

# THE LAST WAR



## HOW TO PLAY HANDBOOK

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*Megagame  
Makers*



# How To Play In *The Last War*

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## PART I - THE GAME

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### ***What Is It About?***

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This is a megagame about the bulk of the Second World War, following December 1941 when the war finally took on its truly global aspect. The game aims to demonstrate in an interesting and challenging way many of the problems facing the major nations and political groupings of the world as they fight the largest war in history.

### **What are Megagames**

The term 'megagame': was coined around 1980, by Andy Callan, an innovative wargamer and historian and a founding member of Wargame Developments . It was turned into reality by the famous military historian, founder of Wargame Developments, author, publisher, wargamer and TV personality, Paddy Griffith. He organised the first few megagames, and the first players included many of the people who currently make up Megagame Makers. We all learnt a great deal from those early games with Paddy.

We now give megagames the following formal definition:

***"A Megagame is a multi-player historical simulation game, in which the participants are organised into teams, and those teams into an hierarchy of teams".***

It is now 25 years since that first megagame and Megagame Makers alone have clocked up 99 previous games. The Last War will be our 100<sup>th</sup> game – and this is why it is very special for us.

Of course we're not the only ones organising megagames – the South East London Wargames Group has organised several and other individuals and groups have also run games from time to



time. The megagame genre – whilst specialised and probably the most difficult type of wargame to stage – remains a type of game that is highly social – challenging and potentially very exciting – for its multiplayer aspects if for no other reason.

And World War Two isn't the only subject matter amenable to the megagame treatment – over the years we have done big starship battles, the Napoleonic wars, the Renaissance, later 20<sup>th</sup> century wars, fantasy role playing, medieval, ancient Rome, classical Japan – even games about international treaties and conferences.

And we are set to do more over the coming year – generally around 3 or 4 megagames are run every year – and the stream of new ideas is showing little sign of drying up. Check our website for the latest programme:

**[www.megagame-makers.org.uk](http://www.megagame-makers.org.uk)**

## Design Philosophy

The first and most important point about this game is that despite some appearances, it is not just a board game blown up to a larger size.

There are many excellent games about WW2, and several set at this level – but they usually work on the premise that one player makes all the decisions for a single country.

Inevitably, a Megagame makes the game design and the rules function in a different way – and means that some design decisions are taken that might not have been taken in a straightforward board game.

To give you some idea of the design challenge involved – the criteria for the rules and game systems were:

1. The resolution of each turn must be completed – by the players - within 5-10 minutes. The game will move on relentlessly at around 30 minutes per turn. If players are to be given time to interact with each other, they must be spending as little time as possible wrestling with game mechanisms.
2. The rules and the background must reflect the major policy and decision-making issues of the historical period. For the world's greatest war, distilling this was no small task.
3. The rules should be divided up to reflect the responsibilities of the various player teams – so, for example, the Naval players should be playing a slightly different view of game to the Army players
4. It should be a realistic depiction of possible events. This is the hardest part of all – especially when it comes to the economics of the war – a period of three and a bit years is very long and the effects of decisions taken in 1942 might very well become disproportionately serious further down the line – guarding against this is very difficult.
5. The game should be enjoyable.

The degree to which we have succeeded to meet these design criteria will only be discovered on the day of the Megagame. It is axiomatic that because of the large variables of player interaction, politics and group decision making it is generally impossible to properly test a Megagame without playing it for real. We have, so far as we can, tested the components – but in many ways you, the players, will be experiencing the first full scale test of the game.

So fingers crossed then.

