transferring funds (charged to remitter's account)	£1.	$1.90
Refund of balance of turn credit	£2.	$4.
Refund of initial start-up pack fee if not satisfied after 2 turns	free	free

Administration charge for work not covered above or part of general service provided
(to be determined on individual basis, and be disclosed on request in advance of action)   variable

Special note concerning game start ups

If you have £7. (or other appropriate currency) in your account on the day that a game is set up (i.e. the day the positions are sent out), then you will be charged £7., which covers your first 2 turns (i.e. the first two turns are free). If you do not have £7. in your account, you will pay for your first turns at the full cost. Note that there are additional charges for setting up Variant and Grudge games (detailed above), and these are charged before the £7. (or other appropriate currency) setup charge. As such, if you only have £7. in your account and are entered into a Variant/Grudge game, you will pay £7 for the Variant/Grudge charge and your first two turns will be paid at full price. Always check to make sure there are no additional fees or discounts when starting a game.

34 – A Comedy of Errors

This article appeared in News from Bree, the in-game Middle-earth newsletter, and highlights many of the more commonly made errors in turn-writing, which the wise player might do well to avoid...

❖ It has been oft-claimed, sometimes with justification, that we make errors when inputting turns. And yes, we freely admit that this is the case, and correct them. However, what is less frequently admitted is the fact that we are not the only ones to do this. As such, then, we took time out from our arduous task of running Middle-earth to examine the turns received for one game. And found the following errors...

❖ No security code and/or turn number and/or game number. Probably around a third of turns received are missing at least one of these things.

❖ 3 and 5 digit hex numbers given for move orders. 3 is understandable, perhaps, but 5 is pretty bizarre.

❖ 2 skill orders given for the same skill field. Only one is allowed, so the other will fail, which leaves us with the conundrum of which you want to attempt. Sometimes easy to deduce, but not always so. We will do our best, but cannot guarantee to pick the one you most wanted to work.

❖ The wrong security code and/or turn number and/or game number. More awkward than the last version, as it leaves us wondering whether it is the character names or the turn/game numbers that are wrong, or in the case of the security code, whether it is a very late or a very early turn.

❖ Wrong/missing/extra character names/ids. Another awkward one, as the question is raised as to what characters the orders are actually intended for.

❖ Orders given for captured characters. This doesn't work!

❖ 360 orders with no character id. given, and the same for 355s and 780s.

❖ 430 orders given with no troop type. Another common one this.

❖ 520 (infyour) & 525 (InfOther) getting confused.

❖ 610 orders with no character id. Commonly altered to 605 orders, but this isn't much consolation to the commander lying dead in a pool of his own blood.

❖ Order 725 (create character) gives a maximum of 30 points to spend on a character's skills. This is often used to name multi-class characters (the only sure way to do so) and is a Command only order. E.g. 1 20 rank Commander at your capital could Create a new character with the following ranks: 30 Command or 20 Agent and 10 Emissary, a 30 Rank Mage, or any variation inbetween up to 30 points allocated. (Note 10 points is the lowest amount allowed). This order costs 10,000 gold.

❖ Orders 728, 731, 734 and 737 allow you to name characters at up to 30 points in that class. E.g. a 30 Rank Commander using the 728 order would name a new Commander at rank 30. A 40 Rank Commander would name the same commander also at 30, but a 25 Commander would name that character at 25. These orders cost 5,000 gold. Some nations have the ability to name a 40 level character. To do so you need to use the Name character skill order - (728, 731, 734, 737 as appropriate). E.g. if you have Emissaries @40 Special Nation Ability, then if you use a 37 Emissary he will Name Emissary a 37 rank new Emissary, or a 50 Emissary would name a 40 Emissary.

❖ A 780 order with extra information such as a hex number or troop type. Strange but true.

❖ 810 orders with no hex number, 810 orders with directions instead of a hex number, and 810 orders with hex numbers that are off the map. This can also apply to 820 & 870 orders, though none were found in this game.

❖ 850 orders with no directions, or with a hex number instead of directions. Which also applies to 830 orders.

❖ 870 orders given with no character id. A very common one this; not vital, as the character will still move, but character ids are not something we can just guess at.

❖ 948 orders with only one hex number given, and 947 orders with two. These tend to be important orders, especially the 948 ones, so getting them wrong is not advised.

❖ 949s with no character id. Guaranteed to annoy your erstwhile ally.