

Warcraft: The Board Game Scenario Creation Guide

by Kevin Wilson

Welcome!

This guide is intended to help you create your own scenarios for **Warcraft: the Board Game**. It takes you through the process step-by-step, explaining why the various parts of the board were designed the way they were, and offering suggestions on things you can do to keep your scenarios interesting.

Remember, if you create a scenario that you are particularly proud of, I hope that you will share it with me at kevin@fantasyflightgames.com and perhaps let us add it to our scenario library for others to enjoy as well.

What is the Purpose of Scenarios?

Warcraft: the Board Game was always designed with scenarios in mind. In the video games, the campaign scenarios form an important part of the game experience, allowing the designers to tell an enthralling story and reveal information about the world of Warcraft.

With the board game, the intent of the scenarios was to increase the game's replayability and work in a lot of the *feel* of Warcraft that necessarily gets lost when you translate a video game into a board game. In addition, scenarios help by allowing players to customize the out-of-the-box game into exactly the game they want to play. Not everyone has the same likes and dislikes, and scenarios allow a designer to cater to a wide range of tastes.

Creating Your Own Scenario

Before you begin, you'll want to familiarize yourself with the rules for **Warcraft: the Board Game**. You'll also probably want your copy of the game nearby when designing scenarios. If nothing else, designing the board setup diagram is a thousand times easier with the board pieces in hand. Lastly, you'll want a pencil and some paper to make notes on while you're working. Once you've armed yourself with all this equipment, you're ready to begin.

The Structure of a Scenario

Scenarios are formatted in the following way:

Title

A bit of story text describing what's going on in the scenario. Most importantly, introduce what the different races are attempting to accomplish. Obviously, if you're designing a scenario for just your own group's use, this isn't that important, but it's still fun.

Players: The number of players the scenario is intended for.

Races: The specific races used in the scenario.

Special Tokens Required: A list of non-standard tokens and/or pieces used in the scenario. Try to stick to the quest tokens that came with the game, since everyone has those for sure.

Setup: The trickiest part for most folks is the setup diagram. Mostly, you just need to worry about getting the board piece orientations across to those who are going to be playing the scenario, as well as marking any space where special tokens or units start. If a unit starts in a Town space, it isn't really all that important to show it in the diagram as long as it's mentioned in this section. (Incidentally, I'll be happy to work up a fancy setup diagram for any scenarios that are submitted to us and accepted for posting on our website, as long as I can figure out what you intended.)

In addition to the setup diagram, any other starting conditions for the scenario should be listed here, including starting resources for each player, units that start out already upgraded, units that are set aside for a special pool, cards that are set aside in a special deck, cards that are removed from the race decks, etc.

Starting Units: All starting units should be listed here, including those that start in Town spaces.

Playing <Race>: If a race has special rules that apply only to it, you should list those rules in this section.

Special Rules: Special rules for the scenario that apply to all players should be listed here. In a lot of ways, this is often the heart of a scenario, since the largest changes from the standard game often occur here.

All special tokens that have unusual effects in the scenario (such as walls, captives, etc.) should be explained here. Handy special rules that can be found in the basic scenarios include:

The Elf Gate: One possible method of having neutral units is described in this scenario.

March of the Necromancers: An alternate method of training units is described in the Playing Undead section of this scenario.

The Captives: Rules for captives and walls can both be found in this scenario.

Nordrassil, the World Tree: Unbalanced teams and a very unusual turn sequence is described in this scenario.

When designing an official scenario, I always try to introduce at least 1 new concept that can be used in other scenarios, so be sure to check out the official scenarios on the FFG website for further ideas for special rules.

Victory Conditions: Good victory conditions may include accumulating Victory Points, holding off an enemy for a certain number of turns, or returning a captive to safety.

Scenario Designed By: Don't forget to sign your name to your scenario!

