

The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age FAQ/Walkthrough

by dragonsinth

Updated to v1.01 on Oct 18, 2013

This walkthrough was originally written for The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age on the GC, but the walkthrough is still applicable to the Xbox version of the game.

```
*****  
ADVICE FAQ -- LORD OF THE RINGS: THE THIRD AGE  
*****
```

```
Version 1.01 -- 10/17/2013  
by Scott Blum (dragonsinth)
```

```
*****
```

Contents

```
*****
```

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 Why I wrote this, and why you might want to read it
 - 1.2 What to love about the game
 - 1.3 What to hate about the game
2. General advice
3. Character and Skill Advancement
 - 3.1 Berethor
 - 3.2 Idrial
 - 3.3 Elegost
 - 3.4 Hadhod
 - 3.5 Morwen
 - 3.6 Eaden
 - 3.7 Lightcraft
 - 3.8 Shadowcraft
 - 3.9 Itemcraft

```
*****
```

* 1. INTRODUCTION

```
*****
```

```
*****
```

1.1 Why I wrote this

```
*****
```

Third Age FAQs already exist containing tedious, exhaustive information about weapons, armor, skills, items, enemies, quests, etc.

This isn't one of those.

Instead, I'm going to give you my **opinions** and **advice** on how to play. In particular, I want you to have as much fun as possible, kick ass, and NOT spend countless boring hours SP farming for useless skills. With this guide, you can keep the SP farming to a minimum and focus on getting the useful skills.

In addition, I'll give advice on how to build each character and allocate the attribute points most effectively.

But first a little about the game itself.

1.2 What to love about the game

There's plenty to love about the combat. The characters are all very different, with unique skills. Many of those skills are actually quite useful in the right situation. The core of combat in Third Age is about controlling the flow of battle. The most dangerous moment in most fights is the very first round. Do I enhance my characters? Do I do status attacks on the enemies? Or do I concentrate my attacks and try to knock out one dangerous enemy before it gets a turn? Depending on your choices, the same fight could turn out to be a cakewalk, or a blood bath (for you).

1.3 What to hate about the game

The single worst thing about the game is skill progression, as I alluded to in the intro. You get 1 skill point (SP) towards your next skill every time you perform an action in that category. Yes, 1. And with a single exception, there's no way to get more than 1 at a time. That skill that you need 100 SP for? Yeah.. you're gonna be performing some stupid skill over, and over, and over 100 times. Worse, every skill has a slow, awful animation which serves no purpose but to make combat and SP gain even slower. The only attack that animates quickly is your normal attack. But why would you ever use normal attack, since it means getting no SP? It's horrible.

Another annoyance is attrition. Out of battle, your characters only heal at save points or with items, so unless you want to burn through your items, you generally want to get all of your characters to full health and mostly-fully AP at the end of each fight.

The third annoyance is experience. Characters who don't take part in a battle get 1/2 exp, so accidentally leaving a character out of a fight means leaving experience on the table.

Taking all three together, you might guess how almost every fight ends. Once you've whittled your foes down to a single (typically helpless) enemy, you use skills that recharge everyone's HP and AP, make sure everyone's gotten a turn, and then exercise a few useless skills for SP. It took me more than 6 months to make myself finish this game, a little here and little there. Much of my problem was trying to get all the skills for each character (committed completists will find this game unbearable). Hopefully with this guide, you can finish it in much less. :)

Don't even get me started about the game outside of combat. The story is lame, and actually makes a mockery of the Lord of the Rings. I'm pretty sure Gandalf didn't have any help from your party when he faced down the Balrog! The cutscenes are worse-- it's just clips from the Lord of the Rings movies with annoying Gandalf voice-overs. Don't even bother watching them, you'd be better off just watching the actual movies again.

Most of the areas are extremely linear, with the exception of the Rohan areas. Treasure chests are not hard to find.

Pretty much the only reason to play this game is for the combat.

* 2. GENERAL ADVICE

EARLY GAME

Most of this FAQ can be ignored early game. Your characters all start the game as generalists. Idrial even starts with a stronger attack than Berethor, due to having a better starting weapon. During the first chapter, just use Lembas between battles as needed to recharge AP when you're not near a save point. The characters don't really begin to specialize until midway through Moria.

