



THE FORTRESS GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

About this guide

Welcome, fellow lightcycle pilot! This guide will tell you everything you need to know about the Fortress, a popular game mode of Armagetron Advanced.

So start your engine, grab a drink (no alcohol while driving though) and start reading - you hopefully won't regret it!

Before we start with the actual guide, I need to tell you some things about it.

First, this guide is a "work in progress". I started with a short fortress tutorial at my website, then some people talked about a complete tutorial at the forums and now I wrote this guide - so much about history for now. Although it is a lot longer and covers more aspects, I can not say it is "complete". The game is under consistent development and there are quite a lot of discussions and debates going on about certain settings of Fortress.

This means, that there will be future versions of this guide containing even more information - or at least "up to date" information.

Second, I really encourage you to contribute to the guide. There are already parts written by others and I think that is a good thing. Why? Because I am not perfect and there is usually more than one way to react in certain situations. Who says that my way to play is the best? Therefore, I want you to contribute: Whether it is a strategy, a simple tip or something else - share it! Detailed contact information can be found at the very end of the guide.

Of course, I am always happy about suggestions, comments, criticism and other feedback. So don't be shy, tell me what you think about the guide - the content, the layout, the graphics, whatever, there is always room for improvements.

Another possibility to help is by simply sharing this guide with others. I released it under a creative commons license allowing people to share the guide with others as long as it is not modified. Post it at your website, tell your clanmates about it, spread the word!

The last thing you should know about this guide is, that it is interactive. No, there are no videos in it (not yet!), but it contains quite a lot of pictures I created to help you and there are also links in the text you can click to get to different websites with more information. Every word that is written in blue is a link, click it!

Requirements

This guide is meant for all kinds of fortress players - from the new one who never heard of fortress to the experienced player who participated in tournaments and leagues.

Nevertheless, there are some things I expect you to know:

- You have installed the game
- You have at least played it once
- You have at least a basic knowledge about the menus and settings
- You have at least a basic knowledge about your controls
- You know how to play online

Those things are obviously necessary, this guide was written to teach you a game mode, not the game itself. If you need more information about the game, visit the official [Wiki](#).

Furthermore, there are some other things you should know. Luckily, they are already written somewhere else, so I can just link to the information.

- Basic knowledge about [rubber](#) (what it is, how it works)
- [Lag](#) (yes, it really exists)

Obviously, it takes some time to get a feeling for the game and its mechanics. But everybody started as a new player once - practise makes perfect.

THE FORTRESS

The Game Mode

The Fortress is a team game. This sentence is probably the most important thing I can teach you - it is a team game. Always keep that in mind, from the start of a round to the end of the match. You win as a team and you lose as a team.

But let's take one step back and talk about the game mode and its objections. There are two teams, each team has its own zone. A zone is a colored circle spinning above the ground - you may know deathzones and winzones, the ones that appear at the end of a round.

The goal of Fortress is to conquer the enemy zone while defending your own. It is similar to capture the flag, but not the same.

Obviously, you can't do everything on your own, that's why it is a team game. And as I already mentioned at the beginning, the gleamed is, just like the game, not "finished" or "closed". There are several discussions going on and there are also different servers with different settings and maps of Fortress.

A yes, the map. The default fortress map is a simple square arena, just like the one in local game or most Last Man Standing - servers.

There is not much else to say about the game mode, theoretically it is pretty easy. Let's have a look at the settings to see if there are any special things we should know.

Settings

Before I tell you what settings a fortress server has, you should bear in mind that there are different fortress servers out there with different settings and maps - that might be confusing at the beginning, but don't panic. Most of the settings are everywhere the same, or at least nearly the same.

The "regular" settings are the ones used for the monthly Fortress tournament called "Ladle". Please do not think that you have to know all those as a player, there are only a few ones I want to talk about, so don't worry.

Rubber - Very important of course, the default "fortress" rubber is 5. Not much compared to most other game modes, so be careful.
Wall Length - 400 is the "default" fortress wall Length, just enough to circle the zone with your wall once.
Explosion Radius - Default is 2 here, so there are holes but they are quite small.
There are some other important settings, especially the Fortress conquest and defend rate as they determine how long it takes to conquer a zone or if it will not be conquered. But I do not think that the numbers will help you here, especially not if you are a beginner, so just play and get a feeling for it.

Rules and Scoring

The regular fortress scoring system works as follows:

- You get 2 points for killing an enemy player
- You do not lose points, neither for dieing nor for committing suicide
- You get 6 points for conquering the enemy fortress
- You get 4 points for winning the round

The last two points can be a bit distracting, so let me explain that. Basically, there are two ways to win a round: You can kill every player on the enemy team or you conquer their fortress. Both ways lead to a won round, but the second one obviously grants you and your team more points.

OK, the "rules" are pretty simple. A fortress match has 10 rounds, but that is not very important. The team that reaches 100 points first wins the match, that is important.

There is no winzone and no deathzone in a regular fortress server and as I already said, the map is the default square arena. Oh, and for those of you who know about different axes, regular fortress servers use the default 4 axes, 90° turns.

There is a score table available, just as in every other game mode, press TAB to see it. The two team scores are at the top, followed by the individual player scores. As I said, Fortress is a team game, so it should not be important who has the most points, it is rather important which team has the most points.
Remember that.

GAMEPLAY BASICS

Basic Controls and Commands

Obviously, you cannot win a single fight without knowing how to drive your lightcycle. Luckily, the basic controls of the game are pretty simple: you can turn left, right and brake. Yes, that is basically it. But of course we want to go a bit more into detail here. First of all, there are some more controls you should use, the most important ones are your camera controls. It is essential to know where your enemies and your teammates are, because otherwise you would make a turn just to find yourself in front of a wall and die.

There are quite a lot of controls for your camera, you can turn it, zoom in and out or glance in different directions. Do not panic here, you don't need all of them. I recommend to set up three keys for glancing and one for changing the camera in general. While playing, you only need your glance keys to glance left, right and back as often as possible. Combined with your three cycle control keys, you have six keys to take care of during the game. I assume you have ten fingers, so this shouldn't be a problem.

We will now add two more keys to the ones we already set up - one for turning left and one for turning right. Yes, this is not a typo, two additional keys for turning left and right. "Why do I need two keys for turning left and two for turning right?", you may ask now. If you played some online already, you may noticed some players making really tight and fast 180 turns. They are not cheating, this is a popular technique called *Doublebinding*. By pressing two "Turn left" - keys at once, you turn back tight and fast. This is, as I already said, no cheating or hacking, most players do it and those who do not doublebind usually know that this technique exists, but do not want to use it.

And there are some good reasons for being a *Singlebinder*. If you got some experience, you will notice that there are some situations where doublebinding leads to death, mostly because you turn too fast or tighter than you expected to. When this situation occurs again, try to use only one key and see if that makes a difference.

Apart from your regular controls, there some other keybindings that can make your life easier. The first ones are the instantchats. An instantchat is a chat message defined by you that is instantly delivered by pressing a single key. Later on, we will see a list of example messages that every fortress player should have. For the beginning, you should focus on playing, but there is, in my opinion, one instantchat you should set up - "Defense down". This message (or a similar one) is crucial for every fortress game. When your goalie dies, you want to inform your team as soon as possible and that's exactly what this instantchat is made for.

The chat key is of course another important key as communication is crucial in every team game. Be aware though, that the chat might distract you (either because you are chatting yourself or you are reading the chat).

There is a chatbot, that takes control of your cycle when you hit the chat key, but the bot is not very clever and can be killed easily. Therefore, you should only chat when you do not have to drive, for example between two rounds or when you are dead. Use instantchats when you really need to say something important for your team.

The TAB key (display the score table) can also be pretty useful, but usually you can look at the score between the rounds.

There is one chat command every fortress player should know of, it is `/shuffle`. Just type it in the chat and you will change your starting position. If you type only `/shuffle`, you will be shuffled to the outside and get the last position. In a team with 8 players, you would get position 6. But you can also add a number to the command for the position you want to shuffle to, for example `/shuffle 2` will put you at position 2. You should never shuffle without asking your teammates, unless you are the goalie and need to start at the last position.

