

Playing Star Wars Epic Duels Online: A Tutorial

So, you want to play Star Wars Epic Duels (SWED) online? Great. Getting everything setup is fairly easy and playing online can be even more fun than playing in real life. What follows is a step-by-step guide to get you from here to playing Epic Duels Online!

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Introduction:

To play SWED online you will need to download several different items from several different places. This tutorial will show you where to download the necessary files and how to start a game. It will also teach you how to use the VASSAL program (the engine that SWED is played on) and the SWED module (the game that VASSAL will load), including the installation of extensions.

NOTE FOR MAC USERS: If you do not have a two-button mouse, when this guide instructs you to right-click, hold the Control key down when you click instead.

1. Downloads

-The first thing you will need to do is download the VASSAL engine. Go to www.vassalengine.org and click on the “downloads” link in the upper left hand corner of the main page.

If you are using Microsoft Windows as your operating system, the best solution is to download the windows installer. If you are using a different operating system, you’ll need to have a Java runtime installed on your computer. The Java version of VASSAL requires Java runtime 1.4 or later. Java can be downloaded here at <http://java.com/en/download/index.jsp>. Once you have Java downloaded and installed, download the Mac/Linux installation from the [vassalengine.org](http://www.vassalengine.org) website. Unzip the archive and store it wherever you’d like. To launch VASSAL using this setup, double click the file `runVassal.jar`.

If you do not wish to download anything from the [vassalengine](http://www.vassalengine.org) website, you can always launch the web-based version of VASSAL as long as you have Java installed. To do so, go to [vassalengine.org](http://www.vassalengine.org) and click the link on the left labeled “click here to launch VASSAL”.

-The second thing you will need to download is the SWED module, which is the game that VASSAL will load when you try to play. This module is also located on the VASSAL website. Click on the “modules” link in the upper left hand corner of the main page and then scroll down the list of modules until you find “Star Wars: Epic Duels.” Click on the link, and then click on the “Files” link which will bring you to the page where the current module is stored. Download the module and save it to the same folder that you saved the VASSAL engine. Remember where you save the module, and do not try to open the file by itself.

2. Running VASSAL

-The VASSAL website has specific documentation about how to run the Engine, so please refer to their documentation for running their program.

-When you start VASSAL a window will popup with several buttons. Click on the “Play Module” button. A browsing window will appear, and you will need to locate the SWED.mod module you saved and select it. Once you’ve selected it, click “Open.” If this is the first time you’ve started VASSAL, you will be prompted to select a username. This name will be the name other Epic Duelers will see you as, so choose wisely. Then the SWED Module will load and a new window will open. This last window that opened is the game! Congrats, you’ve made it this far.

3. Starting a Game

-To start a game click “File-->New Game,” then choose a side by selecting “Player 1” and hitting the “OK” button. Now that you’ve selected your playing position, you need to select a map. Another window will automatically pop up, asking you to select a map from its dropdown menu. After you’ve selected a map, click OK and the map will load after a few seconds, allowing you to finally click all those buttons at the top. If the chat window expands and no map is visible, click the “Figures” button (the image of Mace and Greedo) at the top to get the map to show, or try pulling the chat window up with the bar selector.

-The “map” button is for selecting a random map. If you can’t decide which map to load, press the “map” button and the module will select one randomly for you. Then it’s still up to you to manually load the map. So, once the map is loaded it’s time to select a character deck. Click the “Decks” button. A window will appear with all 12 decks, including a random character deck. Pulling a card off the random character deck (by clicking and dragging) will help you select a character randomly. The random character deck is always “shuffled”, so placing a card you already drew back on top of the deck will reshuffle it. **NOTE:** The random character deck is all the way to the right of the twelve character decks. You may need to scroll the window to see it.

Once you’ve chosen your character, right click the appropriate deck and select the “Send to Game Table” function. Your deck will appear in the “west deck” slot on the game table map. From there you will need to right click the deck again to “send it north” (or farther around the table depending on how many players you have). You **MUST** send your deck out of the west deck slot before another deck from the ED decks window can be sent, otherwise the two decks will be combined together and both will be unusable. If you make a mistake simply click the “undo” button which is the farthest button to the left with the half circle arrow, under “File.”