NORMAL BATTLES

Third Age is all about controlling battles.

For most normal battles, the first order of business is to disable your enemies, preventing them from acting. Order of preference is Sleep, then Stun, then Slow (a.k.a. Cripple). Bind Melee works on a few enemies that are immune to all of those. Learn what enemies are vulnerable to with Elegost's Examine, which works 100% of the time.

Once you've disabled as many enemies as you can, kill the enemies you can't disable. You might take out particularly dangerous ones first, or you might take out the ones you can kill quickly. Once the battle is "under control" and only helpless enemies remain, kill them off one by one. When only one enemy remains, take a few turns to recover HP and AP, and revive any fallen characters. Then finish off the last guy.

BOSS BATTLES

Boss battles (and boss-like battles against a single very strong enemy) work differently. You can't just trade blows because your party will run out of health before the boss does. The first part of the fight generally involves buffing your own party and disabling the boss in any way possible. Always use Elegost's Examine and take advantage of any gaps in the boss's immunity. Some types of disabling attacks have no immunity at all: attacks that reduce accuracy (like blinding shot or seize dexterity), reduce defense (like hew armor or pierce will), or reduce damage (like capture strength or weakening slash) **always** work, so feel free to stack them up. For super-strong enemies with massive armor, the Morgul Decay item will destroy their armor completely, but these are very rare and should be used sparingly.

The primary ways to buff up your own party are Haste and Berethor's leadership skills. There are also items (such as Maiar Embers) that give a character's melee attack an elemental attribute. Putting an elemental attack on your primary damage dealer when the boss has an elemental weakness can greatly speed up a battle-- this strategy is particularly effective against Sauron.

Once you have Morwen, always steal from a boss until you succeed once. Some bosses have stealable equipment that can't be found elsewhere.

RAGES, WRATHS, & RAMPAGES

ALL of the double-hit weapon skills (Citadel Rage, Elven Rage, Mountain Rage, Wrath of Penmark, and Rohirrim Rage) are worse than useless. They hit twice, but carry such a huge turn penalty that in the same amount of battle time, you could have simply performed that character's basic melee skill twice-- spending less AP and getting getting 2 SP instead of 1. (Wrath of Penmark is included because it's the "doubled" version of Double Cleave.) The only time you might consider using one of these skills is for assassination-- on rare occasions it's more important to finish off a particularly dangerous enemy immediately. Most of the time, however, you can find some other way to stop them (sleep, stun, cripple).

Combos that hit more than twice are better. They generally carry the same turn penalty as the 2-hit ones, but since you get more hits, the damage-over-time is better. But they *still* cost more AP and give you less SP than just doing basic melee skills.

PERFECT MODE

I practically *never* use the Perfect Mode attacks. There are situations early game where it can be useful to shorten boss battles, or as a last-ditch attack if you're about to get game over. But the farther you go, the more useful it is to simply stay in Perfect Mode all the time. The fact that Morwen and Hadhod always critical hit when you're in Perfect Mode is so "overwhelming" that it's rarely worth going out of Perfect Mode. The other nice benefit to not using Perfect Mode attacks is that you can ignore all of the skills that increase "Attack Momentum" and get more useful skills instead. ("Attack Momentum" is the rate at which your perfect meter charges.)

EVIL MODE

Whenever a chapter of Evil Mode is unlocked, go play it immediately. It's a really nice change of pace, and the items you get are generally better than what you have. There's a really great Evil Mode FAQ by kibbitz.

* 3. CHARACTER AND SKILL ADVANCEMENT

Characters can be developed in many different ways, but I'm going to highlight what I feel are the best ways to develop the characters: what skills to get vs. not bother with, based on the actual battles you'll run into. Almost all of the Passives are good, and you'll get them all automatically by level 50, so for those it's really more about priority order.

