

Using the Software Simulations/ Ab Initio Games Active Website

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Info Website: www.pbmsports.com Active Website: www.softsim.co.uk

Introduction - This sheet is designed to give you all the information you need to submit orders via email for games run at Ab Initio Games and Software Simulations.

Outline of the system for sending orders by email – The basic system for submitting orders via email is very simple. You have a username and password and log onto a website to submit your orders. There's no cost for submitting orders by email, and they'll reach us almost instantly. It's very easy to do, just fill in your paper turnsheet as usual, then log onto the website and copy them over to an on-line form laid out just the same way.

Which games currently have the facility to send in orders via email? - Already Gameplan (Basic only at the moment, not Advanced), Gridiron Stats, Rugby Stats, Soccer Stats, Empires, Gameplan Baseball, Hoopplan Advanced, Raceplan Advanced, Slapshot, Star Chase, Spaceplan and Dark Age have the on-line, email orders option available, and we're adding all other games to the list as quickly as we can. As soon as the email option is available in your game we'll let you know.

Why do I want to send orders by email? – How long is a piece of string? From our point of view your orders are read into the game data straight from disk. This means no typing for the GM, no risk of GM errors (though these are rare, and it also eliminates the chance of the GM correcting your errors, so make sure you enter orders correctly) and no having to try and interpret spidery writing or unclear faxes.

From your point of view there's no risk of the Royal Mail mangling, losing, delaying, mis-delivering orders, your orders are sent almost instantly (whilst email isn't quite as reliable and instant as some people think, it's much better than any alternative).

Is it free to email my orders? – Yes. The turns are quicker for us to process, it saves us time, which covers our costs of developing the system. We'll only pass on a cost if you're creating un-necessary work (such as sending the same set of orders more than once, in which case a 0.1 credit charged will be levied for each duplicate set).

Can I have emailed reports as well? – yes, but emailing orders and emailing results are separate options. If you prefer to continue to receive reports via the post then that's fine, you can still submit orders via email. And vice-versa, you can have reports emailed to you without having to email in your orders.

What is the "active" website address for sending orders? – We have two different websites. The first, (www.pbmsports.com) is an informational website, primarily for advertising and to attract new players. This has no security, and can be accessed by anyone.

The second, www.softsim.co.uk is the "active" website, where you submit your orders, and in some games might find limited game information (such as maps in Empires and Dark Age). Access to this website is restricted so that we know who is sending orders for which team, so it isn't appropriate for advertising and informational stuff.

How do I access the "active" website? – First you'll need to request a username from your GM. Usually this will be your normal name (to keep things simple). Once you've got a username you can log onto the active website. If you've already got a username because you use the site for a different game then you don't need a new username.

How do I get register on the "active" website? – The first time you log on you'll need to enter your username and then click on the "Login" option (don't type a password, you haven't got one yet). This will take you to the "Change Password" page to set a password (don't forget your password). The system will automatically take you to the Change Password option when you click the Login button.

Once you've set your password you'll need to register your email address (you can't submit orders without providing an email address for us to send confirmation back to and for the sender details on the email itself). To register your email address click on the "Change Email Address" option and enter it.

Once you've set your password and email address you'll need to click on "New Registration" to set your position up for email orders. You'll be asked for three bits of information:- the game title (from a drop down menu), the game number or id (usually a number from 1 to 89, e.g. 2, 7, or sometimes a two letter code – e.g. BA, BX etc) and

the position name or code (either will do – if in doubt, look on the top of your turnsheet). The system will tell you if your request is successful. If the system tells you that the “game number/code” is not recognised then you should contact your GM – usually it means that he/she needs to set up your position on the system.

How do I send in my orders? – Once you’ve got yourself registered, password and email address set then each turn you simply need to log onto the website and submit your orders. Each turn you’ll be required to fill in the turn number, as well as relevant information pertaining to the game. Once you send orders they’re emailed to us and a copy is sent to you. Remember to log out once you’ve finished a session on the website.

How should I write my orders? – we recommend that you write your orders on the paper turnsheet as usual, and then when they’re ready, log on and copy them onto the website. Deciding on and writing your orders whilst on-line isn’t a good idea – it eats up your phone bill, runs the risk of you being disconnected while doing so (by your ISP – not our system) and slows down our system if lots of people are logged on for no good reason. Do your planning and plotting off-line and only log on when the masterplan is complete!

What are the deadlines for sending my orders? – the deadlines for submission of orders via email will vary from game to game. Generally if your orders arrive by 9am on the day of the deadline you’ll be OK, though bear in mind that emails can sometimes take a few hours to propagate via the networks (note it’s when it arrives with us that matters, not the time your computer says it sent it – this is far too easy to abuse!). As with all of our methods of submitting orders, we recommend you don’t wait until the last minute, or you risk missing out if there’s any sort of delay.

Do you want feedback? – feedback on the active website is very welcome. It’s a developmental project, so if you found something confusing, liked something, didn’t like something, have a suggestion, we’re very happy to receive them. Please address these to your GM, and don’t be upset if he doesn’t necessarily agree with you!!

Does the “active” website check for any mistakes I make in my orders? – the “active” website is supposed to check for basic mistakes and errors in order submissions. Such as data missing and so forth. If you do try and send duff information it’ll probably stop you from doing so and ask you for corrections. Please keep an eye for this sort of thing and let us know if it isn’t working properly, or clearly.

What information should I give in my orders? - Generally the only information you must fill in is the turn/week number. Otherwise you should complete the online turnsheet just the same as you would a paper turnsheet. If there are boxes on the paper turnsheet which are “only fill in the changes to the existing selections” then you can also leave these blank on the online turnsheet. If you want to fill them all in that’s up to you, as the orders are read direct into the game data from your email it doesn’t create any extra work for us. But it is un-necessary, and does increase the chances of you making a mistake when you enter your orders!

Note that when things specific to your team/position (like current team selections) are shown on paper turnsheets these will not be shown on the active website (whereas they are shown on your paper turnsheet, but uploading this information to the active website every turn – they’re not even stored on the same computer for security reasons - would create a lot of extra work), so take care when filling in your orders.

All turnsheets on the active website will be laid out the same as on your paper turnsheet. Essentially all you need to do is fill in your paper turnsheet as usual, and then copy over what you’ve written to the active website.

Note also that in some games there are orders which don’t appear on every turn (such as draft orders in sports simulations, etc.). These will appear on the active website as all times, even when they aren’t needed for that particular turn. Simply ignore them when they aren’t actually relevant. If in doubt, the paper turnsheet you have will always show the information you should be submitting.

How do I receive results via email? – If you are interested in receiving results via email (these are normally sent out at the same time as posted results get shoved in the letter box) then just ask your GM (and include your email address when you do so). The first time we send you email results we’ll send you an emailed copy and posted copy at no extra charge. If in future you want emailed and posted copies there’s an extra 0.2 credit per turn charge, but this isn’t applied the first time (so you’ve got the paper copy to know what the emailing version should look like when you print it and can then decide how you want to receive your results in the future).

To print off your report you’ll need a copy of our free printer program, which can be found on the website www.sidetracks.co.uk along with a sample report, or ask your GM to email you a copy. This includes instructions on how to get it working.