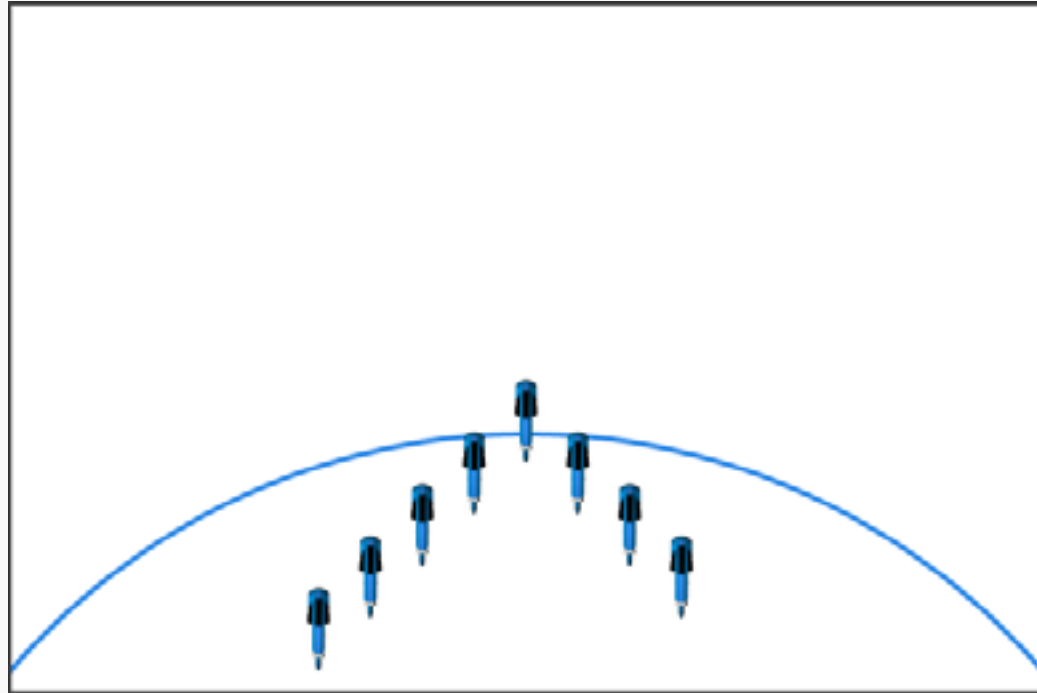
Terminology

There are certain terms every player should know and understand in order to communicate properly with his teammates. I have listed the most common ones with a short explanation here.

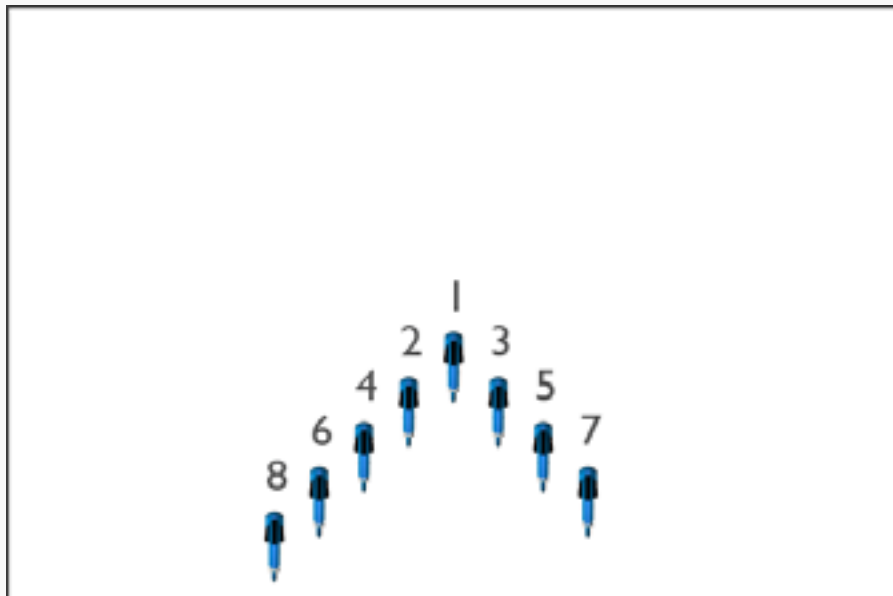
- Grind/Grinding - Driving close to a wall (when you see sparks flying, you are grinding), especially important at the start of a round,
- Shuffle - The chat command `/shuffle`, allows you to change your starting position
- wd - "Well done"
- gg - "Good game"
- gm - "Good match"
- dg - Doublegrind, a special technique explained later on in this guide
- Hole - When a lightcycle explodes, it leaves a hole in the wall where other players can drive through. Use holes to enter the enemy zone or to escape out of a box.

Lineup

The start of a round is very important in a fortress game. You need to gain speed, help your teammates to do so and you also have to block enemy players so that your defense can set up without problems. Below you can see how the starting formation looks like, assuming that there are 16 players, 8 per team.



As you can see, the players start next to each other, but not on one line. The first one in the middle is called Center and starts on position 1. The two next to him are called Wingmen and start on position 2 (left to the center) and 3 (right to the center). These players usually attack. The player on the far outside is in most cases the goalie and starts on the last position (8 in this case). To make things clear, here is the same image with the numbers added to each position.



The Positions

Now we will have a closer look at the different positions and what they mean for a fortress game. This is only a short overview about what each position does, we will discuss playing styles and techniques in the next chapter of this guide.

Center

The player on position number one is called “Center”, simply because he starts in the middle. He plays an important role at the start because on the one hand he has to make sure that none of the enemy players can make a Center Attack and on the other hand he could try one himself. Another aspect to take care of is the fact, that you have usually not much space to survive right after the split of the team. You also have to take care of when you turn, because as the center player, you should not turn when there is still somebody grinding next to you. The center player turns into a regular attacker usually after the start is over.

Attacker

The attacker’s main goal is to get in the enemy zone and conquer it to win the round. As an attacker, you need to take care of enemy sweepers who try to block you as well as the enemy goalie who is protecting the zone you want to conquer. But what can easily be underestimated is, that you also need to take care of your teammates. Mostly, you are not the only one attacking and therefore it is important to know where your mates are. It can be a nasty surprise if you turn around and die on a wall of a teammate, so stay away from your friends and attack a side of the zone where there isn’t already someone of your team. You should also take care of your defense - if a sweeper dies or (worst case) the goalie is down, then you need to get back as fast as possible and help your mates defending.

Sweeper

Sweepers are the left and right hands of the goalie - they drive around the zone of their team trying to block and kill enemy attackers. They are also really important to defend against holes, because in most cases the goalie can not seal them on his own.

Goalie

The goalie protects the zone of his team by circling it with his wall - it is as simple as that. He has to be careful of enemy attackers trying to cut him off or trying to shrink him so they can enter the zone. But he also has to take care about his own wall - he can not stay away from it, because that would leave a gap. Therefore, the goalie has to drive closely behind his tail trying not to shrink or expand too much.

TECHNIQUES

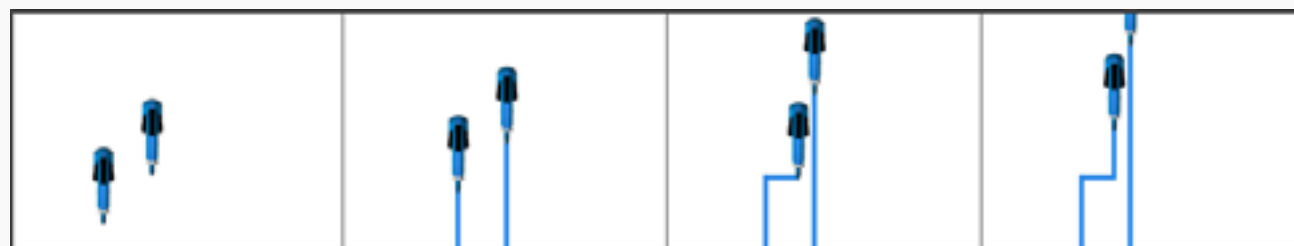
The Start

As I already said, the start is really important - one wrong move and you lose the round within a few seconds.

Grind

In order to perform an accurate start, you need to grind. What, you do not know what grinding is? Don't worry, I'll explain it to you now. Grinding means you drive close to another wall and follow it. You see sparks flying? Then you are grinding and gain speed. Your lightcycle exploded? Then you touched the wall a bit too long, watch your rubber carefully!

In Fortress, every player turns to the center at start and grinds his wall - at least that's what it looks like. The following image strip should give you a good idea of what grinding means and how it is performed.



It is not that hard to grind at start - even if it may look confusing at a first glance. Once again, practise makes perfect and everybody needs to get a feeling for it. Now let's have a look how it is performed with more than 2 players per side.



As you can see, the player on the outside does not grind the center player's wall directly, he grinds the wall of the player on position 2. Nevertheless, you just have to move close to the center in order to perform your grind.