3.1 Berethor

Best used: Tank, Support, Melee

Don't let the other FAQs mislead you. Berethor is NOT a melee damage machine. True, he's a great source of melee damage early on, but by mid-game Hadhod

outshines him, and in the late game Morwen deals *far* more damage, because both Morwen and Hadhod have auto-crit passives. I wasted a whole lot effort getting the SP for Gondor Rampage, only to discover that Rohirric Rampage did just as much damage, but with a much smaller turn penalty. I don't know about you, but I usually have better things to do with Idrial than Valorious Hasting Berethor.

Instead, once you get past mid-game, use him more as a tank, and for support. His high armor rating, taunt, and counter are perfect for it.

Getting him a few Lightcraft skills (especially Aura, Haste, and Power) will greatly enhance his early game support role until you get Eaden.

ATTRIBUTES

Berethor's attributes should be more evenly distributed than any other character-- Strength, Dex, Con, and Speed are all important. Go very light on Spirit, no more than a few Spirit points early on to increase his AP pool; almost none of his abilities are Spirit based, and he has a passive to reduce his AP use. You can also get an elfstone of action to help with the AP.

Sword Craft

Guardian Strike: Berethor's bread and butter, use it all game.

Orc Bane: you have to get this one, but it comes with a turn penalty; stick to Guardian Strike.

Counter Attack: get this ASAP, goes great with taunt.

Shattering strike: One of the weaker armor breaks, but definitely get this; stacks with other armor breaks. No turn penalty, so you might as well use this on any enemy you'll have to hit more than twice.

Citadel Rage vs. Uruk-hai Bane: I don't use either one. Citadel Rage has a big turn penalty and AP cost, but can be useful for assassinations. But Uruk-hai Bane costs more to learn and also carries the usual Bane turn penalty. I'd say get Rage and move along faster in the skill tree.

Ecthelion Wrath vs. Defensive Strike: Very similar situation as above, but Wrath is better than Rage: it's more damage for the same turn penalty. Defensive strike is almost useless.

Targeted Strike: This can do a lot of damage against heavily-armored enemies; unfortunately it carries a HUGE turn penalty, which mostly negates any advantage. :(Unfortunately you have to get it to unlock Gondor Rampage.

Stunning Strike: Berethor's Stunner. A critical skill; get this as soon as possible! Many mid- to late- game enemies that cannot be Sleped can be Stunned. And sleeping enemies should always be woken with a Stun attack to prevent them from immediately attacking.

Gondor Rampage: Second best melee attack in the game, behind Morwen's Rohirric Rampage. They do about the same damage, but Berethor's carries a much bigger turn penalty. The best way to use this is to Double Attack, toss down two of these, and then have Idrial Valorious Haste him. Protip: throw this down if

Berethor is about to die, since the revive will reset his turn.

Leadership

Company Might / Valor: may give you a slight edge in early boss battles.

Fellowship Grace: This is the only way to recharge AP for Berethor, Hadhod, and Elegost until you get Eoaden, so it's an absolutely vital skill. Get it as soon as you can.

Stand Fast: an essential skill against enemies who can stun. Can also be used to clear stun from Berethor's party mates. Always use immediately when fighting Mumakils.

War Call: This isn't as useful as you might imagine due to the turn penalty. You could use it to gain Leadership SP without just throwing turns away, but honestly you'd usually rather have Sword Craft SP than Leadership SP anyway.

Company Resistance: moderately useful in some battles against Area-Effect casters.

All Retreat: not very useful, because the really dangerous battles you can't run away from. However, it's cheaper than...

Company Rally: useless if you stay in Perfect Mode.

Royal Grace: weak healing, not very useful. Instead, get...

Shield of Courage: very useful against Nazgul, who have a fear attack. This is also your only all-party status clear other than Idrial's Cleansing Waters.

That's as far as I got down the Leadership tree. You really don't need anything beyond Shield of Courage.

PASSIVE CHOICES

Rising Valor vs. Gondorian Evade: get the evade, since you're tanking. You won't need the extra AP.

Challenge of Gondor vs. Increase Armor: both are very useful, but get the armor, since you're tanking, and circle back later.

Immune to Fear vs. Citadel Evasion: get Immune to Fear first, as it can prevent some Game Overs vs. Nazgul. But Evasion is also good, so get it too.

