



Warcraft III: Reforged is coming. This means that WC3 will be added to the Battle.Net launcher, advertised, and supported by Blizzard once again. Our favorite game will be brought into modern times with global matchmaking and accessibility. There will be many previous players returning to the game as well as an influx of new blood! With this amazing news, I'd like to revisit and update a project of mine over the years -- Seksi's Comprehensive Guide to Free For All. This latest version has been completely rewritten and updated for 2018 reflecting the recent patches we've received (1.29 and 1.30.1 and 1.30.2).

This guide will also cover the current state of FFA, including how the recent patches have affected the game type.

Join the FFA community!

Discord Channel: <https://discord.gg/Mgh82k6>

Website: www.ffamasters.com

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The Art of FFA: A Comprehensive Guide to Free For All in Warcraft III

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INTRODUCTION:

Once upon a time, many years ago, conversation began about an epic game type known as Free For All. In 2004, a community was established that has continued on through this very day. The passion and resolve of our community has been unmatched. We've seen 28 (!) seasons of the FFA Masters League, 7 seasons of playFFA Ladder, current seasons of WC3M Ladder, numerous seasons of BNet FFA ladder & various FFA tournaments and competitions. Our community has moved to Discord and many players and fans alike have joined us. We are looking forward to Reforged bringing back an active BNet Ladder once again. The future is bright for Free For All.

The challenge FFA presents to a WC3 player is like none other. The ceiling for skill and strategic possibilities is unlimited. No two games are ever the same; and at times, you may find yourself in awe over the sheer epicness that this game type can deliver.

Even after years of experience, one can never truly master FFA. At first glance, some may look at this game type and deem it as luck before understanding the complexity and mechanics behind Free For All. In fact, at higher levels the luck factor is very low. Make no mistake, Free For All is a skilled game type. Skill, decision making, and an "FFA sense" play a far greater role in determining an outcome.

One major deterrent to players new to FFA is the idea of teaming. You play well, grab an advantage and then get teamed?! Well, first you must understand that teaming in FFA is temporary. To win a FFA game, you must be the last player standing -- there is only one winner. Naturally, if a player becomes too dominant, the attention will shift towards them in an attempt to balance the scales and give the other players better position. You may get teamed in the short term, but the tides can often turn multiple times in a given game.

Of course there are ways around being teamed. As the dominant player, you can make decisive moves to secure your position. After establishing map control, you may want to seek out the weakest player and cripple him, effectively gaining experience and preventing a rebuild. Or you might want to seek out your toughest opponent and hit him hard and fast before they have a chance to prepare for you. Another option is to lay low, grab your additional expansions and wait for the right time to act. There are many ways to play your cards in an FFA match and opportunities will continue to present themselves.

Free for All is Warcraft III on a grand scale. There is no cookie-cutter way to play. You must combine a myriad of skills; ranging from micro and macro to decision making, economy management, and strategic maneuvers in order to become a successful FFA player. You'll have to adapt to varying circumstances on the fly.

There is an artistic element to a player's game and style. A well played FFA game often looks like a puzzle being pieced together beautifully.

The battles are legendary. Warfare is diplomatic. Only one player will be left standing.

Are you ready?

FREE FOR ALL BASICS:

1. **You're never out until you're eliminated.**

In a Free For All game, you can almost always come back from near defeat. In poker they call it "a chip and a chair". In Warcraft you can call it "a peon and some gold". Due to the nature of FFA, the power frequently shifts. You may lose your heroes, army, or even main base. If this happens to you, try to be patient and have a back up plan. It can be difficult for a single player to fully eliminate you; often times you will be able to rebuild your base elsewhere. Once the attention is away from you, there may be a window of time for you to rebuild while other players fight. There's been countless games where I've come back from almost nothing, even with only one worker and barely enough gold to make a hall. These are some of the most epic victories. Remember, as long as you have some gold and a way to rebuild... go for it!

Q: How should I play a Free For All game against multiple opponents?

Scout the spawn locations of your opponents and consider your position relative to theirs. This should be the basis of your game plan.

If you have one player near you but the other side free, understand that this player will most likely be your first opponent. This doesn't mean that you should rush them at Tier 2 or even prepare an army for them immediately at Tier 3. This *does* mean that you should keep tabs on that player and scout them. You don't have to engage with a neighboring player early on just because they are close to you. Some players are more passive than others, and if you don't engage early you can choose to stay on 50 food and "hoard" gold for a time being instead.

If you are surrounded (players on both sides of you), you can consider your options. It's usually a smart idea to choose a neighboring opponent and prepare an 80 or 100 food army for them. You'll still want to creep, expand, and tech before engaging. Focus on your macro and getting to that 80 food army efficiently. If you can take them out, you would successfully "break out" of the surround, typically securing their expansion opportunities as well. Another option would be to stay at 50 food and look to expand on the other side of map while scouting and playing defensively.

Sometimes you will have a great spawn, also known as "Marko Luck". This is when you spawn on one side of the map and the other players all spawn on the other side. In this case, you can more easily take multiple expansions and creep camps. Don't be too greedy, however; because spawn luck can turn into being teamed if you take too many early expansions. Still follow the game plan of scouting your opponents to decide a course of action, but in this case you can focus more on your macro and creep route.

In any case, you are ultimately playing to outlast every opponent and be the last player standing. Take your piece of the pie when it comes to creep camps and expansions. Scout early and often to help you make informed decisions. Be diplomatic, yet decisive in your moves. Find your opportunities and seize them.

Q: How do I survive through the game against multiple opponents?

You do this by managing a proper economy to be able to withstand various opponents and circumstances. Unlike solo, it's a good thing to "bank" gold in FFA. You will start every game by expanding quickly and securing additional gold mine(s). It's not uncommon to accumulate a few thousand gold in the early stages of the game and much more as the game progresses.

Just keep in mind that other players will also have gold. You will often fight numerous battles against different opponents. If you are decisive, you will be able to eliminate players at times even if they still have gold. Other times, the game will go to the wire, where all remaining players will be broke or very low on gold.

Don't aimlessly fight. Taking on every fight and every opponent is a common mistake that new players make when they first start playing FFA. It's also referred to as a "Rambo" style. Sometimes this style may be the best choice, but most often it's best to carefully consider who you attack and when. Your fights should have a purpose; whether that's to gain experience or gold mines, to eliminate or weaken a player, or to secure a better position.

10,000+ gold may seem like a lot at first, but you can quickly burn through that. Conserve your resources and choose your battles wisely.

Q: Should I play Passive or Aggressive?

There is no perfect answer to this and it should often be influenced by player spawns. Either style can work as long as you are balanced. Generally speaking, however; you won't usually want to be overly aggressive. Don't creep jack other players unless you plan on engaging them and be patient in your course of action. The best FFA players are decisive in their moves, but also calculated in their strategy.

I typically will play an aggressive style with a plan to take out a nearby opponent, looking to gain experience and secure more expansion opportunities. This isn't always the best route though. If you are too aggressive, you may be seen as a significant threat to the other players. Remember that in FFA you are playing the long game. Only one player wins. At times, it might be a better idea to play passively, scout and be more defensive.

For example, I may choose to play passively and not engage a neighboring player if I am Undead and the villain is another skilled Undead. Sure, I can rush to 80 or 100 food Gargoyles and try to take them out, but that player would likely be doing the same thing. Gargoyles are very expensive. If I am unsuccessful in eliminating him on my first attack, it would probably be detrimental to both of us to fight each other early.

On the other hand, I would usually be more aggressive if my neighboring player has open spawns on the other side of him, because the reward of taking him out would be greater. Every game is different and you'll have to adapt your strategy. Play to your strengths, be flexible, and scout as much as you can.

Q: What is "Peace" in a FFA game?

"Peace" in FFA is basically a temporary truce between two players. Sometimes players will call for peace with a neighboring opponent in the early game. The advantage to this is that you can (usually) safely creep, expand and stay at 50 food for a longer period of time to start the game. After the initial peace, players will either "break peace" and build an army after some time to engage, or they will continue to honor the peace and choose to fight players in other directions.

Other times when a temporary truce can be beneficial is after substantial fighting or if another player is too dominant. For example, two players may agree to stop fighting temporarily if another player is eliminated to be able to scout or reestablish map position.

The idea of a temporary "Peace" in FFA is foreign to players new to the game type, but is necessary at times for your best chances to win. Think of it like this: If you are competing to be the last man standing, there will be times when it's to your advantage to form a temporary alliance. Regardless, never trust a player's word. Keep tabs on them and continue to scout. Peace never lasts forever in a FFA game.

While the concept of peace is important to understand, I do want to note that this level of diplomacy is seen more so in FFA league matches and not so much in ladder formats.

Q: I killed my first opponent, and now there are 3 players (including me) left in the game. What should I do now?

This is referred to as a "3-way". 3-ways can be tricky so the first advice I can say is to scout. Scout the other players, see what they are up to and try to estimate their strength. This can be done by scouting their expansions, hero levels, army composition, and main base.

From there, one option is to engage another opponent and try to take them out. If you can successfully do so, it would set you up for a final 1v1 that would likely be in your favor. However, if you cannot take them out quickly; consider that the third player in the game may help them, leading into a 2v1 against you.

Another option would be to play passively once the 3-way starts. You can take this time to focus on your macro in expanding and accumulating gold. You may want to reduce your army size into a lower upkeep (80 or 50 food). From here, you can keep tabs on your opponents and decide when a good time would be to engage or take advantage of an opportunity. You may also try to manipulate the other players to conceal your strengths, or in an attempt to get one player to focus another.

Of course you may not have the luxury of making these choices. FFA can be unpredictable, so you may be forced to defend against another aggressive player. 3-ways are unbalanced by nature; there is not a definite answer on how to approach them. Always scout, have patience, and be decisive in your moves.

Q: I just lost my initial 1v1, but we stopped fighting and I was able to hang on. What should I do now?

(In a FFA game with 4 players, there are usually two initial "1v1s")

In this position, you are not always at a disadvantage. Sometimes the player who is dominant early ends up being the point of attention for the majority of the game. If you do find yourself in this spot, you may try to use chat to get the other players to help you against your first opponent. If they do help, your priority should be to accumulate gold and rebuild if necessary while scouting the map. You can also offer peace to your first opponent who may reluctantly accept if he is being attacked by another player.

If you can avoid elimination, use this time to scout all players. The power may shift from one to another while you are out of the action. Try to anticipate what your next moves will be. You won't be out of the spotlight for too long, so be prepared to make an army to attack or defend. Your best move may be to lay low and mine gold in "No Upkeep" for as long as possible. Or it may be to mine just enough gold to create a 100 food army and strike back. Or the game may even itself out and you'll find yourself completely rebuilt and mining at 80 food with an army.

One thing to note is that if you lose your initial 1v1 badly, you will often be behind in hero levels. This can be tough to overcome, so I generally advocate *against* staying in "No Upkeep" for too long. Scout the other players and try to find a spot to engage and gain experience to keep up with opposing hero levels.

These decisions ultimately come down to what we call "FFA Sense" and they are never perfect. The best way to make the right decisions is to make informed decisions. Scout always.

Q: If I lost my main base and am trying to rebuild, how can I best keep a low profile in the midst of a game?

First and foremost, don't go out of your way to garner attention. It doesn't make sense to harass another player; and in the same sense it's probably not a good idea to destroy an expansion to take for yourself. Be patient. If you can find one expansion to rebuild on, take it and don't engage with anyone. You can also choose to use chat to your advantage and attempt to manipulate your opponents. If you can form a temporary alliance with another player, you can potentially be protected for some time while you rebuild.

A Goblin Zeppelin can be useful to hide and transport peons to rebuild. If you are Night Elf, consider hiding a Tree of Life somewhere in a cluster of trees. It is more difficult to hide or rebuild as Undead because of Blight, but it can still be done. Sticking with the most important concept in FFA - continue to scout the map. Hiding doesn't necessarily mean doing nothing. The best course of action may be to help another player with your heroes or harass someone who is dominating. Scouting gives you the information needed to decide where best to rebuild and what to do once you've rebuilt.



How do the recent balance changes affect FFA?

Patch 1.29 balance changes:

<https://eu.battle.net/forums/en/bnet/topic/17618223243>

Patch 1.30.1 balance changes:

<https://us.battle.net/forums/en/bnet/topic/20767596655#1>

Patch 1.30.2 balance changes:

<https://us.forums.blizzard.com/en/warcraft3/t/ptr-1-30-2-updated/1282>

While I am sure Blizzard didn't emphasize Free For All when determining these changes, overall I am happy with them and how they pertain to FFA. There were some gripes amongst Human players after the Siege Engine nerf, but deep down they knew Tanks were overpowered. The races are pretty balanced now from a Free For All standpoint and these recent balance changes have opened up more strategies for each race. See below for the significant balance changes by race pertaining to FFA:

HUMAN:

Siege Engine: *Increased Supply cost from 3 to 4. Increased Barrage base damage 12 to 14 (13-14 damage to 15-16 damage).* This is the most significant change, and a glorious one at that. I've called for this balance change for years and was definitely happy to see it. The fact is that Tanks were extremely overpowered for their food cost in FFA. However, the patch also increased their damage against air units. These two changes have led to Tanks being used in smaller numbers (3-6) to combat light air units and less so in mass numbers. Make no mistake, Siege Engines are still incredibly powerful; but their food cost is more in line with their strength, and in FFA this has helped balance the races significantly.

Paladin: *Divine Shield (Level 3) reduced duration from 45s to 35s.* This is the other change that I wanted for years to help balance FFA. The truth is before this nerf, Paladin was insanely strong because his shield lasted forever. Coupled with Brilliance Aura, it was nearly impossible to out damage the healing that a Paladin provided while invulnerable for 45s at a time. This change allows opposing players to wait out the invulnerability in more instances which has changed how players engage Human in FFA.

Archmage: *Brilliance Aura (Level 3) decreased mana regeneration from 2.25 to 2.0 per second.* At first, they nerfed it down to 1.75 mana per second at level 3, until the latest changes brought it up to 2.0 mana per second. This should hardly be felt, but a slight nerf that could come into play when your other heroes are out of mana waiting to use their skill.

Bloodmage: *Reduced casting delay on Flamestrike from 1.33 to .9 on all levels.* This is my favorite change from the most recent patch. Bloodmage is an awesome hero but Flamestrike felt a bit underwhelming because the casting delay left the Bloodmage vulnerable to focus (you can't move until it finishes to successfully cast it). It could also be dodged without much trouble. At .9 seconds, the cast is considerably quicker.

Flying Machine: *Increased Hit Points from 200 to 250. Increased Gold cost from 90 to 100. Increased Damage from 14-15 to 18-19 (air-vs-air only).* They nerfed Tanks, but buffed Flying Machines. This is a significant buff that allows Human to consider playing Flying Machine's more often instead of Tanks being the automatic choice.

Rifleman: *Decreased attack cooldown from 1.5 to 1.35.* A buff for Rifleman! This seemingly had to come as Tanks, Paladin, and Archmage were nerfed. I love this change. Rifleman had usually been a poor choice in FFA as they quickly lost power compared to Tier 3 units. However, now their attack speed is significantly increased so their power can be sustained further into the game supplemented by casters. Human's playing Rifle/Caster in the early to mid game is a lot more interesting than always teching for Aviaries and/or Workshops. This has improved Human's early game and it is viable against all races.

Cannon Towers: *Reduced gold cost from 200 to 150, reduced build time from 75s to 65s.* These are nice changes too. Cannon Towers were always too expensive and rarely useful unless to defend against opposing Siege Engines. They still do a lot of damage though, especially against light units like casters or Spellbreakers. They also deal substantial damage to heroes. I will look to incorporate Cannon Towers a bit more often now.

ORC:

Blademaster: *Critical Strike nerfed; removed +damage item interaction from multiplier calculation.* This was a major nerf for the BM. To be fair, the Blademaster was overpowered with items in all game types. In FFA... it would get pretty ridiculous with the amount of Claws +12/15, Crown of Kings and Helm of Valors. Gone are the days of 400+ crits! This has, along with a buff on the Alchemist, changed the first hero choice for Orc more often away from the BM. He is still a good hero though, excellent at scouting and harassing plus has synergy with TC/SH, Orb of Lightning and Wind Riders. Just not so OP anymore.

Headhunter: *Increased gold cost from 135 to 140. Increase Hit Points from 350 to 375. Increased Regeneration upgrade from 0.8 to 1.0 Hit Points per second. Increased Range from 450 to 550.* Headhunters were buffed! This was a welcomed change, just like the Rifleman buff. Orc ground was usually skipped in favor of Wind Riders/Bats and casters. Headhunters now have a significantly longer range which make them more viable at all stages of the game. Chimera splash damage was also reduced so Orc ground is more attractive to play now. It is still underused, but definitely more viable with these changes.

Shaman: *Increased Hit Points from 335 to 350, Increased Base Damage by 2, Increased Mana regeneration from 0.67 to 0.72. Purge mana cost reduced from 75 to 65, Bloodlust mana cost decreased from 40 to 35.* These are nice changes from a FFA perspective. Bloodlust is incredibly powerful and now Shamans are more efficient.

Reinforced Defenses: *Now available at Tier 2 (Stronghold) instead of Tier 3 (Fortress).* This was not expected, it plays out in FFA to now allow Orc to more safely expand (especially with a Headhunter first build). You can now expand with 2 peons, one making the expansion and the other making towers. You can safely have an expo + 2 towers when you hit Tier 2 and research Reinforced Defenses. I like this change a lot because before Orc's expansions were so vulnerable compared to the other 3 races. The upgrade for burrows is helpful too but your burrows don't get rushed at Tier 2 as often in FFA.

UNDEAD:

Dreadlord: *Carion Swarm's maximum damage increased from 1000 to 1200, mana cost reduced to 100 from 110, now damages mechanical units. Sleep cooldown reduced from 6 to 4 seconds, mana cost reduced on levels 1 and 2. Vampiric Aura slightly buffed.* These are great changes for Undead in FFA. Undead had basically no answer to Tanks in their base beforehand, but now that Swarm can hit mechanical units, it provides some sort of way to defend against them. Blizzard quickly buffed Flying Machines after this change so that level 3 Swarm wouldn't one-shot a group of them. The mana reduction on skills makes him much more versatile as well. Even the Vampiric Aura buff is good for Gargoyles. These were significant buffs for the DL, they helped bring Undead's strength up to a similar level as the other races. You'll still usually want to keep a Mana Pot on the Dreadlord. UD players should consider picking him as their first hero most often.

Acolyte: *Increased Hit Points from 220 to 230, Increased Hit Point regeneration on Blight from 2 to 4 per second, Increased armor from 0 to 1, Increased movement speed from 220 to 235.* Great buffs to Acolytes who were pretty slow and weak before. The main difference in FFA is the Acolyte is now a better early game scout and has better survivability against harassment.

Frost Wurm: *Reduced Frost Breath attack duration on Heroes from 10 seconds to 3 seconds.* I really don't like this change. In all fairness, Frost Wyrms did in essence permanently ensnare your hero if you were attacked by it, but to me that made sense and it wasn't OP. Now the snare is so little that units and heroes can escape from a Frost Wurm pretty easily. One of the few nerfs UD received but this one has FFA implications.

Necromancer: *Buffed base damage, reduced cost of Cripple, reduced negative drain of Unholy Frenzy, increased skeleton duration slightly, increased Hit Points of skeletons.* These are all nice changes that help make Necrowagon more viable. Usually Undead's will play primarily Gargoyle based armies, but Necrowagon has always been strong in the right situation. With these buffs you should see more Necromancers.

Haunted Gold Mine and Necropolis: *The cost of each of these were slightly reduced as well as the build times.* These are minor changes for Undead in FFA that don't make too much of a difference. It opens up more build orders with a Necropolis instead of 2nd Ziggurat, and allows Undead to expand slightly faster. Any economical buffs given to UD are welcomed as generally other races (Human/Elf) have better economic tools.

Ziggurats: *Ziggurats HP were increased by 50.* This makes their towers slightly stronger, definitely a welcome change as Undead bases often fall like paper to other races siege units (Chims, Tanks, Bats).

Orb of Corruption: *Decreased armor reduction from 5 to 4.* Orb of Corruption is still great and an absolute must, even if it's effectiveness decreased by 1 armor.

NIGHT ELF:

Keeper of the Grove: *Entangle buffed to last longer on heroes and Tranquility changed. Tranquility now adds a 3 second invulnerability on spellcast, reduces duration from 30 seconds to 15 seconds, and increases healing per second from 20 to 40.* It's twice as powerful and lasts half the time. The Tranquility change is really strong in FFA, now hastening the full heals between battles, and allows Kotg to be more effective in a short amount of time in battle. The only downfall of this change is that you can no longer use an Anti Magic Potion before casting (like you would with Starfall) to prevent interruption because the 3 second invulnerability cancels the AMS.

Moon Wells: *Moon Wells have increased regeneration at night from 1.25 to 1.50 per second.* This was a welcomed buff for Elf players. In FFA, it's often high value to build multiple wells in your main base as they replenish themselves each night. Each night cycle is 480 seconds, so this gives an extra 120 mana regenerated each night per well.

Ancient Protectors: *Reduced build time by 5s and increased attack speed slightly.* Ancient Protectors were the worst towers before this change, so it made sense they were buffed. It is still usually better to make Moon Wells for defense but it is okay to incorporate some APs.

Mountain Giant: *Decreased cost from 425 to 350 gold. Decreased Supply from 7 to 6. Taunt now activates a second time after 3 seconds. Cooldown increased from 15 to 16 seconds.* Very cool changes for MGs in FFA. Mountain Giants were already seen sometimes against Human, in mirror, or against Undead. At 6 food and a cheaper price, plus the automatic 2nd taunt makes MGs more attractive now.

Archers/Hippogryph Riders: *Increased Hit Points of Archers from 245 to 260. Hippogryph Taming is researched by default.* These changes make Hippo Riders a bit more useful, with more HP and not having to research taming. Hippo Riders are already very good, but an issue is they fall on a different upgrade tree compared to Chimeras/Hippos.

Chimeras: *Decreased half damage splash radius from 125 to 100.* This change is most noticeable now as Orc when playing Headhunters against Chims. Chimeras are still really powerful and the splash is good too, albeit slightly weaker.

Druid of the Talon: *Increased gold cost from 135 to 145 gold and reduced duration of Faerie Fire on units and heroes.* Talons were really strong and still are in FFA.

Demon Hunter: *Mana burn was increased to 60 mana (up from 50) and the duration of Metamorphosis was reduced by 15 seconds.* These are good changes and DH is still a strong first hero pick.

Warden: *Level 3 Blink: Increased cooldown from 1 second to 4 seconds.* This change all but eliminated Warden from being useful. A high level Warden used to be effective in FFA.

