Warlords

- Internet play: no
- LAN play: no
- Lobby search: no
- Direct IP: no
- Play via gameranger: no
- coop: yes
- Singleplayer campaign: yes
- Hotseat: yes

Multiplayer Information

Infos

Warlords is a turn based strategy game from 1990. It is therefore also a candidate for DOSBox, or native DOS or at least Windows 9x/ME. First of all what it can't/has not: Multiplayer of any kind over network, so of course also not over the Internet. What it has: Single-player, multi-player, coop and even no-player. You can also watch the 8 AI players fight it out among themselves. 😃 But it's still a lot of fun, especially because the multiplayer can be played people vs. AI. So you can be busy for hours with it. This Let's play gives a good impression.

Buying

The game has not been distributed commercially for a long time, but there is a combined version available on GOG, that bundles Warlords with Warlords 2. When searching for it, please note that the game has nothing to do with Warlords Battlecry. The latter is a different game, still derived from *Warlords*, but going into a different direction.

Installation

In the traditional sense, you can install the game using the *install.bat* file, that comes with the game (originally it came on floppy disks). However, no installation is necessary, just a simple copy or unpacking. The GOG installer gives you a typical installer experience.

DOS

There is nothing special to do under DOS. The game is a full-screen game and as usual under DOS, the only application running at the same time. But this also means, if the game crashes in the sense of hanging, a computer restart is necessary. But so far that never happened. What helps under DOS in any case is a mouse driver, because the game is mostly controlled by the mouse. Without it you can hardly play the game.

DOSBox

DOSBox already comes with a mouse driver, so an extra driver is not necessary. Also full-screen is not necessary. But it makes the gaming experience much better.

FreeDOS

Under FreeDOS 1.2 the game does not run properly. It will start, but relatively quickly you will get to the point where an error message appears and then no more input is recognized. After that a restart is required.

Windows

x86

Under DOS or Win 9x/ME there is usually nothing special to do. Under Windows you may have to change the game's properties to start it in full screen mode, or for the more persistent cases, in DOS mode.

x64

Under Windows x64 the game can no longer be run because it is 16 bit, and the 16 bit subsystem is no longer part of 64 bit Windows. This basically also rules out Windows 11 or newer, as none of them are available as a 32 bit edition any longer. The only thing that helps here is to boot with a DOS startup disk (the game should already be on the disk) or using DOSBox.

Versions

There are at least three different versions of the game, 1.01, 2.00 and 2.10. The latter two have a few more features regarding production and unit management. For example, there is a view of the ruins/temples where you can see which ones have already been visited and which have not. Also the game was ported to the Amiga. However, the saved games are not compatible with each other. So you should decide on a version before you play. Meanwhile you can even find the DOSBox based version 2.00 for DOS directly playable in the browser. So if you just want to have a first hand look at the game, this is probably not a bad choice. Also know, that for certain map editors a very special version 2.10 is required, that you can get at
https://sombre-sleep.com/warlords/warlords1_maps_howto. Just a fitting version number 2.10 is not

enough for this use-case.

Game Play Concept

Complete Manual

Here is only a brief outline of how the game works. Since all the information about the game results in a manual with more than 40 pages, you can find it as a PDF file in the [downloads]. This is a translation of the original English manual into German, with illustrations extracted from the game and partly additions that are not mentioned in the original manual. If you want to get a closer look at the game, you should read it there. It contains a lot worth reading.

Basic Concept

The basic concept is actually quite simple: On the map (there is only **this** one) there are eight starting castles, from which you first head off to take neutral castles, search temples and ruins and of course to fight the enemies at some point. Each party has certain advantages and disadvantages. *Lord Bane*, for example, is surrounded by four castles in the upper right corner, but then he has to go through the mountains to reach the rest of the map. *Sirians* on the other hand have only one very remote castle at the beginning, but a lot of gold, etc... Which faction is better for you is a matter of taste, but *Sirians* are definitely at a disadvantage compared to the rest.