It might take some time to get it right, but there is no way to skip this - grinding at start is essential for your team. Basically, there are two reasons why players grind the center at the start of a round - speed and defense. The first one is pretty obvious, at least if you know the basics of the game. Grinding a player's wall will accelerate your cycle. If all players grind each other, all of them will speed up. This means, if your team does not grind at start while the enemy players are doing it, they will be a lot faster than you and have a huge advantage right at the start of the round.

The other reason to grind at start is to help your goalie set up the defense by sealing the front side of the zone. If every player would just go straight on at the start, there would be gaps allowing enemy players to drive through and enter the zone.

Split

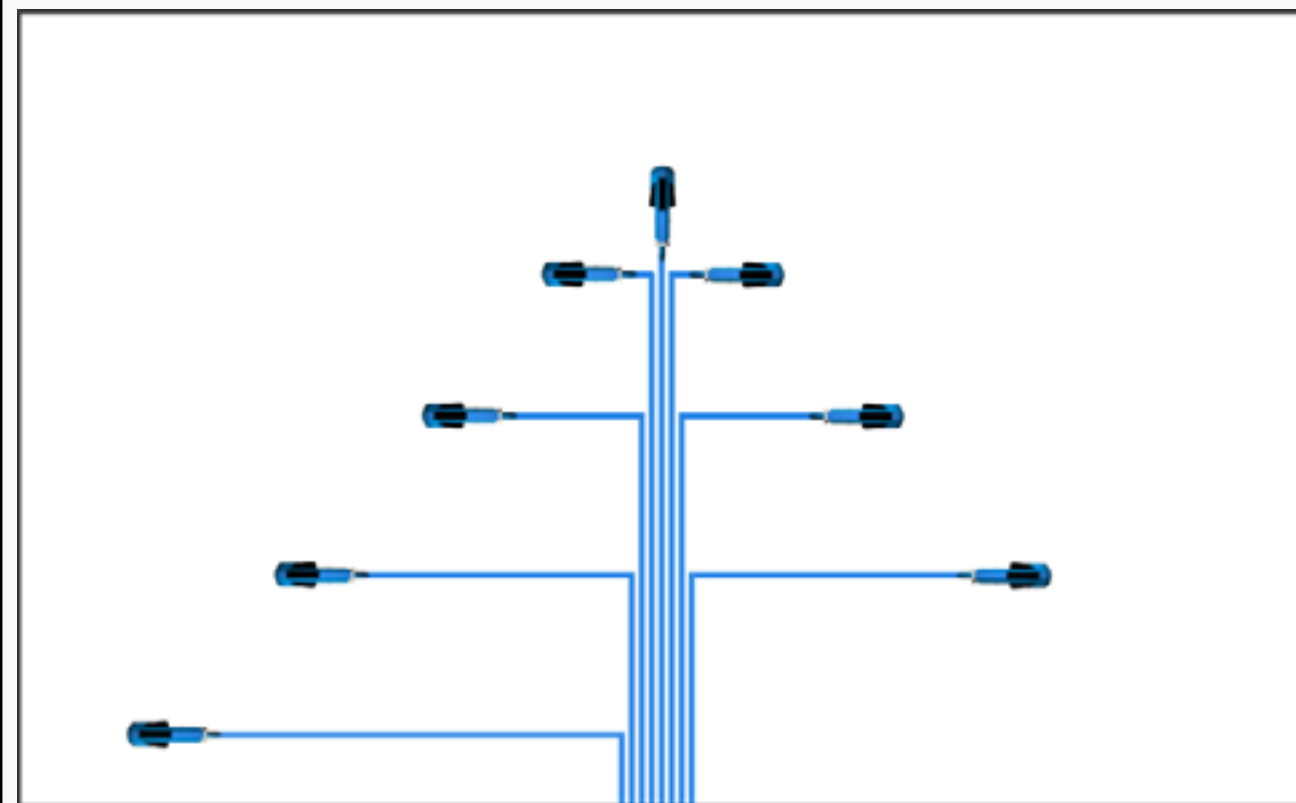
Now that you are grinding your teammate's wall and start to gain speed, you may ask yourself: "When do I stop?". Good question, we will talk about that now.

The next step after the grind at the start is the split. You want to turn away from your teammates wall before you come too close to the enemy players. Your teammates need space to survive, and splitting in the right time will give them that required space as well as offer really fast players the possibility to overtake the opponents on their side and try to attack the zone.

First off, there is not one single break-point. It differs from round to round and from team to team. Sooner or later you will get a feeling when to split. The order is of course every time the same: The first ones to split are the sweepers on the outside, in our example case on position 6 and 7. The goalie is usually not involved in the split, because he turns right at the start of the round and starts sealing the zone. The sweepers should split early, because they do not need speed, and if they split early, they can block the sides effectively and give the goalie time to set up his defense. Now comes the interesting part, the split of the wingmen. The longer they grind the center, the faster those three players will be, but if they wait too long, the center will not have enough space to survive. As a new player, you should rather split a bit earlier to be on the safe side.

It is of course important, that every player can only split, when the one on his side has turned already. Otherwise, you would turn and instantly kill your mate.

I prepared another image, that should give a good example of a split.



Of course it does not look that systematic and exact in a real game, players on the sides do not split on the exact same time, but I hope you get the idea.

Attacking

General techniques

Your main goal as an attacker is to get into the enemy zone and conquer it. First off all, you need to know when you can conquer the zone and when you can not. This depends on the server settings. There are several settings that control the behavior of zones - how fast can you conquer them and when can you conquer them. Currently, you can conquer a zone only when there are more attackers than defenders in it - that's the most important point here.

At the end, it all comes down to points, so you do not need to desperately try to cut the goalie and get in the zone. If you can not put up some serious pressure against the goalie, do something more useful. Yes, there is something else you can do - go for the sweepers. This may sound odd on the first read, but believe me, it isn't. What would you prefer? Attacking the zone for minutes and then finding yourself trapped by the sweepers or going after them grabbing some kills? Of course this brings the risk, that the enemy attackers will conquer your zone while you try to kill the sweepers, but that is usually worth it.

Good sweepers will make your life as an attacker a lot harder leading to rounds where you have to focus on staying alive more than on attacking, which is definitely not a good thing for you. And killing the sweepers will not only give you and your team some points, it will also force one or two enemy players to come back and help their goalie - less pressure for your team's defense.

Patience is really important for an attacker, because in most cases, you will need some time and a couple of tries before you manage to get into the zone. If you are up against a good goalie, you can literally spend hours attacking and won't get in - assuming the goalie does not die on his own fault. And this is one of the keys for successful attacking. If you manage to stay calm and put the goalie under pressure, he likely will make a deadly fault sooner or later. Do not try to cut him if it is clearly impossible - just stay calm can make up some space. If your fellow attackers will also do that, you can gain enough space to conquer the zone - who cares if the goalie is still alive or not? Technically, this tactic can not fail. Even the best goalies can not defend without losing space when the attackers now how to make a goalie shrink. And again, if there are no sweepers, there is nothing that can help the goalie to turn the tide.

Another important thing you should always bear in mind are holes. If an attacker dies at the goalies wall, he will leave a hole - be the first one there and enter the zone! You should only do this, though, when you think that you can really drive through the hole - do not go for that tiny piece of death at the corner, especially not if there are sweepers around that may cover the hole right in front of you (You would, of course, create a new one when you die, but that is not worth it).

Every defense has it's weaknesses and it is your job to study the defense and find out the weak spots. Is the goalie overlapping a lot? Then the chances for a cut are usually too low to risk it - but you can make him shrink pretty safely. Is there one strange corner, where the goalie has to leave a gap for some seconds? Prepare to attack him right there.

You should also take care about your teammates and not only if they die to leave a hole for you. Be aware that they do need space to survive and attack just as you do, so try not to get in their way (and hope that won't get in your way).

Holing

Yes, we already talked about that on the last page. But I think it deserves its own subsection, especially since it is a tactic on its own for a couple of months now.

Let's clear one thing first: we talk about holing on purpose here. One player sacrifices himself to create a hole in the goalies wall for his teammates to go through.

The basic idea behind this strategy is the simple fact, that the goalie can neither cover the hole nor can he hold the zone against two or more attackers. And even if you can just get one player in the zone, this player can fight the goalie (called Sumo) and try to gain space or kill him.

Sounds like a great strategy, doesn't it? But what do you need in order to perform it successfully? And what could the enemies do to beat you with it?

The first thing you need is at least enough space to reach the goalies wall and make a hole. This hole should be easy to take, because you do not want to waste players trying to hole. So, you need at least two attackers for this strategy: one that dies on purpose and creates the hole and one that enters it and creates trouble and chaos inside the enemy zone. This player should ideally have some sumo experience and be able to stay alive in close combat.