NEUTRAL:

Goblin Alchemist: The Alchemist is my favorite hero. To my delight, he was buffed significantly. *Healing Spray no longer heals enemy units and heals the Alchemist. Acid Bomb was significantly buffed to deal more damage while still 'splashing' -5 armor in a AOE.* Plus, Acid Bomb can not be dispelled. *Transmute was significantly buffed to give you a 125% conversion rate (up from 80%).* This means that if you Transmute a Frost Wyrmling which costs 385 gold, you will now receive 481 gold (in No Upkeep). Transmute is affected by upkeep, so if you are in Low Upkeep (where you receive 70% of gold per bag), you would receive 70% of the total conversion... in this case 70% of 481 = 337 gold. In High Upkeep, transmuting a Frost Wyrmling would net 192 gold. The Alchemist is a top tier hero now and is often seen as a first hero with Elf or Orc, as well as used by Human or even Undead sometimes. These new patches have brought on an "Alchemist Meta" and rightfully so.

Pandaren Brewmaster: The Panda on the other hand has went the other way. One of the absolute strongest heroes in FFA got nerfed to where Breath of Fire does significantly less damage. *Breath of Fire is now 75 mana (up from 70) and max damage cap at level 3 is 1080 (down from 1360).* Thankfully, Drunken Haze (the best unit debuff) was untouched. Panda is still very strong and should be used by most Elfs, some Humans and even Undead at times, but he is not quite as OP as before. The Alchemist probably has more of an impact in FFA now.

Naga Sea Witch: *The Naga was buffed in that Mana Shield is much more effective. It doubled in effectiveness each level, absorbing 4 damage per 1 mana at level 3.* You will see Naga being skilled with only Cold Arrow and Mana Shield some times now. The Naga is an underrated hero in FFA because she scales better than almost any other hero as she levels (scales meaning how her stats increase). She has the best Intelligence scaling of any hero, making Forked Lightning, Cold Arrow and now Mana Shield quite efficient. She is most effective in an aggressive build such as DH/Naga/Potm or AM/Naga/Paladin due to her burst damage capability.

Pit Lord: *Cleave was buffed to increase the AOE and Splash Damage, and his base Agility was increased by 2. Cleave splash damage at level 3 increased from 80% to 90% and the AoE for all levels from 200 to 250.* These are cool changes but Pitlord is still not that effective. Pitlord first with Orc can be pretty strong now with Bloodlust and improved Cleave. Specifically with ground units (Headhunters/casters) because Howl of Terror adds another layer of sustain when combined with Spirit Link, Healing Ward and Healing Wave. Pitlord can be played with Elf or Undead as well. His usefulness may be untapped, but he still feels like an awkward hero.



CURRENT STATE OF FFA:

I believe the recent balance changes have improved the overall balance in FFA.

Before, the racial balance in FFA went something like this: Human > Orc = Elf > Undead. Now, all races are close to equal with maybe Elf slightly ahead of the other races. Undead has improved both by its significant Dreadlord buffs and also by the fact that Tanks were nerfed. Elf has also improved with the Tank nerf and also primarily the KotG and Moon Well buffs. Orc has improved because of better ground armies and casters, as well as earlier Fortified towers. Human was nerfed the most, but they also received buffed Rifleman which provided more strategic flexibility. Humans can play more Rifle/Caster openings up to 80 food and can also mix in Alchemist as the 2nd (or 1st) hero. They should utilize more Flying Machines against light air and use Tanks to a lesser degree. Human is still at its strongest when it is aggressive and aims to gain levels early.

Orc should usually start with Alchemist, but Dark Ranger or Blademaster are still viable options based on the map and opponents. I like the idea of starting w/ Headhunters with a Tavern Hero and building 1-2 towers with your initial expansion to fortify at Tier 2.

Undeads should play Dreadlord first more often. A high level DL is very powerful no matter which skill order you choose. Necrowagon can be considered as a pivot instead of a Gargoyle base. Gargs are very expensive units, so if you can play a Fiend based or Necrowagon army first and transition into Gargoyles later it will help bolster your economy.

Elf is the most flexible race and still has a number of strategies and hero choices available to them. They can play top tier combos with a number of starting heroes (DH, DR, Panda, Alchemist) and are flexible in their unit choices and strategy.

Alchemist is the most played Neutral hero at high levels. The buffs to Acid Bomb and Transmute have pushed Alchemist to the top and he really is a safe choice vs all races if you are Elf or Orc. He is fun to play with can be equally frustrating to play against.

GENERAL STRATEGY:

The goal in FFA is to be the last player standing; to outlast each opponent.

In grasping this concept, you'll find that harassing or starting a very early 1v1 is rarely in your best interest. Remember that while you are doing this, your other opponents are happily creeping, expanding and advancing their tech. Focus on your own macro and avoid engaging early without a purpose.

You'll want to be decisive, yet diplomatic. Be strong, but reasonable. There is no sense in making an early enemy by harassing someone with your hero. In the same idea, it doesn't make sense to creep jack someone either. Creep jack someone only if you have a plan to continue and take them out. If not, all it will do is create an enemy that may attack you at an inopportune time. Instead, focus on your own creeping, tech, and expanding.

Choose your actions wisely. A common mistake I see from new players is expanding at every gold mine they see and then wondering why they are getting teamed. The same notion works when a player attacks everything they see and wonder why they are getting teamed. It is often better to secure your portion of the map and slowly conquer instead of over extending.

Familiarize yourself with the minimap. Are there Goblin Labs? Merchants? Marketplaces? Mana Fountain? Where is your natural expansion? Where are the contested expansions? Different maps have different neutral buildings that are very important in FFA games. On maps with a Goblin Lab, you should purchase a Goblin Shredder when it's first available. Lumber is a much more important resource in FFA and the Shredder makes a major difference in the speed of your tech, upgrades, and army composition. It also allows you to produce less lumber peasants, freeing up additional food to utilize. Know that the Shredder is first available four minutes into the first night (4th dot). Be ready, as good players will rush to grab one as soon as they become available.

Most maps have Shops, some have Markets, some have Fountains, and a few have unique things like Dragon Roosts or Way Gates. I will go into more detail on each of these later, but it's important to realize which are available and how to maximize their use. For example, Orc and Undead benefit the most from a Mana Fountain, where as Elf loves to see a Health Fountain.

Scout early and often! This cannot be stressed enough. FFA is a game of decision making, and there's no better way to make informed decisions than to scout and have your own information to rely on. Begin by sending early game scouts both directions to determine where your spawn is relative to all others on the map. The initial scouting will help determine which direction you should expand, as well as your closest opponents. As the game goes on, continue to scout and gather information. You'll want to have a good idea of what the other players are doing, if they are fighting, how many expansions they have, etc. This is valuable information that you will use to adjust your course of action and take advantage of any opportunities that present themselves.

'First Phase' (Initial 10-15 Minutes) is vital to your success. This beginning phase is all about grabbing your portion of the map's creeps and expansions. Try to creep the spots that are more contested before your own. Focus on your macro in expanding and tech to be as efficient as possible. The exact timing of your tech is not as important in FFA. Don't be afraid to spend additional time at Tier 1 to produce more workers as an early investment into your resources (especially on maps without a Goblin Shredder). In general, you'll always want to expand as soon as possible while scouting and creeping. You are right on pace if you can creep to level 3, have an expansion running, and grab a shredder before you hit Tier 2. Anyone can practice and improve on this 'first phase' of an FFA game.

Heroes are your core strength. Your heroes are your primary weapon and they grow in power as the game goes on. You'll want to equip your heroes to be as effective as possible and it's usually smart to invest in items. Boots of Speed, Periapt of Health, scrolls, and various items from the Marketplace have a significant impact. You should begin building your heroes from the beginning of the game and continue to do so throughout. Some early items are extremely effective (ex: Pendant of Energy on a Dreadlord) and some items in a Marketplace can be game-changing (ex: Auras, Amulet of Spell Shield, Staff of Silence). I will go into more detail about specific items later.

Try not to lose your temper. It may feel right to counter-attack a player who just attacked you or punish one who is harassing you. That also may be the right move. But it also may not be. Don't lose your cool if you are being teamed or harassed. Try to think about the best move you can make in a given situation.

Consider hit-n-run tactics. If you don't have the advantage in a straight up fight, you may have an advantage in mobility. Instead of taking a fight head on, consider attacking your opponent's expansions or main base to force a TP. When they do TP, you can back your force and go to another one of his bases. If you have Chimeras, you can use their advantage as long-range siege weapons to destroy bases over trees. If you have Unholy Aura or Endurance Aura, you can use your advantage in movement speed to dictate engagements. Guerrilla warfare tactics can be very effective and often underused.

FFA is a game of mistakes. If you lose a match, try to figure out why you lost. Watching replays of your losses can be very helpful. You may have felt like there was nothing you could do or that it was out of your control. However, there are almost always spots when you could have played better. Maybe you could've prevented being teamed by being more aggressive on specific player earlier, or less aggressive in another situation. After reviewing a replay, you might find that your army composition(s) could have been better at times, or that you mismanaged your upkeep levels. Maybe you took a fight that you shouldn't have or missed an opportunity to capitalize on another's mistake. If you take the time to consider why you lost and learn from your mistakes, you'll quickly improve as an FFA player.

"What the ancients called a clever fighter is one who not only wins, but excels in winning with ease" (Sun Tzu).

TYPICAL EXAMPLE:

The game starts out on Twilight Ruins. I am Human. I view the minimap and see that there are Shops, Labs, Mercenary Camps and Markets as well as a Tavern in the middle. There are 8 possible spawn points. I send a scout each direction (Militia and first Footmen). There is a player on one side of me and other side is free. I continue my scouts past those spawns to see if players are spawned in the next spots. If there was a player on the other side of my neighbor it would mean he was surrounded, making me reconsider my game plan. I may not want to attack into a surround being that there wouldn't be much to gain as another player is next to him. In this case, there is not, the other players are at least 2 spawns away.

I creep my natural expansion and gain level 2, producing enough peasants to both expand and tech simultaneously. I now go to the middle ring of map and creep the shop, waiting to creep the lab until the 4th dot in the first night. By the time I set up my natural expansion and creep the shop nearby, it is approaching the time when a Goblin Shredder is first available. I move to the lab and creep this + purchase a shredder. At this point, my first hero is level 3, I am almost Tier 2, my first expansion is running and I have a shredder. At Tier 2, I train my second hero, throw up production buildings, and tech to Tier 3. I have enough resources to be able to do all of this because of the shredder plus my expansion.

I am researching and upgrading while creeping and sending another scout out. I want to see if my neighbor is putting up his second expansion yet. I go to my second expo myself and throw up an expansion using most of the remaining wood peasants in my main. (I have a shredder so these extra peasants are no longer needed). I see that my neighbor has elected to fast Tech with Orc and he put up his second expansion very quickly. Knowing that Orc is vulnerable to an early rush, I begin to prepare an 80 food army of Gryphons and Master Priests. I am upgrading Gryphon's armor to 3 before upgrading their attack to make bats inefficient as I continue to creep the map.

At Tier 3, I add a Paladin and purchase a staff. I am finalizing upgrades on Master Priests and Animal War Training. I have bought important items like Boots of Speed and Scrolls of Healing. I have enough production buildings to make the jump from 50 food -> 80 food. It is important to manage your food counts... more on this later. Now I have something like 4/3/2 heroes, 3 Aviaries, 2 Sanctums, 2 Workshops, 3 running mines (2 expansions), and ~4k gold. My air units have around 1/3 upgrades. I have macroed well, crept the map and set up expansions/upgraded efficiently. I feel comfortable that the Orc is most likely still researching master casters, or regardless not prepared for this kind of attack. I pre-buff my army with Inner Fire and aggressively take out his expansions. I stay at 80 food to start but could quickly go up to 100 food if necessary. I can easily add Flying Machines, Dragon Hawks, additional Gryphons or casters to counter what he responds with.

This push could not happen without effective macro and creeping. The first 10-15 minutes of this game determined my advantage in being able to go from expanding, creeping, and teching into a strong 80+ food Tier 3 army. It is vital to perfect this first phase of the game. Even if I am not totally successful in this attack, I can fall back and make a different army counter with a strong economy and enough production buildings.

ECONOMY MANAGEMENT:

Free For All requires a different mindset: master your economy. The most important concept to understand is how to manage your food counts. There are three distinct upkeep levels in WC3 based on your food count. These upkeeps affect your gold intake, but not your lumber. These upkeeps also affect the percentage of gold you net when selling items, unsummoning buildings, or using Transmute.

'No Upkeep' is 50 food or less. While in this upkeep, you gain 100% of the gold you mine. Your workers gain 10 gold per bag.

'Low Upkeep' is 80 food or less. While in this upkeep, you gain 70% of the gold you mine. Your workers gain 7 gold per bag.

'High Upkeep' is anything over 80 food. While in this upkeep, you gain only 40% of the gold you mine. Your workers gain 4 gold per bag.

Being in No Upkeep while mining is commonly referred to as "hoarding".

A general rule of thumb in FFA is to be either 50, 80, or 100 food (or getting there). In order to be a successful FFA player, you'll need to fluctuate between these upkeeps.

Being at 50 food (No Upkeep) is ideal if you have active mine(s). You'll want to find opportunities to mine gold in No Upkeep, but understand this holds the most risk as you won't have an army readily prepared. To begin the game, it's usually a good idea to stay under 50 food while you are creeping, expanding, and advancing your tech.

Being at 80 food (Low Upkeep) is common with multiple expansions. This is the happy medium where you have running mines in Low Upkeep and also a decent sized army. This is the most common food count and should be your baseline.

Being above 80 food (High Upkeep) with running mines is horrible for your economy. Only be in High Upkeep when absolutely necessary: To take a strong player out, defending against another 100 food, or when you have no active gold mines. When you do have running mines, consider stopping your peons from mining gold while in High Upkeep.

You will start the game in No Upkeep and eventually "break" into 80 or 100 food. After fighting, you should always consider your position and your food counts. It may be worth it to kill off a few units to get you back under 50 food (or to get you back into Low Upkeep from High Upkeep).

As always, scouting is important to keep tabs on players. You'll want to know if someone is 50 food for too long or has a 100 food army being prepared. Additionally, having a good idea of your opponent's upkeep levels (as well as number of expansions) throughout a game can help you estimate their gold.

As you expand and tech, be sure to build multiple production buildings. You'll want to be able to "break upkeep" and go from 50 food to 80 or 100 food quickly. Multiple production buildings allow you to be riskier with lower food counts. With a strong economy, you should have at least 2 or 3 of each production building you plan on using. For anti-air units, you should typically have at least 3 upwards of 6 corresponding production buildings.

If you manage your economy well, you will be accumulating gold throughout the game at various upkeeps. Conserve your gold. What may seem like a fortune can quickly be depleted; consider carefully how you spend it. It's often a delicate balance to fluctuate between upkeeps during a game, and mistakes are made both ways. If you are too greedy, you may get punished. On the other side, if you don't take advantage of opportunities to be in No Upkeep you may be leaving money on the table, so to speak.

In FFA, it's key to build and manage a strong economy while creating various army compositions and counters. You will need different food counts and different army compositions throughout the game. Sometimes you'll be able to fight at lower food counts with proper counters. Other times you may have to create the right blend to take on two completely different army makeups. It's a constant game of adjustment & balance that revolves around managing your economy.



DIPLOMACY:

"The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting. All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. If we wish to wrest an advantage from the enemy, we must not fix our minds on that alone, but allow for the possibility of the enemy also doing some harm to us, and let this enter as a factor into our calculations. Opportunities multiply as they are seized."

These are some quotes from Sun Tzu's "The Art of War". They very much apply to FFA in Warcraft III. It is often the intelligent players who make the best decisions that end up winning the game.

Manipulation is an under appreciated and mostly misunderstood factor in FFA.

Many players see "manip" today as lying or crying to others for help. These are lame tactics that have become somewhat common in today's FFA. While you can pick up information through the chat, always trust your instincts and scouting first and foremost to combat those who use chat as their primary weapon.

Skilled manipulation is a bit of a lost art. In an FFA game, you'll want to conceal your true strengths and intentions until the opportune moment. Make it difficult for your opponents to have a read on you. Be smart, unpredictable, deceptive.



"All warfare is based on deception."

FFA HERO RANKINGS #1-24:



This section has been an ongoing list since the first version of this guide in 2009. It's interesting to see how it's evolved; in both opinion and how the meta has changed over the years. In recent times, patches to Warcraft III have brought about numerous balance changes to heroes. The Alchemist and Dreadlord have seen the highest jumps, while the Pandaren Brewmaster fell out of the Top 5.

There is no perfect science to these rankings; they are just for fun and completely subjective. Still, it has been interesting to discuss them with other FFA players, and I really like how they look currently.

The criteria used is: "overall usefulness of the *individual* hero in FFA." Necessity by race (ex: Death Knight) is not taken into account, thus why the DK is low ranked. He is a poor individual hero despite being vital to Undead.

FFA HERO RANKINGS #1-24:

Each hero is given a score (out of 100) to provide context for their respective rank. As you can see, the margin between ranks is slim. For example, even though the SH is ranked at #8, he still has a 95/100 overall score.

- 1. Tauren Chieftain - 100**
- 2. Archmage - 99**
- 3. Alchemist - 98**
- 4. Dreadlord - 98**
- 5. Dark Ranger - 97**
- 6. Pandaren Brewmaster - 97**
- 7. Paladin - 96**
- 8. Shadow Hunter - 95**
- 9. Mountain King - 94**
- 10. Priestess of the Moon - 93**
- 11. Demon Hunter - 92**
- 12. Lich - 91**
- 13. Keeper of the Grove - 91**
- 14. Blood Mage - 89**
- 15. Blademaster - 87**
- 16. Tinker - 86**
- 17. Death Knight - 85**
- 18. Naga Sea Witch - 83**
- 19. Pit Lord - 80**
- 20. Far Seer - 75**
- 21. Crypt Lord - 74**
- 22. Warden - 72**
- 23. Beastmaster - 70**
- 24. Firelord - 68**

FFA HERO RANKINGS #1-24:

1. Tauren Chieftain - The undisputed champion in FFA is the big, bad Tauren Chieftain. The TC is the ultimate FFA hero -- he has no weaknesses. He has the best skill in the game. Level 3 Stomp is completely imbalanced. It has a huge radius capable of stomping an entire front line and multiple heroes in one stomp. Stomp has a long duration (5 seconds; 4 on heroes) and cannot be dispelled. There is virtually no way to stop an incoming Stomp other than constant disabling of the TC. Endurance Aura is the best battle aura in the game. Movement Speed +30% and Attack Rate +15%. Shockwave is good too, it's just never skilled first because Level 3 Stomp is that powerful. Last but not least, his ultimate makes him practically invincible. In fact, most times you won't want to kill the TC because he will revive with full health and mana. Yes, Full mana! Reincarnation is much better than a normal revive or an Ankh. Amid all of Orc's strength, he is the number one factor.

2. Archmage - Coming in at #2 is the illustrious Archmage. He can be a tricky hero to rank. Mass Teleport can widely vary from the best ultimate in the game to only mediocre depending on the player. Mass TP has a tremendously high skill ceiling. For those who use it well, the terms of battle will almost always be dictated in your favor. Combined with invisibility and Tanks, Mass TP is one of the most powerful tools in FFA. The Archmage is also great at creeping and securing early game position. At level 5, retraining to Blizzard makes the AM a considerable battle force that has to be dealt with. Lastly, Brilliance Aura gives your other heroes (and casters) significant mana regeneration. He is an excellent hero at all stages of the game. The Archmage is often the leader of the Human army and in the right hands can definitely be the most powerful hero in FFA.

3. Alchemist - Welcome to FFA in 2018, aka the "Alchemist Meta". The Alchemist was already a strong hero before he received significant buffs across the board on his skills. Healing Spray no longer heals enemy units, Acid Bomb does much more damage, and Transmute sells units for more gold. The Alchemist is a unique hero; he has the lowest armor of *any* hero in WC3 while also having the highest Hit Points. This makes it especially important to get +armor items on the Alchy. Ring of Protection +3 usually has higher value on an Alchemist in comparison to a Periapt of Vitality. He also has the highest possible DPS with Chemical Rage activated (and his attack hits air without an orb). Acid Bomb is a unique skill in that it deals immediate damage and applies a damage-over-time effect, plus -5 armor as a splash attack. Acid Bomb cannot be dispelled. It is particularly effective in air battles, or when using Bats or Flying Machines against units with reduced armor. Transmute is a FFA player's dream, providing the ability to instantly kill a unit and convert 125% of its cost into gold. There are few better feelings than Transmuting an opposing Siege Tank or Frost Wyrn. A knock on the Alchemist is that he is a poor early game creeper due to his low armor and isn't as effective at lower levels.

4. Dreadlord - The Dreadlord is equipped with game-changing skills and the latest patches have given him significant buffs. His greatest skill is Sleep, which is a unique ability in that it actually lowers in mana cost as it's leveled up. Sleep is arguably the best disable; it has a short cool down and can be used repetitively for little mana to shut down a threatening hero or as an interrupt. Anyone who has lost to a skilled Undead understands the power of Sleep. Carrion Swarm has been buffed, now is in the argument for the best AoE damage spell. At level 3, it has a 1200 damage cap for 100 mana and it now hits mechanical units. Vampiric Aura is situational but effective with Gargoyles. Infernal is a Tier 1 ultimate skill. Infernal has a major impact in battle, first as an AoE stun, and then into a chaos-damage, very-fast moving Infernal that can also be used to destroy expansions and worker lines. The only knock on the Dreadlord is that he has poor scaling Intelligence for a hero with such powerful skills, so you should look to equip him with a Pendant of Energy or Mana items when possible.

5. Dark Ranger - Rounding out the Top 5 is the Dark Ranger. The DR is still, to this day, totally underrated. Players choose to play other primary heroes as Orc as Elf more often, but the DR is incredibly powerful in FFA. In fact, she held the #1 ranking for years during the first versions of this list. The primary reason why is because of Silence; at level 3, Silence is completely imbalanced. The radius in which you can Silence is huge. You can easily silence and effectively shut down all three opposing heroes in one shot (plus casters, statues, channeling ultimates, etc). Even against a player who can dispel quickly, Silence is effective. It can be used as an interrupt to prevent a heal, channeling spell, or simply to prevent another strong hero from using skills. The DR is also the best creeping hero, creating an early advantage in creeping and setting up expansions. Lastly, she has a game-changing ultimate in Charm; you can steal a Frost Wurm, Witch Doctor, Kodo Beast, Druid of the Claw, etc. One of my favorite moves is to Charm a Bat and use the Bat on the other Bats! Or you can tech a whole new race by stealing their worker. Charm is often a 5 to 7 food swing in a battle. The combination of Silence and Charm is the best duo of skills in the game. Unfortunately, her other facets aren't so exciting. Life Drain isn't very good, she has a weak body that is easily targeted, and she's not as strong in late game situations with only heroes.