-Now that you’ve got your deck, if you haven’t clicked the Figures button yet, do so now. The figures window, with a list of figures, will appear to the left. Select the main character that matches the deck you picked and its picture will appear to the left. Simply click the picture and drag it to the map in order to use the figure. The main characters are sorted alphabetically, and their corresponding minor character(s) will be directly underneath each main character, separated by dashes. The “extension” tab will be explained later. After you’ve dragged your figures to the board, you’re ready to duel!

4. Playing a Game Online

Now that you know how to run VASSAL and start a game, it’s time to learn how to connect to the VASSAL server and play a game online! Unfortunately there is no “artificial intelligence” (AI), so there isn’t a “single player” mode. AI is beyond the scope of VASSAL, and you will have to connect online and play a game with other people.

-Beneath the Help menu you'll see a button with two arrows; pushing this will open the connection window. This window will appear to the right, and you will need to click the double arrow button in this window to connect to the server (assuming you are already connected to the internet of course). Once you are connected you will see yourself in both the "Active games" and "Current games" windows, and you should be sitting in the "main room." If other people are online you will see them in various rooms in the "Active Games" window. If no one else but you is in the Active Games window, then no one else is online. To play online you need to be in any room except for the "main room." So either join a room by doubling clicking it, or create a new one by entering a name into the "New Game" box.

-You will now see yourself in your newly created room in both the Active Games and Current Games windows. In order to play with another person they need to be in the same room as you. Right-clicking the other person in the Current Games window will give you a menu of options. Once you or your opponent has loaded a map, it's time for you to synchronize to each other. Whoever didn't load the map needs to select synchronize and 'synch' to the other person. The person who synchs will be prompted to choose a side, and then the map will load for that person. Whatever actions you take will now be visible by every other person that is synchronized to the same game table, and all actions will be reported to the chat window.

-Once you've synched and setup the board with characters and decks, you're ready to play! Playing Epic Duels in VASSAL is essentially the same as playing in real life. Click the die button to roll the die, then click and drag the figures around the board to move. The buttons with a hand of cards (labeled 1-4) will open a "player hand" window that you may use to store cards. To draw a card simply click and drag a card from the deck to either the table or your player hand window (Note: there is very limited space on the table, so the use of hand windows is recommended). It is important to know that **ALL CARDS YOU DRAW WILL ALWAYS APPEAR TO YOU FACE-UP, BUT WILL APPEAR TO YOUR OPPONENT FACE-DOWN.** In order to make one of your cards visible to your opponent, you should right-click the card, and select "flip card." The card will appear the same to you, but it will be turned face-up to your opponent. Select "flip card" again to turn it back face-down to your opponent. To discard a card simply put it in the discard pile beneath your deck. It is helpful to right-click your discard pile and select the "face-up" option.

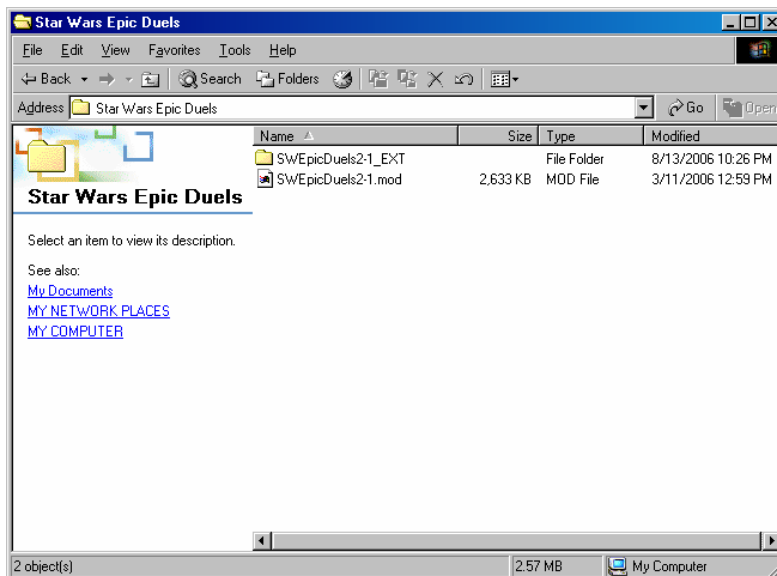
-From here playing Epic Duels Online is the same as playing Epic Duels in real life. Roll the die, move your figures, and play and draw cards. You can chat with your opponents in the chat window or hold a private conversation by right-clicking their name in the Current Games window.