## Credits

**Concept and overall design:** *Jim Wallman*

**UK National Briefings:** *Jon Casey,*

**US National Briefing:** *Brian Cameron*

**Finnish, Rumanian and Hungarian National Briefing:** *Andy Grainger*

**Yugoslavia, Italy, German Free French and USSR National Briefings:** *Jim Wallman*

**Game Gazetteer:** *Bernie Ganley*

**Land Combat Rules:** *Andy Grainger, Bernie Ganley, Mukul Patel and Jim Wallman*

**Naval Rules:** *Dave Boundy, Brian Cameron and Jim Wallman*

**Economic Rules and Data:** *Jurrien deJong, Nick Luft and Jim Wallman*

**Hitler's Henchmen political sub game:** *John Rutherford, Rob Cooper and Jim Wallman*

**Game Materials Production:** *Dave Boundy*

**Play testing:** *members of Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group and Megagame Makers*

**Game Map:** *Mukul Patel, Dave Boundy and Jim Wallman*

**Game Admin:** *Dave Boundy*

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## ***What Do I Do In The Game?***

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In this game you will take on a role as a key figure in one of the major nations in a world at war.

As the game progresses, in addition to the inevitable fighting, various events and crises will occur and perhaps develop, which you will have to react to.

You will also have a number of historically-based national objectives, that reflect the concerns and attitudes of your historical prototypes.

Your response to these will determine how things develop - but those responses will have to be in the context of the actions of other players and teams and should attempt to further your historical objectives.

The game will cover the events of about four years, and as it progresses, depending on the type of role you have you will do a number of different things:

### **Political Team Players**

Your specific National Briefing may modify some of the following.

- Set policy and strategy
- Conduct diplomacy and negotiate with the politicians of other countries (you will be given a list of current issues for discussion in your National briefing).
- Run the economic game system that generates military and other resources. This may involve liaison with the Navy over shipping capacity, importing raw materials etc.
- Work to achieve your personal political objectives (where you've been given some) – usually in the context of a cabinet meeting or the equivalent.

### **High Command Players**

- Direct the military teams under you (if you have any) without necessarily doing their job for them – after all they have a game to play too.
- Report on the progress of military operations to your political masters (the political players if you have them).
- Advise the political team on the practicalities of their strategy.



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## Front Line Military Team Players

- Deploy forces on one or more of the main Combat Maps and in conjunction with the Control team use the game rules to work out results.
- Allocate resources given to you by Higher Command to the front line as needed.
- Report on the military situation to your higher command every turn.
- Advise higher command on the situation and feasibility of their plans.
- Obey the orders given to you by higher command. This is important – many players can be unused to the idea of doing what they are told. In general high command will set objectives and give you resources – leaving it up to you to use them in the best way – but that does not mean a completely free hand and players *are* answerable to their superiors. Disobedience can lead to sacking (or worse).



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## **CONTROL TEAM**

The game is managed by a Control Team. These are a group of impartial umpires who are there to help you play the game and they will advise you on, among other things:

- How to use the game rules, quickly and with minimum hassle.
- How to handle things not covered by the rules
- The political impact of your decisions and the reaction of Non-played Countries (NPCs).
- Helping out teams who are having trouble getting into the game (what we call the 'I don't know what to do next' syndrome).

There are far fewer members of the Control team than players so bear with them if they are busy when you wish to talk to them.

In the event that they have to arbitrate on something, or make a ruling then we operate the familiar '**Control's Decision is Final**' rule. Please try not to ask the same question repeatedly of different members of the Control team until you get the answer you want. This will not endear you to them.

Whilst we aim to make sure everyone understands why decisions or rulings are made, the game cannot be held up for lengthy discussion or debate. There will be plenty of opportunity at the end of each day to have a good chat with the Control team in the debriefing sessions at a local pub.

We realise that sometimes, in games like this, not everyone gets on with everyone else. So if there are any irreconcilable problems, the final court of appeal is the main **Game Control**.

### ***How Do I Know Who Is Winning?***

In games like this we do not normally identify winners and losers as such. Like the real world you should be able, at the end, to judge for yourself how well you were able to deal with the various events and problems.

If there is time we hope to be able to offer some analysis at the end of the game, comparing your performance with that of your historical counterparts.