6. Pandaren Brewmaster - Coming in at number six is the Drunken Brawler himself, the Pandaren Brewmaster! FFA is about air armies and the Panda is the ultimate anti-air hero. His combination of Haze/Fire is unmatched and is the most effective weapon against air. Panda's Breath of Fire was nerfed significantly which brought him down some in these rankings, but Drunken Haze was untouched and is still the best debuff in the game. It cripples light air units and is effective against everything else too. An opposing Panda is still the first hero you look to disable before engaging. Lastly, his ultimate provides a second life of sorts to the Panda while giving him insane DPS against the units that normally counter him (such as Dryads or Breakers). Storm, Earth, and Fire also provides a disable in Cyclone. Level 5 Panda allows you to defend against almost anything in the mid game. As long as he has mana and an Anti-Magic Potion, he will be a force to be reckoned with.

7. Paladin - Right behind the Top 6 sits the best healing hero in the game. The Paladin is an amazing hero with incredible skills. Holy Light is a better much version of Death Coil. Longer range, instant cast, and costs less mana. He is the perfect healer because he can also make himself invulnerable for periods of time. Divine Shield was nerfed but it's still a great skill that leaves him invulnerable for 35 seconds at level 3. Devotion Aura is underrated; at level 3, it gives +4.5 armor! Resurrection revives 6 ground units (another superior version of the Death Knight's skills). You can even kill your units, retrain to 100 food, and revive the corpses to increase your army size up to 124 food. The Paladin is so strong that he should be used as your first hero at times and always included regardless. He gets the slight edge over his Orc counterpart.

8. Shadow Hunter - Next up, right behind the Paladin is the Shadow Hunter. The SH is incredibly useful and impacts battles in two different but equally dominant fashions. Healing Wave is arguably even better than Holy Light. It is surely better to heal multiple units, and its natural AI is to heal those who have taken the most damage. It is easy to use, you can spam it, and it's guaranteed to heal those who need it. Hex is one of the very best disables in the game. Hex is most effective to prevent item use and set up a hero kill. It's also useful to pick off running units. Kind of like the DR, the SH has two incredible skills and two lackluster ones plus a weak body. Big Bad Voodoo can be used well situationally, but remember that it removes all buffs and debuffs, including your own Bloodlust or Spirit Link. Despite the Shadow Hunter's undeniable impact, he has little in the ways of defending himself and is often the first target in battle.

9. Mountain King - Dwarven King sits comfortably inside the top 10. Throwing Storm Bolts with the power of Zeus, the Mountain King has unparalleled strength. He has the best single target skill in the game, dealing a high amount of damage with a lengthy stun. Storm Bolt also has a surprisingly long range, making the MK a top notch hero killer. While Storm Bolt's damage was nerfed, Storm Clap was buffed. Storm Clap is especially effective in combination with Blizzard and has a real impact on opposing front lines as well. Bash is underrated (especially against Air units) as a stun against a hero or fleeing units. His Avatar ultimate makes him practically invulnerable, granting +500 HP and a magic immunity. He provides the only disable for Human, and is often a key force behind their offensive power. The fact that MK lands at #9 goes to show just how powerful all of these top heroes are.

10. Priestess of the Moon - The Priestess of the Moon was once a staple for Elf players. Owl Scout is one of those skills with a very high skill ceiling that is often underutilized. Against a good PotM user, you will seemingly always have an Owl Scout on you that's both invulnerable and cannot be dispelled. Trueshot Aura is an excellent aura that boosts DPS significantly. Starfall is a Tier 1 Ultimate and an absolute game-changer. You can use an Anti-Magic Potion before channeling Starfall to prevent being disabled for 15 seconds. Against a skilled Human opponent, you pretty much need a PotM to combat Mass Teleport and Siege Engines. Keeper of the Grove is the more popular support hero, but the Priestess of the Moon is very strong and should be given serious consideration.

11. Demon Hunter - The Demon Hunter is an excellent first hero choice that is effective at every stage of the game. He is dominant in the early-to-mid game; and when he first levels up to 5, Level 3 Mana Burn completely shuts down opposing heroes. This often leads into an early Metamorphosis which can be game-changing. He benefits from items significantly due to Evasion and his ultimate. The DH is a hero that, kind of like the DL or AM, has a higher skill ceiling. In a lesser player's hands, the DH may not have as much of an impact, but when used properly he is a force to deal with. In a game type revolving around heroes, the DH is the ultimate anti-hero.

12. Lich - The Lich is a potent offensive weapon and the perfect mage-type hero for UD. Frost Nova is one of the very best skills in the game; both served as a nuke and even more so as an anti-air weapon. It's damage is uncapped and it provides a snare. Frost armor is also underrated, granting +7 armor at Level 3 plus a snare effect. Dark Ritual is a good skill used to both fuel your mana for Frost Novas and to deny experience on your units that are about to die. Death and Decay provides a way to destroy bases or towers and usually can force a TP in the process. The Lich is the best anti-air hero outside of the Panda (it's close).

13. Keeper of the Grove - Coming in just a few notches below Night Elf's other supporting hero is the newly buffed Keeper of the Grove. He is a great support hero for Elf because Entangle provides another disable outside of Cyclone. Tranquility is a game-changing ultimate that now is essentially a full-heal in 20 seconds; saving moon wells and allowing you to stay in fights longer while sustaining damage. The KotG is not quite as dominant in FFA compared to Solo, but you could surely make a case to play him in any hero combo, especially against Undead. Despite his usefulness, Force of Nature and Thorns Aura are insignificant skills in FFA, and he is also has a weak body.

14. Blood Mage - The Blood Elves' nomination is a difficult hero to rank and even more difficult to master. I would say that the Blood Mage has the highest skill ceiling of any hero. In the right hands, the Blood Mage can be incredibly powerful. The most recent patch buffed Flamestrike by reducing its casting time. Banish has so many uses, both offensively and defensively; the potential it has with great micro is crazy. Mana Drain is also effective at all levels. Lastly, Phoenix is a chaos-damage flying unit that re-summons. The Blood Mage is an underrated hero in FFA. A knock on him is his general slowness and lack of a tough body, plus his skills being difficult to utilize up to their potential.

15. Blademaster - Ah, the poor Blademaster. **queues violin** The BM used to be insanely powerful in FFA before the nerf to Critical Strike. He is still a very good hero, but now is often replaced by an Alchemist or DR as Orc's primary hero choice. He is excellent and both scouting and harassing. He has synergy with Orb of Lightning, Wind Riders and TC/SH combo. The Blademaster still deals a good amount of DPS with items and Bloodlust. Bladestorm is a strong ultimate and especially against opposing Tanks or casters. There is nothing weak about the Blademaster, but he simply doesn't have the same level of impact as before which knocked him down some ranks.

16. Tinker - The Tinker is another difficult hero to rank. He is a great early game creeper. He is arguably the best harassing hero yet largely ineffective in a bigger battle. I tend to lean a bit more towards battle skills in these rankings which is why Tinker landed at #16. He was still scored an 86/100, but I think a stronger case can be made for any of the top 15 heroes over the Tinker. Still, Tinker is awesome and can have a serious impact in a FFA game. Pocket Factory is one of the best skills to harass a worker line or towers with. Cluster Rockets is decent, but both the damage and stun are minimal. His ultimate form makes him almost impossible to disable unless you are Orc (ensnare; purge). He can be really annoying to play against and extremely effective at times.

17. Death Knight - Want to know why Undead is often the weakest race? Its main hero is significantly worse than the primary heroes of other races. While Death Coil is a good skill and Unholy Aura is one of the best auras, Death Pact and Animate Dead are both weak. Perhaps the best use of his ultimate is when you are dying in your base, you can use Animate Dead and Death Pact one of the spawns to heal. Regardless of those two bad skills, Death Coil is a good skill and Unholy Aura a great one. Unholy Aura gives +30% Movement and +1.5HP/sec. I think a good buff to the DK that wouldn't break the solo meta would be to add some sort of self-heal or scroll of healing type effect when casting Animate Dead. Until then, it's arguably the worst ultimate in the game and the Death Knight is usually a poor (dead) man's Paladin.

18. Naga Sea Witch - My opinion on the Naga Sea Witch has improved over time. The Naga is actually pretty good. She scales better than any other Intelligence hero; at high levels, she will have plenty of mana for Forked Lightning, Cold Arrow, and Mana Shield. The buff she received to Mana Shield was significant, now absorbing 4 damage for every 1 mana at level 3. Cold Arrow is effective in hero focusing and Forked Lightning is good in that sense too. Forked Lightning at level 3 is 750 damage (250 x 3 targets). Tornado is really bad and she doesn't have any auras or complementary skills. Overall, she isn't great but still a good pick situationally with Elf or sometimes Human.

19. Pitlord - Slow and fat, the Pitlord is the Obese One. I always wanted the Pit lord to be better but he just doesn't work well as a hero. His skills are solid, if only he was an Intelligence hero. Rain of Fire is comparable to Blizzard and Flamestrike, costing the most mana but with the longest range. Howl of Terror is a good skill in FFA, reducing enemy damage by 50% at level 3. Unfortunately, Howl doesn't have a large AoE range. Cleave was buffed, but again his skills are a combination of melee fighter and mage with bad scaling Intelligence and low Agility. Doom is a very good FFA skill. Even though it's not as good as Charm or Transmute, it's still one of the best ultimates. If u want to play Pit Lord, I'd play him with Orc ground (Headhunter/Caster). His damage mitigation has synergy with Healing Wave, Healing Ward, and Spirit Link. You can play Pit Lord/TC/SH or Pitlord/Panda/Alchemist. Alternatively, he can be used with Elf or Undead.

20. Far Seer - The O.G. of the Horde. The Far Seer is actually a decent hero, but his lack of game-changing skills or auras combined with a mediocre ultimate brings him near the bottom of this list. Chain Lightning was buffed and it's pretty good but nothing special. Spirit Wolves are effective in harass, and Far Sight is moderately useful. The FS used to be played with Orc ground at the inception of FFA by Invincible_Rice. He would scout with the wolves constantly and have FS/TC/SH with triple Orbs of Lightning and 100 food Orc ground. The Far Seer is not a bad hero in FFA, but simply there are better options.

21. Crypt Lord - The Crypt Lord lurks near the bottom of these rankings, he doesn't live up to his name. He was buffed recently (impale more damage and beetles more health), and he is still useful as a first hero in some fiend based strategies that can use a meat wall. However, the bottom line is he is slow and doesn't have much mana. Impale is good, but it doesn't hit air units or Siege Engines. It's also difficult to aim and can easily miss your targets. The new Beetles are solid, and Locust Swarm is pretty good. Spiked carapace is decent, but there isn't ever a reason to focus the Crypt Lord. I can see him being used in strategies like Necrowagon or Fiend/Abom/Banshee.

22. Warden - What happened to the Warden? Another old school legend, Lost.Ancient, used to play Warden/DR/Panda to perfection. It was an offensive combo with Shadow Strike/Fan of Knives and Breath of Fire/Haze with Silence. It worked well with MG/Dryad type armies as the Warden/Panda AoE was good vs light air units. Warden can surely deal a lot of damage; but she is fragile and without any auras, stuns, or defensive abilities. Her ultimate is not great. What made Warden strong in the right situation was level 3 Blink when it had essentially no cooldown. Now they nerfed it to 4 second cool down; you can no longer jump in, deal your damage, and blink out. RIP Warden.

23. Beastmaster - The Beastmaster is an interesting hero. He can be used as Elf with early aggression or as a secondary hero with Human. He scouts well and is a decent hero in the early stages. However, his impact trails off late as his summons become less effective. Summons are free experience late in the game in most cases, although level 3 Bear can be effective with Blink and Bash. The Beastmaster has little battle presence and zero utility skills which places him just ahead of the Firelord. Stampede is cool, but it is at best a poor man's Starfall that can be difficult to aim. He can be useful in a base race, however, and has been the culprit of some epic wins in the past.

24. Firelord - *"I'm Lit!"* The Firelord was ahead of his time, using the slang of today's youth while they were still in diapers. It's too bad such a badass looking hero is so weak. Lava spawns are only good very early in game. He is slow and has weak skills. Incinerate just burns your mana, and Volcano is a crap ultimate despite being huge and looking cool. The Firelord's one saving grace is Soul Burn. Soul Burn is actually really effective when used on a hero. At level 3 it does 450 damage and silences a single target! That is strong, proving that even the worst hero has some usefulness in a FFA game.

HUMAN: *"Grab your sword and fight the Horde!"*

Human has many strengths and can be very powerful in the right hands, or tossed around without skill. As human, you can establish your first expansion before anyone else and pretty easily grab another due to militia and power-building ability. Not only does Human have the best towers and defense, it has the best anti-towers and siege units. Human has the best pure counters, specifically against air units. A mix of Hawks/Gyros/Tanks will take down any air force. Humans have a research to fortify their buildings three times, making them especially tough to destroy. The Dragon Hawk's Cloud ability renders towers useless and Siege Engines run over buildings while countering air at the same time.

Human has arguably the best overall hero combo in the game. AM/MK/Paladin has amazing synergy together and is strong from the start to the finish of the game. Human has no glaring weakness, nor a time of the game when they are particularly vulnerable. It has a sure advantage in economy (power-building, best towers and defense), siege units (Tanks, Mortars, Gyros), and anti-air units (Tanks, Gyros, Hawks).

Its casters are great, second only to Orc. Priests and Sorceress together are the best casters early on, Inner Fire is extremely strong, and Sorceress are useful at every stage of the game. Spell Breakers are a unique unit with their magic immunity, mana draining attack, and the ability to steal magical buffs.

Its weakness is that in general, Human can have a difficult time standing toe-to-toe in battle with strong armies of other races, especially with lower level heroes. Much of Human is using its utility and resource advantage to play smart and pick the right timings and battles. Human does require the most resources overall of any race to tech fully (Orc requires the second most). Its units are on different upgrade trees, and it may be difficult to build an army that can counter multiple races. If a good Undead or Elf player hits you early enough before you can match their tech, it can be difficult to defend.

Human players may be confused on which army to make, unlike other races. You can start with Rifles and Casters and transition into something else or you can go straight for Air. You might want to make two Arcane Sanctuaries at Tier 2 or skip them entirely and go for Workshops or Aviaries. Human's armies are often complex and can be difficult to manage.

After the changes, Human players must utilize a more balanced approach as mass tanks are no longer as effective (now 4 food, up from 3). To compensate, Rifleman were buffed, and the Bloodmage received a significant buff as well. I am personally looking forward to playing a lot more Bloodmage in Reforged. These were great changes for FFA; and make no mistake, Human is still a powerhouse race in the right hands.

"Uncle Lothar wants YOU."

HUMAN SCOUTING:

Human has great scouting tools. You can research to give your Arcane Towers the ability to reveal. Often times I will build multiple Arcane Towers in my main base and hotkey them. This way I can reveal the map or a location at any given time for free barring the cool-down. They are especially useful to reveal a suspected Blademaster, Shade, or Sentry Ward. It's not uncommon to see Human players with at least 5 or 6 Arcane Towers in their main base for this purpose. They are a great investment as they are also effective against heroes.

You can research Flare for your Mortar Teams as well. Flare is another free reveal on a cool-down for each Mortar Team. I don't use this upgrade enough probably, but it's a nice scouting tool to utilize when including Mortars in your force.

Sometimes the best way to scout is keeping an invisible unit near an opponent's army. I like to do this in combination with Mass TP for a surprise attack right on top of their force. You can also send mechanical critters to your opponents bases to serve as additional scouts.

Early game, militia act as your best scout but also your first footmen. If you get used to creeping without your first footmen, you can scout both directions effectively using one militia and one footmen.

Last but not least, get in the habit of building scout farms. They are cheap and a great way to scout key points of the map. Most times, players will not take the time to kill them which can give you valuable information over and over. I try to keep my first scout militia alive and start to make farms around the map with him once he converts back into a peasant.



HUMAN HERO COMBOS:

Tier 1:

AM/MK/Paladin - Classic Human Trio, each hero has great synergy with one another. The MK provides power, stun and a disable while being beefy and tough to take down. Paladin has seemingly unlimited heals with Brilliance Aura, Divine Shield makes him invulnerable most of the time, and Devotion Aura is underrated. Once the MK gets Avatar, he becomes magic immune making this trio almost impossible to kill. There is even additional synergy with Blizzard and Storm Clap. This standard combo is tried and true.

AM/Panda/Paladin - Classic with a twist. Panda instead of MK gives Human additional effectiveness against air, siege units, and towers. Panda is generally better in bigger battles while MK superior in smaller skirmishes and hero wars. While you gain a lot with Panda, you lose Human's only disable (not counting Panda's ultimate). Panda was nerfed but this combo is still effective, especially against Orc.

AM/Alchemist/Paladin - Classic, 2018 style. Alchemist 2nd is an interesting choice for Human. Acid Bomb has synergy with Flying Machines and Siege Engines. Transmute and Mass Teleport are a ridiculous combination of ultimate skills. You could even choose to skill Healing Spray and Devotion Aura for mass healing in a Rifle/Caster type strategy. I'd like to see this hero combo played more often.

MK/Panda/Paladin - 3 strength heroes with great skill sets. You lose the AM, meaning no Brilliance Aura. This combo is much better on maps with either a Mana Fountain or the ability to pick up a Khadgar's Pipe. It is a big time offensive combo, with MK and Panda wreaking havoc while Paladin keeps them alive. This combo is especially strong against Undead. I would skip early casters without an Archmage.

MK/Paladin/Bloodmage - My favorite Human combo, Bloodmage is inserted and Paladin moved to second hero. "Banish effect" combo, making your Storm Bolts and Gryphons do 150% damage (and Holy Lights healing 150%). Banish has many uses both offensively and defensively, and when used well is extremely powerful. Mana Drain feeds both heroes and Paladin keeps everything afloat. Any Human combo with Bloodmage is micro-intensive but can be dominant. I am especially looking forward to playing this hero combo after the recent buff to Flamestrike.

Tier 2:

Alchemist/MK/Paladin - A cool combo, sticking with the traditional MK and Paladin but swapping in an Alchemist as the primary hero. As noted above, Alchemist has good synergy with Human due to Acid Bomb increasing Tanks and Flying Machines DPS by splashing an armor reduction debuff. This is also a heavy offensive combo with Acid Bomb + Storm Bolt focus on heroes. I would play primarily Gryphon/Breaker + Flying Machines. This hero combo can be Tier 1 on maps that have Mana Fountains and/or Khadgar's Pipe.

Paladin/Panda/Alchemist - htrt's combo is a lot of fun and can be extremely effective and in the right situation. This is a defensive, damage mitigating type of combo where the Paladin skills Devotion Aura over Divine Shield, Panda primarily skills Drunken Haze, and Alchemist primary Healing Spray. The combination of +armor, debuffs, and healing mechanics (Healing Spray, Holy Light, Priests, Scrolls) allows you to sustain damage in battles with the ability to keep everything alive. The best map for this hero combo is Silverpine Forest since you can get big mana items and the map size is smaller, making ground armies more effective. Twilight Ruins is another good map for this strategy as you can find auras in the Markets.

AM/Bloodmage/Paladin - Area of Effect Combo. Archmage uses Blizzard and Bloodmage takes Flamestrike and Banish over Mana Drain. This can be really strong in the right hands with a mix of Gryphons, Breakers, and Casters. The AoE is formidable, and with good Banish use you'll save a lot of units. Phoenix is a strong ultimate, and uniquely so when also playing Archmage as you can Mass Teleport onto the Phoenix egg. This combo lacks the hero-arena power of some others, and it not as effective against air armies.

Bloodmage/Panda/Paladin - Another unorthodox combo, this time Bloodmage is first and takes Mana Drain as its primary skill. The concept usually revolves around a Riflemen-based army with a lot of Tier 2 casters and Breakers. Panda comes second and is fed unlimited mana through Mana Drain while the Bloodmage continues to steal the opposing mana. The combination of Flamestrike and BoF while leeching mana behind a number of casters can be very effective. You can also play Panda first or even Paladin first depending on map and preference.

Alchemist/Paladin/Bloodmage - Credit to Soso who played this combo that hadn't seen much use before him. Alchemist first allows for an early Transmute and high level Acid Bomb (-5 armor splash). Bloodmage is added to this combo as the ultimate utility piece, you can skill Banish & Mana Drain or Flame Strike & Mana Drain depending on the situation. Transmute and Phoenix in the late game are a formidable pair of ultimates. As with any combo without an MK, you lack a true disable although Banish can substitute in some cases.

HUMAN SHOP (Arcane Vault):

Staff of Sanctuary (250g) - One of Human's greatest advantages, this staff teleports a unit back to your base, stunning it and healing 15hp/second until fully healed. 45 second cool-down. A drawback to this effect is that the unit staffed is unable to move until fully healed. An opponent might be able to kill the unit or hero staffed if they go into your main base and focus it down while it's healing. However, the staffed unit is magic immune and healing so it doesn't happen often. You can also dispel your own staff on a unit to stop the healing/immobile effect. I would recommend having one staff on each hero and using them as often as you can.

Orb of Fire (325g) - This Orb was buffed recently, now it gives +10 damage and a slightly better splash radius. It's still probably the worst orb in the game. The only case where it can be effective would be on a Mountain King with Bash against air units, or maybe on an Alchemist with Inner Fire and a high level Chemical Rage.

Mechanical Critter (50g) - This critter is primarily used in combination with Mass Teleport. They are random critters and usually tough to spot. They are not a bad item even without Mass TP as you can send one to each of your opponent's main base or key choke points and have an effective scout. When playing against Human, you should kill all critters on the spot, especially those that don't belong to the tile set!

Ivory Tower (40g, 25w) - An item that places a tower, pretty strong and underused. You can use them offensively when attacking by placing a couple towers in the battlefield, or you can drop them down around an opposing expansion as you attack it. They can also be used as cheap scout towers placed in key points of the map or to quickly fortify a base.



HUMAN ARMY COMPOSITIONS:

Human is one of the most difficult races to create strong, balanced armies with. You'll want to be flexible enough to counter different forces. In general, starting out with Rifleman and casters now is a solid opening. If not, a tech for early Aviaries to produce Gryphons is a safe bet. Tanks were the obvious choice in so many cases before, however; since Siege Engines are now 4 food, you should consider Flying Machines more often as your anti-air.