The Components: An In-Depth Look

A good craftsman knows his tools. When designing scenarios for **Warcraft: the Board Game**, it's useful not only to know what components are in the game that you can use, but also why they were designed the way they were. So, let's work our way through the component list one step at a time, and I'll explain the whys and wherefores, and hopefully give you some ideas in the process.

Board Pieces

There are 13 double-sided board pieces in the game. Of these, 4 are what I call 'town pieces', 1 is the 'center piece', 2 are 'diamond pieces', 2 are 'wedge pieces', 2 are 'strip pieces', and 2 are 'small pieces'. Let's look at each in turn.

Town Pieces

Pieces 2, 3, 10, and 12 are town pieces. Each of them contains the Town square for one of the 4 races. On one side of each piece, the town square is in one of the three corners, and on the other side, the town square is in the middle of an edge. Each side also contains 1 forest, 1 goldmine, and 1 mountain in various configurations.

When building the scenarios at first, I found that I had a lot of trouble evenly spacing out the town spaces. I try to have all the towns exactly evenly spaced from each other, so there's no temptation to go after one opponent as opposed to any other just because one happens to be closer. In a team game, you might want to have allied towns closer to each other, of course. In any event, it's something to keep in mind when designing.

The Center Piece

The center piece (piece 7) features 3 forests, 3 goldmines, and a 2-pt objective space on one side, and 3 mountains and a 4-pt objective space on the other side.

I like to refer to the cyan side of the center piece as the 'feast piece', and the other side as the 'famine piece', and it should be pretty obvious why. By using one side or the other in a scenario, you can greatly affect the amount of resources available to the players.

First, the feast piece. Early on, I found that I wanted a large concentration of resources in the center of the board to draw players in towards each other and promote conflict, but I didn't want the resources unfairly close to one player. The feast piece was my solution.

The famine piece was developed much later, when I was working on the Nordrassil scenario. Basically, I wanted a piece that would funnel units together into the very center of the board in a sort of meat grinder effect. Without using flying units, it can be incredibly difficult to take one of the three 'mountain passes' from a defending force. As a reward for all that effort, I put a big fat 4-pt objective space smack dab in the middle. I figured if nothing else, it would make for some good 'king of the hill' scenarios, which is basically what the Elf Gate scenario is.

Incidentally, I was originally going to use a screenshot of Nordrassil, the World Tree for the 4-pt objective space, but when I tried to get the screenshot in the video game, Nordrassil was way too big to fit on the screen, even when I was totally zoomed out! The elf gate was my second choice, as it looked pretty neat, and was unique enough to justify it. I eventually used the concept art for Nordrassil on a quest token for the scenario.

Diamond Pieces

Pieces 6 and 8 are the 'diamond pieces'. On the cyan side, each has a goldmine and a 1-pt objective space (the bandit camp, which is perhaps my favorite board graphic), while the magenta side is different for each. Piece 6 has a forest and another 1-pt objective, while 8 has a goldmine and a mountain.

The cyan side of these pieces is pretty obvious. They're nice filler with some gold and a victory point. Not critical to victory, but they draw players towards each other and encourage fighting.

As for the other side, if you look at the Elf Gate scenario, you'll see why these two pieces look the way they do on their magenta side. When placed side by side, the two do a stand-in job for a 'wedge piece' and a 'small piece' with a bit of mountain sticking off one side. One of the biggest challenges in designing the board was dealing with the 3-player scenarios, because I only had 2 of most pieces, and I didn't have any room to include a 3rd just for the 3-player scenarios, so I improvised here. Still, it's often useful to have a piece with just a forest or a goldmine on it

Wedge Pieces

Pieces 4 and 11 are the wedge pieces. They both feature a forest and a 1-pt objective on their cyan side, and they get a goldmine in addition on their magenta side.

These are handy because they can be used to add or subtract a goldmine from a scenario without switching from 'feast' to 'famine'.

Strip Pieces

Pieces 1 and 13 are the strip pieces. They feature a 2-pt objective space on their cyan side, but their magenta sides are different. Piece 1 has the largest mountain chain (4 mountains) in the set on its magenta side, while piece 13 is totally blank.