The first player should be able to create a nice and easy to enter hole. Of course he has to hit the wall of the goalie, not the one of a sweeper. And he should make sure that his teammate his right behind him because the longer the hole lasts without being used, the higher the chances are that either a sweeper or the goalie will block it.

There are many players who do not like this strategy and shout on those using it. But holes are part of the game - there is even a serversetting for them. It is a fact that they are allowed, so you should learn how to play with them.

The obvious counter to this strategy are good sweepers. On the other site, this strategy is more or less an instant win, when it comes down to situations where one team has only the goalie left and the other team has more than 2 players alive.

Another counter to this tactic is sumo defense, a special kind of defense that will be explained in later on in this guide.

Defending

Goaltending techniques

As a goalie, it is your job to defend the zone. You do this by circling it, following your own tail as close as possible. Staying alive is one challenge here, another one is not to shrink and lose space. If this happens, the enemies can “gank” the zone, meaning they can get enough players in it to conquer the zone and win the round. On a side note, I do not like the word “ganking” very much, especially not when it is used in a negative way. It is clearly the goal of the game to get more attackers in the enemy zone than defenders, so why complain about it?

The goalie has also be aware of the gap between his tail and his cycle. If this gap gets too large, than enemy attackers can cut through it, enter the zone and break the whole defense. Another thing you have to take care of are holes. No goalie can protect the zone against a good hole on his own, so you need reliable sweepers who can cover the holes and block the attackers.

There are many different ways to circle the zone and defend it. In my opinion, there is not much sense in explaining all those slightly different styles, because every player develops his own playing style and you should not try to imitate an already existing one.

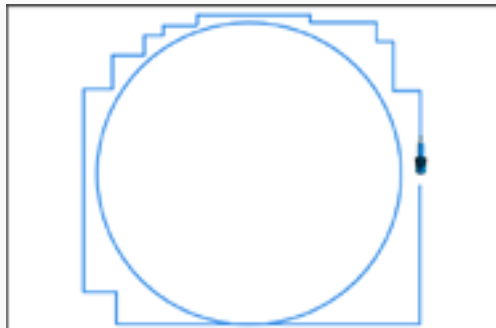
Do not hesitate to experiment with different ways to defend - attackers do have their own playing style as well and certain ways to defend may be better against the attacker you are currently facing than others.

An important factor is mostly speed. Using speed as an advantage is a common way to attack and if there is a noticeable gap in your defense, a fast attacker can easily be the last thing you see before you explode. Driving behind your own wall is a way to protect yourself from being speed-killed, another one is to make many turns, so there is no straight piece of wall the attacker can focus on when approaching you.

What you should always bear in mind is: stay calm. If it comes down to a 3 versus you, there is nothing you can do to prevent the enemy players from holing and then conquering the zone. There is also nothing you can do against attackers that make you shrink - without the help of a sweeper, you will lose sooner or later.

That is another reason why you need sweepers. Usually, the sweepers should leave enough space between their walls and your wall. But in some situations, a sweeper needs to come close to your wall. You should always watch out, not only for the enemy attackers, but also for your sweepers. Trapping a teammate or getting killed by a sweeper is not a good thing and can be avoided if the goalie and the sweepers watch out for each other.

Below you can see a goalie circling his zone (just so you get an idea what that looks like):



Sweeping techniques

Your main goal as a sweeper is to prevent enemy attackers from reaching your zone. Ideally, you make the goalie obsolete by blocking all attackers from the zone. It is not necessary to kill them, although that might seem confusing for the first time.

Sure, you get 2 points per kill and the attacker does not need to be blocked for the rest of the round. But when an attacker dies, he will leave a hole and if he is close to your goalie's wall, this hole could end the round in your enemy's favor.

Therefore, you should focus on blocking the attackers, not on killing them. Of course, if an attacker is not close to the goalie's wall and there is the chance to kill him, go for it. But be careful, you have to watch out for other attackers as well as your teammates. Especially the goalie deserves your attention, because if you sweep too close to him, he may die at your wall.

To prevent that from happening, you should never touch your goalie's wall - it's as easy as that. In my opinion, there are only two cases where you should touch it. One being the death of a player (no matter if it is a friend or foe) at the goalie's wall and the hole that is created after that. It is an essential part of your role as a sweeper to either block that hole with your wall or block the enemy attacker's long enough for your goalie to cover the hole himself.

The other case in which you should touch your goalie's wall is a guaranteed kill. If you see an enemy attacker being trapped and heading for that exit he left himself, seal it and watch him die.

If there are no attackers, you can head to the enemy zone and try to conquer it, as long as you do not disturb your attackers. But every time you leave your zone, be prepared to return to it at any time! Another “rule” is that you should never leave your goalie alone as long as there is at least one enemy attacker. Even the best goalies make stupid turns from time to time and die due to one simple wrong turn.

The death of the goalie is the red alert for every player on a team, but especially for the sweepers. If your goalie got killed by an enemy attacker, one sweeper has to enter the zone as fast as possible trying to cover as much space in it as he can. The others have to prevent more enemy attackers from entering the zone. If your goalie died due to a fault (or simply stupidity), try to take his position on the fly by circling the zone before an enemy can reach it.

Sweeping requires quite some teamwork, especially when it comes to effective blocking and killing enemy attackers. At least in my opinion it is no ideal position for beginners who are not familiar with the physics of the game. Nevertheless, do not hesitate to practise it, because good sweepers are an essential part of a good defense - and if the enemies can not cover your zone, they can not win the round.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

Center Attack

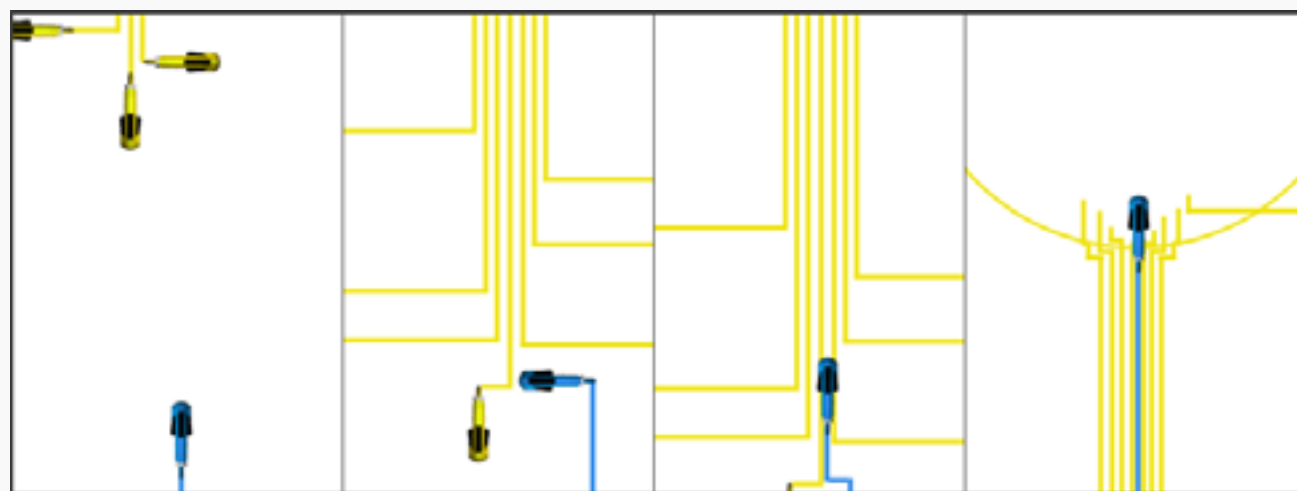
The center attack is a common strategy that can lead to a fast and easy victory if performed right. Basically, it works like this: right after the split, the center player tries to grind between the walls of two enemy players - either player 1 and 2 or 1 and 3. This way, he can drive straight into the enemy zone and he can use his speed to either kill the goalie or cover enough space to stay in the zone.

A center attack can cause a lot of trouble and screws up the enemy defense before the round really started. We will now see how it is performed in detail and how you can defend against teams using this technique.

Doing a Center Attack

Theoretically, a center attack can be performed by any player. But it is usually done by the center player starting on position one for a number of reasons. The first one being that it has to be an attacker who does this - you need your defensive players at defense, because the center attack could fail or your enemies could try to do one as well. The second reason is, that the player who performs the center attack has to be as close to the enemy split as possible - you need to be fast to do a successful center attack, otherwise the goalie will have completed his first round around the zone and then the center attack can not work anymore.

