RETURN OF THE RING

Congratulations! You are about to play the most sophisticated game program yet written for the Dragon 32.

In RETURN OF THE RING you become Ringbearer, wielder of the Four Bright Rings, who has rested the awesome Ring Of Darkness from its guardian Gron, servant of the Evil Sage. You will be able to roam freely through a dangerous and exciting world unrivalled for its wealth of detail and diversity. You will meet friends and enemies both old and new, and face challenges that only your personal wit and ingenuity may overcome.

Charged with returning the Dark Ring to its creators, the Masters of Ringworld, you find yourself transported to a mysterious city on a decaying planet, the last vestige of a once great civilisation. Communication with planet Ringworld has been broken. You do not know why the Masters have abandoned you here, but you sense the forces of the Evil Sage at work...

Further details about the Saga Of The Ring are found in The Ring Of Darkness, but you need not have played this game to enjoy RETURN OF THE RING.

We wish you many hours of happy adventuring, and may luck travel your path.

THE GAME CASSETTE

Since RETURN OF THE RING is too large to fit into just one program it has been written in several, all 100% machine code. Consequently the two sides of the cassette are different and have been labelled START SIDE and GAME SIDE. At times during play, usually when entering or returning from the forest moon, the computer will need to load another program. Leave the Game Cassette in your cassette player unless asked otherwise. Clear instructions will be given on the screen, and all programs load and run automatically.

STARTING THE GAME

Each time you start play, whether to continue a game that you have saved on a blank cassette or to begin a new character, you must first load the START SIDE with the command CLOADM, then follow the instructions given by the computer. If you have been using your computer switch it off then on again before loading.

Like The Ring Of Darkness, RETURN OF THE RING allows you to set up your own character by attributing points to various personality traits, and by selecting from a choice of character types and skills. The choices you make will greatly effect the course of your adventures.

If you have played The Ring Of Darkness you will be able to enter most of the attributes of your favourite character, but be warned. Things are not quite the same on this strange new world. For instance, although magic still exists it is not as strong in this essentially hi-tech environment.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE COMPUTER

The computer provides your view of the world in pictures, moving graphics and words, whilst the sophisticated WORDTEL system incorporated in the program allows you to tell the computer what to do in complete sentences, unlike the traditional "verb-noun" format found in most adventures. For example the program will understand instructions such as: GIVE THE SACK OF MAGIC GRAIN TO MERAK THE ELF.

Punctuation and adjectives, such as A, THE, THIS, and THAT, can be used freely.

Whilst the computer will normally understand abbreviated words it is recommended that you type in the whole word, or at least the first four letters, to be sure of the desired response. For instance, would the command:

TAKE THE DA

mean to take the DARK RING or take the DAGGER? The computer will make a choice, but it may not be the one you had in mind.

Each sentence must have a verb: eg. GIVE, TAKE, SAY, and so on. A complete list of the verbs recognised by the computer is given at the end of these instructions. Some special verbs, such as EAT, SAVE and ACTIVATE, are single word commands.

The main limitation imposed is that each sentence may only contain one instruction. To maintain the flow of the game the use of conjunctions such as AND is not allowed. You will have just one move between each move made by all the other computer controlled creatures.

The question mark prompt means the program is awaiting your input. If the computer does not understand your sentence it will respond with an appropriate message.

THE SCREEN DISPLAY

All displays appear in high resolution colour, even the words, which are printed in upper and lower case by WINTERSOFT'S high speed text generator. You will encounter several different types of screen display, according to the stage of the game you are playing. Most of these are comprised of two independent 'WINDOWS'. The upper half of the screen is normally a 'graphics window' in which you see displays of your surroundings in pictures and scrolling graphics. The bottom half of the screen is the 'text window' in which all messages, descriptions and input will appear.

Sometimes your actions may cause more text to be printed than can fit into the text window, so to give you time to read it there is a measured pause after each paragraph. The length of this pause may be adjusted by the command LAG. Enter a number between 0 and 15, the larger the number the longer the 'lag time'.

Many locations will be accompanied by a special picture, which will be drawn each time you enter the location. To speed things up you can 'switch off' the picture generator with the command NOVIEW (use VIEW to switch it on again), but don't miss any good pictures.

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND

There are two methods of moving yourself around, dependent on the game stage:

1. ARROW KEYS.
   The arrow keys will move your character north, south, east and west whenever you are in a moving graphics style location such as the scrolling planet map or the three dimensional forest.
2. The GO Command.
   In the text style locations where your choice of exit is described in words (eg. EXITS LEAD NORTH, SOUTH, WEST) you must enter the desired direction as a sentence. The sentences GO NORTH, NORTH, or simply N would all suffice to take you on the north exit.

In the course of your travels you will come across strange machines called TRANSPORTALS. These remnants of a past civilisation are matter transmitters leading to new locations, To use a transportal enter the command ACTIVATE. If you use a pass to enter a location via a transportal be sure to bring that pass out with you.

DEALING WITH OTHER CHARACTERS

The planet and its moon are inhabited by a great many strange creatures all of which possess their own independent characters, some friendly and some definitely hostile.

