War of the Ring: a digital edition (product overview)

A fan-made digital version of War of the Ring, Second Edition (Ares Games; designed by Roberto Di Meglio, Marco Maggi and Francesco Nepitello), built by Werner Altewischer. A free, non-commercial fan project, updated 31 October 2026.



What it is

The complete game of War of the Ring, Second Edition, with the Lords of Middle-earth expansion, in the browser: one player against the computer, or two players online. It follows the rulebook and the card texts closely, and it explains the game while you play.

Features

- **The full base-game rules.** All phases, the Hunt and the Mordor Track, battles and sieges, Combat cards, politics, Characters, the Elven Rings and all victory conditions.
- **Lords of Middle-earth,** the expansion: the special Action dice, Elrond, Galadriel and the Keepers of the Elven Rings, Sméagol, the Balrog, Gothmog and the new cards, and the Council of Rivendell (the Fellowship chosen in secret), against the computer and online.
- **Play against the computer** as either side, at three levels that differ in how long it thinks. It searches ahead (Monte Carlo tree search) and judges positions with neural networks trained on its own games and on more than 4,000 games people played in the community's online client, so it prefers the moves experienced players make: it keeps Gandalf as the Guide, saves its Elven Rings, retreats into Strongholds rather than fighting hopeless field battles, and plays Event cards at their moment. Testers flag a move that looks wrong with one click (⚑); each report becomes a test position and a fix, and a change ships only after test matches show it loses no strength.
- **Other bots online.** Bots by other authors play people in the lobby through the open WotR Bot Protocol (github.com/behindmedia/wotr-protocol), and bot authors can match their bots on the hosted referee.
- **Watch two bots play each other,** with a level for each side: pause, step through move by move, save and review.
- **Learn to play.** A 39-step tutorial plays the first two turns of a real game. Each move is animated and explained: what happens, and why that side chose it.

- **Help while playing.** Every option comes with a one-line explanation. Tips appear the first time a rule matters, and hovering over a piece, a die, a Character or an Elven Ring names it and says what it does. A full rule reference can be searched and opened at the right section from anywhere in the game. A hint button ("Suggest a move") is available against the computer. Back undoes a mistaken choice within a die's action, online too, as long as nothing has moved or been revealed. The Hunt tiles (in the Pool, drawn, still to come) can be looked at any time.
- **Online play** against another person. Games can be real time with chess-style clocks, or correspondence with 1–14 days a move. There is chat, and hidden information stays hidden: the server sends each player only what their side may see.
- **Watching games.** The lobby lists the games in progress; anyone may watch one unless its players said no. Spectators see neither side's cards and cannot chat.
- **A live lobby**: who is online, with their ratings; open challenges to accept or post (time, side, rated or casual, a rating range); direct challenges to a player; **quick match** ("Play now"), which pairs players of a close rating; one's games, those waiting for one's move first. Notifications by mail (optional, per kind) and in the browser. Private games with a join code still work.
- **Ratings and history.** Elo ratings per category (real time and correspondence), shown next to every name; each player's finished games, a profile with rating graphs, and a leaderboard.
- **Insights and statistics.** Per player: win rates per side and category, how games were won and lost, length and style, results against stronger and weaker players, and head to head against any opponent. For the community: the sides' win rates, how games are won, results by game length.
- **Replays** of every finished online game, with a share link: move by move or by turn, with both sides' cards revealed, the game log, and a **timeline** of the game (victory points, Corruption and the Fellowship's progress per turn, and markers for battles, the Hunt, cards, nations going to war, casualties).
- **Game review** after the game: each player's accuracy, a win-chance graph over the whole game, and the key moments (good moves, inaccuracies, mistakes, blunders) with a better option shown on the map, judged by the same computer opponent players face. It runs on the player's own device, for online games and games against the computer alike, and says beforehand how long it will take.
- **Accounts**, by invitation only for now, with email verification and password reset. Members can invite friends with personal links; badges mark founding testers and recruiters. Players report bugs from inside the game (with the game attached), send ideas with Send feedback, and see what changed in What's New.
- **Privacy and fair play.** A privacy notice; each player can download all their data or delete their account. Players can block and report others; the admin can mute, warn or block an account.
- **Comfort.** Three text sizes; resigning a game, or discarding one in progress; server updates that pause games for a few seconds without losing a move or charging the clocks.
- **Presentation.** A painted map of Middle-earth (or, for readability, a Clear or a Simple style), painted miniatures for every figure on a living map (figures sway, march along their routes and react in battle), control markers on captured Settlements, a picture for every Event card, animated moves, dice and cards, sound effects, music that follows the game (or the player's own music, assigned by place and moment), and rolling credits. The map, figures and card pictures are AI-generated. The music is licensed for reuse (CC0 and CC BY 4.0).

