

Neverwinter Nights 2 Toolset Tips and Tricks

Brought to you by the NWN2 Toolset Beta Testing Community

This document provides coverage of toolset basics, including tips and techniques to make visually appealing modules. It is not intended to be a comprehensive reference, but more of a getting-started document.

It assumes that you have read the documentation included with the toolset.

Last Updated October 4, 2006

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Revision History..... | 3 |
| Toolset Controls Quick Reference | 4 |
| General | 4 |
| Object Manipulation (Creatures, Placeables, Effects and Trees)..... | 4 |
| Camera Controls..... | 4 |
| Interior Tile Placement..... | 4 |
| Toolset Usage, Organization and Interface..... | 5 |
| General Tips..... | 5 |
| Loading and Saving..... | 5 |
| Area Creation Tips..... | 6 |
| General Tips..... | 6 |
| Terrain and Texture..... | 6 |
| Placeables and Doors..... | 7 |
| Area Creation Guidelines..... | 8 |
| Recommended Area Building Sequence | 8 |
| Textures and Colors..... | 8 |
| City Walls..... | 8 |
| Placeables..... | 8 |
| Roads..... | 8 |
| Hills..... | 9 |
| Miscellaneous..... | 9 |
| Building Interiors with Tilesets..... | 10 |
| General Tips..... | 10 |
| Hookpoints..... | 10 |
| Encounter Creation..... | 11 |
| Blueprints and Instances..... | 12 |
| General Tips..... | 12 |
| Placeables..... | 12 |
| Properties..... | 12 |
| Creating Prefabricated Placeable Groups | 12 |
| Conversations..... | 13 |
| General Tips..... | 13 |
| In Progress..... | 14 |

Revision History

| Revision # | Date | Description |
|------------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 10/2/2006 | Initial revision |
| 2 | 10/2/2006 | added a emphasis on reading docs. Added section for creating groups. Added a reminder note to the worldmap section . Added Cal's hookpoints comments, and a edited/included howto for creating placeable groups. New placeables tip, conversation tip. New Encounters section. Added revision history and made minor text updates. |
| 3 | 10/4/2006 | More cleanup, style and formatting changes, conversion to PDF, addition of new texturing instructions |
| 4 | 10/4/2006 | Fixed more formatting issues. Added new tip about flatten under tool. |

Toolset Controls Quick Reference

General

- Right-click toggles between Select/Paint for objects and terrains.

Object Manipulation (Creatures, Placeables, Effects and Trees)

- To move an object on the X/Y: Directional arrows (or Alt+Arrows)
- To rotate objects: (Can't rotate trees)
 - Mouse: Select the object(s) then hold down shift + right click drag
 - Keyboard: Ctrl+Left/Right Arrow
- Raising and lowering objects:
 - Mouse: holding down alt while moving the mouse forward and backward quickly raises/lowers an object
 - Mouse (precision): Shift + Mousewheel
 - Keyboard (precision): PageUp/PageDown
- To make an object stack atop another placeable, hold down "S" while placing it.
- To drop an object to the ground, press Space
- To hold a placeable in place without actually placing it, hold down CTRL
- To lock a placeable into an x-y position: "L"
- To lock a placeable into a z position (height): "Z"

Camera Controls

- Panning – movement of the camera on the x/y plane: Hold (Control + Left mouse) and drag
- Rotate the camera: hold Control + right mouse and drag
- Rotate the camera: press middle mouse button or wheel and drag
- Adjusting the camera height: Ctrl + Shift + Vertical Mouse Movement
- Zoom in/out: roll mouse wheel

Interior Tile Placement

- Rotate tiles: Left & Right arrow keys
- Switch between tile variants: Up and Down
- Copy a tile: with a tile selected, Right-mouse will copy it