The winner is the one who has taken all the castles or to whom all have surrendered. (Only PC opponents can surrender, and these only do so when exactly one person plays against seven PC controlled players). You can still play the game to the bitter end (which is OK for one human against all PC opponents). But this takes a correspondingly long time. You can plan for six to eight hours for that. Or you can play with several people in a co-op against the AI. This is a bit faster (less opponents) and more fun. Or you can play both: First, you knock out the AI players and then you fight for the overall victory.

Each of the castles brings a certain income in gold. Gold is needed to train troops, but also to strengthen castles or attract new heroes. At the beginning of each round you are first allocated your units that will be completed in that round and the gold that flows per round. The PC then asks if you want to continue production or stop it. If the gold is not sufficient, production orders are simply stopped. Also, at the beginning of each round heroes may offer to join you. For a nice pile of gold, of course, but that's a one-time offer. Usually this happens when you have a little more gold available around. Sometimes they come together with other powerful units, e.g. demons, ghosts, etc., but you only find out about this after accepting their offer. A clue however, is the price the hero asks for his services. If he asks for a relatively high price, then usually some units tagged along. These units are particularly strong, compared to the normal, trained ones from cities. So it is mostly worth it. Also sometimes units from ruins join you.

And with your own troops you can form groups of up to eight units or send them out alone to attack/take castles or attack units (groups) in the open. The result of an attack basically depends on the strength of the units involved, their type and combination, even on the location of the battle or the defence value of a city and of course the number of units. Attacks always cost moves. Each unit has a certain number of maximum moves, which decrease to a different extent when traversing a map tile, depending on the terrain and type of unit. Flying units are (alone or in a flying group)

relatively independent of the underground and usually have many moves. Riding units have relatively many moves, but are strongly dependent on the ground.

Archers, for example, are also dependent on the ground, but in the forest they cost only 1 move per tile, instead of 2 per tile. However, in hill fields they require 6 moves per tile, just like most other units. So it depends on who moves where. On roads you always have 1 move per square. On grasslands you need 2, in hill units 6. There are also bridges and ships.

Another thing to keep in mind: A group is always only as fast as its slowest unit. You can also undo the formation if you want. But as a group, they are stronger when they are attacked, because as said before, the combination also has an influence on the attack strength. The Hero is the only unit that benefits from air unit abilities (but air unit bonuses are applied to all kinds of units accompanying an air unit). Heroes can ride dragons and other air units. Other units cannot do this.

Control

Basics

The controls are mainly limited to the mouse. Basically, left clicks are used, but many things can also be activated or triggered with right clicks. There is also a menu, which can be used to display information and to give further commands, e.g. save and load games. This is achieved by moving the mouse pointer **to the very top** of the screen and left-clicking. The commands in it contain a letter after the command text. You can also use these keys to issue commands directly without having to enter the menu. E.g. with ALT + E you end your turn.

- *Ctr*: Center screen on the currently active unit
- *Nxt*: Switch to the next unit (group)

- *Quit*: Switch to the next unit (group) and do not select the current one again until the next round
- *Def*: Switch to the next unit (group) and do not select the current one again automatically at all.

In the picture a hero is selected in the castle. He has the strength 5 and 12 moves left. According to the flag he carries with him, he is not in any group. The flag has four divisions and an additional small flag as soon as the group contains more than 4 units.

On the right hand side is the minimap, where you can jump directly to a location with the mouse. Therefore the *Ctr*-button may be useful to quickly return to the currently selected unit. You can also keep the mouse pressed while moving over the map. Then the focus moves live in the main view of the detailed view of the map.

Moving

If you click on a free space in the state in which the unit is currently in, the unit will move directly there, usually(!) by the shortest route. Sometimes the unit will get lost, so it might be a good idea to click on the path the unit should take. If the moves are not enough, it will stop as soon as the next step would cost more moves than the unit has left. The unit will then also be demarked automatically. If the end of the turn is not the end of the move points, it may be necessary to make one more click away. Then the unit is automatically unmarked (unless it can still run on a road with the last remaining move, for example).

You sometimes have to be careful with the mouse to avoid the button bouncing, because while moving the detailed map is always carried along, so the unit is always centered. So if you now click once more after the unit has reached its target and it still has enough moves left, it will continue to move. So pay attention when clicking.