Human has a number of utility units between it's casters, Mortar Teams and Dragon Hawks. When Gryphons are not optimal (ex: Against heavy Chippo or Gargs) you can often replace them with Breakers. You should always try to include a few Priests regardless of your composition. Ground based armies with Rifles can be very good at sustaining your strength from the beginning of the game, but try to transition out of them as the game progresses.

A mistake I see some Humans make is waiting too long to fight and falling behind in hero levels. Human is much, much stronger once their heroes are at a higher level. If you allow other races to out-level you, your armies and tanks will be much less effective.

I will often start Footmen if I plan on going straight to air units, or Riflemen if adding Arcane Sanctums at Tier 2.

Human Standard Template:

The first is a simple-yet-effective base of Gryphons and Tanks supported by Inner Fire Priests. Tanks are now 4 food, but they are still effective against light air. More Tanks or Flying Machines, Dragon Hawks or Arcane Sanctum units can be added. It is flexible - allowing you to pivot and adjust the composition.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 peasants (30 food)

7 Gryphon (28 food)

3 Priest (6 food)

4 Tank (16 food)

The second template is one with a Rifle/Caster base at 80 food. This is a strong opening as Rifles are effective in the early to mid game. Dragon Hawks are nice additions to this template to shackle their initial heavy air units. You can transition into Workshop units nicely after Rifles since they share the same attack upgrade tree.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 12 peasants (31 food)

9 Rifleman (27 food)

3 Priest (6 food)

2 Sorceress (4 food)

2 Spell Breakers (6 food)

2 Dragon Hawks (6 food)

Gryphon/Caster - This composition is strong and easy to handle. You can keep your Gryphons in the same control group as heroes and your casters + Hawk in another. Inner Fire and Slow will provide great utility to your force of Gryphons which have good synergy with MK and Paladin. Use your Hawk to cast Cloud on towers and be aggressive in your manner. You can start to add Siege Engines or Flying Machines to your army as it gets countered by light anti-air (Hippos, Gargs, Wyverns).

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 12 peasants (31 food)

9 Gryphon (36 food)

1 Dragonhawk Rider (3 food)

3 Priest (6 food)

2 Sorc (4 food)

Gryphon/Hawk - This composition is also easy to use, plus requires less of a tech tree thus quicker to form. Be sure to focus on upgrading to 3/3 as soon as you can (as you won't be spending resources early on caster training, etc.) Its strength lays in its ability to move quickly, hit-n-run and counter any basic or smaller army compositions well. Keep your Gryphons in control group with heroes, and Hawks in another -simple enough. The balance between the two units depends on the armies you are facing, but generally you'll want a good number of Hawks to make this strategy work well. This can be a good composition to rush players of any race early on.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 12 peasants (31 food)

7 Gryphons (28 food)

7 Dragon Hawks (21 food)

Gryphon/Tank - This combo was the most effective combo that requires a least amount of micro, but it was weakened with the nerf to Siege Engines. Gryphons counter ground, Tanks counter air. It is easy to pilot and very strong. Tanks are extremely difficult to deal with and Gryphons easily kill the siege units that counter Tanks the best. There are pure counters (like Dryads) in which case you would add Mortar Teams. It is important to have the right balance of Tanks and Gryphons. If they are countering your Gryphons with light air don't hesitate to build 6+ Tanks and less Gryphons. You can also add a couple Priests for Inner Fire to make this combo really powerful.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 9 Peasants (28 food)

7 Gryphons (28 food)

6 Tanks (24 food)

Rifle/Caster - Rifle/Caster in FFA can actually strong and effective, especially on smaller maps. Rifleman were recently buffed which makes this option more attractive to start out with, allowing you to be aggressive with your early game. If you go Rifle/Caster, plan on breaking 50 food and initiating a fight much earlier than most strategies. Be sure to upgrade the increased range at Tier 2. This composition requires more micro but can be very effective with master casters, hero levels and upgrades. It's important to have enough Riflemen to have effective DPS against higher tiered units, as well as a number of Priests to heal. A couple Mortar Teams do wonders in this army composition because they will often be protected behind the lines of your Rifles and casters. AM/MK/Paladin is a perfect combo for this as the Water Elementals early provide additional firepower and MK can stun the targets you focus. This army loses power in the late game against opposing heroes that are high level or full 100 food armies.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 peasants (30 food)

10 Riflemen (30 food)

4 Priest (8 food)

3 Sorc (6 food)

3 Mortar Teams (6 food)

Breaker/Tank - This composition is really strong against armies that don't have a major ground presence, specifically against Undead. It is more effective late game once your heroes are high level. This is because Spell Breakers alone don't do much damage, they serve better to compliment high level heroes while Siege Engines wreck buildings and air units. You can add a couple Priests to this set up as well to optimize it. Switching Gryphons for Breakers makes sense when facing a lot of light anti-air units.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 9 peasants (28 food)

8 Breakers (24 food)

7 Tanks (28 food)

Human Ground - This strategy was made popular by Mr. Sparkle, he has always played it and never strayed. It involves a whole mix of ground units: Riflemen, Knights, Casters, Breakers, and sometimes Tanks. It is more effective at 100 food than 80 food, though 80 food can be strong as well with competitive hero levels. The control groups are trickier and in general it requires more micro. Healing scrolls are your friend here as well as comfortable control groups. The idea is to have offense from multiple angles, adding more of specific units as the opposing army changes. Its weakness is to hit and run as big ground armies are not very mobile.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 peasants (30 food)

6 Riflemen (18 food)

2 Knights (8 food)

2 Mortar Teams (6 food)

2 Spell Breakers (6 food)

4 Priest (8 food)

2 Sorceress (4 food)

Area of Effect Combo - This strategy reminds me of ANGRYKOREAMAN, for those who remember him. Here you play AM/Bloodmage/Paladin combo with double AoE spells. Your main army comes purely from Arcane Sanctuaries while your anti-air is fleets of Flying Machines. The concept is that Breakers are immune to AoE so you can wreck the ground with spells while Breakers focus on heroes and Gyros clean up the air. It requires skill to pull off but can be effective (and fun). Use invisibility on your heroes if they are in danger and make sure you have enough Flying Machines to counter the air you face. Flying Machines either get wrecked and do little damage OR obliterate the opposing air depending on how many you have. Be generous in the Flying Machine counts to be sure in your anti-air. Lastly, make sure you have enough Sorceress in this build as slow is important.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 10 peasants (29 food)

7 Breakers (21 food)

3 Priest (6 food)

3 Sorc (6 food)

18 Flying Machines (18 food)

Towers and Tanks - This strategy revolves around grabbing some expansions, towering them heavily and trying to get your Archmage to level 6 (Mass TP and Tanks). You can play the standard hero combo with this strategy, or go all out with either Archmage/Paladin or Archmage/Tinker/Paladin. It is a good idea to skip your second hero until you can creep the AM to level 5. You won't make many friends, but this strategy can be effective as you hoard more gold than the other players and slowly destroy their bases. Late game you can transition to other armies, but the strength here lays in Towers, Tanks, and hoarding gold. Cast Inner Fire on your Siege Engines and Mass Teleport with the objective to destroy buildings, not fight. Get out before you lose too much and rinse/repeat. You can use critters and/or invisible units (sending an invisible Knight or Footmen).

Ex: 50 food

3 Heroes + 2 Shredder + 21 peasants (50 food)

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 13 peasants (32 food)

10 Tanks (40 food)

2 Priests (4 food)

1 Sorc (2 food)

1 Footmen (2 food)

TOP 10 HUMAN TIPS & TRICKS:

1) Be Aggressive. Human is significantly stronger with hero levels; they don't play as well when behind in levels. You will find your spots to hoard, but I recommend fighting and pursuing new expansions rather than being passive in the early to mid game.

2) Master the Archmage. Always retrain to Blizzard at level 5 and get used to spamming it all the time. Blizzard is very strong and you can usually safely channel it with a Paladin to heal, plus you'll rarely run out of mana because of Brilliance Aura. The better Humans will make you feel how powerful and tough it is to deal with an AM's consistent downpour of ice. Stack him with health items and creep aggressively early on.

3) Understand Mass Teleport and its limitations. First, it will only take 24 units. It will not take your entire 100 food army. This can be worked around by sending your air units to the spot first, then teleporting your ground force nearby. Be careful when Mass TPing as you can TP without your other Heroes which can be a fatal mistake. The range of Mass TP is considerably smaller than that of a regular Town Portal scroll, although it was slightly buffed recently.

The best way to use Mass Teleport is fast and furious. Try to send scouts (or have scout farms) all over the place, go from place to place at a relentless clip. Utilize invisible units like a Footmen or Knight as well as purchasable critters from your shop. You can use Mass TP in battle as well to adapt your position and throw your opponent off. Mass TP is without a doubt the most difficult ultimate to master. Anyone can make Tanks and TP into your base, but the best players will make the skill seem so much better to the point of imbalance.

4) Master the Paladin. The Paladin is obviously a key component in Human's success. Divine Shield seems easy-to-use but think about how you want to use it. At times it is best to pop it before engaging to prevent a Silence or disable. Other times you will want to wait until he is being focused to maximize its duration. Make sure he has enough mana to be effective, and use Holy Light as often as possible. At level 6, be sure to use his Resurrection ultimate skill after any battle in which you lose ground units. You can even achieve armies of more than 100 food if you kill your own units, retrain to 100, and cast Resurrection. Lastly, consider Devotion Aura. Devotion Aura is a great skill, and if you can get away without skilling Divine Shield (or only 1 level), your forces will be tougher.

5) Bring a single Flying Machine with your army. It only takes up 1 food and will give you true sight - allowing you to see any Shades, Sentry Wards or Blademasters.

6) Use your Arcane Towers (reveal) and scout Farms to keep tabs on the map. Try to keep your first scout peasant alive as he can be used to build farms around the map. Arcane towers are great in that they can reveal the map. I like to build a chunk of them in my main base, doubling as anti-hero towers and providing timely reveals. You can scout gold mines, main bases, and even invisible units (ex: Blademaster) in battle to your advantage. I will hotkey my Arcane towers to use a round of reveals on cooldown.

7) Utilize your casters to their full potential. Pre-buff your important units with Inner Fire before the fight. This allows Priests to heal in battle, plus disguises your Inner Fire. Coming to battle prepared and pre-buffed will make your force much more powerful. Don't forget that you can cast Inner Fire on Tanks. Invisibility can be cast on your Mountain King or Dragon Hawks to add an element of surprise in your attack. Sometimes an invisible MK can stun their hero at the right time before a TP, or Hawks can appear out of nowhere to shackle a number of air units. It can also be used defensively to save or protect your hero when healing is not available.

8) Spell Breakers can steal your opponent's magical buffs. When auto-casted, they will steal buffs like Bloodlust and Unholy Frenzy and apply them to your own units. An additional, underused ability of breakers is to steal opposing wards. Spell Breakers can steal Healing Wards by using Control Magic, and with true sight you can take over Sentry Wards as well (another good reason to keep a Flying Machine with you).

9) Staff of Sanctuary. This is a great tool for Human that will both staff and fully heal any unit or hero (including Tanks). You should always have at least 2 staffs (I prefer 3) and use them as much as you can. Note that your units cannot move until fully healed. This can be exploited when you staff a low hero and your opponent goes directly to your main to kill it before it heals fully. Keep this in mind when staffing in battles near your main. This effect can be dispelled by its user though. Staff of Sanctuary's healing effects stack - if you need something healed quickly and fast, you can consider using multiple staff charges on it.

10) Siege Engines. Tanks are a Human's best friend and his enemies' worst nightmare. No one likes facing tanks as there are few ways to deal with them effectively since they have fortified armor! Keep in mind they do give a substantial amount of experience (Blizzard's way of balancing them in a previous patch). Tanks are great AA units in numbers, but also great split into small groups to seek expansions. When you have the opportunity, send Tanks in groups of two a few different directions. Towers can hardly deal with them and it can help you gain the map control and tempo advantage. The best armies won't have masses of Tanks but rather use them in conjunction with other units. The recent patch increased their food cost, but they are still effective in smaller numbers.

ORC: *"It's not easy being green!"*

Orc is definitely a power race in FFA, capable of more DPS and overall dominance compared to other races at 80 or 100 food. They have the best possible army in the game. Orc has very good scouting in Sentry Wards as well as one of the best defense researches giving fortified armor to their towers and burrows at Tier 2. Under proper control, they are the most feared race in battle. The rotation of Hex and Stomp at higher levels can permanently disable a hero with good timings which can lead to huge hero kills and swings in battle.

It's heroes and casters have great synergy. Healing Wave, Healing Ward, Spirit Link and the various disables (Stomp, Stasis Trap, Hex) together have tremendous potential to dominate. Your linked units will distribute damage evenly while being replenished with a Healing Ward and Healing Waves. Orc's casters are one of their greatest strengths. It is important to utilize each one and their multiple skills. Witch Doctor Sentry Wards help keep tabs on your opponents as well as important spots or expansions. Shaman Bloodlust is incredibly strong - even against dispel - with a large force. Spirit Walkers are vital to an Orc's success by keeping Spirit Link on fragile units (Wind Riders; casters), dispelling opposing buffs like Inner Fire, and reviving fallen Tauren brothers.

Bats are a quick solution to air units, though they can be inefficient gold wise. It's important to counter heavy air units with Wind Riders and light air units with Bat Riders (more on this later). Tauren are the best ground unit in the game supplemented by Pulverize and Bloodlust.

Orc's weakness is its vulnerability both early game and in later stages. Orc takes the most time to get to its strongest point, meaning they are vulnerable to earlier pushes from other races. An Orc without higher level heroes and Master casters is considerably weaker. Later in the game, they can have a tough time rebounding from one fight to the next. This is because Bats require remaking & their casters need to rebuff (and replenish mana).

Orc also has the slowest economy. Their expansions take the longest to construct and their peon lines are exposed. Your first expansion will finish last; it can be a crippling blow if your opponent cancels it before it's finished. Orc armies are expensive (Bats) and often you will be fighting a lot. For these reasons, it's especially important to properly manage your economy.

Orc is a difficult race to play well. It requires good scouting and map awareness. You must be ready for potential attacks early on as well as tactical strikes later. Anyone can make a Blademaster and bats, but it takes more to unlock the full potential of the Horde.

"KEEP RUNNING!!!"

ORC SCOUTING:

Orc has one of the best scouting tools in Sentry Ward. Sentry Wards should be placed in your opponent's main base, expansions, and other areas of interest as soon as you can train a Witch Doctor at Tier 2. A Sentry Ward in your main stops Undead from camping a shade there, as well as Human sending an invisible unit in to Mass Teleport. Wards placed at key neutral buildings such as a Marketplace allow you first vision to pick up important items. If a ward catches two players fighting, you are provided with valuable information to make your next move.

The Blademaster can serve as a good early scout, specifically once he reaches level 3 (Level 2 Windwalk) and picks up a Boots of Speed. I will usually send my BM around the map to scout once he is 3 while creeping with my second hero. The Far Seer's wolves are very effective scouts too, though not used as much. At level 3, the wolves are invisible and have a long duration.

Early on, you should still send a peon around the map to scout. Though he is slow, it's important to know where your opponents are. Always prioritize getting a Witch Doctor to scout as soon as possible.



ORC HERO COMBOS:

Tier 1:

Alchemist/TC/SH - This is probably the best overall Orc hero combo right now; Alchemist has amazing synergy with Orc. Any Tier 1 combo will have TC/SH as the 2nd and 3rd heroes, and Alchemist first helps Orc become more efficient with their DPS because of Acid Bomb. Bats are much more efficient on targets with reduced armor, and Wind Riders are that much more effective as well. Lastly, Transmute benefits Orc in its typical area of weakness, giving an additional way to bolster your economy by Transmuting opposing units for gold. Alchemist is pretty weak early game due to his low armor, so be sure to make enough Headhunters to properly creep and defend if need be. +Armor items are especially effective on the Alchemist.

Dark Ranger/TC/SH - This combo keeps the TC/SH backbone while taking Dark Ranger as the first hero. This hero combo has the potential to be the most dominant combo in the game. All of the love is for Alchemist nowadays, and rightfully so, but the Dark Ranger is largely unknown and underutilized. This combo has all of the benefits of TC/SH but with an even greater synergy with Silence. Silence/Hex/Stomp is the vicious upgrade to the already imbalanced Hex/Stomp. With this combo you can rotate three mega disables (both of the radius of Level 3 Silence and Stomp are crazy, plus Hex). Add in Charm and it goes overboard. Not many players play this combo anymore, but trust me in its power. Alchemist is the better choice vs Elf, but you can make the case for DR being better against the other three races.

Blademaster/TC/SH - The classic Orc combo, still effective but not as overpowered anymore since Critical Strike was nerfed. As with any Orc combo, TC and SH provide incredible synergy with Stomp, Hex, and Healing Wave. Blademaster has nice synergy with TC and SH, and he is a top notch hero at scouting and harassing. He is great with an Orb of Lightning and has natural synergy with Wind Riders as well. Bladestorm is a respectable ultimate skill that is particularly effective against units with low HP, buildings, or Tanks. Blademaster is a solid choice on any map, but especially so on maps where you can get big items and/or creep with a solo BM. Deathrose, for example, is a nice map to choose BM.

Tier 2:

Panda/TC/SH - Panda first with TC/SH is good but doesn't work quite as well with Orc. This may seem strange as the Panda is so good on its own and with other races. His skills don't benefit Orc as much and he is rather slow for their primary hero. This isn't saying he's not effective. Panda/TC/SH is still good. In fact, any combo with TC/SH is going to be very, very good. Panda can be useful against Human (Tanks), and Undead or Elf against light air armies as well. Maybe we can see the Panda with Orc forgo Breath of Fire and instead skill Drunken Haze/Drunken Brawler. This can be the new "Blademaster" by stacking claws and leveling his passive skill while disregarding the recently nerfed Breath of Fire.

Far Seer/TC/SH - The old school, classic combo. The Far Seer isn't seen much and reasonably so. FS is a good hero but simply the other choices are superior. The best time for a FS/TC/SH is probably on an open map without many choke points that is smaller, like Mur'gul Oasis or Battleground. Far Seer can be good with Orc ground or in an aggressive Tier 2 type of push. Chain Lightning is pretty good and Spirit Wolves serve as good scouts. Far Sight is fine and Earthquake provides Orc with a way to destroy towers effectively. The original "best FFA player", Invincible_Rice, played FS/TC/SH back in the day and held Rank 1 FFA across all four BNet realms.

BM/SH/Alchemist - This hero combo goes against everything you should know about Orc. An Orc hero combo without TC/SH?? Crazy, yes. But this is one combo that can be effective without the big, bad TC. In this setup, you are going for 3 Orbs and a lot of DPS. It can be good with a ground army (Headhunters with 3 Orbs, BM and Alchemist focus with Acid Bomb) and especially good when playing Bats. You will surely miss the best hero in the game's Stomp and Endurance Aura, but these three heroes are plenty effective in their own right. And fun. This can be a strong hero combo with an aggressive play style. Yane used to play this combo with Orc and in more recent times, b100 likes this one.

Pit Lord/TC/SH - Pitlord can be played with Orc, skilling Howl of Terror and Cleave. Cleave was buffed and the PL received +2 starting Agility, making him a better melee fighter. Howl of Terror damage reduction has synergy with the damage mitigation spells: Spirit Link, Healing Ward and Healing Wave. Doom is the lesser of the 'unit steal' ultimates but still very good. Cleave + Bloodlust + Claws sounds pretty cool and can be an effective DPS. Pit Lord plays well with Orc ground armies.

Pitlord/Panda/Alchemist - Noexxx has been playing this combo in recent times; it's the Orc version of damage mitigation and sustain. Howl of Terror reduces opposing damage, Drunken Haze reduces their hit chance and movement speed, and Healing Spray heals your units and has synergy with Orc's spells. This is a cool combo and fun to play, also most effective with Orc ground armies.

ORC SHOP (Voodoo Lounge):

Orb of Lightning (375g) - This orb is as crucial to Orc as Orb of Corruption is to Undead. It adds +5 damage and grants a chance to cast Purge on every hit (30% on normal units). Great vs summons and units running away. Its greatest trait is that Purge prevents a hero or unit from being staffed, nullifying a significant tool that Human and Elf possesses. Be aware that the Purge will dispel all magical buffs and debuffs (Hex) so sometimes it will disrupt a Hex/Stomp combo. At times I will drop my Orb of Lightning when killing a hero with Hex and Stomp and then pick it back up to prevent the Purge.

Scroll of Speed (50g) - This item is crazy powerful. Absolutely underrated. I can't stress enough how great this item is. I will always leave one slot open for a Scroll of Speed as Orc. When I play DR as Elf, I will try to charm a peon to make a Shop for Scrolls of Speed. Movement speed is crucial in FFA and this scroll boosts your army significantly higher than the movement speed cap for 10 seconds. These can be used offensively; pop it and charge in to their army, positioning your heroes much quicker than they can react. Or defensively; running away or backing up to reposition, saving a TP and/or any straggling units. It can be used in quick hit-n-runs with Bats or heroes. Available at Tier 1, 50g is a steal for this item!

Tiny Great Hall (600g, 185w) - Orc's expansions normally have the longest build time, this item helps make up for that. Don't use it when you have a good amount of gold or don't need an immediate expansion as it costs over 200g more than a regular expansion, but when you want to jump the wait time and grab a contested expansion - it's very good. It's also nice when fast teching early as you can build one expansion with a peon and purchase another instant one at Tier 3. Lastly, it can be held onto in a base race situation to quickly create a Great Hall in a pinch.



ORC ARMY COMPOSITIONS:

The standard Orc army mixes Wind Riders and Bat Riders with 1-2 Tauren and casters. You'll want to have enough Wind Riders for your core DPS while bringing enough Bats to handle the light air. A small number of Tauren can be added to pulverize front lines of Tanks, Breakers, etc. I like to have 2 of each caster as a base. The ratio between Wind Rider, Bats and Tauren should be flexible and determined based on your current opponent.

You may want to start with grunts for a better early game (or Headhunters with a Tavern hero), or tech straight to Tier 2 for early Wind Riders. The latter holds more risk but is generally preferred when playing Blademaster first.

Bats should be primarily used on light air (Gargs, Hippos, Hawks, Flying Machines, Wind Riders) and Wind Riders should focus the heavy air (Wyrms, Gryphons, Chims). The Kodo Beast is important as well, but he isn't very mobile and usually not as efficient in an 80 food army.

Alternatively, you can play a Headhunter base -- Orc ground. This is more of an old-school strategy but usually more cost efficient compared to using Bats and maybe more fun to play too. It can be great vs any race, but it lacks mobility and takes more time to prepare and manage.