Double Attack vs. Ecthelion Might: get the extra health for tanking. Get Double Attack later after you have Gondor Rampage, that's the only real reason to use Double Attack.

3.2 Idrial

Best use: Spellcaster, Status attacks

Idrial's Sword Craft is useful early on. In particular, you can get her Stunning Strike *long* before Berethor and Hadhod get stunners. But eventually, the other melee characters will leave her in the dust with better weapons. Her true power is as a caster.

Shadowcraft is the best complement to Idrial's natural skills, see below.

ATTRIBUTES

Spirit and Speed. Higher spirit = more spell damage and healing! Higher speed lets her act more often and take less melee damage. A bit of Con is helpful for more health, but you're definitely going to want to put an elfstone of health on her. She'll also need just enough Dex to be able to hit consistently with Stunning Strike. Strength is a TOTAL waste of points.

Sword Craft

Weakening Slash: for strong boss-like enemies whose melee attacks cannot be prevented

Wounding Strike: the damage-over-time is based on Idrial's Spirit power, NOT her melee strength, so this can actually be really useful. However, get Stunning Strike first then circle back.

Stunning Strike: Get this as soon as possible! This is your only early-game stunner.

The rest of Idrial's Sword Craft is not very useful, but you may end up filling out her tree anyway just because it doesn't take much SP.

Spirit Powers

Gift of Elrond: your initial healing spell, use it a lot early on. :)

Loudwater Fury: it's your only really decent Spirit attack early game (Hadhod's fire attack is about as strong, but has a HUGE turn penalty). The real problem with this spell is the big turn penalty; it effectively takes your only healer out of combat in exchange for hitting one enemy. Sometimes it's useful to assassinate a really dangerous foe, but you should replace it as soon as possible with Black Speech from Shadowcraft.

Haste of the Elves: In many a boss battle, I've had Idrial self-cast this, then cast it on other characters. I love casting it on Morwen, as it *stacks* with her Battle Haste. Also useful to cast on a character who's farming SP, so that character gets more actions.

Drain Inspiration: Get this as soon as you can, before Gift of Galadriel. Ensures Idrial can recharge her AP and heal everyone at the end of battles. This can be used *offensively*: sometimes you'll run into an enemy with very damaging attacks that's difficult to stop or kill, but has low AP. Using Idrial to drain their AP can render them helpless. A great example of this is the "Flames of Udun" goblin you run into early in West Moria.

Gift of Galadriel: your bread-and-butter healing spell for the whole game. It

costs more AP, but who cares? You can always Drain the AP back. Importantly, it recovers FASTER than Gift of Elrond.

Cleanse Shadow: very useful for clearing off enemy status effects until you get Cleansing Waters, but I'd get Aura first, since a character dying also clears their status effects.

Aura of the Valar, Power of the Valar: Reviving a character in Third Age is different from many other RPGs in a really important way: revived characters get full HP and AP, and act *immediately* in battle. Having Idrial self-cast Aura on herself makes you practically immortal, since you can instantly recast it the moment you revive. Taking things one step further: Revive + Frenzy + Aura + some other spell is downright cheating. I would get Aura first. In the early game, you generally know when one of your characters is about to die (and you can use Taunt to influence it).

Valinor Endurance: USELESS. What's the point of taking a character out of battle? If you ever even think about casting this, self-cast Aura instead.

Valorous Haste: I don't use this often because of the long turn delay, but there are situations where it's useful. The best use is when some other character Double Attacks with two very long turn delay skills (e.g. 2x Rohirric Rampage or Gondor Rampage) and you want to let them do it again. Or occasionally some character has a skill that you desperately need before the enemy turn (Arrows of Sleep, Stand Fast, and Shield of Courage come to mind). Get Cleansing Waters first.

Cleansing Waters: extremely useful, one of the very few ways to clear status penalties off your group.

Gift of Grey Haven: I've definitely found this useful on occasion, but it's less useful than you might imagine, due to a big turn penalty. Generally, by the time you get this, Idrial can self-Aura, and many other characters have drain attacks.

Water Stallion: The problem with this spell is the massive turn penalty. By the time you would get this, you'll have Shadowcraft. So just get Black Speech and Wheel of Fire instead; they do the same damage with no turn penalty.