Toolset Usage, Organization and Interface

General Tips

- This document is a supplement to the official documentation that came with the toolset. Even if you're the type of person who hates reading directions, **read the documentation included with the toolset**. These documents are invaluable, and will save you a lot of time. This guide itself assumes that you are familiar with them. To reiterate: **it will take much longer to figure out the basics of the toolset if you do not read the included documentation!**
- Look for the little thumbtack button in the upper right hand corner of the various windows around the main area view. Clicking this will send them to the edges of the screen and have the windows fold out when you hover over the tab, freeing up a lot of screen space for the main view.
- Should you lose some or all of your toolbar windows and don't know how to get them back, there are three things you do:
 - Just right click in the header/title bar of an toolset window, and check the one you are looking for
 - Hit **View > Module Properties** the **Properties** tab will appear now run the cursor over the **Properties** tab which in turn pops up the **Module Properties** tab right click this and there they all are
 - If neither of those works, do this as a last resort: Delete the folder C:\Documents and Settings**username**\Local Settings\Application Data\NWN2 Toolset. Note that if you don't keep your profiles in C:\Documents and Settings, you'll have to find the right location go delete from. This option will reset all of your preferences as well.

Loading and Saving

- To quickly back up an area before making changes, right click on it in the Areas list and choose Duplicate Region. Once you no longer need it, make sure to delete the duplicated area.
- **Do not disable autosave**. While it is a bit inconvenient to have the autosave progress dialog pop up for a few seconds every once in a while, you'll be cursing yourself the first time that you need roll back to an old version of your module and can't do so.
- If you're going to leave your computer for an extended period of time, don't leave the toolset open. Autosaves will continue even if you have made no changes – so depending on your configuration, you could have five identical autosaves waiting for you when you return a couple of hours later.
- In rare circumstances, your module file can become corrupted and will no longer open. This is not the end of the world – a temporary folder is often available that has the latest version of all your changes. Look for a folder in your modules directory that is named the same as your module, or has your module name in it somewhere. To "retrieve" your module after it is corrupt, create a new module and copy the contents of this the temporary folder into it. Save the new module and re-open it in the toolset – all of your work is once again available.
- For better loading and saving performance, you can save your module as a folder. If you have added placeables, changed a walk mesh, or altered terrain height, you **MUST** remember to bake your area.

Area Creation Tips

General Tips

- Take advantage of the fact that the rendering engine in the toolset is the same as the one used in the client. Preview your area using all of the different day and night settings, with full effects turned on. Even better, turn on day/night progression in the toolset when proofing your work.
- Distances and sizes can be hard to gauge in the toolset. Placing one or more normalized human NPCs in the area provides an excellent point of reference.
- Turn OFF the Normal Mapped Terrain feature (If you haven't moved it, the button is located on the top toolbar).
- The filters are invaluable, allowing you to filter out placeables, trees, effects, water, etc when you find that they're in the way.
- Frequently toggle Surface Mesh mode. Refer to the documentation for the meaning of the mesh line colors.
- Consider the color white as an 'eraser' color – using white lightens colors you have already placed, revealing more of the textures beneath.
- You can re-use some areas throughout your module. Using the texture swapper, new terrain colors, altering a few trees and changing the lighting can make an area look completely different and cut down your development time quite a bit.

Terrain and Texture

- When Flatten is selected, use the eyedropper to set the height based on existing terrain – just press the eyedropper button, then click the terrain at the height you want to use.
- When water is selected, the eyedropper can be used to set water height in the same way.
- Using the Flatten tool, build up a layer of "flat" ground before painting in hills or placing buildings. This will let you shape the terrain much more - you can sink roads and paths into the terrain and give them a well-traveled look.
- Try to plan your textures ahead of time; this can save your time when you build.
- Simple color additions - like darkening recessed areas - can make dramatic differences.
- Before trying something new in the area you're working on, switch to an empty area reserved for experimentation with textures, colors, and surfaces. When it gets filled, deleted it and make another one. This allows you room for mistakes before making final changes to your area.
- Sharp edges are unnatural. Use smooth, raise, and lower for more realistic terrain
- Apply a different texture to the steep vs. flat parts of the map to accent the changes. If you have the patience, smaller brushes are best.
- Using Raise Terrain instead of flatten to set the heights of hills and mountains makes for much sharper appearance, resulting in land that looks geologically "younger".
- Performing a global texture replace in your area when you first start working on it prevents you from using an additional texture slot. For example, if you're working on mountains, replace the default grass texture with a stone or mountain texture.
- When painting water, it often provides a more natural look to put the water down first, then using the Raise brush raise the land edges above the water level
- In the Terrain section/Terrain tools there is a flatten under button. If you have a placeable selected and then use that button, the terrain under that placeable will be flattened.