Orc Standard Template:

Balanced and flexible, this composition's DPS comes primarily from the Wind Riders and Heroes while being supported by casters. 1 Tauren has significant value here. 4 Bats are included to deal with the initial light air you may face. More Bats can be added as need be, or more Wind Riders against heavy air. A Kodo Beast or an extra Shaman and Walker can be added when going to 100 food.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 10 peons (29 food)

1 Tauren (5 food)

6 Wyvern (24 food)

4 Bats (8 food)

2 Shaman (4 food)

2 Witch Doctor (4 food)

2 Walker (6 food)

Wind Rider/Caster - This is a basic composition revolving around using Wind Riders and your heroes to apply lethal amounts of DPS while casters buff and keep them alive. You can keep your Wind Riders and heroes in the same control group, and your casters in another. Keep Bloodlust and Spirit Link on your Wind Riders and Heroes. Bats can be added if you face a lot of light air. Be aggressive with this army, focus heroes and get out if threatened by a pure counter.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 peons (30 food)

8 Wyvern (32 food)

1 Kodo Beast (4 food)

2 Shaman (4 food)

2 Witch Doctor (4 food)

2 Spirit Walker (6 food)

Wind Rider/Bats - This composition is simple and effective, primarily in earlier stages of the game. One of Orc's early-game weaknesses is the time and resources it takes to tech for all three master casters. Opposing players can take advantage of this window of time by rushing with 80 food armies. At times, you may find yourself with a couple of each caster and few air units while researching -- leaving you unprepared for a heavy rush. To combat this, you may choose to skip casters altogether to start the game and elect to go pure Wind Riders/Bats as your first army. I wouldn't usually recommend this, but if you are facing Elf (who primarily makes Chims and Hippos), you can often skip casters and go pure air units early. You'll always want to have enough Bats to counter opposing light air.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 peons (30 food)

8 Wyvern (32 food)

9 Bats (18 food)

Tauren/Caster/Bat - This is a strong composition that is not used much, it is particularly effective with DR/TC/SH. It is simple in theory - Tauren take care of the ground supported by casters while Bats blow up the air. Since Bats are expensive, it's important to have a strong economy if playing this composition. With DR, once you reach level 6 players will be reluctant to make heavy air units which make your Bats even more effective. Even against air armies, Tauren are important to apply the pressure to opposing heroes to go along with your TC and company. If facing a heavy air counter (mass Wyrms, Chims, or Gryphons), you will be forced to counter with Wind Riders if you don't have a significant gold advantage to mass Bats.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 12 peons (31 food)

3 Tauren (15 food)

1 Kodo Beast (4 food)

2 Shaman (4 food)

2 Witch Doctor (4 food)

2 Spirit Walker (6 food)

8 Bat Riders (16 food)

Orc Ground - This composition relies primarily on Headhunters and casters but includes Tauren and a Kodo Beast or two. Bats are rarely used here as Headhunters provide your anti-air. This is an old school composition, very powerful but tough to manage. In a standstill fight, you won't find a more effective army. Its weakness is its difficulty to control due to the number of units as well as a lack of mobility. If you can establish dominance early to mid-game, preferably on smaller, open maps, this composition can be extremely effective. Here you'll want more casters than normal and plenty of Headhunters. Scrolls of Healing are vital as your objective in battles will be to establish position and sustain. Don't reach for hero kills but rather focus on fighting well and preserving units. Orc Ground plays the most effective at 100 food.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 peons (30 food)
1 Tauren (5 food)
11 Headhunter (22 food)
1 Kodo Beast (4 food)
3 Shaman (6 food)
3 Walker (9 food)
2 Witch Doctor (4 food)

Ex: 100 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 6 peons (24 food)
2 Tauren (10 food)
15 Headhunter (30 food)
1 Kodo Beast (4 food)
4 Shaman (8 food)
4 Walker (9 food)
3 Witch Doctor (6 food)
4 Bats (8 food)

BM and Raiders and Bats, oh my! - This strategy revolves around playing a solo Blademaster for most of the game, securing as many expansions as you can while amassing towers. It is Orc's version of the Tower/Tank. The goal here is to hoard as much gold as possible and mass towers while you siege players out with Bat and Raider harassment. Assuming you hoard enough gold, late game you can transition into a more standard style army, adding TC and SH with waves of 100 food. Much like Tanks, you won't make many friends playing towers and Bats.

Ex: 50 food

1 Hero + 1 Shredder + 17 Peons (26 food)
12 Bats (24 food)

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 10 Peons (29 food)
12 Bats (24 food)
9 Raiders (27 food)

TOP 10 ORC TIPS & TRICKS:

1) It's the TC and SH, mon'. No matter which first hero you choose, these should almost always be your second and third hero choices. They have amazing synergy together with Stomp and Hex, commonly referred to as "Hexastomp". At higher levels, the rotation of these two disables can kill any hero while effectively preventing it from using any items. It can seem truly imbalanced to lose a level 10 hero regardless of items to a series of Hex and Stomp. The timing of these two skills require some feel to get right, and you should be aware of potential dispel of Hex via an opponent's dispel or your own Orb of Lightning. Unlike Solo, Tauren Chieftain is the better 2nd hero and Shadow Hunter 3rd.

2) Get a Spirit Lodge and a Witch Doctor out as soon as you hit Tier 2.

Use this Witch Doctor to place Sentry Wards all over the map as soon as you can. This is extremely important as you will always have to consider your nearby opponents preparing a push for you or someone else. This information is invaluable in helping decide your plan of action. Later in the game, you can keep one Witch Doctor in a separate control group to "dot" the map with Sentry Wards. The best Orc players will have map control by placing wards everywhere, allowing them to seize opportunities by not missing the action.

3) Build multiple Beastiaries and consider multiple Voodoo Lounges.

You'll always want to be prepared for an attack, but in the case when you are not, you may have to mass-produce Bats to defend. Having multiple Beastiaries is obvious but shops may not be. Orc requires a Voodoo Lounge to produce Bat Riders. A tip I tell other races is to quickly kill the Orc's shop. If it's his only one, he would not be able to produce Bats which could be a deadly mistake. I will often have 4-6 Beastiaries in a given game, and 2 or 3 shops strategically placed around my main base.

4) Optimize caster use. Pre-buff your army. Turn OFF auto-cast on your Bloodlust. Use Bloodlust as a pre-buff before engagements. This requires more micro but makes a major difference. First, when auto-casted, Bloodlust will cast on units that don't benefit from it as much (casters, Bats). Secondly, Bloodlust is mana-intensive, so you'll want to save it and choose which units to give it to. Pre-buff your Wyverns, Tauren, Heroes and Kodo Beast. Try to always keep Spirit Link on your Wind Riders. Since you will be pre-buffing, it is rare to need more than 2 or 3 of any caster. A common ratio is 2 Shaman, 2 Doctor, 2 Walker (2/2/2). You can add another Shaman or Walker as needed.

5) You are vulnerable, but also better at hoarding than most races.

It may sound nice to grab 2 or 3 expansions and stay at 50 food, but you better have the map well scouted and accounted for. Often times, it may be better to be prepared, going to 80 food earlier than you would with other races to prevent an unexpected push from crippling you. Remember that as Orc, other players will be gunning for you as you have periods of vulnerability and often rely on Bats for anti-air. With that being said, you are better at hoarding than most races. This is due to the strength of fortified towers as well as the ability to mass produce Bats. Other races have a more difficult time catching up in levels, especially Undead and even more so Human. Orc is not forced to fight with real armies as they can use mass bats to catch up in experience. Know you are vulnerable, but take the opportunity to hoard if you have it.

6) Be efficient with your Bat use. Understand the difference between the anti-air effectiveness of Wind Riders and Bats. Bats are most efficient when used against light air (Hippos, Gargs, Hawks, Wyverns). Wind Riders are more effective against heavy air (Wyrms, Gryphons, Chims). If you use Bats against heavy air units, oftentimes it will take 3 bats to kill one with upgrades. Better yet, use a smaller pack of bats to blow up the light air while focusing on the heavy air with your Wind Riders. This is a very important concept that many Orcs fail to grasp.

7) Shadow Hunter's ultimate skill, Big Bad Voodoo. This is one of the trickier skills to use well. It grants your army (within radius) immunity while your SH is extremely vulnerable. Note that casting BBV debuffs your entire army, good and bad (rids Bloodlust, Spirit Link, or Slow). The best time to use this skill is when your SH is relatively safe and you can benefit from the protection of the rest of your army. My favorite time to use his ultimate is in a mirror match. I will bait a pack of Bats to fly into my Wyvern only to pop Big Bad Voodoo the moment before they hit. This will not only prevent the Bats from exploding, but they will lose their AI entirely giving you a small window to kill them! Another great time is after you disable the opposing disabling hero. Hex, stun or Silence the MK and then cast BBV to negate Tanks or anything else for a brief time.

8) Use speed scrolls early and often! The speed scroll is underrated and grossly underused. They can be used defensively to get away from a situation while saving units in the process. Offensively; to charge in and establish an advantageous position, or aggressively when chasing and using Orc's series of disables. It can be used in tactical strikes with Bats or otherwise as a hit-in-run. I will try to always keep one speed scroll on a hero at all times regardless of the quality of items I have to choose from. For 50g - it's a no-brainer.

9) Fear the Bull. Tauren are the best melee unit in the game. While FFA is filled with threats from the sky, try to keep 1 or 2 Tauren in your army. Tauren add an undeniable pressure on opposing heroes. 1-2 Tauren also increase the effectiveness of "Hexastomp" on heroes and often provide a boost of DPS that takes Orc's power to the next level. Most Orc players today forgo Tauren and primarily play Air/Casters, but Tauren are underrated and even effective when the opposing player has no ground units (other than heroes).

10) Fight on your own terms. This tip can apply to any race, but especially to Orc since it has the advantage in speed and mobility. If you are not pre-buffed or in good position, don't hesitate to back away temporarily. Same goes if you do not have enough Bats or mana on your heroes. Often times, I will see an Orc fight a Human head on against too many Tanks to engage, or an Elf with many more Hippos/Chims then his Bats can handle. This can end up in a lopsided loss that could be prevented entirely by backing up, adding Bats, pre-buffing and regrouping before engaging. The difference between dominating or being dominated can be a fine line with Orc.

NIGHT ELF: *"I said a bow string not a G-...Ugh, never mind."*

Night Elf is a unique race in FFA in that it can be played in many ways. It has a natural advantage in picking Tavern heroes due to their moon wells, and it has the best hard counters as far as organic units (non-machine). Hippogryphs are great, pure anti-air units and Chimaeras are the most devastating anti-ground unit. These two power units make up the core of most Night Elf armies, but the better Elf players learn to incorporate much more into their strategies.

Night Elf has the best synergy with the Pandaren Brewmaster and very good synergy with DR, Alchemist, or any other Tavern hero. This is great for them because their racial hero choices do not stack up in comparison to the other three race's options. Moon wells give a unique advantage in that Elf can continue to replenish their health and mana throughout the game without as much of a need for scrolls or items.

They have a distinct economic advantage through their expansions. They have the lowest build time of all four races, plus have a closed mine (workers are not exposed). On top of this, Elf can easily place wisps around the map for quick expansion creation. This is much easier to do compared to the other races and is one of their best features.

Elf can handle towers well with their Chimera's long range siege upgrade. They also have a unique Tier 3 melee unit that can cast Roar and Rejuvenation. Their Dotts double as anti-air units and casters with Cyclone. Due to Night Elf's synergy with Tavern heroes, it has the highest number of effective combinations of heroes of all races. They also have Staff of Preservation which is key in saving your units as Elf does not have a traditional healing hero.

A weakness that Elf has is that it relies on air units more so than other races, leaving it vulnerable to hard counters from other races. They also have lesser racial heroes, so Night Elf is typically the weakest race without an army. The best way to combat these weaknesses is to utilize your economic advantages. You can often mine the most gold and quickly produce powerful armies. A rule to live by with Chippo is to either be "50 food or 100 food". You can easily 'pump' an army from 50 food with Elf. 100 food Chippo is much more effective compared to 80 food.

Build multiple Moon Wells to fortify your base rather than towers. Moon Wells are a great investment as they will continue to replenish themselves each night. Sometimes your base can be vulnerable to other races, so having enough Moon Wells and competitive hero levels will help deter enemies out of your base.

Night Elf is a cool race, one of my favorites to play. It is deceptively simple yet intricate when playing at a high level. It requires a delicate balance between passivity and aggressiveness and skilled use of heroes and staffs. You can play with tactical strikes (Chims siege bases quickly) or powerful head-on forces. Be wise in your decisions, and be one with the night.

"I shall be your executioner!"

NIGHT ELF SCOUTING:

Night Elf has a variety of scouting tools, but not always an elite scouting tool like the other races have. It's best scout requires the use a Priestess of the Moon. Owl scout is amazing. It has a good movement speed to keep up with armies and a long duration at higher levels. The best elves who play PotM will seemingly always have an Owl scouting you.

Sometimes the best scout that Elf has is a Hippogryph. They fly fast, are cheap, and only cost 2 food. I will keep a Hippogryph in a separate control group for my active scouting purposes when not playing PotM. If it happens to die, you can easily retrain one.

Dott in flying form is another option as it can cast Faerie Fire. The Dott flies slower and dies easier so it requires some more micro for a scouting unit. I like to cast Faerie Fire on an opposing unit as a player is using a Town Portal to escape away from me, granting vision of their main base until it is dispelled.

Outside of Owl scout, Elf lacks any natural way to reveal units. This is painfully evident when playing KotG over PotM, in which case you must buy Dust of Appearances from your shop and occasionally reveal your army and main base for Shades, wards etc.

Perhaps its greatest scouting tool is its wisp. Wisps are the best worker unit of all races; they can latch on a tree and gather lumber without chopping it down or having to return it to a hall. For this reason, you can send wisps around the map and place them at key points to give vision (and the possibility of creating a Tree of Life at some point). I like to keep one between myself and my neighbor's base(s) as well as at contested expansions, Taverns or Markets. Early game wisps are the fastest scouting unit.



NIGHT ELF HERO COMBOS:

Tier 1:

DR/Panda/Potm - This is the classic, old school Elf combo used by F-L-Y. It combines the true power of Dark Ranger and Panda with PotM's utility as the third hero. Silence and Haze/Fire are incredibly effective and have perfect synergy with Elf's Chippo armies. PotM is added for additional DPS on the Chims plus a consistent scout Owl. Starfall is a bonus that is great in many situations and especially against Tanks. When playing this combo, you should constantly scout and look for the opportune moments to strike. This combo is particularly effective against Human and Orc.

DR/Panda/Kotg - The classic DR combo evolved. Here the PotM is replaced by a KotG. What you lose in a scout and aura you gain in a disable. Entangle is very important to Elf because without it they lack any kind of disable outside of Cyclone. Without a disable, opposing races can hit-and-run you effectively, making it difficult at times. With KotG, you can play more aggressively, often dropping four offensive spells at once (Silence or Mana Burn, Haze+Fire, Entangle). Tranquility has been buffed and is arguably as good as Starfall now. The cooldown is low and often provides a full-heal, sparing your moon wells and can be used in or out of battle. I usually prefer KotG as my third hero unless the strongest opponent is Human or Orc at times. This combo is particularly effective against Undead.

DH/Panda/Potm - Old school flavor with DH as the primary hero. The Demon Hunter is underrated; he is great in the hands of a player with strong micro. Consistent Mana Burns are effective the entire game, and his ultimate is very, very good (albeit the duration was nerfed). DH's effectiveness skyrockets on maps with items that benefit him (+AGI, +Damage, Crowns, etc). This combo allows you to aggressively scout and keep tabs on your opponents while being especially strong in the mid-game. Utilize these advantages by being decisive and deliberate in the path you choose.

DH/Panda/Kotg - The KotG version of DH/Panda, in most cases my go-to pick even over the DR first choices. This combo is very well rounded, you have defensive tools in Haze, Entangle and Mana Burn and those same heroes present offensive weapons. You are strong at all points of the game and when KotG comes out, the level 1 Entangle makes more of a difference in battle than any other hero would. Entangling and focusing a hero plus Mana burning it is strong. When playing KotG, make sure you send out scouts frequently to make up for a lack of Owl.

DH/Panda/DR - Another variation, this time leaving out both the PotM and KotG. DR third can be very good as well. Here you have both Mana Burn and Silence, ultimately shutting down your opposing heroes. You do miss out on both the Owl scout and Entangle, but if there was ever a hero to make up for that it would be the Dark Ranger. I like to be aggressive with Chims with this combo. If my opponent TPs to an expansion I will drop a Silence on top of them, effectively shutting them out and forcing another TP or scramble.

DH/Naga/Potm - This combo was revolutionized by Trunkz. At first glance, it doesn't seem as strong because Naga is usually a weaker hero; but these heroes have great synergy together. This is a rare hero combo for Elf that compliments a style that Elf usually isn't known for - hero focusing. Mana Burn, Forked Lightning and Cold Arrow focus with air units and Trueshot Aura is an insane amount of DPS. This allows Elf to look to hero kill in the way that UD or Orc are used to. You won't necessarily need to have a superior army if you can kill their heroes. Hippo Riders and Dotts for Cyclone are key components to maximizing this combo's effectiveness. The lack of Panda is largely made up for with PotM's Starfall. It can be weaker in air vs air fights since you don't have a Panda or Alchemist, but its burst damage capability - especially against heroes - has to be respected.

Alchemist/Panda/Potm - Alchemist hero combos are now Tier 1 and that is no different with Night Elf. Acid Bomb has great synergy with Chims and Hippos, and Transmute is very strong. The Panda second is standard and compliments the Alchemist well. Adding a PotM third gives you the scouting ability and additional DPS to make your move. It's surely enjoyable to transmute units like a Siege Engine or Destroyer. With this combo, use your Owl scouts to choose your battles and late game to find Transmute targets. You lack a disable here, so this combo can struggle against heavy pressure or teaming.

Alchemist/Panda/Kotg - This version more tailored to my playstyle; it is another versatile and offensive combo. KotG third grants a disable to be used in combination with Acid Bomb and Haze/Fire for a deadly focusing ability. Air armies will be forced to run when you throw your anti-air debuffs at them, but will have trouble doing so between Haze and Entangle. KotG gives you the element you need to maximize the effectiveness of your Alchemist and Panda. Engaging with Entangle + Acid Bomb + Drunken Haze + Breath of Fire is a massive opener.

Panda/Potm/Kotg - The final Tier 1 combo, popularized originally by Nooblex. This combo is simple yet extremely effective. It revolves around leveling your Panda to level 5 (or close to it) before even getting your second or third hero. Panda is your work horse while you have each of the two utility heroes providing their benefits. This combo is very powerful, especially with a playstyle goal of hoarding a lot of gold and fighting big battles. You miss out on the spell breaking heroes of DH and DR, but you represent raw power with the most efficient utility. As always, be sure to keep an AMS pot on your Panda at all times. This combo is great against all races, but can suffer in late game / hero arena situations.

Tier 2:

DH/Kotg/Potm - The classic, Reign of Chaos Night Elf combo. I'm going to shout out my old friend Neo-Geo with this one. It's big glaring hole is that it's missing a Panda. You will be at a disadvantage when facing Undead or Tanks in earlier in the game. With that being said, it can still be a powerful hero combo when you can stack DH with items. Once all heroes gets above level 6, it jumps into Tier 1. The utility of the Kotg and Potm have a nice synergy with the DH. This hero combo is particularly effective against Elf and plays well with MG/Dryad or Hippo Riders.

DR/Panda/Alchemist - Enter the Alchemist. Here, my favorite hero in Warcraft plays the third role behind DR and Panda in some crazy-offensive skilled combo. You have Silence, Haze, Fire and Acid Bomb in an ultimate rotation of AoE utility. Late game you have Charm *and* Transmute. This is an awesome combo to play, even if it lacks the key skills that you get from the more standard third hero choices. KotG and PotM are almost vital for utility, but Alchemist is a cool choice for a 3rd hero that can still be quite effective.

DH/Panda/Alchemist - Same idea as above but with DH leading the way. This is my favorite Night Elf combo with DH first. You can do Orc-like damage with these guys, it's fun to control three melee heroes and watch Panda and Alchemist demolish air units. Each is a beast in its own right; if you can stack items on these three and have enough to compete with armies -- look out. You don't miss Entangle quite as much here because of the quick power and effectiveness of Mana Burn, Haze/Fire and Acid Bomb.

Alchemist/Naga/Potm - This combo is most recently played by Gradient. Naga also has nice synergy with Alchemist. Acid Bomb + Forked Lightning with Cold Arrow focus and Trueshot Aura is a whole lot of DPS as well. The only reason I have this combo as Tier 2 while the combo with DH first is Tier 1, is that it is not as aggressive as with DH. The Demon Hunter combo is especially effective because of Mana Burn to shut down your healing heroes. However, this combo is strong in it's own right and if you like the Naga and this type of style, it is fun to play and can be effective.

Dark Ranger/Alchemist/Pit Lord - I have to include the "Triple Unit Steal" combo and it's best played with Elf. Dark Ranger first creeps the map well and sets up your early macro. Alchemist and Pit Lord are added and they both have strong battle skills. This combo is very good in air vs air fights and large skirmishes early. Late game, you can Charm, Transmute, and Doom units!! That seems really imbalanced at first, but the synergy with these heroes isn't great.

Tinker/Panda/Potm - This is probably the best combo to use if you want to play Tinker first. This combo wrecks Human and does a great job harassing. I would get a Staff of Teleportation on both Tinker and Panda and use your Owl Scout to harass expansions and towers. You lack a true disable and Tinker isn't as effective in battles compared to other starting hero choices. Use this combo to harass, and choose your battles wisely - usually at 100 food. I remember facing Dovekie who played this combo with a walled off base and it was almost impossible to break playing as Human.

NIGHT ELF SHOP (Ancient of Wonders):

Moonstone (50g) - A cool item that turns the day into night for 30 seconds. There are a number of advantages to this for Night Elf. At night; your moon wells regenerate, you have longer vision (with the research), units that can hide have the ability to, and archers are more effect (Elune's Grace). The more Moon Wells you have, the better you can maximize this item. You can also use it in a form of manipulation, when the day turns night the other player's notice it and might think you are either fighting or for whatever reason need the moon well juice.

Orb of Venom (325g) - Powerful in its own right, it grants +5 damage plus a poison damage-over-time effect. These poison effects stack and you will see some players swear by them always having one on each hero. Personally, I like to have an Orb of Venom on my DH and sometimes one ranged hero, but I usually prioritize other items over an Orb with Elf.