### ***What Are The Game Roles?***

There are thirty-eight main teams of players in *The Last War*

|     | <b>Team</b>                 | <b>Roles</b>  |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|
| 1.  | Germany Political           | Speer, Goebbels, Himmler, Borman, Ribbentrop, Goering<br>(Note: Hitler is <b>not</b> a player role) |
| 2.  | Germany OKW                 | Keitel, Jodl (Jodl also is involved in political game)  |
| 3.  | Germany OKH                 | Brauchitsch, Fromm, Halder  |
| 4.  | Germany Air Ministry        | Jeschonneck   |
| 5.  | Germany OKM                 | Raeder (Raeder is also involved in political game)  |
| 6.  | Germany Front Line A        | Von Rundstedt, Von Bock, Von Leeb, +Staff   |
| 7.  | Germany Front Line B        | Rommel + Staff Officers   |
| 8.  | USSR Political              | Stalin, Molotov, Beria  |
| 9.  | USSR - STAVKA               | Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Antonov   |
| 10. | USSR - Groups of Fronts A   | Commander + Staff Officers  |
| 11. | USSR - Groups of Fronts B   | Commander + Staff Officers  |
| 12. | USSR - Groups of Fronts C   | Commander + Staff Officers  |
| 13. | UK Political                | Churchill, Eden, Atlee, Cripps,   |
| 14. | UK - Imperial General Staff | Brooke, Portal, Pound   |
| 15. | UK - Royal Navy             | Cunningham + Staff Officers   |
| 16. | UK - Med /Africa Forces     | Alexander + Staff Officers  |
| 17. | UK - Far East               | Mountbatten + Staff Officers  |
| 18. | USA Political               | Roosevelt, Hull, Stimson, Morgenthau  |
| 19. | USA Joint Chiefs of Staff   | Leahy, Marshall, King, Arnold   |
| 20. | USA Pacific Command         | Nimitz, McArthur + Staff  |
| 21. | USA Atlantic Command        | Ingram + Staff  |
| 22. | USA Africa/Europe Army      | Eisenhower + Staff  |
| 23. | China Nationalist Political | Chiang, Chiang, Soong, Kung   |
| 24. | China Nationalist Military  | Ho + Staff  |
| 25. | China Communists            | Mao, Liu, Chou, Teng  |
| 26. | China Communists Military   | Chu + Staff   |
| 27. | Japan Army China            | Koiso + Staff   |
| 28. | Japan Army Home/Pacific     | Tojo + Staff  |
| 29. | Japan Navy                  | Shimada + Staff   |
| 30. | Italy Political             | Mussolini, Ciano, Reval   |
| 31. | Italy High Command          | Cavallero, Pricolo, Iachino   |
| 32. | Free French Political       | De Gaulle, Giraud, Massigli   |
| 33. | Yugoslavia                  | Peter II, Jovanovic, Tito, Mihailovic   |
| 34. | Finland                     | Ryti, Mannerheim, Witting   |
| 35. | Hungary                     | Horthy, Bardossy, Szombathelyi  |
| 36. | Rumania                     | Antonescu, Neagu, Radescu   |
| 37. | Axis Press                  |   |
| 38. | Free Press                  |   |



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## ***What Are The Rules Of The Game?***

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The game rules are split into four main areas – Land Combat, Naval Combat, Economic and Political. There is a short booklet of rules for the first three of these areas – the political rules are outlined below.

Depending on your game role you are issued with one or more of booklets. In addition you will get a team-specific briefing and for some of the political players a personal briefing too.

The personal briefings will be handed out on the day of the game in case any players with key roles drop out at the last minute.

Within the context of these game rules you can do anything that would have been possible in the real world. In the case of any doubt, the Game Control will decide whether an action is possible and resolve uncertainties.

It is important to remember that the rules are not exhaustive and should be thought of as mainly guidelines. They are not immutable, neither are they holy writ. The most important frame of reference is reality – if the rules are producing what we feel are unreasonable results then Control will alter them as necessary (though we hope not to have to do this).

Whether within the rules or not - most of the time your decisions and actions will have repercussions, either on the other players, non-played characters or on the general war effort.

You will be told about these effects by the Game Control as and when you would realistically have known about them.

Whilst the main combat maps are open and available to the military players, not everything that happens is either military or obvious or known to everyone.

Often, in order to find out what is happening you need to make some sort of effort and tell your Control how you aim to find out things.

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## ***The Map***

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The game is centred on one very large map of the world, showing the key battle fronts.