Placeables and Doors

- The days of setting all unused doors to be locked in cities and towns are over. Instead, set the Static property of unused doors to True. Doing this makes them part of the building itself. This provides a much cleaner and less confusing environment for players, because static doors are not usable – so there is no cursor change in-game when they are moused-over.
- Don't place trees and placeables too early in the process. Changes in terrain height and appearance can make a lot of rework in their locations, and these objects can get in the way when trying to perform other tasks.
- When possible, work with groups of identical placeables or trees instead of placing them each individually. Once the groups are placed, go back and individualize them. This can save a lot of time and the results are just as good if not better.

Area Creation Guidelines

Recommended Area Building Sequence

To build appealing areas, this is the commonly followed sequence. Your mileage may vary, so adjust as you see fit.

1. Have a vision of what you want the area to look like. It may help to sketch this out ahead of time.
2. Perform a global replace on the default texture if appropriate. Shape the terrain to match the general features you need.
3. Take an initial pass at textures terrain and coloring.
4. Paint water.
5. Throw in placeables and environmental objects.
6. Refine the terrain further to integrate the placed objects.
7. Define your walkable paths using the walkmesh brush.
8. Fix walkable bugs in bridges and objects
9. Set area day/night lighting and fog as appropriate.
10. Place lighting and alter shadows of placeables as needed. Darken or lighten coloring as needed.
11. Finalize the textures and coloring
12. Finalize water currents and colors
13. Add encounters and transitions.

Textures and Colors

Proper use of colors and textures is crucial to a well-polished area. Mixing a variety of textures and blending the transitions between them can look incredible, whereas using only one dirt or grass texture makes your area look unpolished and distinctly NWN1-like.

The color tool can give new appearances to old textures. Don't underestimate how useful this is. Accents and highlights can draw attention to walkable areas. Spraying a darker green under border tree cards can create the illusion of greater distance. Spraying a darker color around the base of buildings and some placeables makes them look a lot more natural. Darkened mud textures between close-packed buildings can be used to create a very convincing alley.

City Walls

One excellent way of creating city walls that can be walked on – without having to fiddle overmuch with walkmeshes – is to raise the terrain and place the walls on top of and in front of the raised surfaces.

Placeables

Sparse areas look unnatural. Even in Kansas, *some* features break up the otherwise flat terrain. When you walk into a town or inside a building, there should be something to show people live there. A misplaced shovel leaning against a wall, a pile of laundry in the corner of the room, a cluttered desk or a puddle of muddy water on the path.

Roads

Even in modern-day, few roads are perfectly smooth for very long. This is certainly far worse without the benefit of 6-ton smoothers and asphalt. Keep your road surfaces slightly uneven; in wet climates, deep ruts will be common. Roads will also tend to sink into the terrain towards the

center, as the weight of many feet presses them down over the years. Try to sink them below the level of the surrounding terrain. A good mix of textures can serve to muddy up a well-traveled road, while lesser-used areas may be overgrown with weeds.

Hills

To make realistic hills, start with the flatten brush set slightly higher than you want the hills to be, and lay out the general setup. Vary the height of your brush as you go. Next, go back over them with the Smooth brush and/or the lower brush. Using broad sweeping motions with these tools without staying too long in any one spot can create convincing hills.

Once you have edited the walkmesh of your hills to define the walkable paths, go back and choose a texture that is slightly different and paint the non-walkable section of the hills with it. In addition to looking good, this also serves to communicate information to the p layers. If done consistently, this provides subtle hints to the players as to where they are able to walk, and where they are not.

