



From the Guardian's Library

Building *Wheel of Time* themed areas: The WoTmud IV Building Guide (I)

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I. Introduction

...Welcome to the world of building on WoTmud IV. You are now part of the creative process that makes our mud tick, and keeps the players coming. Please take some time to read this document carefully and become thoroughly familiar with the WoTmud IV style.

It is not very difficult to build here once you get the hang of things. If you're reading this chapter I'll assume that you're about to be given a zone, and have been told to read this as preparation. So get yourself a ringbinder or a folder, print out this and the second part of this document, the relevant section from the concordance and codex and get yourself some graph paper to plan your zone.

If you have not read the *Wheel of Time* books, I strongly suggest that you do, as you will appreciate the mud a lot more. It will also be very helpful to you when building. At least get information from the concordance about your zone, to make it true to the books. If you have not read the books, you can only build a generic countryside zone. This includes forests, ponds, rivers, caverns, etc. In addition, any areas mentioned in the books will need to follow them truthfully and in the same vein as they were presented by Jordan, so having the books on hand as reference may be useful while building. Alternatively, there are heaps of places on the net filled with good information about Jordan's books. Getting down to the facts, you will be given a zone when you are ready. Each zone has 100 rooms. They are numbered xx00 to xx99, where xx is your zone number. So if you are given zone 10, you have rooms 1000 to 1099. Zone 23 is rooms 2300 to 2399..etc. You use the commands /room name, /room description, /room exit, etc (as listed by help /room) to modify these rooms. There is not currently a set zone layout (i.e. a standardized grid for each zone) so you may build in any kind of puzzling format you wish. However, try to avoid having small clumps of rooms attached by long stretches of 1-room-wide road or trail and equally, make the zone internally consistent.

Every new builder begins by building a "test-zone". That is, you are assigned a zone, but you build ONLY in the first ten rooms. Thus you may modify rooms xx00 to xx09. Once that is approved, you may proceed and modify the rest of the rooms. The original work is saved of course.

Make sure you save your work often using /room save or /zone save, otherwise it will be lost in a crash or reboot. /zone save will save the entire zone, and send a global echo to everyone logged on, while /room save will save the current room.

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II. Zone Building Rules:

The rules laid out in this document exist to standardize the zones within the mud and insure that your work is acceptable the first time around, without rewrites being necessary. We strongly suggest that you take the time to make sure you understand what it laid out here.

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III. General Building Rules:

1. Your area must be unique to the WoTmud IV. If it is found on another mud, it will immediately be removed.
2. Never EVER, EVER use the tilda character in any room name, description, keyword, or anywhere else. This is extremely bad, and will most likely result in the loss of all zone information following the tilda, and possibly ruining the entire zone altogether.
3. Do not attempt to connect your zone to any other zone. You will work on this with your zone supervisor, after the completion of the rest of your zone, unless you are specifically told beforehand that your zone will connect at a specific place. When your zone is finished, you should have a list of suggested connections to other zones.

4. You must have express permission from the zone supervisor before building any confusing maze or other confusing area. Addition of an area of this type without permission will result in the zone not being added to the game. Mazes are fine in the right place and for the right reason, such as a huge marsh, but not just for the sake of it.
5. If you are building a "generic" zone, it should not contain proper names, as it should be able to fit into the game at pretty much any location (following the general land/vegetation structure of your zone). That is, you can build caverns, cliffs, valleys, beaches, lakes, forest, desert, mountains, and so forth, but there should not be names such as 'Caverns of Moria,' 'Forest of La'hred,' or 'Al'Than Castle,' as this will likely cause conflicts with the books, and in the end you will have to rewrite your zone to remove these conflicts. If you have a question as to whether something is allowed or you can build a certain type of area, ask your zone supervisor, who can give you guidance or find out or decide if an area is allowed.

This is NOT an attempt to stifle your creativity! Plenty of fun adventures can be created using MOBOL, and we have barely begun to scratch the surface of the variety and depth of adventure that Jordan's novels offer us.

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IV. Room Building Style:

The style and quality of rooms in the game reflects directly upon the builder, management, and game in general. Therefore, in this area rules and guidelines are fairly rigid, though the actual descriptions are left up to the builder, as long as the correct formats are followed. These points are where zones most often fail when being evaluated, as the quality of zones and rooms in the game is much more important than the quantity that have been completed.