Staff of Preservation (150g) - One of Night Elf's greatest strengths. Staffs a unit or hero back to your main base, 30 second cooldown. These are great with Elf because of the synergy with Moon Wells. You can staff a unit or hero back to your base, heal it fully and have it rejoin your army with ease. In order to become a strong Elf player you should get very comfortable using staffs. I use a hotkey for mine and have the muscle memory down as much as any other hotkey. The choice to have 2 or 3 staffs often comes down to your hero selections and items available. I really like having a staff on every hero, but at times I will not have one on my DH or Panda, for example, if the items he has are very powerful. Note the synergy staff has with DR also as you can Charm a unit and immediately staff it back to your base. Staff of Preservation also works great with Staff of Teleport. You can Staff of Preservation a hurt hero back to your base, heal it full with wells, and Staff of Teleport back into battle immediately.

Anti-Magic Potion (100g) - Another one of Elf's greatest tools. This item prevents all magic damage or disables for 15 seconds. This, like Speed of Scroll for Orc, is incredibly strong and underused. To start, you should ALWAYS have an AMS potion on your Panda. Any opposing player's first priority in every battle against Elf is to disable the Panda. AMS prevents this, making sure your super-effective Panda is doing his work. AMS prevents Sleep, Hex, or any other nukes that come your way. You can even carry an Anti-Magic Potion on all heroes. Heroes are the most important factor in any battle and AMS prevents them from being neutralized. Additionally, it prevents damage from heavy air units like Chimeras or Frost Wyrms. The AMS pot is also useful on a PotM once she is level 6 to prevent Starfall from being disrupted. Buy these potions early and often, and always save a slot on your Panda for one.

NIGHT ELF ARMY COMPOSITIONS:

Elf most often relies on an easy-to-use yet effective core army of Chimeras and Hippogryphs, aka "Chippo". Your standard composition should first look to include enough Hippogryphs to overwhelm opposing air forces, and then add Chimeras to overpower the ground. Having the correct ratio between Chimeras and Hippogryphs is crucial.

From this point, I like to mix in Dotts (ground form or air form, depending on the circumstance), a Bear for Roar and possibly a Mountain Giant or two. I like to have a couple ground-form Dotts to Cyclone key heroes. 1-2 Dryads for Abolish Magic on things like Sleep is effective. More than 1 Bear or Dryad is typically not as strong. Regardless of your first hero, you can start with Archers and eventually transition into Lore units or straight into a Chippo variant.

Alternatively, you can play Hippogryph Riders. Hippo Riders are good, especially earlier in the game. They have a high amount of DPS and decent bodies (HP was recently buffed). It is particularly strong against Elf early on. You can even continue to play Hippo Riders later into the game and mix in Dotts with some Dryad support. Hippo Riders are effective because of their single-target DPS as well as their utility. If needed, you can dismount and have plenty of anti-air in a pinch, and then remount back to Riders.

One issue with this strategy is that Riders are on a different upgrade tree than Chimeras or regular Hippos. You will need to upgrade 3/3 on both trees if you choose Hippo Riders as your main units. Overall, "Chippo" based armies are usually more effective compositions, but playing Archers and Hippo Riders with Talons has proven to be strong as well.

Night Elf Standard Template:

A balanced mix of Chims and Hippos, supported by 1 Bear and a couple Dotts. This composition is balanced and effective against almost anything. More Hippos can be added as needed or an additional number of Chimeras. The second example is the Hippo Rider version, primarily Riders with Dott support and a Bear.

Ex: 80 food
3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 12 Wisps (31 food)
5 Chims (25 food)
8 Hippos (16 food)
1 Bear (4 food)
2 Dotts (Ground-form, 4 food)

Ex: 80 food
3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 Wisps (30 food)
9 Hippo Riders (36 food)
5 Druid of the Talon (10 food)
1 Bear (4 food)

“Chippo” - The most basic of Elf compositions is also very powerful. This army requires little micro to be effective, but is much more fearsome in the hands of a good player. It is important to get the right ratio of Chims to Hippos based on the armies you are facing. For example, if you face a lot of Gargs, Gryphons, Wyverns, etc. then you should build plenty of Hippogryphs (and consider adding Dotts). It's okay to only have a few Chims if you face primarily air units. It seems simple, but many Elf players still do not match the right number of Hippogryphs and can lose a battle badly because of it.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 wisps (30 food)

4 Chims (20 food)

15 Hippos (30 food)

Night Elf Ground - The idea behind Night Elf ground is a variety of ranged ground units led by a frontline of Mountain Giants and Bears. You don't want to have Chims here as they will splash your own friendly units, plus give targets for opposing anti-air units. This army is tougher to control but can be very good situationally. You'll want to have enough Archers with their Tier 3 research and upgrades to provide DPS while mixing in Dryads and ground-form Dotts for utility. You can have a few Bears, but not too many as Mountain Giants with upgrades are generally superior here. Scrolls are your friend. An advantage you have in playing an all-ground army is any opponents anti-air units like Hippogryphs are useless against you.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 10 Wisps (30 food)

2 Mountain Giant (12 food)

1 Bear (4 food)

8 Archers (16 food)

6 Dotts (12 food)

2 Dryads (6 food)

Fast Hippogryph Riders - In this strategy, you'll want to start DH first and continue to produce archers throughout your Tier 1 tech. Add two Ancients of Wind and begin producing Hippogryphs. Don't worry about upkeep as you are trying to get to 80 food Hipporiders as soon as you can. The strength of this strategy lays in its power in rushing. A level 4 or 5 DH with a Panda or Naga 2nd, and Kotg or Potm 3rd, is very strong with this composition early. Find your first opponent and take him out; you shouldn't have any problems except for very good Humans or Undeads, but even then it's unlikely they have an army that can counter this early on. Add a Bear for Roar soon after you break 50 food. Later you can transition into a more standard army after securing additional expansions.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 Wisps (32 food)

11 Hippogryph Riders (44 food)

1 Bear (4 food)

Bear/Hippo - This is an uncommon composition, but powerful nonetheless. You start with Lores and go for fast Bears in a solo style tech. This allows you to creep the map efficiently while being strong in the early and mid game. As you tech into Master Bears you can add Hippos to take out the air you face. It's simple yet effective, and available earlier than Chimeras and Hippos. You can really apply the pressure against any race with early Bears and Hippos following up. Htrt played this type of composition with Elf for some time. Transition this into a more standard army or continue with the same. It can be effective until a point when most armies are heavy air when Bears would become more of a liability.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 11 Wisps (30 food)

7 Bears (28 food)

2 Dryads (6 food)

8 Hippos (16 food)

Archery Range - This fun strategy forgoes any Air units and doesn't even play MGs. It revolves around having masses and masses of Archers and Dotts. The DPS is pure and destructive if left to fire away. PotM is very useful, as is KotG. You can even try a combo like DR/PotM/Kotg here. You need 3 Scrolls of Healing at all time (plus a Protection scroll) and a good control of multiple groups. Continue to recreate archers and stay on top of the opponents food count. Mountain Giants can surely be added to this strategy, but you really want to utilize your food with a large mass of Archers and Dotts.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 10 Wisps (29 food)

15 Archers (30 food)

7 Dotts (14 food)

1 Dryad (3 food)

1 Bear (4 food)

MG/Dryad - This is FFA's version of an Ancient of Lore army. Instead of masses of Bears, you elect for 2-4 Mountain Giants with many Dryads backing them up. This is the pure counter to Chims and Elves in general, and also is very effective against Human. This army composition is underused and deserves more recognition. It completely negates anti-air units, but is weaker to Undead and Orc. Here you want to be aggressive in your manner to force your opponent to try to counter you. Mountain Giants soak up damage while your Heroes can do work, dryads do well against all air units and can dispel opposing magic. MGs & Dryads don't have the most DPS, so you'll want to have aggressively leveled heroes.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 12 Wisps (31 food)
3 Mountain Giants (18 food)

1 Bear (4 food)
9 Dryads (27 food)

Chim/Dryad/MG - This composition is primarily effective against Human's Gryphon/Tank. Here you choose to forgo Hippogryphs entirely, counting on Dryads to kill the Gryphons. Dryads are a great counter to Gryphons as they are immune to their magical attack while also doing Piercing damage (150% against Light Armor). If you don't use Hippos, the Tanks are less effective at killing your air units as they only hit Chims. Now you can focus Tanks with Chimeras and a Mountain Giant wielding a siege-damage tree, making it easier to micro your army and counter his. This army is very good but since it lacks anti-air, is countered by Orc or Undead standard armies.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 1 Shredder + 9 Wisps (28 food)
1 Mountain Giant (6 food)

5 Chims (25 food)
7 Dryads (21 food)



TOP 10 NIGHT ELF TIPS & TRICKS:

1) Use your Panda. While his Breath of Fire was nerfed recently, The Pandaren Brewmaster is still usually your most important weapon when playing Chippo. You'll want to get used to using his Haze and Fire abilities every time they are ready. Level up your Panda and always buy an Anti-magic Potion for him. Don't hesitate to use it frequently to prevent your opponent from doing the first thing you do when facing an Elf -- disable the Panda. Buy a Boots of Speed and make sure he has enough mana to be effective at all times.

2) Go for their Main Base. As Elf, you have the advantage of long-range siege-damage Chimeras! If a player is focusing you, taking out your expansions or attacking your main; consider taking the fight to *his* main. You will more than likely force a TP and dictate the battle back on your terms. When defending against Tanks, often your best move is to go for their Castle. Human cannot produce Tanks without a Castle; if you siege it with Chimeras, you can potentially deliver a critical blow. If not, at least you force a TP and stop the Tanks from ravaging your main base. One of the best moves you can do with Elf against an early Human opponent is to go 100 food Chims and destroy his Castle. Too often Elf players will not utilize the advantage they have in Chimeras being able to fly and siege bases outside of the range of towers.

3) Utilize your wisps to scout the map early and often. You can leave these wisps on trees around the map, at key locations or expansion spots. If you happen to have plenty of extra wisps (plus a Shredder), you can use them in battle by mass detonating. As Elf, you should be the most active early scouter since Wisps have the fastest movement speed and ability to cling on trees. I like to have a wisp between my opponent's base and mine, as well in between opposing player's bases to scout if they engage.

4) Understand the power of Moon Wells (and the Moon Well upgrade).

Moon Wells are superior to towers in most cases because they replenish themselves. Moon Wells were buffed in a recent patch to have slightly better mana regeneration. Don't hesitate to build extra Wells beyond your 100 food cap to strengthen your base and your heroes' effectiveness at the same time. The Moon Well research increases the maximum pool and regeneration rate -- get it as soon as possible. I like to build a significant amount of extra wells as I get the research before the incoming night so they will regenerate fully during that time. The Moonstone can be a worthwhile investment to bolster your wells during the day time once you get the research. When healing your heroes, be sure to drop any items that boost HP or Mana prior to healing, that way the Moon Wells are used efficiently (less overall stats = less juice used). There are many ways you can build your base but in general, I like to have some wells surrounding my main tree (so units can auto heal when staffed, also so my hero can heal in a pinch after a TP). Aside from those, you can wall off your base or spread them around, but try not to bunch them all up together as that leaves you vulnerable to AOE spells.

5) Build multiple Ancient of Winds and utilize your Ancient of Wonders.

Always have at least 3 Ancient of Winds and upwards of 6. These are your fast track to anti-air in a pinch. I like to have 4 Chim Roosts, 4-6 Winds, and 1-2 Lores. Also remember to utilize your shop - specifically Staff of Preservation and Anti-Magic Potions. The staffs are incredible tools; Elf players with good staff use are far more threatening. Anti-Magic Potions are just as incredible and unique to the Elf race. Buy and use them often! Aside from your Panda, they are great on a DH to prevent a disable like Sleep. They can also be used late game on your PotM to prevent Starfall from being disrupted.

6) Your Ancients can uproot and move. This is a common fact but especially useful in FFA. When your expansion is up, you can uproot it and either move it to another gold mine or simply back to your main, providing another tree to TP to if need be. I will also uproot my Ancients later in the game to eat trees and carve out a better base layout. This is another economic advantage for Elf as you can uproot and walk your old expansions to reuse them. Sometimes in a FFA game, it will come down to a base race, in which case Elf has an advantage by uprooting and hiding trees.

7) Amass the Hippogryphs. The most common armies in FFA are made of air units, and Elf has the pure counter to air units. It's rarely a bad idea to make a bunch of Hippogryphs. On the contrary, avoid relying on Dryads. Dryads are more effective in solo but are less so in FFA due to their low DPS. It's okay to have a couple Dryads for support or dispel, but Hippos should be your primary anti-air unit. Dotts are good as well and should be mixed in, but Hippogryphs are what you should rely on.

8) Incorporate Support Units. Making more than one or two Bears is rarely good in FFA as they die to heavy air and even your own Chim's splash damage. However carrying one with your main army is great as you can Roar and cast Rejuvenation on heroes. I also like having 2-3 ground-form Druid of the Talon to cast Cyclone on opposing threatening heroes. These simple units can make your Chippo army much more potent. You can have simple control groups of Chimeras, Hippogryphs, and a support group of 1 Bear + 1 Dryad + 2-3 Dotts.

9) Faerie Dragons. These are unique units in that they are magic immune. When facing high level Undead heroes in the late game, consider making your final army purely Faerie Dragons since they cannot be nuked down. They have weak damage on their own, but in great numbers can be effective. Remember that even a small group of Gargoyles will tear through them, so wait until the Undead has little to no army but big heroes. Sometimes a high level UD trio can wreck Elf with mass nukes, so a group of magic immune Faerie Dragons complimenting an Elf hero combo can be the difference. Aside from their late game use, they are effective in small numbers against Human or Orc casters.

10) Gold in your sights. Elf has the best economy of the four races. They have the lowest build time for expansions as well as protected gathering lines. Plus, all you need is one wisp. Regardless if you are 50 or 80 food you should look to have multiple expansions. As Elf, it is less detrimental and expensive to lose an expansion compared to other races. Sometimes it is better to let an expo get destroyed and simply rebuild it as opposed to Tping in and losing chunks of your army.

UNDEAD: *"I love the dead... frequently."*

Undead is my favorite race to play in FFA, but it can be a tricky to play well. Over the years, it has generally been considered the weakest of the four races. It's units are fragile, plus it lacks a devastating racial unit (Tanks, Bats, Chims). Recent patches have changed the racial balance somewhat. Some of the most significant changes benefitted Undead such as the Dreadlord buffs as well as nerfs to Tanks, Paladin Divine Shield and Panda BoF. Undead is now stronger and on a similar level to other races. I would say Elf is the strongest race now by a small margin, followed by the other three in no particular order. I noted this earlier, but as a Random player, I am pleased with the changes and the fact that all races are pretty close in overall strength now.

As Undead, you must learn to utilize your advantage in mobility through Unholy Aura. Unlike other races, Undead does not usually fare well in a standstill fight. You'll want to swoop in and out, dealing damage in quick strikes while preserving your forces.

Undead is kind of a Mage-type in that it has high DPS but cannot sustain much damage. Unholy Aura allows you to fly in-and-out of engagements, picking off units and softening the opponent with nukes. Gargoyles have high DPS but get picked off like flies. For these reasons, always try to throw volleys of nukes at your enemy before engaging. Your advantage lays within hit-and-run and often dictating when or when not to fight. Undead can surely dominate a battle, but the line is very delicate and should be played carefully. If you do have an advantage, seize it, as Undead can quickly dismantle a foe that's unprepared.

The Shade is one of Undead's foundations and core to hit-and-run. If you can keep tabs on an opposing army while controlling your force; with superior movement speed (Unholy Aura), as well as heroes that can nuke (Coil, Nova, Swarm) and quickly disable (Sleep), you can essentially control his army. The opponent will try to force a fight, and if not be forced to retreat or bring the battle to your main.

As your heroes grow in level your power increases substantially. Undead relies on its heroes more than any other race. You will want to become very comfortable with your hero combo - nuking, healing, and casting timely disables. The difference between average, good, and great Undead players almost always comes down to hero use and hit-and-run ability. Remember, deadly but fragile in your strikes.

Unlike Solo where Fiends are prominent, Gargoyles are your primary unit in FFA. You can start most games with Fiends and even play an 80 food army earlier in the game with a Fiend base, but they lose their power as the game progresses and hero levels (and Tier 3 armies) grow. Gargoyles are expensive, however. In fact, they are the most expensive unit in the game behind Flying Machines (nearly 100g per 1 food). A group of 12 Gargs is almost 2,400 gold. Given this fact, be sure to utilize scrolls often and choose your battles wisely. If you can play a Fiend based army or Necrowagon early before transitioning into Gargs later, that's usually a good idea to help sustain your economy.

An advantage Undead has is in the early game. They are the strongest race early on with DK and Fiends and they can establish and secure their first expansion easily with a Sacrificial Skull and towers. Plus they can both tech and expand with ease since a single Acolyte can summon buildings. This transitions Undead into an 80 food army very well. It is difficult for any race to handle an 80 or 100 food push from Undead early as other race's techs often require more time and resources. This is an important idea to understand. More often than not you should be preparing an 80 or 100 food army with Undead to attack another player and take advantage of that window of time.

Playing Undead is a rewarding challenge. You can start most games off safely by securing an expansion and deciding a plan of attack. From here it gets tougher as other races have tools that can give Undead a lot of trouble. Its weakness is its fragility in units, heroes, and main base. Other races can potentially roll over your base no matter how many towers you have. You must be quick and decisive in your actions, scout well and utilize the advantages that Undead has. Seize your opportunities and capitalize on them!



"You should see the skeletons in my closet."

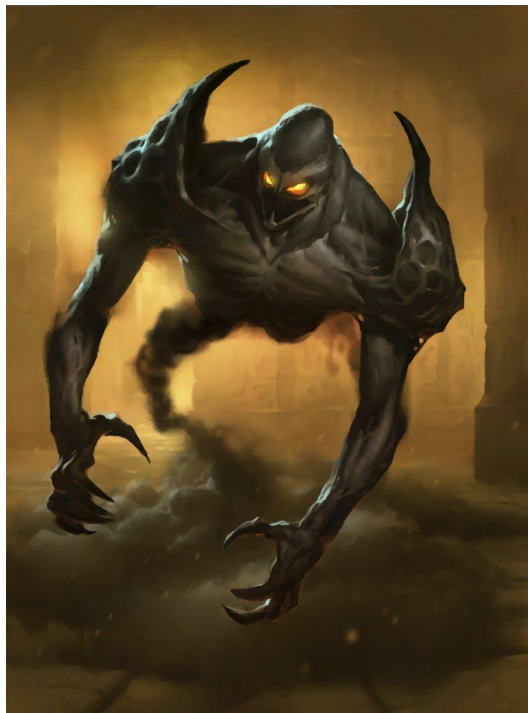
UNDEAD SCOUTING:

Undead has the all-seeing Shade at its disposal. It is a vital component to your success. Scouting is even more important as Undead because your base is weaker in comparison other races and army more fragile. If you know about an incoming attack, you can not only prepare for it, but go on a counter strike to intercept them; or force a TP, choosing to fight on your own terms. Shades are first available at Tier 2 and should be the first unit you make after your second hero. You can send a Shade around early to your nearby opponent's main base to check if they are preparing a rush for you. They also give information on expansions and contested creep spots. I try to always have at least two shades; one scouting opponents and one with my main army. A shade with your force allows you to see and destroy Sentry Wards, invisible Blademasters, opposing Shades etc.

Shades should also be used to keep tabs on your enemy's army. This allows you to hit-n-run with nukes without having to engage head on. Any time you can engage when you have vision and your opponent does not should be to your advantage.

You can also set your shade to patrol between remaining gold mines or in a rotation around the map. This is a easier way to scout with your shade requiring little micro. Shades give consistent information which is an edge that helps Undead to perform at a high level. The difference between good and great Undead players often has to do with their shade use.

Other then the invisible ghost, skeleton rods can be used early-game to scout positions and initial expansions. Try to send a full charge (2 skeletons) very early - one in each direction - to understand your position relative to others. Lastly, a solo Gargoyle can be used to scout for player's hidden armies by flying it around the edges of the map.



UNDEAD HERO COMBOS:

Tier 1:

DK/Lich/DL - This is the standard hero combo that fuels Undead's power. These heroes have perfect synergy with one another, each with their own nuke and supporting abilities. DK provides healing and movement speed, Lich has the best nuke in the game along with key abilities like Frost Armor and an ultimate to destroy any towers or main hall. DL gives you the needed disable in Sleep, an improved Carrion Swarm, and a great ultimate in both battle and to scout and harass. Undead has the least flexibility when it comes to hero combos. Perhaps more than any other race, Undead shows most of its power from its heroes. You can play Frost Armor or Dark Ritual with the Lich based on your preference. If you do play Frost Armor, be sure to pre buff your heroes in battle with it along with your Frost Wyrms & Statues. This combination can be played as DK/DL/Lich as well, by preference. Taking DL second instead of Lich is better in the long run, but Lich 2nd is better in the early stages.

DL/DK/Lich - This is the standard combo but with Dreadlord first. While it is the same hero combo as above, the difference in first hero selection is significant. Especially after the recent changes, this hero combo should be the best choice most often. If you play DL first, you are starting with a Ghoul fast expansion into Gargoyles. If you play DK first, you are usually starting with a Fiend fast expansion and later into Gargoyles. You can play either in a fast tech alternatively with an extra Necropolis. Dreadlord first is clearly better against Undead or Elf, and still better against all races in some cases. Death Knight is better as a first hero if you plan on building a 80 food army of Fiend/Destroyer/Wyrm. Death Knight is more dependable in the early game when facing very early aggression. Depending on the map, I still prefer DK at times, but largely now I am focusing on playing on Dreadlord first.

Tier 2:

DK/Lich/DR - Here you are replacing the Dreadlord with a Dark Ranger. DR is an insane hero in her own right. Instead of Sleep you have Silence and instead of Infernal you have Charm. DR is a great choice when fighting Human or Orc as Silence is most effective against them. She is also better suited when playing Fiend based armies. What you miss out on the most is the third nuke of Dreadlord. You won't be as effective against light air and will need to have a different play style. Gargoyles don't have great synergy with DR. I love the DL so much, you won't see me playing this combo often but it can still be effective.

DL/Panda/DK - This combo is a lot of fun to play, especially after the new patch which granted Carrion Swarm the ability to hit mechanical units. DV played this combo a lot after the patches and it is pretty dominating with both DL and Panda skills. As you can imagine, Carrion Swarm and Breath of Fire wreck Human. Be sure to get Pendant's of Energy or Mana on your Panda and DL and keep them protected. This combo lacks the Lich, so you will not be as strong in hit-n-run and some air encounters. Panda also cannot be healed by the DK, so the quicker you can level him up the better.