To unselect a unit only, right-click on a free spot. If you no longer want to use a particular unit this turn, you can click on *Quit*. If you click on *Nxt*, this unit will be selected again this round. Def is almost the same, with the difference that it will affect all subsequent rounds until you select the unit yourself again or add a unit to a defending group.

Selecting a City

To deselect the current unit, either right-click on it or click on the crossed-out flag at the top. Then you can use the mouse pointer, now shaped as a question mark, to click on the terrain and get information. You can also click on a city. Then *Defence*: will be displayed at the bottom, with the current defence value of the castle and its income: the income of the castle in gold per round (*gp* = Gold pieces).

If you first click on the shield with sword (second button from above), you can stop the castle production:

Now you can set the production to this unit either with the F-keys or by clicking on the unit pictures. The numbers next to the units mean production time / production costs. The maintenance costs per round are half of the production costs once the unit is finished. Another click on the same unit displays its properties (Moves, Strength). Click on *Prod* to confirm the production. Caution: If a unit is already in production, but not yet finished (e.g. it takes two rounds, but only one has passed) the production progress already made is lost. Also when issuing a (new) build the cost is taken immediately. So avoid switching between units during a round. If you click *Stop*, nothing will be produced anymore. Clicking on *Exit* will take you out of the production menu (this also allows you to cancel messed up commands). *Loc* is intended to redirect the production output to another castle. The unit will then no longer appear in the producing castle, but in another, the selected one. Meanwhile, they are not visible on the battlefield, so they cannot simply be knocked down by the enemy on the way to the target castle. A maximum of four unit transfers can be placed on a castle. If a castle is full, i.e. there are already 32 units in it, production will not simply continue. You have to free space in the castle again, otherwise the production will not continue.

Economy

In a sense, every city produces a small amount of gold. Besides the stolen gold from successful city attacks and treasures in ruins, this is the only source of gold. This gold is in turn used to produce troops or to hire offered units. The latter are always relatively expensive but also usually relatively strong and cannot be produced in castles. Likewise, every self-produced unit on the field costs maintenance costs. You have to keep this in mind, because producing units and not losing any can make you broke pretty fast. (That's why you can also disband units. Either because they won't get into combat anymore anyway, or because the cost-benefit ratio simply makes it hardly profitable to keep them).

The production possibilities depend on the castle on the one hand. Every castle has a certain set of units that it can produce. Even with the same unit types (e.g. horsemen), the values for Attack and

Moves may vary in the different castles. The production time and costs can also vary. It is therefore advisable to think carefully about where you produce what and what overall strategy you want to follow, or how you want to face the enemy. Everything has its advantages and disadvantages, especially if additional abilities like flying or swimming (ships) are to be used.

Towards the end of the game the supply lines become longer and longer and especially the manual transport of the produced troops towards the frontline feels like an eternity and gets on your nerves (especially for the other players who are not on their turn). That's why there is also the possibility to select a target castle via the LOC button in the castle production, to which it will be sent automatically. An additional bonus is that units that are transferred always need two rounds after completion to reach their destination and do not appear on the map (i.e. cannot be attacked). This is especially advantageous for distant target cities and makes the late game manageable.

Knights/Heroes

Knights are called Heroes in *Warlords* and are generally important for the game-play. At the beginning of each game each player (incl. PC opponents) receives exactly one hero. This hero is relatively strong for a starting unit and can become stronger or weaker over time. It is also suitable for attacking castles. But this is actually not its most important task. **Only** heroes can search ruins and temples for items and carry these items. When searching a place with a hero you can find hostile units that will attack (and possibly kill) you, friendly units that will join you, or items that give you bonuses in battle.

You can also come across thrones. You may or may not sit on them. Depending on whether you're lucky or not, your combat strength can increase or decrease or stay the same. Except for these specialties, heroes behave like all other ground units, except for the ability to ride flying units. If you have lost your hero it can take a while until you get another one again. But basically you have the chance to get another new hero each round. The more gold you have, the more likely it gets that a new hero offers to join you.

Especially in the beginning it is advisable to send him off with other units. Because especially at the beginning, when you are taking the still neutral castles, loosing him it is a severe setback in terms of fighting strength and thus for further expansion.