Platforms

One codebase builds three apps:

- **Web.** This is the focus. It runs in any recent desktop browser (Chrome, Edge, Firefox, Safari 18.2+) and on tablets. It is live, by invitation, at wotr.behindmedia.com.
- **Desktop** (macOS; Windows and Linux possible from the same build), not released yet.
- **iPad and iPhone**, in landscape, with touch controls, not released yet.

Technology, in plain words

- The **rules engine** is written once and used everywhere: in the apps, on the server and by the computer opponent. Automated tests check it, among them random games played to the end.
- The **computer opponent** and the **game review** run on the player's own device: in the browser in background threads, so the page never freezes. No server costs per game.
- The **game server** is small. It checks every move with the same rules engine, runs the clocks, the lobby and the ratings, relays the chat to players and spectators, and keeps accounts, games, statistics and reviews in a database. It runs on one small cloud server today (about €5-10 a month).
- Built with Kotlin Multiplatform and Compose Multiplatform: the same interface code on web, desktop and iOS.

Current status

- Working and stable enough for testing; the web version has been live since 11 October 2026, updated almost daily.
- **By invitation**: anyone may ask for an invite on the site. Non-commercial: no price, no ads, no donations.
- Testers, among them experienced players of the community, report bugs and ideas from inside the game, and the computer opponent's dubious moves they flag drive its improvement.
- Not affiliated with or endorsed by Ares Games or the Tolkien rights holders. It would be taken down on request.

What an official release would still need

- **A licence** covering the digital game, from Ares Games and, through Ares, the Tolkien rights holders (Middle-earth Enterprises).
- **Art.** Either keep the current AI-generated art, or replace it with the official board, card and figure art; the art is kept apart from the game's code, so it can be swapped.
- **Expansions:** Warriors of Middle-earth and Kings of Middle-earth (Lords of Middle-earth is in).
- **Store releases:** Steam, the App Store, perhaps Android, with the review, payment and support they need.
- **Localisation:** the game's texts, the rule reference and the tutorial in other languages.
- **The computer opponent:** more training (by self-play, the next step), and a measurement against experienced players' ratings.
- An accessibility pass and a professional proofread of the rule texts.

Screenshots



The map on turn 1, the Free Peoples to act



A battle at the Fords of Isen, with the battle panel



The Hunt finds the Fellowship



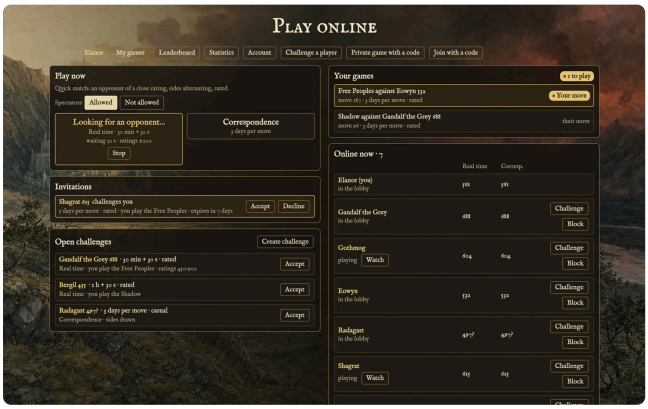
The tutorial: the Fellowship moves



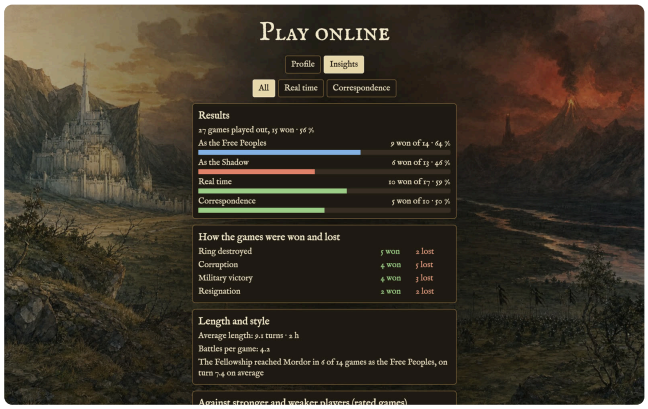
An Event card, shown large



An online game in real time, with clocks and chat



The lobby: quick match, challenges, who is online



A player's insights



A replay with its timeline



The game review: win chance, accuracy, a key moment



Lords of Middle-earth: the Balrog in Moria, Gothmog's special Action die, the Elven Rings' Keepers



The Council of Rivendell: the Companions' versions chosen in secret



One of the expansion's Event cards: A Balrog is Come!

The video: war-of-the-ring-trailer-4.mp4 (two minutes and twenty seconds, recorded from the web app of 31 October: the tutorial, the Hunt, a battle, the computer opponent, a game of Lords of Middle-earth, quick match and chat, a replay and the game review). The earlier cuts, war-of-the-ring-trailer-3.mp4 (20 October), war-of-the-ring-trailer-2.mp4 and war-of-the-ring-trailer.mp4, show the interface of October before the expansion.

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