

# **The Early Rush**

**A Civilization IV Strategy Guide to Conquering your Nearest Neighbour for  
Fun and Profit before the BCs become the ADs**

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## ***Introduction***

Okay, here's the short version: Research Bronze Working. Found a second city to claim copper. Build Axemen. Go out and kill something

Of course, if it was that easy, the game wouldn't be much of a challenge, would it? Hence the extensive detail in the rest of this document.

The obvious first question, though, is why bother? The AI leaders are extremely peaceful in the earliest part of the game, even the warlike ones like Montezuma and Shaka. If you manage diplomacy carefully, they'll leave you alone for a long time. There's plenty of land freely available for expansion. And shouldn't you be worrying about defending your territory from barbs rather than sending your military off to foreign lands?

The answer is that there are several advantages to rushing and eliminating an opponent in the earliest phase of the game.

- By eliminating a rival, you, well, eliminate a rival. One less potential enemy to worry about for the rest of the game.
- If you can't eliminate them, you can at least weaken them and make them less of a threat for the rest of the game.
- Capital cities are usually in choice locations. By capturing a rival's capital, you'll have at least two powerhouse cities in your empire.
- You may capture other worthwhile cities as well. In Civ IV as in real life, land is power. The more of it you have, the better off you are
- As a result of the war you will have an army of veteran units. You can use them for later wars. (Upgrades may be required, but are often worthwhile for highly-promoted veterans.)
- You may also generate enough XPs to allow national wonders such as the Heroic Epic and West Point, giving you early/mid-game military advantages which continue for the rest of the game. In Warlords and Beyond the Sword, you'll also get an early start on your first Great General.
- Eliminating the nearest civ will usually result in you having more top-notch city sites available, and often more time to settle them. You'll also increase the spectrum of resources under your control, helping with those early health and happiness numbers.
- Gold! Every captured city gives you a heap of it; the bigger and older the city, the more booty you claim. You can help fund your research and unit upgrades with war booty.
- Wonders! If the AI directed hammers into a wonder rather than its military (the fools!), then the captured wonder, its benefits, and its Great Person points become yours. The same applies to religious shrines.
- Diplomacy: By attacking early, you can often avoid the diplomatic penalties from other civs for "declaring war on our friend."

- War Weariness: This problem is at its least debilitating level at this point in the game; it gets magnified in each successive age. By attacking earlier rather than later, you avoid much of its impact.

Convinced? I thought you would be, if you weren't already.

But as several players have noticed, an early military rush is not easy. You have only a few small cities, a limited number of Workers (and therefore, few tile improvements), and a limited selection of military units. In particular, you will not have siege weapons to remove cultural defenses and cause collateral damage in suicide attacks. In many ways it's easier to just wait for Construction and Catapults before even contemplating your first war. But by then, the opportunity to grab an early advantage that rockets you ahead of the competition may be lost.

This article intends to pass along the principal methods and techniques for performing an early military rush. As with any strategy article, it won't include every possible trick and tactic, so I welcome commentary, constructive criticism, and further suggestions. My thanks go out to everyone who participates on the Civilization Fanatics' Forums, to whom I owe a debt of thanks for many of the ideas contained herein.

## Sidebar: When *Not* to Rush

Of course, you shouldn't attempt to perform an early rush in every game of Civ IV. There are times when it will be impossible, or at least extremely difficult. This is not to say you can't try to rush, but it may not offer the same rewards—in fact, it may be too costly and lead to you losing the game.