This is used to display the situation, as it is known to the military staffs reporting to you.

Markers are placed to show things like the front line, major offensives, freshly gained areas etc.

All player teams will also have their own small versions of the map for reference.

### **Approaching the Maps**

ONLY Military staffs are permitted to enter the main map room and approach the combat maps. Military teams will be given special badges that allow them access.

Politicians are forbidden to come and look at the maps and instead must rely on reports from the military players

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## PART II – THE POLITICAL GAME

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### ***Conferences and Summits***



These will occur as the game progresses, and to some degree preparation for, and reaction to, a particular international conference will form much of what many of the Allied political players are doing for most of the time.

Similarly, bilateral meetings between Axis members will occur from time to time.

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### ***Political Actions and Reactions***

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It is one of the rules of this game that every action will have some related reaction.

The Control team will assess the impact of your actions and decisions in the light of a given situation. This will either gain or lose you influence.

You will not be told exactly how we measure this, but you will be told that your influence has increased or decreased in a particular area, should it change.

You can be considered to have influence in countries where you have strong trade links, countries you have treaties with, and your military allies.

You also have internal influence on your own political system and population, which in some cases is important where you might be involved in decisions that could prove unpopular at home or with your key supporters.

Influence is, in a way, a consumable resource - in general the more you call on this influence to help you achieve some aim or other, the less that influence will become (unless the action improves your standing at the same time).

The control team will not normally give precise information on influence gains and losses in these briefings, but can offer general advice if you are unsure of the likely impact of a given action. Common sense applies in most cases.

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### ***Diplomacy***

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All nations, even those at war with each other may conduct diplomacy.



In reality, diplomacy between belligerents was often conducted via neutral intermediaries and in conditions of considerable secrecy.

However, given that we are simulating 2 months of discussion crammed into a few minutes of real time, the game will allow face-to-face discussions between *all* political teams.

Similarly, peace negotiations are permissible. The policy of unconditional surrender had, at the time we start the game,

not yet been set out by the Allies. Whether it is or not will be up to the players. Diplomatically a whole range of options exist.

That said, politicians do not have a completely free hand either – they must remember that their constituents and political supporters will object if they negotiate something that cannot be justified, or is wildly inconsistent with the what has gone before.

There is advice in the team briefings on this, which should be read carefully, and thought about.

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## ***Cabinets and Decision Making***

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Top political teams in the democracies operate on a cabinet consensus basis– that is the team as a whole should agree on all important decisions. It was exceptionally rare, even unheard of, for cabinets to vote on decisions.

The totalitarian states operate differently, obviously. In this case we recommend a ‘Chinese Parliament’ system in which each member of the political team expresses a view in turn, and the Leader then decides what to do – and that decision is final.

**Germany is a special case.** In this game there will not be a Hitler player. Instead German political players will be playing a specially designed ‘*Hitler’s Henchmen*’ sub-game which generates high level Hitlerian-type decisions for the Germans. Those involved in *Hitler’s Henchmen* will be given the necessary briefing and rules on how to play.



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## **PART III – GUIDE FOR NEW MEGAGAMERS**

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### ***First Contact***

When you arrive at your first Megagame Makers Megagame you may feel overwhelmed. There will be bustle, strange activity, and even stranger people (your fellow gamers!) and it may not make sense for a while.

### ***Relax. Don’t Panic.***

It was that way for all of us when we started. Many other everyday games you are familiar with have clear-cut objectives, like scoring more points than your opponent. Megagames tend to be more like ‘real life’ – you can decide for yourself to some extent what counts as ‘winning’ – it could be to ‘outdo’ your historical counterpart, or maybe just have fun working as part of a team to solve problems, or stitching up your enemies with a cunning plan. Many players also enjoy the feeling of being directly involved in momentous events, even if it’s only a simulation.

If you want to have fun, then get involved! There will be challenges, many of them caused by other players, but you **can** make a difference. You'll find that, always, the more you put in the more you'll get out of the game.

You may well feel like it's your first day at school or in a new job; nevertheless don't be afraid to ask questions.