1. Room Names: These should appear in the form of "A Green Pasture" or "The Inn of the Singing Fool" that is, the important words in the room name should be capitalized, while articles should have lower-case first letters. Room names such as "cobblestone street" or "The Tavern Of The Twisted Squirrel" are both bad. Also, room names should not contain a period following the name. It's "A Green Pasture" not "A Green Pasture." therefore.
2. Periods are followed by exactly one space, not two. This is not an optional choice, all zones will conform to this style, or you will be left to fix all occurrences.
3. No lines (including the first) of a room description should be indented.
4. All room descriptions are to be one paragraph, no more. This paragraph should number at a minimum four lines of text. Remember that the descriptions are there to provide brief, yet insightful, information about the area, be it a room, forest, or whatever. Anything static may be included in the description, such as the surrounding terrain, geographical location, points of interest within sight, furniture, etc. This should not, however, include descriptions of visible animals or actions (see below).
5. Do not leave "dangling" words in descriptions. That is, if you reach the end of a line, and have less than four words to go (which would be on the new line) it is better to rephrase your description so that it fits better. Even better is the room description that fits exactly on the line.
6. Each line should be as close to 78 characters per line as possible, without going over. To have 6 lines of 50 chars, or 3 lines of 95 chars are both equally bad. Not everyone has the same size screen, so 78 is the standardized number used. It is possible to justify room descriptions in the editor if necessary.
7. Each room description should be long enough to adequately describe the area without spamming players. That is, huge descriptions should not be put in, unless the room very strongly calls for it, which most don't. Also along this vein, however, is the requirement that room descriptions be long enough to be worthwhile. A one, two or three line room description will almost never be worthwhile, and will likely be rejected during evaluation.
8. These are to be no arabic numbers in any room text. That is, all numbers should be written out in words in room descriptions. As an example, this is bad: "...there are 5 paintings on the wall, each one is about 3 feet away from the other." The words "five" and "three" should be used instead.
9. Do not use metric measurements, and avoid using english measurements. The weight and length units from the books should be used. See 'help weight' and 'help length', and assume that the familiar values such as feet correspond with the English measurement system.
10. Room copies, or rooms which are almost identical are completely unacceptable. If these are found, you will be spending a great deal of time rewriting.
11. All Deathtraps (rooms flagged DEATH) must be approved by your zone supervisor. Avoid having a deathtrap solely for the sake of having one. Everyone seems to want to create these, but no one wants to encounter them while playing. Also, some plans are better done using code rather than autodeath.
12. These must be an acceptable, logical reason for any one-way exits or doors, and rooms should not overlap unless the level of ground has changed. That is, if a player goes east, south, west, north (assuming this is possible) s/he should end up at the place they began, unless there has been a justifiable change in scale or a slope has intervened, usually a tunnel or some other reason.
13. Hidden doors should have a min_search_open value that is comparable to the min_search_find value, to prevent players from opening hidden doors by simply narrating for the door name. A min_search_open value of 0 on a hidden door is unacceptable.
14. Locked doors should have a min_pick value that is on par with both the estimated difficulty of the lock (what quality is it) and with what is behind it.

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V. Common Room Description Problems:

The following are common problems encountered while writing descriptions. Some of these problems are fairly serious (notably the first few) and WILL cause you to be doing rewrites as they are bad quality rooms.

1. A common building problem is that descriptions give too much information to the player. The player is told things they couldn't possibly obtain from first-order perceptions. Be careful not to do this. An extreme example would be:

"You sense an evil, female presence guarding this one thousand, four hundred, and thirty-two year old fort, it's probably the ghost of Brigitte Doger, who died a few years back. The neighbors around these parts say she's going to haunt this place forever."

This example, while extreme, demonstrates the point. Don't give out information that there is no way the player should know. If you feel the need to alert the player of things like this, that's fine, but find another way to do it.
2. Another common problem is attributing overly cognitive and emotional reactions to the people reading the desc's. If you want to build a mood, build it with subtle descriptions of what is DIRECTLY perceived, such as appearances, sounds, and the like. The point is this: rooms are as descriptive as possible but NOT portrayals of your particular feeling. Do NOT say "You are scared and want to run screaming" What if the player/character is not scared? What if they've been here a thousand times? What if they're intensely evil and like this place? Also, avoid things like "you want to destroy this evil place." What if they player is a troll or darkfriend?
3. As an extension of the above, do NOT write any actions or thoughts or possessions of a player into a room description. Doing so will probably end up annoying the zone evaluator, as well as causing more work for you to do when rewriting everything after the evaluator gives up and says 'fix it.' These problems generally stem from the use of the word 'you,' as in "You are standing upon a dusty road" "You grin and bounce upon the bridge, causing it to sway beneath the feet of your companions" "You turn swiftly as you hear a noise down the eastern hallway." "You heft your lantern to read the runes engraved upon the wall." While not all bad comments will contain 'you' it is generally an indicator that you should stop and make sure you want to write the sentence.
4. This should never happen, but there are to be NO references to how dreary and boring the room is. "The damn road continues through even more mud to the north. When will it end?" This is totally worthless.
5. Some people fall into the trap of constantly using names such as: "A Field", "A Forest", "A Swamp", "The Tree-Top", "The Landing" Instead, spice them up or add some detail to the room name. Rather than relying on "A" or "The" try using "Over", "Under", "Near", "Before", "Overlooking", or other such words. "Among the Trees" is a far better room name than "The Forest"

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VI. Special Zone Rooms:

There are two types of special rooms within a zone, the information room and any personal godrooms. Of these, the information room is the most important, and must follow the format stated below.

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VII. Zone Information Room:

The "00" room in your zone is an Information room for Immortals. This room must contain a description of the zone, as well as comments on any special theme or major points of interest in the zone. There should be no exits to/from the rest of the world in this room, and it should be flagged GODROOM.

KEYWORDS for Zone Information Rooms:

MAP:

This room must eventually contain an ASCII map of the zone. If this is not available, It will not be evaluated.

CONNECTIONS:

This keyword lists the connections from your zone to those surrounding it. Your zone supervisor will work with you to determine the optimal connection locations for your zone. This entry should list the room name for each side of the connection, the room number for each side, and the directions traveled to/from each room for each connection. ex. A Green Forest (1295) east to Below the Towering Oak (5701) west

CODING:

This entry will list any special coding requirements/requests for the zone. Try to be as verbose as possible here so that the coding plan can be understood easily.

QUEST:

This entry will list what the 'story' behind the zone is, and what has been used with MOBOL coding to make the zone interactive. It should also list the difficulty of the quest, and what level players it is aimed at.

SHOP:

If your zone contains shops, this keyword should contain an entry for each, listing the room number, shopkeeper name, what type of shop it is, who it deals with, and the class of objects bought/sold.

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IX. Additional Zone Specifications

In addition to the room building, there are a few other items which will need to be set for your zone. Messages for sunrises and sunsets will need to be set using the /zone sunrisemessage and /zone sunsetmessage commands. This does not currently work, but will in the future. In addition, after all of your /com commands have been set, a /zone lifespan will need to be specified. Try, for memory reasons, to make your zone only reset as few times as possible.

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