PASSIVE CHOICES

Fury of the Valar vs. Mallorn Armor: get Fury for the extra damage, her armor is already good (especially with all the Speed points you're giving her) so circle back later after getting Frenzy.

Fortunes Mastery vs. Elven Inspiration: I'd get Fortunes Mastery; she should have plenty of AP with all the Spirit points you're giving her.

Haste of the Valar vs. Endure Shadow: Haste, hands down. Endure Shadow is far less useful, get it later.

Frenzy vs. Grace of the Eldar: Frenzy, for the Aura combo. Grace is almost useless since you can always Drain to recharge AP.

Best use: Status Effects, early game AE damage

Elegost's job is to get in, inflict status effects, then get out of the battle as quickly as possible. His poor armor won't stand up in battle for long, and his damage potential is a lot lower than every other character. You might imagine that when faced with a group of enemies his AE attacks would do well in terms of total damage output, and there's some truth to this in early / mid-game. But there are a few problems. First, most of his AE attacks carry a big turn penalty. Second, once you get Black Speech, the casters will do a *lot* more AE damage. And third, in most group battles, the goal is to focus on knocking out one enemy at a time as quickly as possible, not wounding the whole group.

Elegost's best move is Arrows of Sleep + Sleep Volley. Get those as soon as possible and you can "sleep walk" through the mid-game. Even as far as Minas Tirith you'll find at least 1 or 2 enemies in a group will be happy to take a nap for you.

NOTE: you could take Elegost in a completely different direction. You could focus on Speed, Dex, and Spirit, and once you get Lightcraft turn him into a second healer, freeing up Idrial for other things. This would not be a bad direction to go, and might make a few mid-game boss battles easier. Unfortunately, there's no way to fix Elegost's armor problem, making Eaden a much better long-term choice for this role.

ATTRIBUTES

Elegost's critical attributes are Speed and Dex. You want to get in and out quickly, and you don't want to miss! Some Con and Strength are useful. Just a few Spirit points early on to increase his AP pool, but mostly Spirit is a waste.

Bow Craft

Arrow Flurry: skip over this to blinding shot, it carries a big turn penalty.

Blinding Shot: critical early game vs. boss-like enemies, get this as soon as you can.

Draining Shot: nice to be able to heal yourself instead of taking a turn from Idrial, but get Crippling Shot first.

Crippling Shot: a Slow attack; few enemies are immune, even many bosses are susceptible. Stacks with Hadhod's Crippling Smash and Shadowcraft Cripple for even more slowness! The only downside is the turn penalty. But once you get Crippling Might, it slows the enemy down so much that Elegost should get a turn to escape before the boss gets a turn.

Shield Piercing: stacks with other armor-smashing attacks, but not as good as Hadhod's Hew Armor or Eaden's Shatter.

The last two skills are not worth the effort. Pinning Shot is almost useless, and True Shot with its turn penalty just isn't as good as the damage attacks other characters can do.

Ranger Craft

Aimed Shot: good damage, but turn penalty.

Piercing Might: decent early game vs. boss-like melee attackers. The other great thing about this is the very low AP cost; especially early-game it's a great way to keep the SP rolling in without running out of AP.

Pierce Will: not amazingly useful, but there a few boss battles where you'll end up wanting to do a lot of Spirit damage.

Arrows of Sleep: Elegost's best skill! Note that when you wake a sleeping enemy by attacking it, that enemy will get to act immediately.. UNLESS you wake the enemy with a Stun attack. The general strategy is to either stun or else 1-hit kill enemies as you wake them, to prevent them getting an attack off.

Paralyzing Shot: a "Bind Melee" attack. This is an absolutely vital skill against Mumakils, but you won't run into those until Pelennor Fields. There are other enemies you can use this on, examine Bosses to see which ones aren't immune. BEWARE: some enemies have weaker melee attacks but strong spirit attacks; if you Bind Melee on them, you'll force them to use only powerful Spirit attacks!

-- Paralyzing Shot is the last "must have" skill. From here on, all Ranger Craft skills are "nice to have" at best and useless at worst. --

Kingsfoil Grace, Cursed Arrow: these are both almost completely useless, unfortunately you have to get one or the other to advance in the skill tree. I'd say get Cursed Arrow, there may be a handful of useful situations.