The strip pieces are very handy for creating large distances on the board, and piece 1's magenta side makes for a terrific obstacle that will dominate any scenario it's used in (you'll notice that I haven't gotten around to it yet, but I will, oh yes, I will...)

Small Pieces

Finally, the small pieces (5 and 9) feature a 2-pt objective on the cyan side, and nothing on the magenta side. I use these as spacers, filling in little gaps here and there in the map, usually. One nice trick is that you can make a third 'strip piece' by laying them end to end, one on its cyan side, one on its magenta side. Very handy for 3-player scenarios, when you really want to have 3 of a single type of piece for building a balanced board.

Wooden Unit Markers

The units in the game come in three flavors: melee, ranged, and flying. As my standard setup, I start players with 3 melee units. This avoids going over the stacking limits, doesn't give them units that they can't normally build at the start of the game using their starting buildings, and still gives them some flexibility in their early game play.

In my opinion, you shouldn't start players with units that they are incapable of building, so if you want to hand out ranged units, make sure players start with a ranged building in their town as well. I could see making an exception if it's a special unit or you're trying to recreate one of the video game scenarios, but most of the time, it just seems weird.

Town Interfaces

The town interface not only establishes your costs for upgrading and building buildings, it gives you your worker building and a melee building to get you started. If you wanted a really nasty scenario, you might have the worker building destroyed, so that when a player loses his last worker, he can't harvest any more resources. Of course, that would just be mean...

Outpost Markers

As shown in the Nordrassil scenario, the outpost markers are a good way to put a town space on the board without using a town piece. They can also be used to give a race some extra placement options, perhaps to make up for some other weakness, such as fewer starting resources or being outnumbered by their enemies.

Building Tiles

Building tiles are a great place to set up starting balance between the different races. By starting a race out with a ranged or flying unit building, you can give a strong advantage to a race and/or speed up the start of the game.

Worker Markers

I generally start each player with 3 workers. That gives them 1 to harvest gold, 1 to harvest wood, and 1 to construct buildings. Remember that workers are incredibly fragile, so you should be careful if you position them near enemy units. Losing workers early in the game can permanently cripple a player.

Unit Tiles

The primary concern that unit tiles have for a scenario creator is whether or not to start them upgraded, and if so, how far. Also, if you only upgrade a unit type partially, you should probably make sure to give the player enough starting buildings to be able to continue upgrading without a massive initial construction push. Lastly, remember that upgrades that lead towards a race's special power or area attack ability are more powerful than those that don't.

Experience Cards

First off, if you are not using VP in the scenario, make sure to either have the players remove the VP cards from their experience decks or assign those cards another ability for the scenario.

Next, if not allowing building, harvesting, or some other aspect of the game, make sure to look at the cards to see how this impacts them and plan accordingly, as with the VP cards above. Sharp-eyed players will note that I missed this in several of the basic scenarios in the rulebook, so watch out, it's really easy to forget. Corrections to these scenarios will appear in the FAQ/Errata document.

Resource Tokens

In some scenarios, you may wish to limit the total resources available, with spent resources being removed from the game. Another trick you can do is to place 'caches' of resources on the board that get collected by the first player who ends the movement turn in the same space as them.

Depletion Tokens

Depletion tokens can be used to deplete resources at the start of the game if they are inconvenient for your board setup, or to have a player start with a town that is already damaged. Finally, you can use them as special markers on the board to denote some feature that you have a lot of in your scenario, assuming resource spaces aren't depleting as usual.

Quest Tokens

Quest tokens have a variety of uses for a clever scenario designer. I tried to pack in as many useful tokens as I could think of for the base game, and I list the reasoning for each below.

Unit Type Tokens

These tiles are intended to be used as alternate sources of units on the board, either as single units that the players come across who join them, or as endless pools of units, such as in March of the Necromancers.

