



Ab Initio Games

House Rules



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Introduction These are the "house rules" for Ab Initio Games. Many of them will be fairly obvious but they're all laid out so you know what to expect from me, and also how to behave. My general rule of thumb is to treat everyone the same and be fair to everyone, but inconsiderate players, either towards the GM or to other players won't be tolerated. The GM's decision is final and is made in the best interests of the majority of players and the fair running of the game concerned. I won't engage in arguments with players, as profit margins in play-by-mail (PBM) games are too tight to spend excessive time on an awkward minority. They find themselves ejected from games and not allowed to rejoin!

Turn Credits As in all PBM games you are required to pay for turns in advance. The number of turns you have paid ahead is shown on your game report. One turn credit is deducted for each turn you play. Turns that have not been paid for will be played but will not usually be mailed (sometimes I may send the first unpaid turn, as players often forget to send payment - but don't rely on this - there's no reason why I should send a turn you haven't paid for). In all games you'll see tenths of credits (or "part-credits") reported. These are used to pay for extra listings, faxes, extra email reports, replacement rulebooks and so forth. Payments should normally be made for full numbers of credits, in the amounts shown on reports.

UK Payments Payments should be made by cheque or postal order and made out to "Ab Initio Games", unless otherwise specified. If you send an amount that is not an exact multiple of the turnfee (or discount offer) then part credits will be issued. If you are in more than one game of the same type then you may split payments between them.

Overseas Players We welcome overseas players, though we strongly recommend you have access to email and the Internet. If you do, you can receive results via email, you can submit orders via our website, and you can contact me via email. However, if you really need to get results via air mail, submit orders via fax or air mail you can do so, but there may be extra costs and slower turnaround times (Europe is usually OK, but North American and Australian air mail takes 4-7 days). Details of sending payments in non-UK currencies follow.

Credit Card Payments Credit Card payments can be made via the active website (www.softsim.co.uk). This quotes rates and prices in three separate currencies:- British Pounds (Sterling), US Dollars and Australian Dollars. If you wish to pay for turns in a different currency then you can select to pay in Sterling and the Credit Card system will convert it into your local currency. We use 2checkout.com and there is a facility within that for you to see exactly what you'll be charged in your local currency.

Overseas Postage We strongly advise overseas players use email both ways (submitting orders and receiving results), if they can, but if necessary we'll send results via air-mail and you can submit orders via fax (or air mail).

For air-mailed results there's an extra charge on turns (to cover the extra cost of air mail). This is 0.1 credits to Europe, 0.4 credits to the USA & Canada and 0.5 credits to Australia, New Zealand and the Far East. Please be aware that such results will take longer to arrive.

Sending Cash I strongly recommend you don't send any cash, particularly coins. If you send cash and it doesn't arrive you won't get your credits, and coins sent through the post frequently fail to arrive.

Costs and Discounts The cost of each turn depends on how many you pay for at once. Turnfees are shown on game reports. In some games you cannot buy less than four turns at a time because of the cost of processing each payment. As a general rule of thumb the more turns you buy at once the cheaper they are.

Emailed Reports All games now offer you the option of receiving reports by email. If you'd like to receive results by email then you can try the printing program and sample reports at www.sidetracks.co.uk/DownloadsPage.html. Once you've got that working send me your email address and I can start sending reports to you via email instead of by post. Alternatively you may wish to have reports sent to you by email **and** post, but in this case you will be charged an extra 0.2 credit per turn for having the duplicates sent. There isn't any difference in the cost of receiving orders by post or email. While sending emailed results saves us postage and printing costs we do have other costs to recoup from the development of emailed results, and where we make savings we generally try to pass these onto players in the form of keeping turnfees unchanged. Turnfee rises have been few and far between over the last ten years for these reasons.

We are also now converting games so that you may receive game reports as PDF files. These mean you don't have to fiddle around with our printing program, with printer drivers, and indeed can even read your game reports without printing them off if you don't have access to a printer.

Emailing Orders You can submit orders via email using our active website. If you want more information about submitting orders via email, please ask for details. The deadline for submission of email orders is normally 9am on the day of the deadline.

Faxing Orders You have the option of sending your orders by fax. The fax number is **020-8249-1819** (4420 8249 1819 from outside the UK). Use of the fax facilities is open to all players but it's intended to be there for those playing from abroad and those needing it as a last minute emergency option. There is a cost for receiving faxes (line rental, printing costs, etc) and I pass this cost onto you. The charge is 0.1 credit per page received (so avoid sending cover notes and so forth).

Fax Quality The quality of faxes is often poor, generally because the fax is overused (mainly by people who have no need to use it at all). There's nothing I can do if I can't read your fax, so my advice is to not use it unless you really have to. You should take extra care with writing your orders if they are to be faxed, and use clear bold lettering (black is best, red will be better than blue). Take extra care to mind your O's and D's.

Fax Deadlines Faxed orders must be sent by 9am the day of the deadline. If your orders aren't there at that time then they'll probably miss the deadline (I start running games as soon after 9am as possible, to ensure the results are back in the post to you the same day). Don't ring me to ask if I'll wait for you to fax orders in later in the day, I won't – that's not fair on everyone else. The bottom line is if you wait until the last minute you aren't being very smart, and you shouldn't be surprised if something goes wrong.

Introducing New Players If you introduce someone new to our games then you are entitled to four free turn credits when they sign up to play. Get the new player to mention your name on their application (this bonus does not apply to startups under free offers). This offer applies to new customers (not existing customers playing a different game) and is restricted to genuine customers who join the game and keep playing (to stop the of rogue who makes up a bogus mate who pays £5.00 to join in order to claim a bundle of free credits).