Miscellaneous

When creating areas where there has been mass carnage or even just a murder, it's possible to create a very wide variety of corpse appearances by placing dead creatures. Place your creatures -- tinted and scaled to your needs -- with these properties:

- lootable = false
- no permanent death = true
- body bag = body
- current hit points = 0
- no scripts specified – all script entries should be blank.

Once you do that, the creature will spawn in and immediately die, leaving a corpse that can't be selected or looted.

Building Interiors with Tilesets

General Tips

- Remember to take advantage of the keyboard shortcuts – particularly up and down arrows cycling through variations on a tile.

Hookpoints

Hookpoints are places that placeables can be attached to. When you are in the tileset and placing things down, turn on the Show > Hookpoints option, then turn on Snap. When you go to place things like chandeliers and wall torches, they will snap to the nearest hookpoint. This can be very useful when placing torches to light a darkened crypt.

Encounter Creation

Below is a quick guide to creating encounters that work as expected correctly.

1. Select the encounter in the blueprints menu
2. Paint a trigger with at least three points by clicking into three or more different locations surrounding the area you wish for the trigger to cover. *If you create a trigger that contains only two points (ie, is a line and not a triangle or other shape), it will not fire.*
3. Make sure the trigger is selected in the area, then make sure that the trigger's Active property is set to true.
4. Again, make sure that the trigger is selected. Create spawn points by choosing Paint Spawn Points in the toolbar, then clicking to place them into the area.

Blueprints and Instances

General Tips

- When creating any type of blueprint, you can edit the properties and preview the appearance at the same time, NWN1-style. To do this, drag the Preview tab down and dock it next to, under, or over the Properties tab.

Placeables

- Double-click a building to pull all its doors back into their frames.
- If you are testing a module and find a carpet or something that you cannot walk on, go back into the toolset and bring up the properties for that item. Find the property IsWalkable and set it to TRUE. You will need to rebake and save the area. When you start the area up again for testing, you will be able to walk all over that item now.
- **Position Lock** and **Height Lock** are amazingly useful in features in Placeable Properties. Position Lock will make sure that you don't accidentally move that carefully placed object, and Height Lock is handy for lining up things on uneven ground.
- Setting the IsStackable properties to true for an object will cause other placeables to place on top of it.

Properties

- In almost all of the toolset UI, when there are boxes for input, double-clicking on them toggles their state if they are true/false without needing to open the dropdown and make selection.

Creating Prefabricated Placeable Groups

1. If you haven't done so, save your module as a directory. This is necessary for these steps, and has the added bonus of being faster upon open and save.
2. Create your placeables group within the area, then select them all. Having drag-select turned on makes this easier.
3. Right click the selection and select Group.
Give the group a name. The actual name is not important, since it will be getting changed shortly.
4. Export this group into your module directory by right-clicking it and choosing Export. The directory you choose should be the same one you saved the module into in step 1. This group is now saved as a prefab.
5. Save and reopen the current module. Again, make sure you have saved it as a directory.
6. Open up the Blueprints and choose Prefabs. You will notice your new prefab without a name, etc. Click on it and go to its properties to reassign the name/tag/classification/etc. This new prefab is part of the module itself, and will not need to be included in an override or hakpak.

Since creation of the prefabs has nothing to do with how the data is presented between client and server (toolset side only), this can remain locked with the module and does not need to be moved to the override or a hak.

Conversations

General Tips

- Take advantage of the new script parameter feature – conversations that used to require dozens of scripts in NWN1 can now be done in as little as one script.
- Cutsцене conversations are great, but sometimes you want or need the old NWN1 style conversations. To create them, go to the conversation's properties and set "NWN1 Style Conversation" to "true".
- Placed cameras can be used within conversations to change to static viewpoints during a conversation.

In Progress

This document is still very much a work in progress. Future revisions hope to bring some of the following features:

- World Map How To
- More information on creature creation and customization
- Area transitions
- More info on conversations