Remember we want you to have a good time, and come back next time, as well as recommending megagames to your friends.

### ***Before the Game Starts***

It is very important to read all the briefing material you are sent, and make sure you understand it and can find your way round the sections.

On the day you will almost certainly be given **more** material to absorb, such as a personal briefing or updates on the situation at the start of the game.



You will probably enjoy yourself more if you can concentrate on the new material, and on discussing the problems of the game with your fellow team members, rather than reading the game handbooks for the first time.

### **Pre-Planning**

Especially if you're playing with existing friends, it can be tempting to try to short-circuit the early stages of the game by setting up plans and cutting deals in advance. Our advice is that it is probably better not to do this.

Experience has shown that it's usually more fun, and helps the game to flow more smoothly, if you leave important decisions until the day.

Remember that whilst you have a lot of information in advance - you will not have all the information you need, as you won't have seen your personal brief yet, and will certainly need to see how other teams are starting out too and to talk to them.

### **On the day of the game**

Most players dress casually.

You may want to bring your own packed lunch – there is no food available at the venue but the bar will be open and tea and coffee will be available.

Lunch breaks are not in the programme – you eat as you play.

Don't forget to check you know the way there if you're unfamiliar with the area of the game, and allow plenty of time for travel – arriving late will certainly cause you to miss out on some of the important early stages of the game, as the weekend is on a strict timetable and the game won't wait for anyone.

### **On arrival**

There is a signing-in procedure at the entrance.

If you've been to a conference before you'll know the kind of thing.

You'll usually be given a sticky badge with your name and role. If you arrive well before the start you will have time to learn your way around the venue, but the game will not start until the advertised time.



If this is your first time the game designer may have asked one of the Control team (otherwise often known as 'Umpires') to make sure new players like you are settled in and comfortable.

But remember that person will have many other things to do, and once the game starts you cannot rely on Control to do everything for you.

You will be directed or shown to your team area and have an opportunity to meet the other members of your team and other players.

Don't be bashful; the players are generally a sociable group.

In particular, other members of your team who have played megagames before can often help you with points you're not sure about, or other useful help and advice.

There is also often a settling in period before the game starts to discuss strategy, look over the maps and familiarise yourself with the game generally.

Just before the game starts there is a plenary briefing by the game designer covering admin details and any last minute game points you all need to know about.

### **Once the game starts**

After the general introduction, you're off!

This is when reading the briefing material in advance will pay off. If you grasp the general principles of the game (which are usually of similar complexity to a board game) you will be free to get on with the problem solving and interacting with other players which for most is the point of megagaming.

You may find it enjoyable to play a role, and put yourself 'in the shoes' of the character you are playing. The game can get very complex, try to remember that it's just as tough for everyone.

The trick is often to sort out the important from the trivial, and stick your objectives. You do need to be active, and try to make things happen. It won't usually come to you on a plate.

If you sit back, especially as a politician, you may get bored as other players start to ignore you. Get stuck in!

This game is built around a structured game turn taking 30 minutes per turn. The game is therefore driven by the clock, and each new game turn starts at the specified time. As in real life it will not always be possible to do everything that you'd like to do in a single turn, and the game will not wait if you haven't managed to do all that you would like.

Megagames run continuously until they stop. You eat, drink and take breaks while the game continues. If you leave the venue for long during the game it will disrupt your game and probably your team-mates' game too.

### **Other players**

Megagame Makers cannot guarantee other players will behave well, or fairly. You must accept that in the nature of many games, others will try to trick, con, deceive or destroy you. There is a war on, after all.

But that is not to say that bullying, rudeness or cheating *are* allowed. If you think you are being treated unreasonably, tell the player concerned you think so.

Many times, we find that the 'rude' person is playing a role and isn't intending to upset you. In some cases the excitement of the game means that people get carried away. Very occasionally there are people who behave unacceptably. Megagame Makers do not tolerate 'out of character' rudeness, aggression or cheating.

Usually problems are easily resolved, either by a civilised conversation by a new role in a different part of the game.