To deal with most characters you will use the command TRANSACT. In a shop, for instance, the sentence TRANSACT WITH THE SHOPKEEPER, will tell the shop keeper that you wish to buy or sell something.

Not all of the mutant creatures you meet in your travels will be aggressive (unless you are), and can also be TRANSACTED with. On the scrolling planet map your character appears in the centre of the display and mutants will appear to the north, south, east and west of your position. Since you may encounter more than one mutant at once you must always tell the computer the compass position of the mutant you wish to transact with. For example:

TRANSACT WITH THE MUTANT TO THE SOUTH.

or simply:

TRANSACT SOUTH

The same rule applies to attacking mutants on the planet map:

ATTACK THE MUTANT TO THE EAST.

or simply:

ATTACK EAST

On the forest moon you can only TRANSACT or ATTACK creatures that are directly in front of you, in your line of vision, so you will not need to specify a direction.

ACTEL CHARACTERS

You will also meet a number of very special computer controlled characters who, using a sophisticated program called ACTEL, are able to do almost anything you can, often of their own free will. Several of these Actel Characters will join you as companions in your quest.

To communicate with Actel Characters the command SAY is used. For example, if you had a companion called Merak The Elf you could:

SAY TO MERAK "GET THE LASER LANCE"
SAY TO THE ELF "GIVE THE LASER TO THE GREY DWARF"
SAY TO MERAK "ATTACK NORTH"

In fact most of the commands you can use on yourself can be given to an Actel Character, providing it is willing to co-operate.

THE OBJECTS OF THE GAME

Most of the many objects found in RETURN OF THE RING may be picked up or put down with the commands GET, TAKE and DROP. Objects dropped on the scrolling map will appear as boxes. After positioning your character over a box you may pick it up with the single command TAKE. The command EXAMINE will print the contents of a box.

You may obtain a list of the items you are carrying at any time with the single word command INVENTORY.

Actel characters may also carry objects. To list the items carried by a character you must include that character's name in the sentence. For example:

INVENTORY MERAK THE ELF.

If you wish to use an object in your possession you must tell the computer so:

USE THE DAGGER.

The command READY serves the same purpose, so you could have said

READY THE DAGGER.

The USE command will not always have an immediate result. For instance, whenever you USE or READY a weapon you are in fact making that weapon ready for your future ATTACK commands.

Many items require a power source before they will function, and the USE command has the effect of switching them on. To save power it is important to switch off the energy items you no longer wish to use with the command STOP USING. For example:

STOP USING THE LASER LANCE.

STAYING ALIVE

It is essential to keep your stamina points as high as possible, which you do by eating food units. After entering the single word command EAT the computer will ask how many units you wish to eat. Each food unit eaten gives two stamina points, but as in the real world there is a maximum to the amount of stamina you can gain by eating, which is shown as MAXIMUM STAMINA in your status listing. Food eaten whilst stamina is at maximum is wasted.

If your stamina falls to zero you will die, and one of your valuable REGENERATIONS will be used up. If ever you use all your regenerations you will have to start a new character.

To make real progress in RETURN OF THE RING it is important to build up EXPERIENCE POINTS. The more EXPERIENCE you have the higher your GESTALT LEVEL will rise.

OTHER COMMANDS

@: This very useful command has the effect of repeating the last sentence entered.

STATUS: This command will give a complete listing of your current status, including amounts of EXPERIENCE POINTS, STAMINA POINTS and FOOD UNITS. It is NOT possible to list the status of an Actel character.

BOARD: Allows you to board an item of transport on the map. First position yourself over the item.

EXIT: This command allows you to stop using an item of transport.

SAVE: It is very unlikely that you will complete RETURN OF THE RING in a single sitting. The command SAVE allows you to record the current state of your adventure onto your own blank tape. This is also useful to save a well progressed game in case you are killed.

LOAD: This command allows you to reload a previously saved character during play. Both the LOAD and the SAVE command can only be used whilst you are on the planet map.

LOOK: In the text style locations this command will give a description of your surroundings, including exits and visible objects, and a picture if there is one (providing the VIEW is on).

HOLD: Suspends the game until you press any key.

TIME PASSES...

RETURN OF THE RING is played in REAL TIME, which means the computer will not wait forever for you to give it a command. If after twenty seconds you have done nothing you will see the message:

TIME PASSES...

and all the other creatures will have their turn.

Pressing the ENTER key without typing a sentence will force time to pass.

THE COMMANDS

Movement Commands:
NORTH N SOUTH S EAST E WEST W (ARROW KEYS move your character in moving graphics locations)

Action Commands:
ACTIVATE ATTACK A BOARD DROP EXAMINE EAT EXIT GET GIVE GO READY SAY STOP TAKE T TRANSACT UNREADY USE

Special Commands:
@ HOLD H INVENTORY I LAG LOAD LOOK L NOVIEW SAVE STATUS VIEW

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RETURN OF THE RING has taken over one year to create, and was written by John F. Humphreys and David A Briskham.

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