Basically, all you have to do when going for a center attack is grind hard. Well, not only hard, but harder than the enemy player's grinded. This way, you can drive between their walls, speed up and enter the zone. Being able to perform a hard grind is one skill, another one that comes in handy here is the ability to spot out weak grinds. If you can judge whether you can beat a grind or not, you can avoid deaths and do something more useful. The following image strip shows you how a successful center attack looks like.



Defending against a Center Attack

A center attack can be very annoying, especially if you are the goalie. Luckily, there are several ways to block center attacks and grab an easy kill. Basically, there are three common ways to block a center attack.

1. Grind hard

This one is pretty obvious. If player 2 and 3 grind the center harder than the enemy player can grind, the enemy player will die. Unfortunately, it is really hard to tell how "hard" somebody can grind. And because all of that happens within a few seconds, you can easily grind too hard and die yourself. Nevertheless, you will often hear a "Grind harder!" after a center attack.

2. Seal the center

Probably the best strategy against center attacks. Right after the split, your center player will seal both sides of his wall, so the enemy players can not grind on them at all. This is as easy as earlier your team splits. The best strategy against a center attack is therefore an early split combined with a block of your center player.

3. Goalie seals the center

Right after the start, the goalie turns around, drives in the zone and behind the walls of his teammates. When an enemy player comes down the center, he will now find himself in front of a wall and die - usually. The bad thing about this strategy is, that you can not say when exactly an enemy player will arrive and when the wall of the goalie will disappear. If you are unlucky, it will disappear before the enemy player arrives, opening the entrance into the zone again.

My favorite strategy against a center attack is a good block. You do not need to split that early, if your center player knows how to do it right and chances are high that a good block will get you a kill. But if I play as a goalie, I like to seal the center in the zone myself, as an additional protection against center attacks.

The hard grind can be successful as well, but I would not rely on that. The enemy will either stop trying to center because he can not grind hard enough or he will try to grind harder, leaving the chance that he can beat the grind and center attack.

And if you try to grind too hard, you will die right at the start leaving your team with one player less and your goalie with a dead tail in his zone.

Don't get me wrong here, grinding hard is an important technique for Armagetron in general and everybody should practise it. I just do not believe that it is a reliable strategy against center attacks.

Doublegrinding

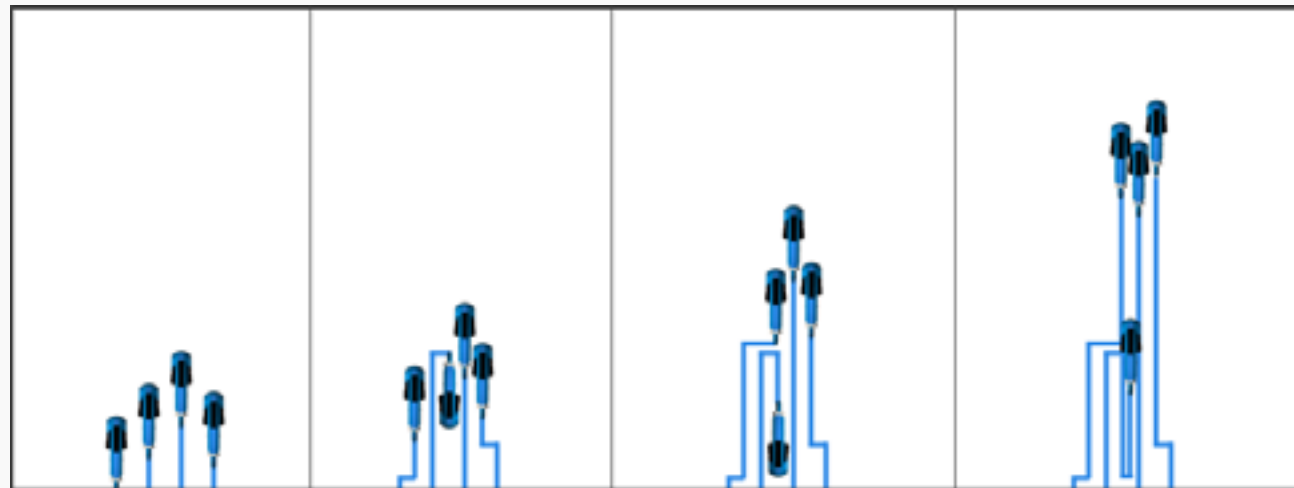
Another common strategy found in nearly every fortress game is a double grind. It might sound complicated at a first glance, but it is not difficult to execute. The basic idea behind a double grind is, that you become faster the closer you are to a wall. This effect gets doubled, if you drive close between two walls, like driving in a tunnel.

Doing a Doublegrind

In order to perform a double grind, you need at least three players at one side, center included. This means that your team has to consist of at least 4 players. If that is the case, the player on position 2 can doublegrind. In order to do so, he has to do the following: He does *not* grind the center player at the start, instead he drives straight on. After a few seconds, when he is near the zone, he performs a 180 and turns back. While he drives back, player 4 grinds the center, but not too hard. Player 2 does another 180 when he reaches the start point and can then grind between the walls of player 1 and 4. This will speed him up pretty fast and is called a Doublegrind.

The obvious advantage of this technique is the speed of the doublegrinding player. If the split works well, he can use it to start a fast attack by overtaking the enemy players on his side and go for the zone. Another advantage is the grind itself, it is usually harder than a single grind and can help blocking a center attack, although I would not rely too much on it.

The image strip below should give you a good idea on how a doublegrind works.



Defending against a Doublegrind

If you face a good doublegrinder on your side for the first time, chances are high that you will get smashed and lose the round. But after that, you can handle it. Knowing that the enemy has one or two fast doublegrinders allows you to prepare. Basically, there are two ways to defend against doublegrinders. You can either doublegrind yourself and hope you can do it better or you can let your wingmen and/or sweepers split very early, so they can block the sides easily.

Sumo Defense

This kind of defense is pretty rare, but it has its advantages if performed well. Basically, it works as follows: Two players defend inside the zone, each of them covering roughly one half of the zone. They leave space between their walls, so enemy attackers can enter the zone. The basic idea behind this technique is that the enemy attackers can enter the zone, but they can not conquer it, because there is not enough space to stay in the zone long enough. This offers the possibility to kill enemy attackers when they enter the small space in the zone and try to conquer it.

Of course, this strategy has its weak spots. If one of the two goalies dies, you will need good sweepers, because either the remaining goalie takes up the space and switches to regular defense or one of the sweepers takes the spot of the dead goalie. But if an attacker can take up the space, you get in serious trouble. Another downside of this tactic is the fact, that the two goalies need to be careful, so they do not kill each other by accident.

If you are an attacker and you face enemies playing sumo defense, you need to stay calm. Only enter the zone if you know what you are doing. Try to squeeze the goalies and focus on killing the sweepers first. Sumo defense can be a great counter against center attacks and holers, but it lacks consistency. I personally like it, because it is fun to play and can drive enemy attackers crazy. You should definitely give it a try, discuss it with your teammates and see if your enemies can handle it.

Wall against Wall Attack

This strategy was developed by Lackadaisical and originally posted at the official Forums, [here](#).

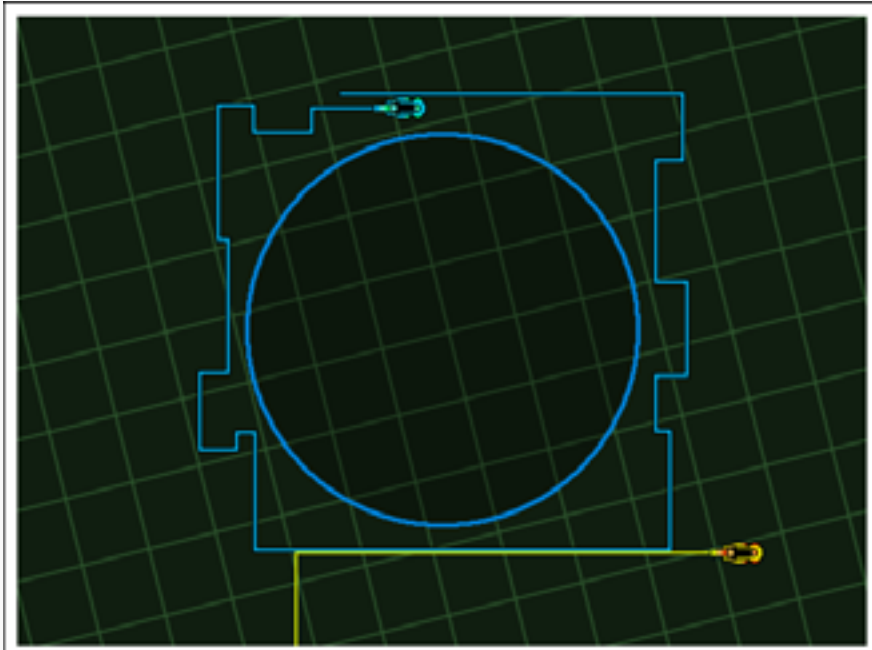
Step 1

Look for a good spot where you set up the attack, a good spot has the following properties:

- There needs to be a long straight piece of wall (the longer the better)
- The straight segment needs to come right after one of corners of the defense
- It is preferable if the side before the corner has a couple of turns in it

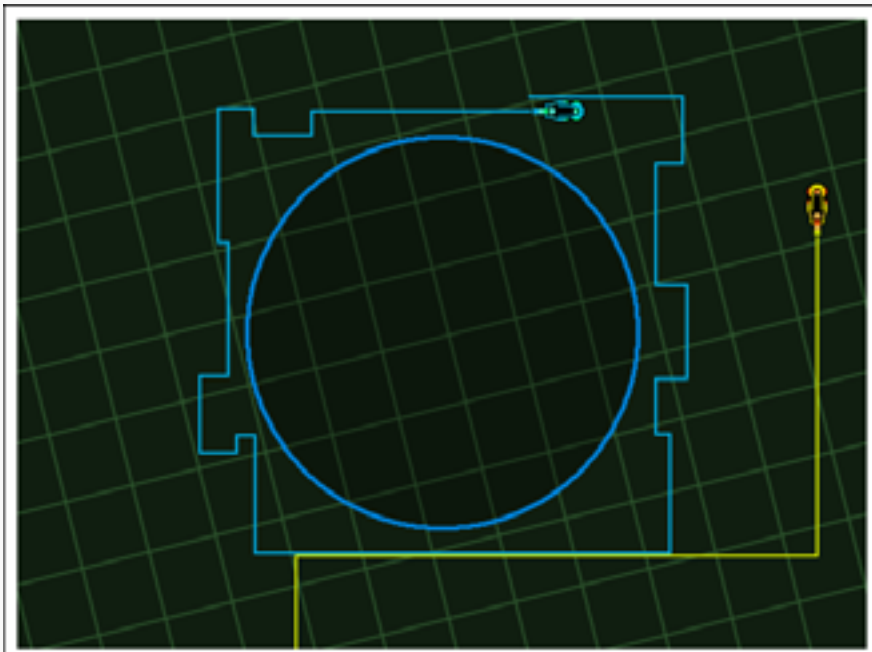
Step 2

At the right time, when the defender is more or less on the opposite side you grind the straight piece of wall in the opposite direction of the defender. You want to make sure you grind hard enough that you can't get between it when you're making a light grind. This step also gives you the necessary speed to at least equal the defender's speed. (if you aren't at least the defender's speed, abort and try again)



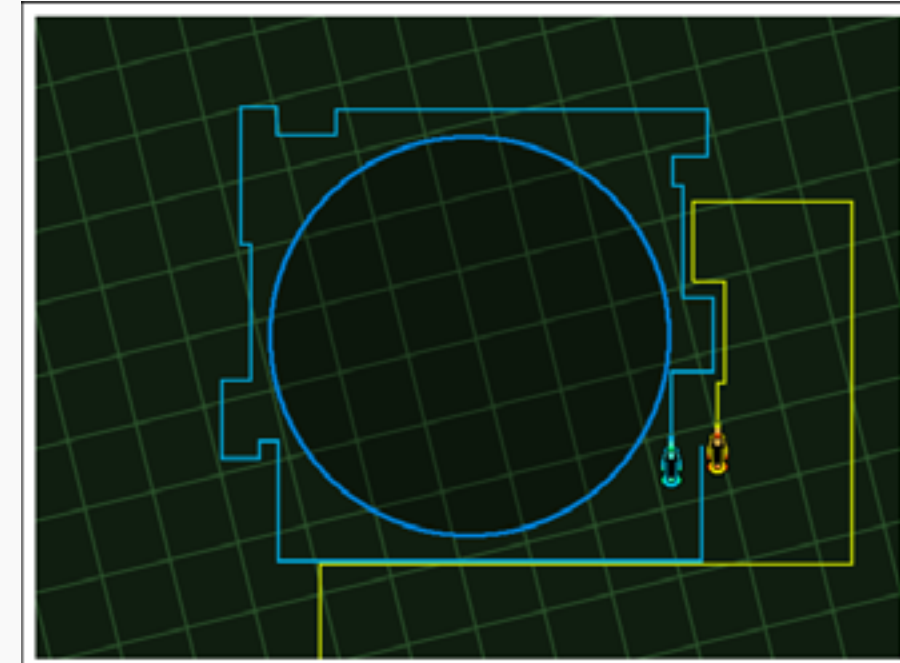
Step 3

At the end of the wall leave some room and head in the direction of the defender.



Step 4

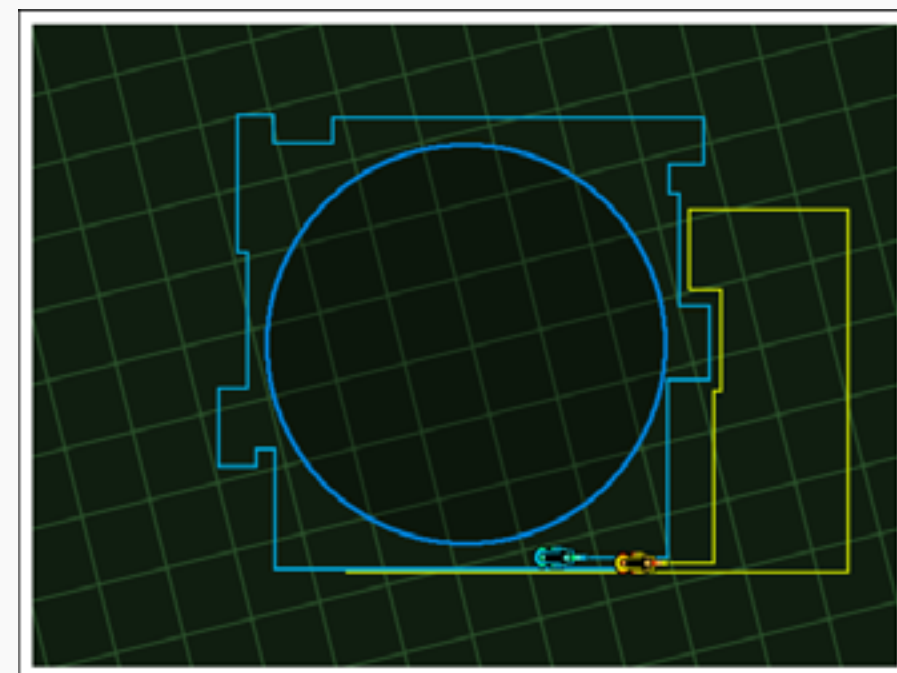
Depending how much speed you got you can either harass the defender (and make him burn some rubber) a bit by following his tail just slightly in front of the end (enough so he can't get you with a tail-shrink attack) or go back on your own tail to get more speed. This kinda depends on the type of defense as well.