Captives, Walls

Rules for captives and walls can be found in the Captives scenario, and for official scenarios, it would be nice if all scenario authors used the same captive/wall rules. Of course, you could also have players 'rescue' units from the captive tokens, gaining units when they 'free' them, and you could use the walls to completely block off movement through certain areas (even to fliers) or to allow players to fortify positions. Maybe players could even build walls on the board in the same way they build outposts!

Graveyards, Necromancers, Nordrassil

While used for specific purposes in their original scenarios, these markers make good all-purpose objectives or space/progress markers.

Bringing It All Together

Ok, now we've looked at the format of a scenario and the tools you have to work with, so it's time to bring it all together, give you a few last pieces of advice and get you started.

1. Don't Get Discouraged

Speaking from experience, it's very difficult to get everything to work out just right the first time. Scenarios have to be played and replayed, tweaked a bit, and then played some more. The math involved can be quite tricky, and if you're introducing special rules for the scenario, then it's extremely difficult to predict the exact effects they will have.

Don't let this discourage you, though. Having other people play and enjoy something you've created is a great feeling, and you don't want to miss out on that just because your first attempt didn't go down so well. With a bit of perseverance and some patient friends, it'll come together. If you need some advice, try the message boards listed at the end of this guide.

2. Watch the Resources

Unless you have special harvesting rules for the scenario, the resource spaces on the board are something that you really need to keep your eye on. Make sure that each player has an equal opportunity to claim resources for himself by counting the spaces between the players' towns and the resources available.

3. Focus on Fun

A common mistake that game designers make is to add in a rule just because it's "neat" or it "makes the game more challenging." This is very common in video game design in particular, where designers often build in extremely difficult levels to "challenge the players." It's important to keep in mind that you want people to enjoy your scenario, not just hold it up to the light and admire how clever it is. Focus on what's fun about your scenario, not what you think is clever, and I guarantee that your designs will show it.

4. Story is Important

You may not think so yourself, but the vast majority of gamers that I've played with and spoken to are keenly interested in the story or theme of the board games they play. When designing scenarios for **Warcraft: the Board Game**, that means you'll want to come up with a clever story hook that will make your players care about harvesting that wood and training those workers. It doesn't have to be long or complicated, just answer the most important question: Why are we fighting, and what are we trying to accomplish?

5. Victory Point Guidelines

Lastly, if you use victory points, keep this guideline in mind. If you want the scenario to be a bloody one, the victory points needed for victory should be equal to 9 (the player's own town + 3 VP cards + 3 upgrade VPs) plus about 50% of the points on the board. If it's a team game, throw in another 9 VP for each additional team member. That will make it most likely that the game will end with a player elimination. If you want to make a VP victory more likely, lower the VPs needed to approximately 5 (+5 per team mate) plus about 35% of the points on the board. The basic 4-player team scenario, for instance, would actually be 20 VPs if you wanted to cut down some on the bloodshed and increase the likelihood of a bloodless victory. You'll want to examine your board layout and tweak it up or down a bit to reach the desired difficulty of a VP victory, of course. Remember that in a 4-player scenario 12 VPs are tied up in the town spaces, which is certain to be a significant chunk.

Focus on the basics, add a bit of story and color, and playtest enough to make sure the scenario doesn't completely fly apart, and you're ready to go!

Final Notes From the Designer

There you have it. I didn't get any further into specifics because it's difficult to lay down hard and fast design rules when the individual scenarios can be so different from each other. There is an excellent Yahoo! group for the board game at:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/warcraft_boardgame/

and plenty of good discussion about the game at:

<http://www.boardgamegeek.com/viewitem.php3?gameid=7479>

If you find yourself in need of some advice/playtesters for your scenarios, I suggest you try those two locations first.

Ultimately, I am hopeful that this guide will help you to continue to enjoy **Warcraft: the Boardgame** in new ways for a long time to come, and I look forward to seeing what you all come up with.

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