Formation Basics

Originally sent by Baak as an e-mail to Kaor just before our *first* Match – August 10, 2000

Hey **Kaor**,

Tell you what, I only do the "double-click" for selections at the *very beginning* of the game, and only to select troops that I put into the "presets". I think it's pretty difficult otherwise, and this may very well be at the heart of getting "overrun" by the enemy.

The manual (you may very well have a different manual, by the way) has a *brief* description of this under "Selecting Units" called "Preset Selections".

In a nutshell, you can have preset selections like buttons on your radio, to select troops by number. Now, they mention it as a way to mix troop types, and that's fine, but I use it almost exclusively to divide my troops up into types by preset. Here's an example of how I do it:

At the beginning of a game, I select my primary "warriors" or ground troops by doing the "double-click" thing. Let's say you have 10 Warriors and 10 Thrall (in a multiplayer game). I'll double-click the 10 Warriors and then, *holding down the shift key*, double-click the 10 Thrall - this selects all twenty guys. Next, I press Alt-1 and hold it until it "registers" (it'll show your preset selection on the screen - takes a couple of seconds).

Now, when I want to move my "ground troops" to a location, I can press Alt-1 (which selects all the troops I preset to Alt-1), and move them there. An "Intermediate" technique is to select them and then *right-click* on the overhead map to send them "off-screen".

Play around with that to get used to it. *There's more*...

So, I've got my ground troops assigned - I then select my "archers", which are Bowmen or Soulless, by double-clicking (sometimes you have to do double-click and shift-double-click if they start off separated by a lot of space). These guys are Alt-2 for me.

Next, it's those pesky Dwarves - Alt-3.

Again, you can use *whatever* system works for you - for some reason these numbers just "click" with me and I can move guys *very quickly* as I don't even have to think about it.

Now, since you're only allowed Alt-1 through Alt-0 (10 presets), I tend to put odd setups to the right of the Alts. So, here's my other ones:

Alt-9 & Alt-0:	Usually Wights in multiplayer games
Alt-7 & Alt-8:	Scouts (Ghols and/or Spiders)
Alt-5 & Alt-6:	Typically Warlocks and/or Journeymen/Herons - this is one case where I sometimes mix. Often I'll group a Warlock with a Journeymen/Heron (I call 'em Healers). Really used for movement primarily - keeps a guard and healer for the Warlock.
Alt-4:	Typically used for my "whole army" minus scouts or extra Warriors if there are too many for one preset (it happens!).

See, once you get a system down, you just do it at the start and then you don't even have to think about it.

Intermediate: Once you get the swing of this, then add the "formation" stuff with it. For instance, I usually put my archers (Alt-2 guys) in a "Shallow Encirclement" - NOTE: I really only use a couple of formations, and I had to look up the name - I just go by number in my mind rather than using the icon on the screen.
If you do this, not only is it *faster* but you have more visibility on the screen - I set my preferences to have the upper and lower menus **off** (F6 toggles the top, Shift-F6 the bottom).

Here's an example:

I want to put my archers on a hill just at the edge of my view. I do this:

Alt-2
7
Left click on the hill
Rotate the positions shown using the left/right arrows
Forget about 'em for now

Once you get this (just takes a couple of times), you'll realize exactly how powerful (and fast) this is. (I also use 2 (Long Line) for archers, but notice that 7 gives you a "focal point" like a radar dish - *very* effective!).

Ok, now I want my dwarves to one side of them. I do this *while* the archers are meandering towards there location on the hill.

Alt-3
3
Left click on the spot where I want 'em
Rotate the positions shown using the left/right arrows
Forget about 'em for now

Formation 3 gives those pesky dwarves some space around 'em so they don't blow each other up as easily!

Now, you could do the dwarves first (as they are slower, which is why I do these guys *before* the warriors), but the archers can shoot enemies further away - so just in case someone is coming at there location, they'll start firing before the dwarves arrive, and I can do an "Alt-3 R" (retreat) or "Alt-3 <pick new location>" to position for defence.

Next, it's the warriors:

Alt-1
1 or 4 usually
(Same as above click, rotate, & forget 'em)

Then the rest...

Now, I do tend to send the scouts (Ghol/Spiders) out right away, and these can be in one group or many (Alt-7 through Alt-0, depending on the game). I usually send these out before the above:

Alt-7
0 (or whatever formation you like – 0 is good as they are facing **every** direction and thus will auto-attack no matter what)
Right-click on the overhead map
No rotation
Forget about 'em, but keep an eye on the map for enemies.

See, you can right-click on the map (see Commanding Units - Moving Units with the Overhead Map) without actually moving the "camera" - this is great for scouts especially. If I have scouts that are just sitting a long time, I can do Alt-7 and right-click on the overhead map where I want them to go and I don't even have to look at them! They just GO. This is where the presets really help.

Intermediate/Advanced: Ok, so you get an idea what this preset thing can do. Now, continuing the setup above with the archers (Alt-2) and dwarves (Alt-3), I typically put the warriors *just behind them* in a 4 pattern (something with some space). Now the archers/dwarves can fire on the enemy, and when they get too close, I can either order the warriors to attack through the archers (Alt-1 attack), and/or bring the archers/dwarves back at the same time (Alt-2 click new position; Alt-3 click new position after Alt-1 attack) - suddenly everybody's moving, but there is *order* to it! It will definitely throw someone off whose just clicking guys one at a time!

Intermediate/Advanced: One noticeable flaw in the game (in my opinion) is how the units tend to lose formation during an attack and attack just at the front. One way I get around this is to not "attack" (clicking on the enemy) all the time, instead I move the units close to the enemy and let them attack automatically (which they will do).

Example: In a game with wide-open spaces, put the warriors in that shallow curve (formation 7) - so, you see the enemy and you have them outnumbered, do: Alt-1, 7, left click an area in front of them so that your units "wrap" around them. This way the warriors will attack a bunch of guys from all sides! Tricky! :)

Sometimes if they aren't attacking the "choice" enemies (like Warlocks, archers, and my favorite conquest: dwarves), you can start "singling" out guys by first single-clicking a warrior and then clicking on the enemy you want them to attack - do this with three or four warriors (especially those on the fringe) and put them to use! This can be *very* effective!

Whew! That was a *huge* e-mail!! Once you get used to the preset thing (it'll "click" pretty quickly) - you'll see that it makes all the difference. Add some of the Intermediate and Advanced techniques I describe and you'll be ROCKIN!

Let me know how it goes! I'll post the time request and maybe some of the above (just to be fair to TS and NKI) - we don't want to *completely* annihilate them! ;)

--**Baak**