- Right-clicking a figure brings up a contextual menu with several commands that are important to playing the game. To change a character's hit points as it takes damage, right-click the figure and choose Hit Points; enter the adjusted total. There is also a "Turn Sideways" command in the case of a character that is the target of Yoda's Force Lift card. Use the "Stand Back Up" command to return a character to normal status. If you wish to label your characters (such as calling your clone troopers "Trooper 1" and "Trooper 2" for simplicity in declaring attacks), right-click the character to label and choose Change Label. Then simply type whatever label you would like. Finally, when a character is destroyed, right-click it and choose "Delete Character" from the menu.

5. Extensions

The Epic Duels module only contains the decks, figures and maps that came with the original Hasbro game. However, there are several custom decks and maps in existence, and in order to use them you must load them as "extensions" to the original module.

-The first thing to do is create a folder that VASSAL will use to load the extensions. You will need to create a new folder in the same location that the module is located. The name of the folder must match the name of the module, but with the suffix `_ext` at the end. For example, for the 2.2 version of the module, you need to name this folder “SWEpicDuels2-2_ext”. It is important that the name of the extension folder matches the name of the module exactly with “_ext” added to the end; if this folder is not in the correct location and/or is not named correctly, the extensions will not load.



(image is for mod v2.1)

-Next, you will need to download the various extensions. The Yahoo group provides links to various sites with extensions and even includes a few extensions in the Files section. The central location for all custom materials (VASSAL and Printable) is the ED Wiki: <http://epicduels.pbwiki.com> When you download the extensions, be sure to save them in an easy to remember place. Once they are downloaded, choose which extensions you want to load and place them in the extensions folder you created from above. It is important that the extensions are saved to your computer as .zip files when you download them (your computer should do this automatically), and you should not open them, keep them zipped.

-If you've done this correctly, when you load VASSAL, each extension in your “_ext” folder will load. A message in the chat window should indicate which extensions loaded successfully when you start up the game. If you have 256 megabytes of RAM or less, you may find that your computer has trouble loading more than a few extensions at one time, especially if you are running the Java version of VASSAL. The only solution to this problem is to get more RAM. Java uses a large amount of RAM when it runs, and more extensions will mean slower games (on slower computers). Windows users may find that using the Windows version of VASSAL as opposed to the Java version may allow the use of more extensions, as its RAM requirements are not as great.

-The extensions you load will affect the module in individual ways depending on what the extension is. Some extensions add new buttons, and some extensions add more options to existing windows. For example, most deck extensions will appear in either the “Ext 1” or “Ext 2” windows, and their corresponding figures will appear in the “Extensions” tab of the Figures window. Most map extensions will simply be added to the map drop down menu.

6. Logfiles and Saving Games

It is possible to save a game and finish playing it later. It is also possible to record a logfile of any game and then watch it.

-To save a game, simply go to File->Save Game. Select a location for the "Save Game" file, name it, and then click save. When you want to come back to the saved game, after loading VASSAL, select "Load game" instead of "New game", and your saved game will load. Then after it loads, pick up where you left off.

-To create a logfile of a game, simply go to File and select "Begin Logfile." You will be prompted to select a location and a name for the logfile. Selecting Save will begin the logfile. When you are finished with the game and want to end the logfile, go to File and select "end logfile." A message will appear in the chat window "logfile written" if you've done this correctly. If you quit VASSAL before ending the logfile, the logfile will be corrupt and you will lose the record of your game. **NOTE TO LEAGUE MEMBERS:** Any League game that has no logfile is null and void, so make SURE that both players are saving a log in case anything happens or you will be forced to replay the match-up.

-To watch a logfile of a past game, when you startup VASSAL select "load game" instead of "new game." Locate the logfile you saved, select it and click Open, and this will load the logfile. Directly under Help will be a button marked with a right-pointing triangle. Clicking this button will advance the game one step at a time through the logfile. Each action that was logged, all the text that was typed into the chat window and the physical movements on the board will appear. Simply click this button repeatedly to view all the logged actions of the game in the order they happened.