Errors Mistakes cannot usually be corrected, and games cannot be rerun. If you spot an error then you should inform me immediately, as there is a free turn credit for spotting an uncorrected error and compensation may be made for adverse effects on your position. Errors must be notified as soon as possible (it's much easier to fix something if you tell me straight away, so I can if necessary notify other players - don't wait until just before the next turn is due and expect me to be able to sort something out).

Sending Orders If possible, submit orders via the active website. If you post orders, I strongly recommend you send orders by first class mail, and allow three days for orders to arrive. My estimation is that 80% of first class mail is delivered next day, 98% within two days and 99.5% within three days. If you allow less than three days for orders to arrive you run the risk of the Royal Mail letting you down. I strongly recommend you don't use second class mail at all - it's simply too unreliable and not worth saving a few pence for the risk of your orders not arriving.

Receiving Results Turns are normally processed on the day of the deadline and sent out by first class post. Occasionally turns will be run a day late, usually because of problems in the office or because I take the odd day off (football or cricket last minute - which I consider as offsetting the fact I work 51 weeks a year - my week off being at Christmas when the post dies anyway) but usually I'll be able to warn you in advance. If things are running late I'll normally post a note on the website – click on the Latest News link.

You can normally expect postal results the day after the deadline (if things run on time and the post isn't slow reaching you). However, please wait four days before worrying that results haven't arrived (then call me to find out what's going on). Please don't call me the day after the deadline "to see if they ran on time" - the answer is either no (I'm running behind and trying to catch up, so answering such phone calls isn't very helpful) or yes (and the Royal Mail has let you down). Either way calling doesn't help to get the results to you any quicker. Wait the four days then ring me! Emailed results normally come through within hours, but please wait 24 hours before reporting them missing – even emails can be delayed.

Guaranteed Delivery Please do not send orders by guaranteed/special delivery as I won't accept them. First because I work from home guaranteed delivery usually means the postman wants a signature at 7am in the morning, when I'd rather be asleep. Second if he does arrive at a more civilised time and I'm not here to sign for a letter then he'll take away the letter again and require me to collect it. Either way it causes much more work and hassle for me un-necessarily. You ought to be organised enough to be able to send your orders in plenty of time, and if not you can always fall back on faxing orders in an emergency (for details see overleaf).

Late Orders In some games if you miss a deadline then your previous set of orders are used instead. In others there is a computer routine to write orders for you. If your orders arrive late then they'll be set aside and used only if no new instructions arrive before the next deadline.

Postal Strikes In the case of a major postal strike, any deadlines falling after the start of the strike will be reset when the strike is over. Any turns due shortly before the strike will be held back until after the end of the strike. Unfortunately no special arrangements are made for minor and local strikes, otherwise we'd never be able to run anything. Hopefully we can cope with local strikes via fax and email.

Replacement Rulebooks If you need a replacement rulebook for any game then just ask for a copy. The cost is normally 0.2 credits per rulebook sent (for games with more than one rulebook the cost is per rulebook).

Missing Turns Game reports are kept only until the following deadline. If you miss a turn (by running out of credits or through mail getting lost) then you will need to act promptly in order to get the missing game report. If your results haven't turned up four days after the deadline then ring.

Problems and Questions If you aren't sure about something to do with your game please ask, but please follow a few ground rules. First make sure you've checked in the rules - if you ask something that's clearly in the rules I'll simply tell you to read the rules. Second make sure your question is clear - if I don't know what your question is I can't answer it. The third is please put your question down on a separate sheet of paper - questions on the backs of turnsheets are easy to miss and it's much easier for you to read the answer if it's alongside your original question.

Player Communications In our sports games it is our policy not to publish players' addresses, but you may send messages to other players via the GM (umpire) to be forwarded with game reports. Messages should be on postcards or index cards, clearly labelled with the league name or number, your name and team, and the name and team of the player you intend the message to go to. Inappropriate messages (anything likely to cause offence) will not be forwarded. Player newsletters (by players, for players, one for each league) are encouraged. In other games where player interaction is important to the game an address list may be provided. It is common, but entirely optional, in these games to exchange phone numbers or email addresses in the public messages section.

Hotline The phone hotline for problems and questions (please note that you cannot ring in orders) is available from 10am to 7pm Monday to Friday. Please don't call outside these hours. Whilst I do work from home I like to switch off from work, so please restrict calls to "office hours". The number is 020-8325-2448. There is an answerphone on this number if you need to leave a message, but please don't ask me to call you back - if I'm not here and you need me you'll need to call again. Alternatively email me on danny@pbmsports.com. Please ensure it's a genuine query – if you just want to phone up and moan because you lost you'll get short shrift! Find a cat or something else to take out your frustration!

Returning Players If you stop playing in a particular game/league and wish to return at a later date, then I normally will only allow you to rejoin your existing team (assuming they are available). You'll normally also be charged a credit for being reinstated (because of the extra work involved). This only applies to players returning – new customers normally get their startup free as part of the startup package.

Cartels and Multiple Positions If we think players are working together in games where they shouldn't, or one player is operating more than one position in the same game then we'll eject them. Quickly and permanently. It's rare people try and do it, and we deal with them swiftly.

This section might look scary, but in our games it rarely happens because we make sure the games are designed to prevent it, and we monitor them carefully. If you want a game that's run properly and fairly then you can rely on us to do so.