Flash Arrow: this is a nice-to-have against groups of enemies who are immune to Arrows of Sleep. Against boss-likes, you can also stack it up with Blinding Shot.

Arrow Splinters: almost useless.

Grace of Athelas: fairly useless.

Pierce Spirit: somewhat useful against Spirit-attacking bosses.

Northern Storm, Fangorn Roots: neither is worth SP farming for. If you have to pick one, get Fangorn Roots, it's about the only attack you have that inflicts "Root", and there are enemies immune to practically everything else. Northern Storm is completely trumped by Wheel of Fire from your casters.

PASSIVE CHOICES

Hands of the Bowman vs. Ranger War Rally: Hands of the Bowman, for sure. Ranger War Rally is a useless "attack momentum" skill; get it last.

Spirit of the North vs. Frenzy: Spirit of the North, Elegost is always short AP. The only time I EVER recall using Frenzy is to get off two Paralyzing Shots in a double Mumakil fight in Pelennor Fields.

Blessing of Haste vs. Sleep Volley: while Haste is really good, Sleep Volley

is Elegost's absolute best passive. Get Haste after Lingering Sleep and Crippling Might.

Lingering Sleep vs. Crippling Might: It depends. If you don't yet have Shadowcraft's Cripple, then get Crippling Might first. If you do have it, Lingering Sleep is the best SP farming and anti-attrition skill in the game up until about Minas Tirinth.

3.4 Hadhod

Best use: Melee, Tank

From the time you get Overwhelming Axes until Morwen hits her stride, Hadhod will be your top melee damage dealer. His high HP, taunt, and counter make him a good tank, though his armor isn't as good as Berethor's.

He's a joke as a spell caster. Don't even bother with his damage spells!

ATTRIBUTES

Strength, Dex, and Speed. Some Con for tanking is useful, as there are battles where you'll want Berethor to taunt one enemy while Hadhod taunts the other. Spirit is a complete waste.

Axe Craft

Dwarven Cleave: surprisingly, Hadhod's basic melee skill carries a turn penalty! You're actually better off using other skills with no turn penalty once you get them.

Goblin Bane: okay, but like all Banes, carries a turn penalty.

Cleaving Wound: a little more AP, but no turn penalty. I use this skill as Hadhod's basic attack once I get it.

Crippling Smash: a Slow attack, stacks with other things like Crippling Shot. Great against most boss-like enemies.

Hew Armor: best early game attack to take down armor, stacks with others e.g. Berethor's Shattering Strike. Use on boss-likes.

Stone Hewer, Mountain Rage: unfortunately, these both suck. Stone Hewer because it's a Spirit attack, Mountain Rage because it's completely eclipsed by Durin Wrath.

Durin Wrath: Hadhod's Stunner. Get it as soon as you can! Often fails to Stun an enemy on account of killing them outright. :)

Counter Attack: not as critical as for Berethor. Get Berserk first.

Spirit Cleave: only modestly useful, get Berserk and Counter Attack first.

Berserk: an automatic triple critical that also self-hastes? This is an

absolutely fantastic skill!

The rest of Hadhad's melee tree is mostly useless. Smite is utterly useless, since you're already auto-critting. Rampage of Durin is ok, but not as good as Morwen or Berethor's Rampages. Mountain Hwer is not as good as what your spellcasters can throw.

Spirit Powers

Unfortunately, this entire skill tree is nearly useless. Almost everything in here carries a huge turn penalty. In addition, getting Spirit SP for Hadhod is a major chore.

Stone Shield: I suppose you could toss this on Berethor while he's taunting a lone enemy.

Flaming Fury: this is only useful in early game fights where you can't reach the enemy, for example the Watcher in the Water fight.

Endure Flame: this is useful in the Balrog fight, so try to have it by then, even if you have to SP farm just a little. Endure Flame is the best way to SP farm in this tree, since it doesn't carry a turn penalty. (Not that you should be SP farming this tree.)

Mountain Shield: useful in limited circumstances, but carries a turn penalty.