That said, most of our games are built around interaction with other players, both within your own team, and with other teams. In some games, the members of a team will all be pulling together for common objectives, in others there might be internal conflict within the team. This can vary widely. So some 'in character' conflict is not only acceptable but encouraged.

If you are in any doubt, or feel you may have offended someone or been offended, it is Ok to see them at the end of the day and 'de-role' – i.e. explain that when you called them a 'fascist bastard' you were in role and it was nothing personal.

### **More about the Control Team ('Umpires')**

These people are here to try to make the game run smoothly. In many games, they help to interpret the rules; they play the part of any 'non-played' person; they provide information about background events.

They will do their best to help you have good time. But you must be aware of the following:

- Game Control are usually outnumbered five to one or more by the players. Their main duty is to keep the game moving. They cannot provide anyone with a continuous help service - they are just too busy.
- Confusion and difficult problems for players are often the essence of a game. Don't expect Game Control to solve your game problems for you. Work with what you have, and ask your team-mates first.

### **Debrief**

At the end of the game there is always a debrief session. This varies in format, but usually one or more of the Control Team will try and give a report on what actually happened, and occasionally key players get a chance to report on how their plans worked out.

At this debrief a critique questionnaire is circulated and everyone has a chance to give a structured response on how the day went for them. This is valuable feedback for both Megagame Makers and the game designer, and especially so from newcomers, who might not have the temerity to speak out and criticise the game on their first visit.

As in many other games and sports, going to a nearby pub and discussing the game is a traditional part of megagaming. This is where you find out what **really** happened. You can meet your enemies and find out what they were up to. You can meet the players and discuss the game in detail, or games in general. With any luck, there are no hard feelings, no matter how the game unfolded!



### *In Summary*

- Read the briefing well before the game
- Set yourself objectives (decide what you want from the game)
- Ask questions early on if you're not sure
- Get stuck in, be active!
- If you're totally confused, or severely fed up with another player, ask Game Control for help
- Have fun, and have a memorable experience!

## ***Timetable for the Weekend***

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### **SATURDAY 8 OCTOBER**

0830 Day 1 Set-up team arrive  
0930 Day 1 Reception Opens  
1000 Plenary Session in the Ballroom  
1030 Game Start  
1030 – 1130 TURN 1 Jan/Feb 42 (extra long first turn)  
1130 – 1200 TURN 2 Mar/Apr 42  
1200 – 1230 TURN 3 May/June 42  
1230 – 1300 TURN 4 Jul/Aug 42  
1300 – 1330 TURN 5 Sep/Oct 42  
1330 – 1400 TURN 6 Nov/Dec 42  
1400 – 1430 TURN 7 Jan/Feb 43  
1430 – 1500 TURN 8 Mar/Apr 43  
1500 – 1530 TURN 9 May/June 43  
1530 – 1600 TURN 10 Jul/Aug 43  
1600 – 1630 TURN 11 Sep/Oct 43  
1630 Play Stops – Rapid Pack Away from rooms being used in evening.  
1700 Sharp - Exit premises

1800 Game Buffet and Debrief at The Witness Box pub

### **SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER**

0900 Day 2 set-up team arrives – reset tables – sort out problems from Sat evening booking.  
0930 Day 2 Reception opens  
1000 Day 2 Play Starts  
1000 – 1100 TURN 12 Nov/Dec 43 (Extra long restart / start-up / hangover turn)  
1130 – 1200 TURN 13 Jan/Feb 44  
1200 – 1230 TURN 14 Mar/Apr 44  
1230 – 1300 TURN 15 May/June 44  
1300 – 1330 TURN 16 Jul/Aug 44  
1330 – 1400 TURN 17 Sep/Oct 44  
1400 – 1430 TURN 18 Nov/Dec 44  
1430 – 1500 TURN 19 Jan/Feb 45  
1500 – 1530 TURN 20 Mar/Apr 45  
1530 – 1600 TURN 21 May/June 45  
1600 – 1630 TURN 22 Jul/Aug 45 (or debrief time)  
1630 Clear Up  
1700 Sharp - Exit Premises

**1730 Final Debrief in The Witness Box pub**