DL/Alchemist/DK - True to the meta, Alchemist is incorporated into Undead with this combo. It's similar to the above combo but plays a little bit differently. Acid Bomb is still good against air units with Vampiric Aura, but I would play Carrion Swarm over Vampiric Aura in this build. Sleep/Swarm/Swarm/Sleep/Swarm. Carrion Swarm and Acid Bomb is a pretty lethal combination of AoE skills. Late game you have both Infernal and Transmute which is awesome. You do miss out on Lich in this combo, and it's not quite as effective in some situations as the Panda alternative. Alchemist has very low armor and cannot be healed by the Death Knight, so it's better to play this combo on a map with a Health Fountain or premium Marketplace items.

DK/Panda/Lich - This is an interesting combo, same as above except for playing DK first and adding Lich instead of DL. We all know how great the Panda is, though the downfall with Undead is he cannot be healed efficiently. This combo is excellent at fighting light air because of Panda and Lich skills. It can also destroy bases well and still does pretty good in hero arena late. Try to stack the Panda with items and consider running a Banshee or two for Anti-Magic Shield.

CL/DK/Lich - The almighty Crypt Lord is seldom used by anyone not named WorpeX. This combo is better than you may think, and is most effective with fiend-based armies. A high level CL with a strong early to mid-game fiend army can be difficult to face. CL's ultimate is also strong and effective against light air. It's weakness is that you obviously miss out on the other elite hero choices, as well as the fact that the Crypt Lord is generally weaker in air battles. Impale doesn't hit Tanks which is lame. If you want to play this combo, focus on many fiends with a small support of heavy air, statues, and casters. I would skill Beetles and Carapace until the late game and retrain Impale.

CL/DK/DL - This awkward combo of melee, strength heroes is most effective when playing Abominations! Yes, Aboms, typically a terrible FFA unit. You can try to mix Aboms with Fiends and casters in a mid-game push while leveling these heroes up. Dreadlord is added third instead of Lich for Sleep and Vampiric Aura. The ultimate army for this combo would be a line of Abominations, with Fiends, Necromancers and Banshees behind. A couple Frost Wyrms can be added. If the opponent is playing mass air, you'll have to mass Fiends and Banshees while getting Orbs on all heroes.

DK/DL/DR - This is a strange hero combo because DL and DR have awkward synergy together. They both have disables that sometimes will overlap each other. You do have two great ultimate skills, but lack the utility of the Lich. This combo can be used effectively with Necrowagon strategies by shutting down heroes and disabling anti-caster units. It's also effective in strategies that rely on mass towers and hoarding until the late game. It's tough to siege an Undead with these heroes due to the multiple disables and Charm.

DL/Panda/Lich - This is my favorite combo in the Tier 2 section. In fact, I used this combo to win a semi-final in FML against some tough players. It seems crazy to play a combo without a Death Knight, but in the right situation it can be dominant. It's power comes in the ridiculous anti-air combo of Panda and Lich. Dreadlord is taken first and levels Sleep and Vampiric Aura (not Carrion Swarm). Sleep as your primary skill on first hero has a major impact in shutting down opposing heroes. You use Panda and Lich to decimate the air. This combo is excellent against Undead and Elf and not so strong against Orc and Human. Try it in a game with primarily Elf and UD and even better on a map with mana items and auras.

DK/Lich/PL - In come the combos with Pit Lord. On paper, the Pit Lord has great skills. You'd think he would be a great hero here as Undead can heal him. He was even buffed in the recent patches. However, he is slow and clunky and doesn't synergize as well as other heroes. He should be an Intelligence hero, but instead he is a half-melee, half-caster with awkward stats. With that being said, this combo can still be effective when playing Fiends. Pitlord can add additional AoE while reducing attack damage at the same time. His ultimate is good too, basically a weaker version of Charm or Transmute. I like the Pitlord and will continue to try to use him, but I often find myself underwhelmed by his impact.

DL/DK/PL - This combo starts with Dreadlord first and adds the DK and PL. The idea is to get Infernal quickly while adding PL's damage reduction. This combo can be good with ground or pure Gargs. Late game you can manage two big bad summons with Infernal and Doom Guard. You'll probably miss Lich here, but if you can find some spots with efficient Howl of Terror use, Vampiric Aura has excellent synergy in air battles with Gargoyles.

DK/DR/PL - Lastly we have the Undead combo of unit-stealers. This can be a good choice when playing Necrowagon strategies. Silence and Howl add defensive utility while Rain of Fire comes down from the backlines. Later game you have two unit-stealing ultimates in Charm and Doom. I wouldn't play Gargoyles with these heroes, but this may be the best hero combo to play Necromancers with.

UNDEAD SHOP (Tomb of Relics):

Rod of Necromancy (150g) - This early game item for Undead is excellent. It helps you creep effectively as well as scout the map. If you can, try to use only 1 of 2 skeletons on each charge to creep and send the other to scout. If you get in this habit, you will become much better at scouting with Undead early. You can also use your first charge to scout with both skeletons if you have a delayed creep pattern. Additionally, the Rod can be used at all times to combine with Death Pact or Dark Ritual.

Sacrificial Skull (50g) - Useful to protect your first expansion with towers every game. Often times, an early contested expansion will go to the Undead (or Human) as they can quickly get up a couple towers to defend it.

Orb of Corruption (375g) - Essential to UD, grants +5 damage and most importantly reduces armor by 4 on the unit being attacked with it. Specifically dangerous on a ranged hero to projectile attack and focus down. It is still effective on a melee hero, but I usually won't equip another Orb if I have one on a ranged hero already. The exception is if you play all melee heroes in which case you should get an Orb of Corruption on all three heroes. Undead is considerably stronger once you get this orb.

Scroll of Healing (250g) - Undead is the only shop that has this scroll which is an important advantage to utilize. Often times the scrolls at shops are contested or far away; in understanding this, I will often build more than one Tomb of Relics in my base to be able to quickly buy multiple Scrolls of Healing. As noted earlier, Gargoyles are your primary unit and they are also very expensive. Practice using Scrolls of Healing and never leave home without them.



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UNDEAD ARMY COMPOSITIONS:

Undead typically follows a standard procedure when building armies. When playing Death Knight first, you will usually want to start with a Fiend based army and transition into a Gargoyle based force later. If playing Dreadlord first, you will start with Ghouls and transition earlier into Gargoyles at Tier 2. The other option is a fast tech with an extra Necropolis. In this case, you will only use your early Ghouls until you can produce Gargoyles after your tech.

In any case, you should have at least one or more Destroyers and usually a complementing Frost Wurm. Remember that in FFA, the majority of Tier 3 armies will be composed of primarily air units. Crypt Fiends only counter air in the earlier stages; Gargoyles will be your primary unit of choice. Become comfortable using Stone Form and Scrolls to keep your Gargs alive. I like to have more Destroyers and Frost Wyrms when facing Orc or Human, but still a solid number of Gargoyles regardless. When up against Elf or Undead, the more Gargs the better.

Undead casters are a bit more situational. At times, you won't want to use the food on a caster when you could have more air units and a mobility advantage. However, adding a couple Banshees for AMS or Necromancers for Unholy Frenzy in certain situations is good.

Alternative to Gargoyles, you can play an army based around Necromancers and Meat Wagons, aka "Necrowagon". This army is especially effective against Human, but can be strong against any race. It does lack mobility and takes time to prepare, but when rolling it can be one of the strongest armies in the game. Necrowagon is also better in the earlier stages before heroes get high levels.

Undead Standard Template:

Plenty of Gargoyles supported by a light presence of Destroyers and Frost Wurm. You can add more Destroyers, Wyrms, or Gargoyles as need be. This army is mobile, flexible, and true to Undead's greatest strengths. When facing too many Tanks or incoming Bats, you can Stone Form your Gargoyles and throw volleys of nukes from your heroes.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 10 Acolytes + 1 Shredder (29 food)

2 Shades (2 food)

16 Gargoyles (32 food)

2 Destroyers (10 food)

1 Frost Wurm (7 food)

Fiend/Destroyer/Wyrm - This solo-inspired strategy can be effective early to mid game but loses its power in the late game. The strength of this composition lays within the fact that it uses your early game units and easily transitions to grow in power. Fiends are very effective early game before the game's heroes rise in levels. Adding Destroyers and Frost Wyrms make this army complete. All of these units are on the same upgrade tree; creating this army with full upgrades is easier in relation to other armies. You can challenge any race early on with this force, and it's great against Human or Orc in particular. However, in the late game, this army gets wrecked by Chippo, Gargs or buffed Orc. When playing this strategy, you'll want to ideally take out a Human or Orc and then transition into a Gargoyle based army later.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 10 Acolytes + 1 Shredder (29 food)

7 Fiends (21 food)

3 Destroyer (15 food)

2 Frost Wyrm (14 food)

1 Shade (1 food)

Necrowagon - This is an awesome strategy that has the potential to be one of the strongest armies in the entire game. It requires a lot of setup however, microing of various units and establishing favorable battle position. It revolves around Meat Wagons and Necromancers. Wagons have a research to produce skeletons to drop and Necros can obviously raise the dead. With all of the researches, Necrowagon can quickly become insanely powerful by raising legions of 24 skeletons at a time (24 is the max amount of skeletons you can have at once). It's strength is shown when the army is continuously recreated and pressure is applied. Skeletons have been buffed and this army can fend off air units as well if complemented by some Fiends.

Wagons and Necromancers with some Fiends, Banshees if you'd like, and a couple Destroyers or Wyrms as need be. While you are preparing, produce Necromancers idle next to a Statue to gain full mana. This strategy requires time to get all the researches plus time to set up, but once rolling can be devastating. Undead counters it well with Destroyers, and Orc counters it with TC and Walkers, but both Elf and especially Human are vulnerable. Priests just don't cut it, Humans best chance is with a assortment of Mortars, Knights and Priests to which they normally won't have. Elf can do well with a high level Panda and masses of Chimeras, but anything less than 100 food and level 5 Panda can get rolled over at times. Wisps barely do the job to dispel as the skeletons continue to pump. XX was the original Necrowagon master, later came Audigy; and most recently Vyvanne plays this strategy effectively.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 10 Acolytes + 1 Shredder (29 food)

1 Shade (1 food)

3 Meat Wagons (12 food)

6 Necromancers (12 food)

5 Fiends (15 food)

2 Statues (6 food)

1 Destroyer (5 food)

Mass Gargoyles - In this simple-yet-terrifying composition, the aim is to mass as many Gargoyles as you can and compliment them with a high level Dreadlord and Healing Scrolls. Originally used by PencilWarrior years ago, it is supremely effective against most FFA armies. Since Gargoyles are only 2 food, you can find yourself with two or three full control groups of Gargoyles at times. In anti-air battles, it is often a numbers game that you will win, especially with the support of a high level DL. You can play DK/Lich/DL but preferably DL first. Keep multiple Scrolls and play aggressively. The downfall to this strategy is that Gargs are very expensive unit by food cost. For a comparison, 1 Frost Wyrms is basically the same cost as only 2 Gargoyles. You will also not fare well against Tanks or Bats. Try not to fight in battles where you will lose many units (Bats, Tanks, bad positioning) and avoid a war of attrition by seeking your victory early. You must master Stone Form use and Scrolls of Healing for this strategy to be effective.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 12 Acolytes + 1 Shredder (31 food)

1 Shade (1 food)

24 Gargs (48 food)

Ex: 100 food

3 Heroes + 8 Acolytes + 1 Shredder (27 food)

1 Shade (1 food)

36 Gargs (72 food)

The Frozen Fleet - This strategy can be seen by some new players who love Frost Wyrms and want to mass them. They are food-intensive units, but can be very powerful against certain armies. It is an easy-to-use strategy that makes use of the Frost Wyrms' heavy magic damage and ability to attack both air and ground units. When optimizing this force, consider adding some Necromancers for Unholy Frenzy to make your Wyrms have an insane damage output. A couple Banshees can protect them with AMS. Watch out for anti-air units like Hippos, Gargs or even Wyvern as they can quickly counter your force. This is best used as a early to mid-game tech against players who will often be unprepared for that much heavy air, or very late game when you have level 7+ Lich and Dreadlord.

Ex: 100 food

3 Heroes + 10 Acolytes + 1 Shredder (29 food)

9 Frost Wyrms (63 food)

2 Necromancers (4 food)

2 Banshees (4 food)

Ghouls N' Gargs - Old school theme here, the goal is to overwhelm your opponent with masses of Frenzied Ghouls and Gargoyles. Early game, you can creep and gather wood at a high rate while adding multiple Crypts as you expand and tech into Tier 2. Dreadlord first is a sound choice here with Sleep and Vampiric Aura. Add DK second and Lich third while massing Gargs and playing aggressively. As weak as Ghouls are normally, they can be a force with a high level DL, Frenzy, and Healing Scrolls. In the battle, try to surround his force with the Ghouls while unleashing Gargs at the air. Sleep and use scrolls! The ratio of Ghoul-to-Garg should be based on your opponent's composition.

Ex: 80 food

3 heroes + 9 Acolytes + 1 Shredder (28 food)

14 Ghouls (28 Food)

12 Gargoyles (24 food)

Fiend/Abom/Banshee/Wyrm - This mixed army is one of the few times when Abominations can be effective. This army performs well against Humans with Tanks. The idea is to protect your big creatures - Wyrms and Aboms - with AMS while the core of Fiends Web down air units. It is a strong mix overall, but lacks the pure anti-air power that would be needed against most army compositions. While it will be effective against budding FFA armies, it will be overrun by late game Orc or 100 food compositions with heavy air.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 10 Acolytes + 1 Shredder (29 food)

1 Shade (1 food)

6 Fiends (18 food)

3 Aboms (12 food)

3 Banshees (6 food)

2 Frost Wyrms (14 food)

Heavy Air Arsenal - Destroyers and Frost Wyrms are the mix, starting with an early tech for Destroyers and eventually adding Frost Wyrms. This concept skips fiends entirely, focusing on lumber gain with ghouls while teching and adding two Slaughterhouses and a Sacrificial Pit. It is best used to rush a neighboring Orc player, or sometimes Human. Similar to a Solo style, you'll want to get your first Destroyers out quickly after Tier 3 and rush his burrows, adding Frost Wyrms later to eventually reach 80 food. Orc can now fortify at Tier 2, but won't often prioritize that research early. Upgrade 3x armor upgrades before attack to better withstand Bats. This solo inspired strategy can have its use in FFA as a skilled Orc can be very difficult to face in the late game as Undead.

Ex: 80 food

3 Heroes + 11 Acolytes + 1 Shredder (30 food)

1 Shade (1 food)

7 Destroyers (35 food)

2 Frost Wyrms (14 food)

TOP 10 UNDEAD TIPS & TRICKS:

1) Master Your Heroes. As Undead, you can decimate an army almost as quickly as you can lose everything. One missed coil can begin an avalanche of destruction your way. In a similar fashion, one clutch sleep can turn the tides in your favor in an instant. You will want to be comfortable using your heroes effectively at all stages; whether you have a 50, 80, or 100 food army, as well as late game with only heroes. If you may lose your Death Knight in battles, consider skilling Death Pact at level 4. Death and Decay or Infernal can be used to destroy trees. The DK's ultimate (Animate Dead) is really bad, but it can be used when defending in your base at your Graveyard to animate a target for Death Pact.

2) Use the Nukes, Put em' to Sleep. Practice throwing volleys of Frost Nova and Carrion Swarm at bunches of Hippos or Gargs. Run close by a pack of casters that your Shade sees and Coil + Nova a Shaman. Rinse and repeat to soften their force. Try to use Sleep as often as you can. Sleep the DH, Sleep the BM, Sleep the TC. Sleep the Lich. Spam Sleep (as it levels, it lowers in mana cost). Effective sleep use is a factor that separates the best Undead players from the good ones. As a player against great sleep users, it is very annoying and often critical when the hero you want to use is neutralized.

3) Hit-and-Run with Unholy Aura. As Undead, an advantage that you have is in your movement speed. You are faster than any army other than Orc who is comparable. You can usually choose when and where to fight. Use your nukes, shades and mobility advantage to dictate the fighting conditions. Undead nuking is great and thus their playstyle should differ from other races. Undead is the worst race when fighting head-on. It has the advantage when making quick strikes in-and-out of battle. When possible, throw volleys of nukes at your opponent before engaging head on. Only engage when you are sure the situation is favorable for you. With proper hit-and-run tactics, you will often be able to throw multiple volleys of nukes before engaging; forcing the opponent to come to your main base or retreat.

4) Maximize Items. Undead's heroes are arguably the most important their respective race's power. For this reason, it's especially important to equip your heroes properly. Buy Boots of Speed on your Lich and Dreadlord every game without exception. Boots allow that quicker nuke or disable or one-step faster getaway or chase. They also give Lich and DL the same movement speed as the DK for optimal synergy. Grab mana items (Pendant of Energy or Mana) for your Lich and DL when possible. Periaps of Health are key in keeping these heroes alive too. Lastly, try to keep a Scroll of Healing on every hero at all times, as well as a Scroll of Protection sometimes.

5) Frost Armor. Many Undeads choose Dark Ritual as their secondary skill with the Lich. I understand this choice as you can ritual skeletons and weak units to fuel more Frost Novas as well as deny experience. With that being said, I almost always skill Frost Armor. Frost Armor is great on heroes and Frost Wyrms specifically. +5 or +7 armor makes a huge difference in keeping them alive and slows down the group of Gargs or Hippos targeting your Wurm. I make it a habit to Frost Armor each hero and Frost Wurm before any skirmish.

6) Maximize Shade efficiency. This has been a recurring theme. Utilize how effective a Shade can be for you. Carry one with your main army to reveal all wards, invisible heroes and opposing Shades. Keep one in your main base to halt invisible units (Mass TP) and opposing Shades. Use a Shade early on to scout neighboring bases to prepare for incoming rushes or find weaknesses to exploit. Patrol a Shade from gold mine to gold mine to always know the state of the game's economy. Keep a Shade on your opponent's army and use it to weave in and out; hit-and-run with nukes before engaging. The Shade is one of Undead's most valuable tools.

7) Be aggressive. It doesn't always play out well for Undead to hoard early on. You will need to gain hero levels to compete with other races in the late game. It is often better to make an army early, fight, and then find your spots to hoard later on. Remember that Undead has an advantage in their tech tree. You can build a stronger 80 food army earlier than any other race (comparable to Elf) and certainly faster than Orc or Human. Use this to your advantage by attacking with 80 food decisively.

8) Gargoyles are effective, but expensive. While they should be your primary unit, try to find spots to build other unit compositions that can be effective. Early game, you can play a more cost-effective composition of Fiend/Wyrm/Dest. In the Mid game, you can play Necrowagon. In the Late game you may be able to play a higher ratio of Frost Wyrms with limited Gargoyles. Don't get me wrong -- you shouldn't choose other compositions over Gargoyles often. But try to find value spots where other compositions can serve you well that are more cost-efficient.

9) Stone Form. Stone Form is key ability for Gargoyles, and it can be difficult to master. You can go in the heat of fire and quickly take out opposing air, using scrolls as necessary to keep them alive, and then finally stone form when they almost dead to protect and save the Gargs. It helps against Tanks and especially against Bats. When you see Bats flying toward you, try to bait them and then Stone Form at the last minute. This will throw them off course and give you a window to nuke them down. Remember that Stone Form also removes any debuffs (Slow, Faerie Fire, Haze; but not Acid Bomb) instantly, but the cooldown of 30 seconds means you cannot Stone Form as often as you'd like.

10) Build a proper base. Undead bases can be tricky to build properly because they are generally weak and easy to roll over. Combat this by using the natural trees around you (Don't chop them all) to create a natural, unpassable border. Then mix in Nerubian Towers and Spirit Towers without placing them all together. Try to leave enough space to navigate through but very few openings for a point of attack. Make at least one additional Necropolis, if not more, spread around your base as well as another shop. The extra Necropolis' act as another food source, provide an additional hall to TP to in case your main falls, and help to further strengthen your base. Extra shop(s) give access to additional Scrolls of Healing and Mana Potions.



MERCENARY CAMPS:

There are different mercenary camps depending on the tileset, each with its own unique mercenaries for hire. Below are the mercs that can be useful in FFA:

Forest Troll Berserker (245g, 30w, 3 food) - Essentially a higher DPS Rifleman (without upgrades). These guys are solid units early on or in the mid game to add to your army instantly. Their effectiveness decreases as the game goes on.

Assassin (250g, 30w, 3 food) - Forest Troll Berserker with Poison Arrow! I really like these early on, whether to creep or in an early-game attack. One map that he is available on is Marketplace. He is available right as the first night strikes which is often barely into getting your tier 1 units. He can supplement your army nicely, especially if you choose to play a solo-hero tech.

Furbolg Shaman (255g, 30w, 3 food) - Continuing with our 3 food effective Mercs, the Furbolg Shaman is a great pick up early since he can cast Rejuvenation. This will help you creeping and in any early skirmishes.

Ogre Magi (320g, 50w, 4 food) - I haven't picked up too many of these outside of Monsoon where you used to be able to buy all the mercs in an attempt to creep the nearby Red Ogre camp. He does cast Bloodlust which could be useful at any point of the game.

Forest Troll High Priest (305g, 40w, 4 food) - These guys are awesome. Super priests for any race. They can heal, abolish magic and cast Inner Fire.

Centaur Outrunner (195g, 2 food) - I list these only because they are available early on maps like Deadlock and provide some solid meat for the cost. They are more like a Grunt than a Footmen.

Razormane Medicine Man (350g, 60w, 4 food) - One of the more expensive Mercs. He has low end summons but importantly casts Healing Ward. Deadlock is the map that comes to mind. Pick one up and you can even leave it in your base to heal whenever you Town Portal home.

Giant Sea Turtle (295g, 35w, 3 food) - The sea's version of Troll Berserker, simple yet strong and available very early (at the first night). I like picking these up on Mur'gul Oasis or Emerald Shores.

Makrura Deepseer (500g, 100w, 4 food) - Extremely expensive and for right reason. This Merc casts decent summons and has entangle!! Can make the difference early on maps like Emerald Shores and still be effective late game for races who have trouble disabling. The entangle does not work on heroes.

Magnataur Warrior (340g, 15w, 4 food) - Probably the best valued melee Merc. He is immune to magic and has 900 health.





DRAGON ROOST:

The only dragon truly worth the cost is the big one. There are 6 different Dragons: Red, Black, Blue, Bronze, Green, and Nether. All of their base stats are the same. They all are immune to magic, have Chaos damage attack, and Devour. The Nether is the exception; it has Cripple instead of Devour.