The rest of the skills in this tree are all useless. The damaging shields sound nice in theory, but as a practical matter there are very few fights where they would do any real good. Against groups of weaker enemies, you generally arrange for them not to hit you at all. Against bosses, the reflected damage is insignificant compared to the boss's health. Flames of Ruin and Dragon Calling are totally outdone by your casters throwing Wheel of Fire.

PASSIVE CHOICES

Lordly Might vs. Evasion of Gloin: Lordly Might for sure, get Evasion later on.

Battle Hardened Armor vs. Overwhelming Axes: Get Overwhelming Axes as soon as possible, it will massively increase Hadhod's damage output. Armor is also good, but get it later.

Might of Balin vs. Dwarven Challenge: Depends. I'd go for the extra health. Unless you happen to use Hadhod to taunt a lot (I didn't), I'd save Dwarven Challenge for next-to-last or last.

Dwarven Haste vs. Double Attack: Dwarven Haste for sure, Hadhod's main problem is being slow. Double Attack is almost useless, get it last.

3.5 Morwen

Best use: Melee Damage Machine

Don't be fooled by Morwen's crappy starting weapons;, she's destined to become your greatest melee damage dealer. It's not that she pulls the biggest numbers per attack, but she attacks so *frequently* that her total output is extremely high. With Cloak of Plains as her secret weapon, she can win most fights SOLO if it comes to it.

If you really wanted to overdo Morwen, you could also get her Haste and Power of the Valar from Lightcraft, neither of which depend on the Spirit attribute.

ATTRIBUTES

Strength, Speed, and Dexterity! A few points in Con are probably okay. Don't waste a single point on Spirit. Get her an elfstone of Action instead.

Dual-Axe Craft

Double Cleave: Use it constantly!

Battle Haste: Use it every battle! Stacks with "Haste of the Elves" for even more speediness! Great for SP farming since the animation is very quick.

Stunning Cleave: Stunners are always good!

Rohirric Rampage: best melee attack in the game. At end game, it does as much as Berethor's Rampage, but recovers much faster.

Paralyzing Wound: great vs. Mumakils, but doesn't last as long as Elegost's paralyzer.

The rest of Morwen's Dual-Axe Craft skills are much less useful, I would go for whatever's cheaper to get to Rampage quicker.

Thief Craft

Cloak of Plains: Critical skill for tough fights! Makes Morwen invulnerable. You may think "If the enemies don't attack Morwen, they'll just attack someone else, so what's the point?" Well for one, that other person probably has better health and armor. For two, that person might be auto-life Idrial. And third (and most importantly) it makes her immune to AE and status attacks. The major downsides are the huge AP cost, and the fact that it runs out after a while. But once you get a sense for the timing, you'll know when to recast before it runs out.

Steal Action: Critical skill to replenish Morwen's low AP pool. Use it immediately after casting Cloak of Plains to ensure you have enough AP to recast.

Steal Health: Very useful to quickly heal Morwen, takes less time than a healing spell from a caster.

Capture Strength: very useful against boss-like enemies to not only reduce their melee damage, but increase Morwen's.

Seize Dexterity: if you find an enemy that you tend to miss, use this and try again. Also good against melee bosses.

Seize Skill: this is ONLY useful for SP farming her other Thief Craft skills. This is the only skill in the game that nets you 2 SP instead of 1, but they'll both go to Thief Craft.

Steal Item: try this on all Bosses, a few of them have equipment (such as Axes for Morwen) that can't be obtained any other way.

PASSIVES

Overwhelming Blows is Morwen's best passive, hands down.

Hands of Rohan, Mearas Good Fortune- more hits, more damage!

The worst passives are the Item Crafting ones. Double Attack is marginally useful for a 2x Rampage followed by Valorous Haste -- but really, if you're going to burn a Valorous Haste anyway, you might as well 2x Berethor's Gondor Rampage instead.

