QuickStart Guide for BGE

Presumably, you are reading this because you are brand new to Battlegrounds Gaming Engine (aka BGE) and you want some tips for getting up to speed quickly in order to get started gaming as soon as possible.

The assumption is that you will be playing a digital game conversion in a game session that someone else is hosting. Because every licensed copy of BGE always comes with one or more free Player Slots, you do not necessarily have to purchase/own a BGE license yourself in order to use the software and participate in game sessions. If the host of the game session has enough free Player Slots available, the players will be able to participate in the game session using the free BGE Demo.

Here are the recommended steps that you should follow. It should take someone who is brand new to BGE approximately 45 minutes to complete them and be ready to begin playing. Once you have been through this "crash course", prepping to play other games should only take about 5-10 minutes each.

Get the BGE software
1. Download BGE from here, if you haven't already done so. If you've been invited to participate in a game session, ask the host which version of BGE (e.g., BGE v1.2) he/she will be using, so that you can download the right one. You will not be able to connect to the host if you are not running the exact same version of BGE. Note that the "Full Install" versions of BGE always include the User Manual, so you will not need to download that separately, but you *should* download the corresponding Addendum to the User Manual, to ensure you have complete and up-to-date documentation.

Get the digital game conversion
2a. If you will be playing a free digital game conversion, download the game conversion that you intend to play from here (scroll down to the "Free Games!" section).
2b. If you will be playing a commercial (ie, non-free) digital game conversion, the host must provide you with the download link.
2c. If you will be playing a custom-made digital game conversion, the host will have to either email it to you or send it some other way, such as via Dropbox, chat client file transfer, etc.), unless it has been posted on a server, in which case you will just need the download link.

Install BGE

3. Install BGE by extracting/decompressing the Zip file. Once that is done, don't throw away the Zip file; you will probably want to create additional installations from it if you intend to play other digital game conversions, since it is best to install each digital game conversion to a fresh BGE installation. Full installation instructions can be found on pg. 11-12 of the BGE User Manual, should you need to refer to them. Note to Windows OS users: Do NOT attempt to run BGE from within the Zip file (i.e., without extracting the Zip files' contents first).

Install the digital game conversion

4. Extract/decompress the Zip file that contains the digital game conversion.
5. Open the ReadMe file that came with the digital game conversion and read the installation instructions. Note that custom-made digital game conversions might not contain such a ReadMe file (although they *should*).
6. Install the digital game conversion that you intend to play, by moving the files into the corresponding folders of the BGE installation that you created in Step 3.
7. Read the rest of the ReadMe file that came with the digital game conversion. It contains all the information you will need to play the game, although it will not go into detail about BGE's basic operating instructions (the ReadMe files assume a working knowledge of the software), nor about the game's rules (although many digital game conversions include the game's rules, either in a stand-alone PDF file, or embedded into an on-screen component).

"Required" (or at least strongly suggested) Reading

The 158-page User Manual may seem a bit daunting, but in truth, reading most of it is not necessary if all you want to do is *play* a game (as opposed to create a custom game conversion, or host game sessions). For playing most games, all you should have to read is about 34 pages worth of material, detailed below.

For a quick overview of the software, pg. 6-8
Help Screen, pg. 14-15
For a list of the hotkeys used to control the software, pg. 18
Basic Interface, pg. 20-22
Scrolling the Game Table, pg. 27
Zooming the Game Table, pg. 28
Views, pg. 32-33
Selecting and Deselecting a Unit, pg. 42
Moving a unit, pg. 43
Selecting Multiple Units, pg. 46-47
Contextual popup menus, pg. 49-50
Interacting with cards, pg. 76-78
Connecting to the game host, pg. 79, 81
Chat window, pg. 83-85
Rolling dice on the game table, pg. 99-100
Using the Card Table window, pg. 116-119
Manipulating cards and card decks in the game table window, pg. 121

Depending on the particular game you are playing, you may also want to read up on the Turn Sequencer (pg. 101-104) and on using Dice Macros (pg. 89-98). Alternatively, the game host can just talk you through what you need to know about these features in a couple of minutes at the beginning of the game session.

If possible, use voice chat

Using VOIP software (such as Skype, Ventrilo, etc.) during a game session is highly recommended, as it leads to significantly faster and more enjoyable gameplay, and greatly enhances/preserves the social aspect of gaming. Voice chat is practically a requirement if the host plans to explain the game rules to someone who has never played before, unless the game is very simple to teach.

The host should inform the players which VOIP program they will be using, well ahead of the game session. For a game session using voice chat, each participant will need a microphone and speakers; preferably a headset mic, since it helps to reduce background noise and feedback from the speakers.

Troubleshooting

The most common issue that new users have with BGE is that players cannot connect to the host (usually because the host has not set up port forwarding on his/her router). If this happens to you, direct the host to the Troubleshooting section of the BGE User Manual, which begins on pg. 148. You should also refer to that section of the User Manual if you experience any problems yourself (error messages, crashes, unexpected behavior, etc.) while using the software.