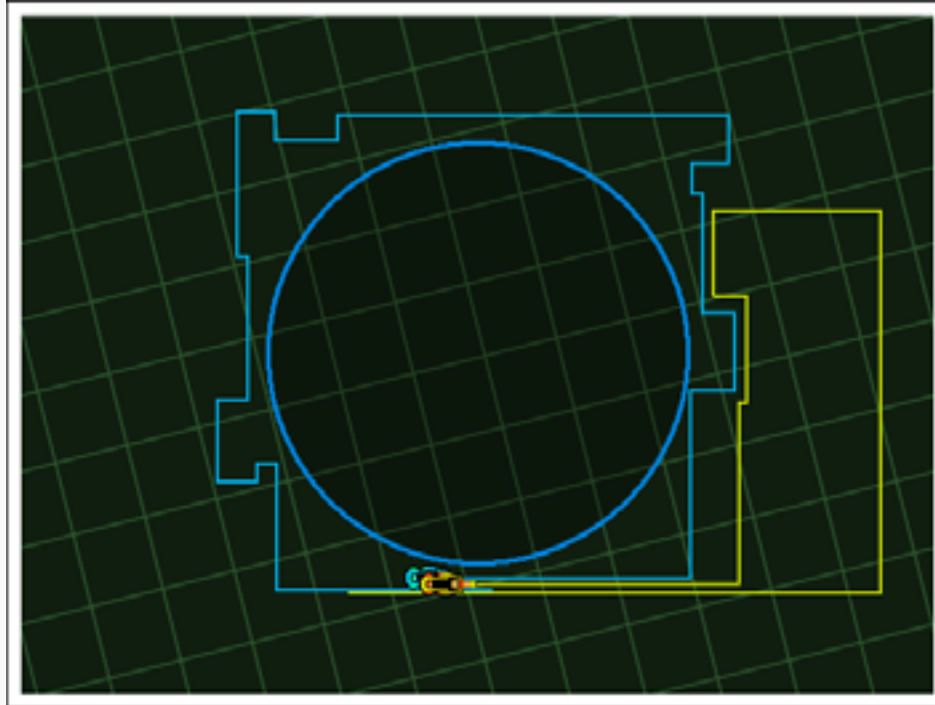
Step 5

When you get to the corner, you grind your own wall you left there in step one with sort of a light grind: you need to get between tail of the defender and the defender himself. For best effect you need to time this in such a way that you sort of hit the tail of the defender. If all goes well you will end up between the defenders end of the tail and the defender self. Because of the speed you get in the tunnel and because the attack happens right after a corner he usually won't be able to adjust quick enough to kill you.

The picture here is a bit misleading because the walls in arma don't have any width, it's basically four walls stacked against each other pretty tight.



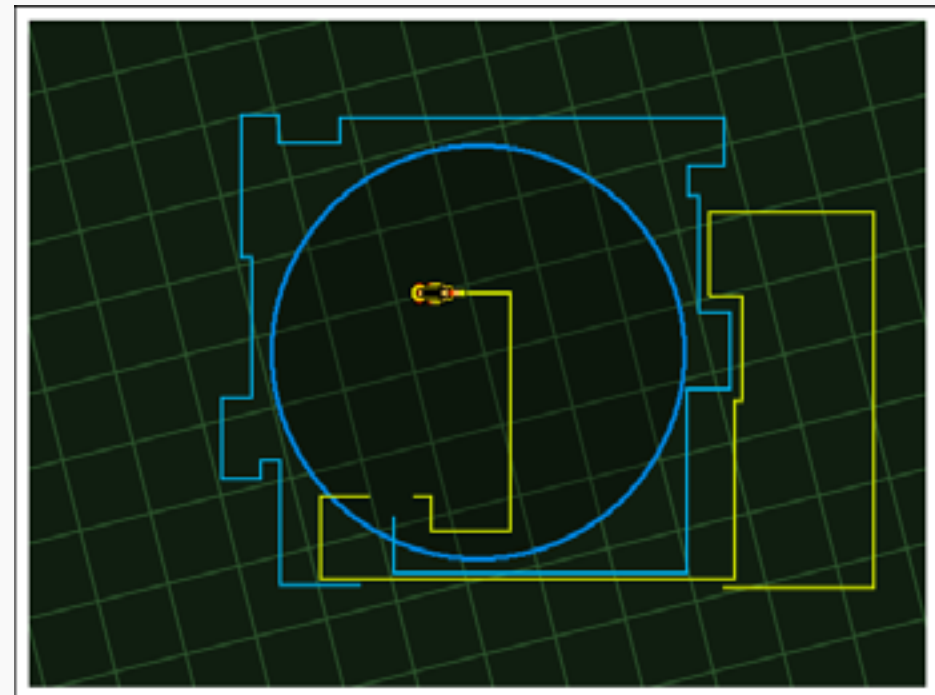
Step 6



Step 7

Profit!

Step five is the most crucial step, so you'll probably die quite a bit before you get the timing right. Not as hard as outgrinding someone with an outside cornergrind though.



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FINE-TUNING

Key bindings

What keys do you need?

It is, of course, impossible to give a short and simple answer here. Every player has his own preferences and his own needs. However, here are the ones I strongly recommend, including explanations if needed.

Glance Keys: It is just like driving a real car or cycle. You always need to know what is happening around you. In reality, you turn your head, in the game, you use your glance keys. There are three of them, glance left, glance right and glance back. If you start using them, you will die a couple of times just because you glanced. Don't worry, you will get used to playing with glancing, it just takes some time and practise. After you managed to get used to glance, you will see the benefits you get from doing so. No matter if it as an enemy player coming from behind or a hole in a wall on your left side, using your glance keys will help you to keep track on what is going on.

Turn Keys: Yes, obvious, I know. But it has to be said, get two keys for each direction, otherwise you won't be able to perform those tight 180's needed in some situations (for example if you want to doublegrind at the start).

Brake: Another obvious one. Especially useful when you have little to no space to survive or you want to grind as hard as possible. Remember though, that you have only a limited amount and your brake needs to refill, so do not overuse it.

Instant Chats: You need some instant chats, otherwise you can not communicate important things fast enough. Here are the ones that I suggest:

- /shuffle (so you can instantly shuffle out, useful when you are the goalie)
- Defense down! (Your goalie is dead, head back as fast as possible)
- Defense needs help! (There is an attacker inside your zone)
- Defense OK (Everything is fine here, attack)
- Attack needs help! (One of your attackers is inside the zone and needs help conquering it)
- Center Attack! (An enemy is speeding through the center, be careful)
- Grind at start (New players on your team usually do not know what to do at the start)

Of course there are more useful chats, like if you need a sweeper or if you are going to make a hole. Using color codes in your chats can help to make your messages clearer, for example use green for "Defense OK" and red for "Defense down". More information about color codes can be found [here](#).

Chat Key: Between the rounds, or if you have some spare time, you can of course chat normally, discuss tactics and so on.

Example Key Layout

As I already said, there is no perfect keyboardlayout, but it is still interesting to see how other people have assigned there keys.To give you some inspiration, here is my current keyboardlayout:



Red:Turn keys and brake (2 x left, 2 x right and a brake key)

Blue: Glance keys

Green: Chat key (“C”) and instant chats

As you can see, I play with both hands and I use both hands to turn.The right hand is used for driving the cycle, the left hand only comes to aid when I want to doublebind.The left hand is mainly used for glancing as well as using the instant chats.This way, the right hand can focus on driving the cycle (Yes, that sounds as if my right hand has its own mind).

I think the main reason why I use a keyboardlayout like that is because I play guitar.There are people out there, who would never use a layout like this as well as there are people out there who use a very similar layout.
All in all, you have to find “your” layout yourself.Think about how you play other games.Think about what instruments you play, if any.And finally, experiment with different keyboardlayouts to find the one that best suits your needs.

Of course, this is not my complete setup.There are some keys missing, for example the console key, the key to toggle spectator mode and the cockpit toggle keys. I did not add them because they have little to no influence on the game, simply because you do not use them often. I also know that there are players out there that use more than two keys to turn per direction.Triplebinding, Quadrobinding or whatever is possible, but I do not see any advantage in doing it.Try it for yourself and see if you find it useful.

It is also possible to play Armagetron with a Gamepad, a Joystick or a Wheel. I tried it once using an Arcade Stick, but I was already used to my keyboard, so it was not really serious, rather just a funny try.

Camera

The game offers 5 different camera settings as well as a custom camera. In my opinion, everybody should try experimenting with the custom camera sooner or later. Every player has his own preferences, some prefer to have the camera far away from the cycle to get a good overview, others play with the camera relatively close to the cycle for close combat.
Some players prefer a fast turning camera, others get distracted by it and therefore have their camera turn rather slowly.

As you can see, you will probably need some time and some tries before you get “your” camera, but it is worth the effort.Another point that should be considered is the aspect-ratio of your monitor. I started playing on a 4:3 monitor and when I switched to my current 16:9 laptop screen, I needed to adjust my camera to the new aspect-ratio.

The different camera settings

To create your own custom camera, all you need to do is create a file called `autoexec.cfg` in your user directory at `<appdata>/Armagetron/var/autoexec.cfg`.Whenever you need to change a setting, paste it in this file, because it will not be overwritten by a new installation, the default `settings.cfg` will be overwritten and changes to it get lost.

So, what settings can you use exactly to customize your camera? Here they are:

<code>CAMERA_CUSTOM_BACK</code>	How much the camera is moved back
<code>CAMERA_CUSTOM_RISE</code>	The height of the camera above the cycle
<code>CAMERA_CUSTOM_BACK_FROMSPEED</code>	How much the camera is moved back for every m/s speed
<code>CAMERA_CUSTOM_RISE_FROMSPEED</code>	The height of the camera above the cycle for every m/s speed
<code>CAMERA_CUSTOM_PITCH</code>	Inclination of the camera
<code>CAMERA_CUSTOM_ZOOM</code>	How much the camera zooms in your cycle at the beginning of the round (to show the team’s formation)
<code>CAMERA_CUSTOM_TURN_SPEED</code>	Speed the custom camera turns with
<code>CAMERA_CUSTOM_TURN_SPEED_180</code>	Factor to the turn speed after a quick reversal

There is a list at the Wiki with different camera settings from different players, it is definitely worth a read, check it out [here](#).