- **Isolation:** If you find yourself isolated on an island or continent by yourself, the early rush is pretty much out the window. First of all, it doesn't make sense. One of the big advantages of the early rush is to ensure you have room to expand into at your leisure. Well, that's precisely what an isolated start gives you. Second, you'll need to research Sailing and build a fleet of Galleys to attack an opponent, assuming one is within reach of those early naval units, and by the time you've built your navy *and* your units, it will probably be too late. Save your hammers for other purposes.
- **Distance:** Sometimes you'll find yourself on a land mass with neighbours who are quite far away. Once again, this gives you time and room to expand, negating one of the big gains of the early rush. It also means that any cities you capture and keep will have higher maintenance costs because of their distance from the palace. And it may simply take too long to get your units to the enemy, giving him more time to tech to and build better units. How far is too far? That's a judgment call. I usually plan out my first four to six cities, guess where my nearest opponent will place his, and if my borders and his won't overlap, I'm probably too far away. Map size, of course, affects this, as does the number of starting civilizations; the bigger the map and the fewer the civs, the less likely it is that you'll have an early target located conveniently nearby.
- **Tough Neighbourhood:** If your only early rush target has an obvious counter to your rush unit, you may have to forget about the whole business. For example, if the North Americans are next door, you can forget about an Axe rush. Dog Soldiers get a bonus against melee units, and NA Archers get additional promotions from Totem Poles. If your neighbours are Shaka and Pacal, with their enhanced Spear UUs, and you're Egypt or Persia, you're better off only warring against barbarians in the early game.
- **Other Options:** You may gain a start that initially takes you in a more peaceful direction with regards to technology targets and builds. For example, suppose you start with the Mysticism tech and you are lucky enough to have marble and perhaps even gold in the capital's fat cross. Well, you're almost guaranteed the Oracle in that case. But if you research military instead of religious technologies and build units instead of the wonder, you may lose out on it. Remember, the main purpose of the early rush is to gain an advantage early in the game. If you see another way to achieve an early advantage, you may prefer to pursue it instead.

## Ingredients

### Speed

Remember this above all else: it's called an early *rush*. Not only are you “rushing” at an opponent with an early army, you're also *rushing* to get that army in the field.

Why? You want to catch your enemy unprepared for the strength and speed of your attack. Your target will optimally have no units better than Archers- and not many of them. Your rush should hit before the enemy expands, so that the few units you'll be able to field will be enough to accomplish your goals. And you will generally need to get the war finished quickly; an early war can cripple your fragile, nascent economy if it drags on too long. Finally, you also want to attack before the enemy cities' cultural defense bonuses reach higher levels, which will happen as the game progresses.

So remember that you're trying to do everything *fast*. Everything I recommend in this guide comes back to the need for speed. That speed will require trade-offs, which I'll discuss below..

### Civilizations and Leaders

While it is possible to accomplish an early rush with any leader, some civilizations and leaders lend themselves better to the early rush than others. Three leader traits offer advantages to those wanting to rush an opponent.

- **Aggressive** leaders have the best advantage: their melee units—usually the workhorses of an early rush—have an automatic Combat I promotion for +10% strength. Also, Aggressive leaders build Barracks at double speed. As I said, speed is a factor in the early rush, so saving several turns by having cheap Barracks is significant.
- **Charismatic** leaders also have an advantage here, though less so than Aggressive ones. Their units will earn promotions from fewer XPs, so it will take fewer successful battles to have an army of veterans at your disposal. They lack Aggressive's initial advantages, but make up for it quickly in the field. For example, an early Charismatic unit produced in a city with a barracks starts with 3 XPs and only needs 1 XP (one successful battle) to achieve its next promotion, unlike regular units, which need 2 XPs to reach Level 3.
- **Protective** leaders seem to have an advantage, but it's a dubious one. In the early game, the Protective trait's free promotions are only available to Archers, which are better defensive units than offensive ones. (In fact, one of the free promotions, City Garrison I, is only in effect while on defense, and only inside cities at that). Tales of successful Archer rushes in Civ IV are few and far between.

Civilizations that have an early unique unit (UU) also have a distinct advantage. These civs can field a unit for the rush that offers some tactical advantage at a time when margins for victory in battles are small and the tiniest factor in your favour can result in a huge payoff. If you're playing as a civ with an early UU, plan on leveraging it for the

rush; dedicate your early research to obtaining the required technology, focus on claiming any resource required to build the UU, and produce the UU almost exclusively.

## Opponents

You may have more than one target to choose from if you're on a reasonably large land mass with two or more civilizations as neighbours. In which case you have to decide whom to attack.

Generally, given the uphill battle you'll be facing because you have no siege weapons, it's usually best to attack whichever neighbouring civ is weakest. So that means the one that (a) isn't Protective; (b) doesn't have an early UU; and/or (c) doesn't have a religion yet to increase cities' cultural defenses. It's nice if you get a neighbor who lacks all three of those things, but it's also unusual. Usually you'll just want to target the civ with the fewest advantages over you.

However, picking on the weakling may not be an option. You may want to take advantage of the early rush to take out an opponent who will only become more of a menace over time. Aggressive leaders are good targets in this regard. They tend to be more belligerent, so you may as well be that way yourself—do it to them before they do it to you.

