

MidCon for Beginners

A guide for people who are new to cons or **MidCon**

Welcome to **MidCon** for the first time. This is intended to be a brief guide to how games conventions work, and suggestions for getting the maximum value from the event. There is far more detailed information in the main **MidCon** booklet which has information on buffet times, places to eat, second-hand games stall, the Saturday night quiz, websites, local games clubs and all that.

I'm assuming you've not wandered in while passing, but have seen some publicity, and know what games get played, how long we're here for etc., but you are wondering how to get into a game, and what else you need to do.

Why we're here

The objective of **MidCon** is simple; to give you a place to play games with people from all over the country (and overseas), with facilities like a games shop, a second-hand games stall (you can sell as well as buy), bars and additional fripperies like food and bedrooms for the less committed players.

The convention is run by unpaid, slightly harassed volunteers and not the hotel, so any problems other than with your room, drink or food should be addressed to a Committee member (coloured name badges). We had a virtually problem-free year in 2011, our first year here, and think the staff and management are as helpful as they can be. The good news is once you've paid your convention fee and, if you're a resident, your room bill there's nothing further you need to pay for except food, drink and a big pile of the new stuff from the games shop (which

offers a **MidCon** discount as well).

Peer to peer games library

The first thing that might strike you is the low level of organisation of the gaming. Rather than a formal tournament structure, the idea is to find a game, place to play it, people to play against and get on with it. Repeat as necessary. The *Diplomacy*, being different, is a tournament system, details are in the booklet.

There are two main rooms in which to play games, as well as the lounge behind the main bar and more rooms near the front of the hotel. Apart from the bar lounge we have exclusive use of all this space. Extra rooms may be added if required by a late rush. There are also a lot of people who come alone or in small groups who need to find opponents, and I'm afraid social interaction might be required to get a group together for a game. The usual tricks are to set up a game of something and hope passers-by ask to join, or wander around looking for games being set up looking for passers-by to join. People wandering around looking for games to join often find similar groups, and discussions can proceed from there, and games about to start can often accommodate extra players (after all, who really plays three-player *Imperial* from choice?).

If you want to play something you don't have with you should be able to borrow a copy if you can find one. People will lend out their precious games to complete strangers all weekend unless they intend to play them soon, but please ask before

helping yourself to the contents of a games bag. There's no restriction on what you play, but be reasonable with the noisier games (play them near **MidCon** head honcho Jeremy for added effect).

We never close ...

Gaming tends to get going straight after breakfast, with a big thinning out for evening meals from about 7.00pm. Most residents return for more games, and you can stay up as late as you want, playing away without mum telling you it's a school day tomorrow. Late night games are sometimes less sophisticated than the afternoon delights, but so are the players by then.

People tend to leave their games in the games room overnight, and in 30 years of going to conventions I can't recall any games going missing (there's a games shop in there as well). There's also no problem leaving a quick game of *Through The Ages* half-finished for completion next day, just don't leave it unplayed on a table for 6 hours during the day as tables can become scarce at times.

Food and drink

There is a Saturday and Sunday lunchtime and evening buffet served in the main games room (The Garden Room) for £6 a go, while it is worth reminding you that if you are a resident in the hotel (or the overspill hotel across the road) the breakfast is included in the room charge.

Although there's a good restaurant in the hotel, most go out into the delights of Derby for evening meals, and there's a comprehensive listing and reviews in the **MidCon** booklet. It's accepted form to go out with the people you've just spent hours playing games with *if you want*, and dining groups vary from couples to

over a dozen. If you want to eat something beyond a sandwich before the Friday evening buffet opens at 6.00pm I recommend The Brunswick Inn, a superb pub about 2 minutes away that does food until 5.00 on Friday afternoon (ask for directions from the committee or hotel staff), and the Hotel Bar does good but pricey bar food all day (just the three food outlets in the hotel then ...) The train station has the food outlets you'd expect in the post-Railtrack era.

Responsible drinking during games is not so much tolerated as encouraged, as any cask ales left over in the games room bar are charged to the convention. Just as we've never had any reported thefts, we've never had any drink related incidents either.

Any probs?

If your problem is with the hotel please try reception first, then a **MidCon** committee member if you can't make any progress. If the **MidCon** reception desk is empty, look for a balloon in The Garden Room; we're talking a helium-filled balloon, not the full Phileas Fogg escape vehicle. At one end of it – the balloon – should be a committee member. We'll do everything we can to help, but can't create empty bedrooms, meals at 3.30am or a spare copy of *Outpost* (original) to play. The gamers and Committee are generally a tame lot, so ask questions if you need help, just not in the middle of someone's 3-way merger in a game of 1842.

If you find things unsatisfactory in any way, or can suggest improvements please tell us, as there are small problems we are often unaware of, and fresh perspectives often help.

The **MidCon** Committee.