Unit Composition/Attacking

Each unit has its own strengths and weaknesses, starting with just moves and attack power. But also in the effectiveness in the terrain, they may differ in combat strength or speed depending on the location. Especially interesting is the combination of units. Special units and normal units in combination reinforce each other. Flying units give bonuses, just like heroes and their carried items. So it is not just a matter of looking at the strength points.

In battles, the order of single combat always starts with the weakest units of both sides. In case of doubt, it makes less sense to march into a battle with the heavy units first, but to possibly start with a group of weaker units that are more likely to be cannon fodder for the lighter units of the opponent.

Especially when attacking castles, it is often the case that you have to launch several waves of attacks. If you send out your strong units at the beginning, it is possible that due to castle defence, combination on the enemy's side and the corresponding bonuses, the strong units are already destroyed, so that you still have to overcome the enemy's bonuses in the end, but only the weaker

units are available.

For this reason it is always a good idea to create at least a minimum amount of diversity in a group. Even a single flight unit to regular ground units can make a big difference in the combat strength of the whole group. Even if the group is completely wiped out, it will most likely take more enemy units with it than if you had only sent in one more unit of the same type as the rest of the group.

This way you can create real killer groups, e.g. 3-4 strong standard units, a hero with an item, a flying unit and two special units (e.g. demons). Even a single dragon with a hero can cause a tremendous amount of damage, because you bring the flying unit bonus and the special unit bonus (and maybe even an item bonus) with you, and the dragon itself is already very strong and the two can fly together(!) and the hero gets the moves of the dragon this way (although he would definitely be the slower unit). Such combinations are much stronger than, for example, a group of eight heavy infantry. Defending a castle may make the whole thing become even more intense or if the opponent attacks with units that fight badly on the terrain (dwarves in a swamp for example).

Defence Value of Cities and Towers

The defence value of a castle contributes significantly to how well the units in the castle can defend themselves against attacks. This also applies to neutral castles! However, in neutral castles, all castle units fall as soon as the first castle unit has fallen (the number corresponds to the defence value of the castle). Thereafter, the defence value of the castle is reduced by one level each time it is taken over (even if the castle is empty!). In this way, the value decreases over time to more ineffective values, but never below 0. This can be counteracted by upgrading.

If you want to upgrade the castle, i.e. increase its defence value, you must have a unit inside of the castle. Then you can use the menu *Orders → Build* or the B key to issue the command. You will then be told the costs and you have to confirm that you want to upgrade the castle. You can also tear it down (*Orders → Raze* or R key). This can be useful if you know that your opponent is about to take it and you want to get ahead of him this way. Once a castle has been torn down, it cannot be rebuilt!

Also note: The mentioned defense bonus does not scale linearly with the defence value of the city. The following defense bonus is applied, depending on the defence value of the defending city:

Defence Value	Bonus
0 – 1	0
2 – 6	+1
7 – 8	+2
9	+3

Cities cannot be fortified to more than level 9.

Towers also provide for additional defence. A group placed on top of a tile with a tower on it get an additional bonus of +2 defense.

Historical Information

The first version of Warlords was developed by Steven Fawkner in 1989 and published through the

Publisher Strategic Studies Group (SSG). It was the first game he published with commercial intent. Special attention was paid to the AI, which at times shows almost human play behaviour.

After the first submission of Warlords to SSG, they rejected it for the time being because they had no interest in fantasy games. Ian Trout (SSG employee) passed the game on to his ten-year-old son, who was enthusiastic about the game. After that SSG was also convinced. Even though the game was already well developed at that time, a few months were invested with Fawkner and the AI specialist Roger Keating to further improve the AI before the game was released. Originally it was also planned that there should be a fog of war. But this did not come until 1993 in Warlords 2.

Fawkner stated that he was mainly influenced by games such as Dungeons and Dragons and the board game Dragons of Glory, especially in terms of the visual design of the manual and graphics, but also the story. The strategy game Empire by Mark Baldwin (1988) was a model for the complex possibilities of the game but at the same time easy to learn. The change between top view maps and 2.5D battles is inspired by Mike Singleton's Lords of Midnight on the ZX Spectrum.