Dragon (745g, 200w, 8 food) - Insanely strong. 2200 health, immune to magic and has a health regeneration passive. Plus it has a super devour skill in which it consumes things at twice the rate of a Kodo Beast Devour. Thankfully, there aren't many maps with these Dragons. The cooldown on these big Dragons is 410 seconds (roughly 7 minutes). The first Dragon appears at about the 16 minute mark.





GOBLIN LABORATORY:

One of the first things you should do when the game starts is check the minimap to see if there is a Goblin Lab. If there is, you should plan on grabbing a Goblin Shredder as soon as it's ready. If there isn't a Goblin Lab on the map, you'll have to accommodate the lack of a Goblin Shredder by producing many more workers to chop lumber.

Goblin Shredder (375g, 100w, 4food) - The most important unit in the Lab, available at the 4:00 minute mark (4th dot in the first night). Get one with every race, as soon as you can, on every map that it's available. Sometimes you could even consider getting two (for example with Human who wants to fully tech, research, tower, and fortify their bases extremely quickly).

Goblin Sappers (215g, 100w, 2 food) - These guys are cool and probably not used enough. They can quickly clear towers and expansions. Just be careful not to get them killed or worse kill each other with the explosion radius. They take up food, and require micro to manage them thus are often skipped. They are no longer affected by Speed Scroll.

Goblin Zeppelin (240g, 60w, 0food) - Zeppelins are very abusive in Solo, but aren't seen as much in FFA to harass. However, they are used in FFA to hide peasants, units or heroes, or to transport a peasant to an island to build.

Reveal (50g) - Got gold? Reveal is usually a thing I mass spam at the end of a game to find a player's last buildings. Sometimes I will keep a wisp at the lab to reveal in battle like a Blademaster, Sentry Wards or Shades. If I failed to scout properly early, I will reveal spawns to help dictate my early game plan.



GOBLIN MERCHANT:

Boots of Speed - Boots are very important in FFA. Heroes are your main strength and increased movement speed makes them more efficient. These are the heroes that you should *always* buy a Boots of Speed for: Mountain King, Demon Hunter, Panda, Keeper of the Grove, Dreadlord, Lich, Tauren Chieftain. You can certainly buy them for other heroes as well such as the Alchemist, Paladin, Shadow Hunter, or Dark Ranger.

Periapt of Vitality - +150 HP. These are staples of an FFA player's inventory. You'll want multiple Periapts in most games when Marketplaces aren't abundant with premium items. It's not uncommon to see an Archmage with TP, Staff, and 4x Periapt of Health.

Scroll of Healing - Heals 150 hit points to all friendly non-mechanical units around the hero when used. Simple and sweet, Scroll of Healing is efficient and especially critical when playing armies with light air units (Wind Riders, Hippogryphs, Gargoyles) or casters.

Scroll of Protection - Increases the armor of all nearby friendly units around the hero by 2 for 30 seconds. +2 armor is significant in a large fight, also most valuable when playing armies with light air units. Aside from the +2 armor, I believe it also has a mental effect on your opponent; as all of your units get buffed it may cause them to overthink or retreat.

Potion of Lesser Invulnerability - Makes the hero invulnerable to damage for 7 seconds when used. Since heroes are your most important asset, it's not a bad idea to buy these whenever you have a chance - especially if you have a vulnerable hero or facing a tough opponent who focuses your heroes.



MARKETPLACE:

Marketplaces are a lot of fun and extremely useful in FFA games. Note that a new item appears every 30 seconds starting at the two minute mark. If the Market is full, it will randomly replace one of the items with a newer one when the time comes. For this reason, I will sometimes buy out the cheaper items and resell them to make room for better ones.

A Marketplace in any given map will only stock items that the creeps of that map can potentially drop. For example, the Markets on Silverpine Forest have many great items - all of which can drop from its red creep camps. The Markets on Twilight Ruins are different. While you can get an Amulet of Spell Shield from a Silverpine market, you cannot on Twilight. However, you can get Endurance Aura from a Twilight market, but not on Silverpine. This is because the items which drop from each map's respective Red camps are different. The last example is Rock Quarry, where you could get both items from its market as the red camps there drop both kinds of high level items.

The last thing to note is that these high level items will not appear until at least one of the creep camps are cleared that could drop that item. For example, for a level 7 item to appear in the Market, a camp with a level 7 creep must have been cleared. This is important to know specifically on Twilight Ruins in a full house. If there are 8 players in the game, it means there are no red creep camps. Thus, you wouldn't ever see the high level items (Claws +12, Aura items, etc) in its Markets if there are no red camps (empty spawns). In a 8-player game on Twilight Ruins, the best item you would find in the Marketplace would be a Pendent of Energy; whereas in a 4-player or 6-player game on that same map, you would eventually find the Aura items.

MARKETPLACE ITEMS:

Belt of Giant Strength (+6 STR) - A superior Periapt of Vitality, especially on Strength heroes. On other heroes, just buy a Periapt of Vitality.

Boots of Quel'Thalas (+6 AGI) - Only good on a Demon Hunter, Blademaster, or sometimes an Alchemist. Not worth it on other heroes.

Robe of the Magi (+6 INT) - This item is a good pick up for any hero, but better on a Strength hero that relies a lot on mana like a Panda or Dreadlord. Good on Intelligence heroes too but they often prioritize health items over mana.

Helm of Valor (+4 AGI, +4 STR) - Great on your DH, Alchemist, or Blademaster.

Medallion of Courage (+4 INT, +4 STR) - A very good item on heroes like Panda, Paladin or Dreadlord.

Pendant of Energy - +150 Mana is very useful, available on maps like Twilight Ruins. Many times players won't check for these on Twilight even though they have a major impact on heroes like a Dreadlord, Panda or Shadow Hunter.

Scroll of the Beast - A very underrated item, giving +25% damage for 20 seconds to nearby friendly units. This can be a battle changer in light air fights or otherwise. If you have a 100 food army later in the game, consider checking the Market to see if you can buy one of these "roar" scrolls before engaging.

Runed Bracers - This item reduces magical damage dealt to the hero by 33%. This means spells and hero skills, but also incoming damage from units like Chims, Frost Wyrms or Gryphons. This is a good item at times, especially so on those heroes that get nuked often (ex: AM, SH).

Ring of Protection +4 (or +5) - Ring of Protections are underrated. On Strength heroes, they are often better than +HP items. It's worth it to have a Ring of Protection +4 or better on a Strength hero with over 1000 HP. On the Alchemist in particular, Ring of Protection is amazing; even a +3 Ring is better than a Periapt of Vitality on the Alchemist.

Claws +12 (or +15) - These claws used to make your Blademaster insanely dangerous, but now they are best on a DH or Alchemist (Panda with Drunken Brawler or Pitlord with Cleave could be considered). I would sell Claws on almost any other hero.

Infernal Stone - This item is pretty crazy if you can buy it early (ex: Deathrose). Infernals are always good because they come with a AoE stun plus the Infernal. If you can get them early on Deathrose, you will almost certainly be able to take out an opponent early as they are especially difficult to deal with in the early game. You can use it to drop on a hero to stun in combination with other skills to kill it, or simply drop on an opposing group of casters to begin the battle.

Stone Token - Infernal Stone's little brother. This guy is good because he has a Storm Bolt effect that has a long range. You can use him to contribute towards a hero kill as well.

Khadgar's Gem of Health - +300 HP; it's a super Periapt of Vitality. Obviously a great pick up for any hero, but especially on Intelligence or Agility heroes, or especially vulnerable Strength heroes like a Death Knight, Dreadlord, or Paladin.

Pendant of Mana - +250 Mana in one item. Not much else to say. See one and buy it, put it on your mana intensive hero and watch it flourish. Great on Panda, Lich, Dreadlord, Shadow Hunter, etc.

Amulet of Spell Shield - The amulet is arguably the best item in the game. This stops an incoming spell once every 60 seconds. Put this on your important hero and the opposition will have trouble trying to disable it. Amazing on any important hero that is often targeted. Actually, it's amazing on every hero regardless.

Staff of Silence - Another candidate for best item in the game. Turns any hero into a mini Dark Ranger granting a low level Silence on cooldown. With enough micro this item can help shut down opposing heroes in combination with all of your regular hero skills. Game changer.

Kelen's Dagger of Escape - A very cool item requiring micro to use it well. It gives your hero Blink on a 30 second cooldown. The dagger is most imbalanced on TC. High level TC with level 3 Stomp blinking and stomping into your heroes and front line is absurd. It is also good on nuking heroes or those who can disable like a Panda or Dreadlord. One of my favorite items.

Khadgar's Pipe of Insight - Brilliance Aura. This pipe is a sight for sore eyes when playing Undead or Orc (or Human without Archmage). Mana regeneration means so much to Orc casters/heroes and Undead heroes. This is my favorite item to find in a market as one of these races.

Ancient Janggo of Endurance - Endurance Aura. Competes with Brilliance for the best aura in the game. Increased movement speed and attack speed. Buy it!

Legion Doom-Horn - Unholy Aura. Endurance's almost-as-strong cousin. Increased movement speed and health regeneration. Buy it!

Warsong Battle Drums - Command Aura. All units damage increased by 10%. An upgraded version of the flute, plus it stacks with the Kodo Beast Aura (War Drums). Buy it!

Alleria's Flute of Accuracy - Trueshot Aura. Ranged units damage increased by 10%. A solid item for any race, helps add DPS to your Fiends, Air units, Gryphons, Tanks, Chims, Wind Riders, etc. This is a situational buy depending on your race and army composition.

Scourge Bone Chimes - +15% Vampiric Aura. This item is really good for Orc (Tauren, Heroes) and decent for Elf (Hippogryphs). This is also a situational buy.

FFA BUILD ORDERS BY RACE

HUMAN:

Standard: Human standard applied to FFA. You can continue to produce peasants to prepare for an expansion and tech. Generally, you'll want to have enough lumber to both tech and expand at about the same time.

1. 4 peasants to gold mine, 1 builds Altar
 2. First peasant trained builds Barracks
 3. Second peasant trained builds Farm
 4. Third peasant trained to gold mine
 5. Fourth peasant trained builds Farm
 6. Continue producing peasants to lumber, make third farm when able
 7. You should have Hero + 3 Footmen at 2:05, plus 8 lumber peasants (24 food)
-

Rifleman Standard: Interesting build order after a lot of playtesting. I think this is the best build order for a Rifleman + fast expo macro. Hero comes out about 15 seconds after the DK in the Fiend Standard.

1. 4 peasants to gold mine, 1 peasant to lumber
 2. First peasant trained to lumber
 3. Second peasant trained to gold mine
 4. Third peasant trained builds Blacksmith
 5. Fourth peasant trained builds Barracks
 6. Build Altar with peasant who gives you 90 lumber
 7. Build Farm with other peasant after returning lumber (at 50 lumber)
 8. Fifth peasant trained builds Farm
 9. Sixth peasant trained goes to lumber
 10. Build 3rd and 4th farms with the peasant who built the 1st farm, after completion.
 11. Continue producing peasants to lumber
 12. You should have Hero + 2 Riflemen at 3:05, plus 11 lumber peasants (27 food)
-

Tavern Hero w/ Footman: Pretty basic, though there usually isn't a reason to play Footmen over Rifleman with a Tavern hero.

1. 5 peasants to gold mine
2. First peasant trained builds Barracks
3. Second peasant trained builds Farm
4. Third peasant trained builds Farm
5. Fourth peasant trained builds Altar
6. Fifth peasant trained to lumber
7. Sixth peasant trained builds Farm
8. Continue producing peasants to lumber
9. You should have Hero + 3 Footmen at 2:20, plus 8 lumber peasants (24 food)

ORC:

Standard: Orc Standard with an early emphasis on extra lumber peons.

1. 4 peons to gold mine, 1 builds Altar
 2. First peon trained builds Burrow
 3. Second peon trained builds Barracks
 4. Third peon trained to gold mine
 5. Continue producing peons to lumber, make second Burrow when able
 6. Make Shop at 20/20 food with Seventh peon trained
 7. You should have Hero + 1 Grunt with Shop building at 02:05
-

Tavern build w/ Headhunters (Tavern or Alter Hero): The most efficient build order for a Tavern hero with Orc.

1. 5 peons to gold mine
 2. First peon trained builds Burrow
 3. Second peon trained builds War Mill
 4. Third peon trained builds Barracks
 5. Build Alter with peon that completes Burrow
 6. Fourth peon trained to lumber
 7. Build second Burrow when able
 8. You should have Tavern Hero + 1 Headhunter at 2:25
-

No Barracks Tech: Best on maps where you can creep with a solo Blademaster (ex: Marketplace; Deathrose)

1. 4 peons to gold mine, 1 builds Altar
2. First peon trained builds Burrow
3. Second peon trained to gold
4. Third peon trained to lumber
5. Fourth peon trained builds Shop
6. Fifth Peon trained builds War Mill
7. Tech at 20/20 food (1 Hero + 10 lumber peons). You can choose to forgo the early War Mill and tech at 18/20 food for slightly faster Tier 2.

NIGHT ELF:

Standard Ancient of War Creeping: Elf Standard; a second AoW is built to allow your first AoW to walk to another creep camp.

1. 4 wisps to gold, 1 builds Altar.
 2. First wisp trained builds Moon Well.
 3. Take one wisp out of gold mine before Moon Well is started to build an AoW near creep.
 4. Second wisp trained to gold mine.
 5. Third wisp trained to gold mine.
 6. Continue making wisps to lumber.
 7. Build second Moon Well when able.
 8. When Ancient of War is finished, produce one Archer and uproot to AoW creep. You may need to bring 1 or 2 wisps to help repair against a difficult camp.
 9. At your base, build a 2nd AoW when you have 60 lumber.
 10. Build third Moon Well when able.
-

Tavern Hero w/ Archers: The most efficient build order for a Tavern Hero with Elf.

1. 4 wisps to gold mine, 1 wisp to lumber.
2. Take the wisp off of lumber once you harvest +5 lumber and make a Moon Well with it. This should be at the same time as the AoW is made.
3. First wisp trained makes Ancient of War.
4. Second wisp trained to gold mine.
5. Third wisp trained to lumber.
6. Fourth wisp trained to lumber.
7. Once your first Moon Well is complete, that that wisp and make an Altar with it.
8. Fifth wisp trained to lumber. Wait for this wisp to harvest +5 lumber and make your second Moon Well with it (at 40 lumber)
9. Continue producing wisps to lumber and Archers
10. You should have Tavern Hero + 2 Archers at 02:15, plus 8 lumber wisps (22 food)

UNDEAD:

Fiend Standard (3 ghouls + Acolyte): Macro-oriented build, faster expansion and slower tech.

1. 5 acolytes to gold mine, ghoul to lumber
 2. Summon Crypt
 3. Summon Graveyard
 4. Summon Ziggurat
 5. Summon Alter
 6. Make second Ghoul to lumber
 7. Make 6th Acolyte to scout
 8. Make third Ghoul to lumber
 9. Summon Ziggurat (This can be substituted for a Necropolis to allow a quicker tech but slightly slower expansions.)
 10. Summon Shop
 11. Make first Crypt Fiend
 12. You should have Hero + 1 Fiend + 3 Ghouls + Acolyte at 02:50
-

Ghouls Standard: Ghoul version of macro build.

1. 5 acolytes to gold mine, ghoul to lumber
 2. Summon Crypt
 3. Summon Ziggurat
 4. Summon Alter
 5. Summon Ziggurat
 6. Summon Shop
 7. Continue making Ghouls to lumber
 8. You should have Hero + 6 ghouls at 02:30
-

"Qwest Build": A Fast tech with an early Necropolis to produce acolytes. Quicker tech, slower expansion. This is Qwest's preferred version for ladder.

1. 5 acolytes to gold mine, ghoul to lumber
2. Summon Crypt
3. Summon Necropolis
4. Summon Graveyard
5. Summon Alter
6. Produce Ghoul
7. Summon Shop
8. Tech at 210 lumber.
9. Produce 2x Ghouls to lumber.
10. Produce Acolyte to expand with.
11. Summon Ziggurat
12. You should have 19/20 food, Hero + Acolyte + 4 ghouls at 03:05

GLOSSARY (FFA TERMS)

Peace - A temporary truce between two players.

Backstab - When two players agree to peace, but one of them breaks the peace and attacks.

Hoard - To have an active gold mine while under No Upkeep (50 food or less). Commonly used to describe a player with multiple gold mines in No Upkeep.

Manip - Short for manipulation. Used to describe a player's messages in chat that carry the intention of influencing another player to their advantage.

Dead - Can be used in an attempt to manipulate, whether true or untrue.

Suicide - The actions of solely focusing on one player regardless if it ruins your chances to win the game.

Toming - Refers to a feeding experience off of a player by killing them easily, or easily and slowly, a la Tome of Experience.

Soloing - Refers to the act of playing an FFA game like a solo match with disregard to the other players or the game as a whole.

Rambo - The style of fighting everything you see and taking on all players without any thought or strategy behind it.

FFA Sense - A term to describe the ability of a player to understand a given situation in a FFA game, as well as the awareness of other player's strengths and intentions. This is a developed skill that ranges from being able to estimate opponent's gold counts to predicting another's moves or making the correct decisions yourself.

"50" - Used as an adjective to describe a player's food count to be under 50 food, aka No Upkeep. *"You are 50."* Also seen as "80" or "100", referring to Low and High Upkeeps, respectively.

FML - FFA Masters League.

FMA - You can ask ena1337 about that.

FFA Q&A:

Q: What do you think of Warcraft III: Reforged now that it has been announced?

A: I couldn't be happier to find out about Reforged. Despite anyone's feelings about graphical changes or the direction Blizzard is taking, the fact remains that Blizzard is working on our favorite game again! It's being advertised and supported. WC3 will be brought into modern BNet which includes modern (global?) matchmaking and support. Many players, new and old, will be playing and the game should be active again. I can't wait to queue on BNet and find FFA games on a competitive and active ladder once again.

Q: Any specific strategies or races you look forward to playing?

A: I am currently looking forward to playing Human with Blood Mage. I also want to explore Pit Lord more so, and continue to refine Dreadlord first with Undead. I'd also like to include the Alchemist in more styles with all races. I think he can have a significant impact as Human with AM/Alch/Pal, Alch/MK/Pal, or even Alch/Panda/Pal.

Q: I am new to FFA. What is the best strategy or race to start with?

A: I would play the race you are most comfortable with in other game types. Practice the 'First Phase' on different maps so you can creep, expand, and tech efficiently. The easiest race to play effectively would probably be Night Elf because of the power and ease-of-use of Chimeras and Hippogryphs.

Q: Which is the best race in FFA? How would you rank them?

A: All four races can perform well at a high level. With that being said, I think Elf currently has an edge as the best FFA race. I would rank them Elf > Undead = Orc = Human. Before the recent patches, I would've ranked them Human > Elf = Orc > Undead.

Q: What is your best race? What is your favorite race? What about Heroes?

A: I play Random, all races are similar but Undead or Elf are slightly ahead. I enjoy playing them all; if I had to pick I would say Orc is my favorite race to play. My favorite heroes are the Alchemist, Dreadlord, Dark Ranger, and Blood Mage.

Q: What is your favorite thing about FFA, and why?

A: I love the depth in strategy. As there are multiple players and only one winner, it is a complex match with many things to consider. I also enjoy building heroes with items and fighting with varying army sizes and compositions. Lastly, I love that every game is different and unpredictable.

Q: What is your favorite FFA map, and why?

A: My favorite FFA map is Silverpine Forest. It is a 6-way map that promotes action with close quarters, while also embracing FFA elements such as higher gold mines and an abundance of creeps and items. The Marketplaces are insane, so there requires a balance to allocate resources between your army and items.

Q: What are your accomplishments in FFA?

A: I've played Free For All on and off since 2006. While BNet ladder was active, I held Rank 1 FFA on Azeroth and Northrend. I am a 2x playFFA Champion, 2x FML Ladder Winner, WC3M FFA Champion, 3x FFA Masters League Finalist, and ISFF Cup Finalist.

Q: Do you think Tanks are OP?!

A: Siege Engines have been nerfed! As I stated earlier in the guide, the food cost of a Tank increased to 4 food and I was thrilled to see that change actually happen. They did increase the DPS of Barrage (anti-air attack) slightly which was okay with me. Tanks are still really good - even at 4 food - just not completely OP anymore.

Q: What about the Alchemist, is he as rampant in FFA as in other game types?

A: Yes. We are in what can be called an "Alchemist Meta" in FFA. He is often the best choice for Elf and Orc as their first hero, and can be seen with Human or even Undead at times too. I have mixed feelings about that because while I love the Alchemist, it's a bit lame and stale to play against multiple players with an Alchemist in a FFA game.

Q: Who are the people that manage FML and other FFA ventures?

A: WorpeX is the founder of the FFA Masters League and is still an administrator. HighTac is the head admin that runs most of the FML related events, and massmoretanks is also an FML admin. Ugrilainen is the founder of playFFA ladder, and is now better known for his work on everything in relation to Warcraft III as an e-sport. Ping created the WC3Melee bots that carried us into current times.

Q: How many control groups to you use? What about custom hotkeys?

A: I use 2 or 3 control groups for units unless I have 100 food and need 4 groups. For example, with Orc: 1- Heroes/Melee, 2- Casters/Kodo, 3- Wind Riders (or Bats/Raiders) 4- Production Buildings/Altar, 5- Main Hall, 6- War Mill, 7-Burrows, 0- Scouting Unit

My custom hotkeys are primarily for hero skills. F, S, D, and Z. This makes nuking more efficient (Coil/Nova/Swarm = F/F/F) and skill-use comfortable across all races. I've changed some awkward building hotkeys and tough to reach ones like Hide for Night Elf from 'i' to 'x'. I use tab to switch between heroes more so than using the F1, F2, F3 keys.

To change the numpad keys (items) it is still difficult and it bugs out sometimes. I do have one slot on hotkey for staffs or scrolls with other races. I'm sure with Reforged there will be in-client support to change key bindings without a 3rd party software which will be great.

Q: Will you stream?

A: Yes. I am taking a leave from WC3 for awhile, but I will return when we are closer to Reforged being released and stream again regularly.

EPILOGUE:

Thank you for checking out this comprehensive guide to FFA. I hope you enjoyed the content and found it useful. At this point, Warcraft III is pretty much the only game I play and I'm sure it's the same with some of you. Long live WC3, the best RTS of all time! And Long Live FFA, too! My stream will be back running on a regular basis some time prior to Reforged being released. Have any questions? Differ in opinions? Did I miss something important? I'd love to hear your feedback. If you are a new player and interested in FFA, you can join our Discord channel and send me a message. Free For All in Warcraft III is one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences. I cannot wait to play FFA on Reforged!

Hope to see you there.

Cheers,

Seksi