WASTE OF SKILL POINTS

Rage of Maiden: the slight extra damage isn't worth the turn penalty

Twin Wounds / Poisoned Wounds: the damage-over-time is TINY compared to Morwen's melee damage (I think it's probably Spirit-based)

Orc Bane: by the time you get it, Orcs will be the least of your problems

Sneak Attack: rarely useful

Valorous Cleave: you should be dumping points into Dex anyway

Wrath of Penmark: for only 4 hits, the turn penalty isn't really worth it, skip over it and get to Rampage faster, which gives you 6 hits for the same cost and turn penalty.

Steal Experience: useless; despite the description you're only stealing experience from other party members ultimately!

3.6 Eaden

Best use: Spellcaster

While you could take Eaden in either direction, I strongly recommend you go for pure caster. His melee just isn't up to par. In addition to his own unique Spirit Powers, Eaden is greatly enhanced by Lightcraft (to share / take over healing and support from Idrial) and Shadowcraft's Black Speech and Wheel of Fire for damage.

ATTRIBUTES

Spirit and Speed, just like Idrial. Go a little heavier on the Con, though. His armor is worse, and he can't auto-life, so the extra health is useful for keeping him alive.

Spear Craft

Honestly... don't bother. You could go the whole game without Eaden ever thrusting his spear.

Spirit Powers

Dispel: Only AE Dispel in the game. Always use it when an enemy casts Battle Mirror!

Channel Spirit: very useful for allies who don't have a quick way to replenish AP.

Shatter Armor: best armor-lowering attack! Stacks with other armor breakers.

Drain Health: quite decent, the damage is not capped by Eaden's max health.

Drain Spirit: not as good as the Lightcraft version, so get the Lightcraft version ASAP and use that instead.

Channel Health: not as good as Lightcraft; good for SP farming though.

PASSIVES

N/A, you get him at level 50 with most of his passives already learned.

WASTE OF SKILL POINTS

All of his high-level Spirit Power skills other than Shatter Armor. Lightcraft and Shadowcraft are just so much better!

3.7 Lightcraft

The Lightcraft skills have a lot of overlap with Idrial's Spirit Powers. For that reason, it's not super useful to teach Idrial Lightcraft. The best early game use is having 1 or 2 people other than Idrial get Haste of the Elves and Power of the Valar, and to a lesser extent Aura. Berethor is a great choice for this; Elegost also works. Late game, it's fantastic for training Eaden as a second healer / support.

A few notes--

Sleep: not useful since you have Arrows of Sleep.

Drain Spirit: better than Eaden's version.

Suffocate Evil: Binds melee, ranged, AND spirit. I'm not sure, but I think it doesn't work if the target is immune to any of those binds. Feel free to give it a shot, but I didn't use it much.

Blinding Light: A good spell (to be sure) but generally not as good as the Shadowcraft attack spells, which do the same amount damage, but hit all targets.

3.8 Shadowcraft

Shadowcraft is awesome! Teach it to Idrial as soon as possible. The Shadowcraft attacks are much better than her water-based attacks. There are really no bad skills in the entire set!

Dispel: not as good as Eaden's AE dispel, but handy to have pre-Eaden

Whip of the Master: the main thing here is realizing which enemy attacks are slowing attacks; several different attacks like "Curse of Barad-Dur" are actually Slow attacks, keep an eye on the turn meter and character status.

Silence: a great spell against casters

Crippling: a Slow attack like crippling shot or smash, but even better! Recasting pushes back the enemy's turn *even farther*; it can be used over and over to render helpless enemies who are immune to sleep and stun.

Drain Health: I'm not sure whether this is better or worse than Eaden's version. If you test this out, let me know.

Black Speech: fantastic AE damage attack with no turn delay, get it ASAP!

Fear: can disable a few strong foes that are immune to sleep, slow, and stun.

Wheel of Fire: same damage as Black Speech, but fire elemental and DOT effect.

3.9 Itemcraft

Please don't waste your time with this! Most items are nearly useless to begin with. Now consider how much energy is involved in learning the skills, creating the items, and then using them.

* 4. CONCLUSION

I hope you find this helpful, and it makes Third Age more fun and less annoying for you. Feel free to repost, but please link to the original on GameFAQs. Feedback? Suggestions? Email dragonsinth at gmail dot com.

Thank you to kibbitz, for his Skill FAQ and Evil Mode FAQ.