Visuals and Moviepacks

There are different ways to change how the game looks like. Well, basically there are two things you can change - the cockpit and the moviepack. The cockpit or HUD is all the information you get from the game and the way it is displayed. The moviepack is a collection of textures and a cycle model - this is how your game looks like.

Adjusting the cockpit to your needs can take some time but it is worth the effort. I do not want to say that the default cockpit is bad, but every player uses a different camera and wants different information to be displayed. There are two ways to change your cockpit - create your own or use an existing one. If you want to create your own, you should have a look at the [Cockpit Tutorial](#). It is not that hard and if you are familiar with XML you can get your cockpit ready in no time. For those of you who do not want to create a cockpit on their own, have a look at the [Cockpits List](#) - a couple of players have released their work their.

If you want to change the look of the game, you need to use a moviepack. Technically, it is a folder with images in it that are used by the game as textures. This way, you can change everything you see - the arena wall, the cycle wall, the cycle itself, the sky and the floor.

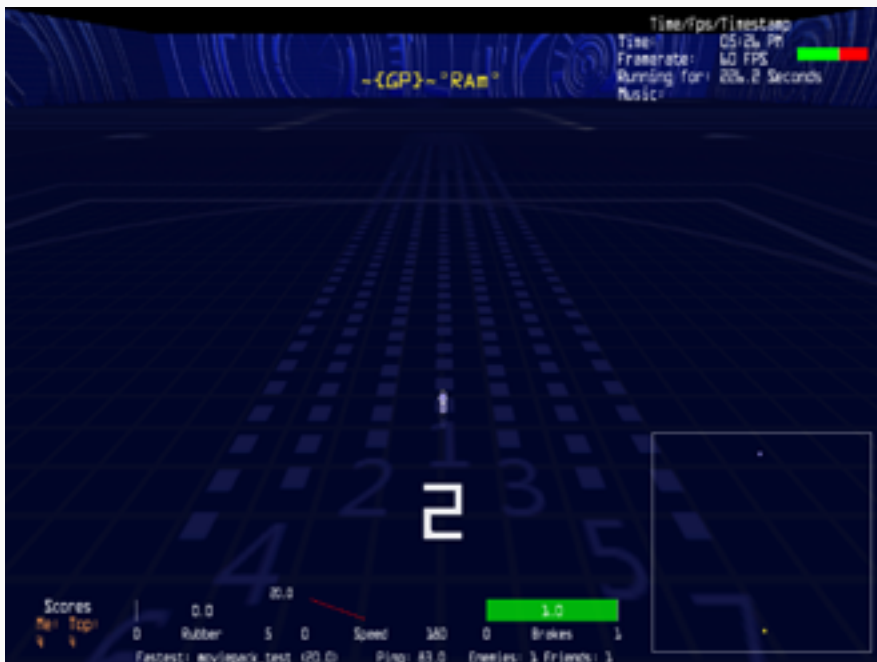
Creating a moviepack is not that difficult, all you need is an image editing program. Take a look at the [Moviepack Wiki Page](#) for more information on creating a moviepack.

There is also a [List](#) of existing packs for you to download and use.

The Fortress Moviepack

This special moviepack is designed for fortress players and it is especially helpful for beginners. It has a special designed floor that has lines on it for splitting as well as circles for the zones. It is also divided into segments for orientation.

The moviepack can be really helpful for players that do not know how to split at the start or how to perform the start grind. It should also give you a better understanding about the overall layout of the game.



EXPERT SECTION

The Art of Mindgames - Get inside your enemies brain

Have you ever wondered what could be the difference between a good player and a really good player? I can not say it for sure, but I think that staying cool when you are under pressure is an important aspect and could be considered as "skill" just like other things do.

Other parts are creativity and flexibility. Even the best attacker is useless when you desperately need a goalie, or another sweeper. Being able to play on any position and knowing how to play different strategies against different kinds of enemies is important, especially when the "team" aspect comes into consideration.

"Mindgames" is all that and maybe a bit more. Do unexpected things, but expect everything yourself at the same time. Stay calm and be patient while you circle the zone. Don't look at the mini-map too much, neither at the chat. Focus on your cycle and what's around you at the moment.

Every player gets a feeling for most game related things sooner or later. You do not need to watch your rubber gauge all the time and you do not need to ask your teammates what you have to do after some time playing with them.

Being able to put your enemies under pressure while staying calm on your own is therefore important in the game just like it is in any other game or sport.

Another aspect of "Mindgames" is that the longer you play, the better you should know how certain players react in certain situations. If you can predict what your opponent will do in the next couple of seconds can be a big advantage.

I hope you get an idea of what I am talking about. Just ask yourself next time you get coredumped: "What else could I have done?"

SERVERS

There are plenty of fortress servers out there, most of them using the classic fortress settings. However, there are a couple of servers that use different settings and/or maps. The probably best known example is Crazy Tronners Wild Fortress. This server uses a lot of different maps combined with different settings. It offers a lot of diversification to players but might be a bit confusing for new players. Nevertheless, it is worth a try for every fortress player, especially for those of you who want to try out something new.

Sooner or later, most players will get kicked from a server just for being new to the game. That may sound rude, but as fortress is a team game, one single player can ruin the game for all the other ones. Sadly, most players do not talk to new players, they just poll them.

As a new player, you should expect such behaviour and try to stay calm. Furthermore, listen carefully to your teammates and try to find out why they could be angry at you.

The main reason for angry teammates is the start - if you do not grind at all, you will probably get kicked within the next few minutes.

At most servers, there is a suspend command that is used to suspend a player to spectator mode. Now he is supposed to watch how the other players play and what he has to do.

Staying in spectator mode and watching other players is a good idea to improve your skills. Watch out for tournaments and if you can not play, try to watch some matches and learn how others play.

RESOURCES

The different Armagetron Versions

Basically, there are two different versions of the game currently in use, the 0.2.8 series and the 0.3 beta series. The main difference (and the one we talk about here) is the cockpit. 0.3 supports the new cockpit file with new gauges, a mini-map and some other improvements.

You might have guessed it, but the thing we want to talk about here is the map. Having a map or not can make a huge difference. A map gives you an easy way to get a good overview of what is currently going on on the grid. Where are your enemies, where are your mates? Does your defense need help because an attacker just entered the zone? Or did one of your teammates just started a center attack?

Having a map can answer all those questions faster than a chat message can, assuming you are looking at the map. On the other side, you should not get distracted by the map, although you can see yourself on it as well.

I recommend playing with 0.3 instead of 0.2.8 simply because of the better cockpit (not to mention all the other advantages it has). Give it a try and see how you like it.

SUMMARY AND FURTHER READING

Phew, that's it. Thanks a lot for reading the guide, I hope it was fun to read and you learned something from it. As I already said at the very beginning (remember that?), this guide is neither complete not totally right in every sentence. Some players might see some things written here totally different and disagree with me - that's fine. And some players might just think: "Bullshit" - this is fine, too. I am always open for feedback and criticism, so if you think something is wrong, give me a note. If there is something missing, feel free to tell me about it, I am happy about any form of contribution I can get.

If you want to contribute with your own tactic (like Lackadaisical did), I would appreciate if you could write a short text about it (you do not need to create images like Lack did, although they make it easier to understand a certain strategy). Of course your name will be mentioned here in the guide.

But what if you want to know more? Do not despair, there are other resources of information. The first and most important one is the official [Wiki](#). There is information about every single aspect of the game (not only fortress) as well as a lot of information for players who want to host a server, work with the code or play in a tournament.

Another good resource is the official [forum](#). Despite the fact that there are tons of useful threads, you can talk to and discuss with other players about the game, ask questions or show off your strategy.

Well, there are other sites out there related to Armagetron, but I can not mention all of them here. Have a look at the [linklist](#) or use a search engine to find even more information if needed.

VERSION HISTORY

0.1 - First Release of the guide at my site <http://www.creotronic.net>
0.2 - First PDF-Version

CREDITS & LICENSE

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Contributors

sine.wav - Inspired me for my table of content and the basic outline of the guide

Lackadaisical - Wall against Wall Attack