Warlords was the start of a whole PC game series, followed by Warlords 2 (1993, expanded with more and partly hidden maps, new and different units, alliances, the Fog of war and an editor), Warlords 2 Deluxe (1995, expandable with own tiles), Warlords 3 (1998, now also playable over the internet) and Warlords 4 (2003).

(Source)

Designer

- Original Design and Amiga Programming: Steve Fawkner
- Artificial Intelligence Design and Programming: Roger Keating
- IBM Development and Programming; Stephen Hart
- Production Co-Ordinator and Additional Development: Gregor Whiley
- IBM Utilities: Simon Hayes
- Computer Art: Graeme Whittle
- Sleeve Art: Nick Stathopoulos
- Game Testing: Janeen Andrews, Richard Simpson, Mark Hill, Tim Wakeman, Karl-Peter Baum, Andrew Taubman, Rowan Keating, Tim Reichelt, Alex Shaw, Anthony Pearson and Ian "Orc-lover" Trout

Technical Information About Maps

Warlords contains two maps, that (although representing technically the same map) are, from a technical point of view, not connected at all. One is the tactical map information (shown on the left), where units are commanded. The strategic map (on the right) is basically only a graphic, used to give an overview and for navigating the view port of the tactical map. These files can of course be altered, to create new map layouts.

The easiest way to edit the stock map is with map editors. See Map Editors on the subject.

Strategic Map

The strategic map consists of two files, *strat.pck* (VGA version) and *estrat.pck* (EGA version), both stored in the in the folder *picts* of the *Warlords* installation. It essentially contains the basis for the graphical representation of the game map, which should mirror the definition of the tactical map details, but does not necessarily do so (technically two different sets of information could exists, e.g. when using a map editor, that does not update the strategic map, such as Warlords Terrain Editor). This means, playing different maps in *Warlords* would require changing the strategic map as well, every time the tactical map is updated by some means.

Tactical Map

The tactical map is defined by file *illuria.map*. The map is encoded by two bytes per map tile. It consists of 109 tiles in width and 156 tiles in height, making the file have the size of 34'008 bytes. Aside from the obvious definitions of terrain, city locations, ruins and similar objects, it also contains way points for the AI to try and reach. Those way points are basically just grassland fields, but with a different byte code than normal grassland fields.

Here are some elements, that are known:

Number	Type	Tile
00 00	Grasslands	
07 80	Grasslands with way point	
07 8A	Temple	
07 8B	Library	
07 8C	Ruin	
07 8D	Swamp	
07 8E	Road East-West	
07 8F	Road North-South	
07 90	Cross Roads	
07 91	Intersection South	
07 92	Intersection West	
07 93	Intersection North	

Number	Type	Tile
07 94	Intersection East	
07 95	Turn West and South	
07 96	Turn West and North	
07 97	Turn North and East	
07 98	Turn East and South	
07 99	Dead End East	
07 9A	Dead End North	
07 9B	Dead End West	
07 9C	Dead End South	
07 9D	Coast North-West	
07 9E	Coast North	
07 9F	Coast North-East	
07 A0	Coast South-East	
07 A1	Coast South	
07 A2	Coast South-West	
07 A3	Coast West	
07 A4	Water	
07 A5	Coast West	
07 A6	Cove South-East	
07 A7	Cove South-West	
07 A8	Cove North-East	
07 A9	Coast North-West	

Number	Type	Tile
07 AA	Eddy	
07 AB	Forest Edge North-West	
07 AC	Forest Edge North	
07 AD	Forest Edge North-East	
07 AE	Forest Edge South-West	
07 AF	Forest Edge South	
07 FC	Bridge water right	
07 FD	Bridge water left	

Videos

- Let's Play

Weblinks

- http://warlorders.com
- Browser Version
- Walk Through
- Warlords 1 - Version 2.00 online playable
- Darklord's Lair – Warlords Archives

Downloads

- German Manual for Warlords
- Warlords 1 version 2.00
- Warlords 1 version 2.10
- Warlords 1 version for Amiga

See also

- Warlords Series

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