## Units

### *Early Generic Units*

Even without an early UU, you can still have a successful rush. Chariots, Axemen, and Swordsmen can all be used in these ultra-early wars.

To perform an early rush, you'll need something better than Warriors. (Well, with one exception: the Incan Quechua. More on them shortly.) Let's have a look at the basic early units commonly used for rushing and what they need in order to be built, then we'll have a look at the early unique units.

Unit	Technologies Required	Resources Required	Move	Strength	Cost
Axeman	Bronze Working	Copper or Iron	1	5	35
Swordsman	Iron Working	Iron	1	6	40
Chariot	The Wheel, Animal Husbandry	Horses	2	4	25
Spearman	Hunting, Bronze Working	Copper or Iron	1	4	35

Of the units listed above, the **Axeman** is the most commonly-used workhorse of the early rush; hence the term "Axe rush". There are many reasons for this. Axemen are stronger than the most common AI early defender, the Archer (5 versus 3). Axemen can receive City Raider, Cover, and Shock promotions. They can be built after researching two early technologies (Mining and Bronze Working), and if your civ starts with Mining (several do), Bronze Working is that much easier to obtain.

Bronze Working is worth researching early on for several other reasons, too: it enables the Slavery civic and forest chopping, both of which will figure large in the techniques used to make the early rush happen. It's also on the way to Iron Working, which enables another early rush unit.

**Swordsmen** are also useful for an early rush, though we're starting to play fast and loose with the term "early" when we consider using them. After all, you need to research Mining, Bronze Working, and Iron Working to enable them, and you'll need the Wheel, too, in case you forgot, in order to hook up the iron mine to the nearest city. They have a +1 strength advantage over Axemen, however, and a 10% bonus when attacking cities; if you can field them early, it's often worthwhile. Note, however, that Swordsmen make poor defenders versus Axemen, who have an automatic 50% bonus versus other melee units. So remember to bring at least one or two Axemen along to defend your Swordsmen.

Are they worth the delay? Possibly, especially if you're facing a tough opponent such as a Protective leader, and/or if you lack copper or horses. Another consideration is your research. If you're fortunate enough to start near a high-commerce tile such as gold, gems, or silver, you may be able to accelerate research enough to finish researching Iron Working long before your opponent has anything better than Archers to field in response. And if you're playing as Rome, well, a Praetorian rush is simply a must; that's the main reason to play as one of the Caesars.

**Chariots** are an unusual early rush unit, but can be used because of two advantages they have over the other units listed above. First of all, they're fast (2 moves), and speed is everything here, right? And look at the last column. That's right, Chariots are *cheap*. You can build more of them, and frankly, you'll need them, because they're weaker than the other units. They only have a +1 strength advantage over Archers, and that's easily negated by promotions, defensive terrain, and fortification. They also cannot get City Raider or Cover promotions. But if you bring a lot of them, you *can* capture cities with them.

The main problem with Chariots as an early rush unit is that they are much more easily countered than Axemen. All your enemy needs is Bronze Working, Hunting, and a source of copper, and they'll be able to field Spearmen, which can eat your Chariots for breakfast. Granted, as of Warlords Chariots can do the same to Axemen, but Chariots are easily countered by including a Spearman in the stack of Axes. It's harder to include an Axe to counter Spearmen amongst your Chariots because of their 1 move; one of the advantages Chariots have is that they move faster than melee or archery units, so you don't want to cripple them by making them wait for a lumbering Axeman.

(And while we're on the subject, facing fast-moving Zulu Impis when you have a stack of Chariots is downright ugly. If you're playing as Persia or Egypt and relying on their UUs, be very nice to Shaka. *Very nice.*)

If you fear that your opponent will be able to field Spearmen against your Chariots, try to send one of your fast-moving units to pillage their source of copper or iron. In fact, a Chariot rush may be more successful if you only use it to pillage and thereby make a civ weak and unable to expand rather than trying to conquer their cities.

Speaking of **Spearmen**: I included them just to be thorough. Although these units can receive City Raider promotions, you're unlikely to use them for that purpose. If you can build Spearmen, after all, you can build Axemen for the same price and +1 strength. But Spearmen can be very useful if your opponent is able to field Chariots—especially if you're playing with either Warlords or Beyond the Sword, where Chariots are counters to Axemen. Include at least one Spearman with a stack of Axemen to defend them from mounted units, especially Chariots.

I've left out Horse Archers. I think they come too late to qualify as early rush material, and they lack the advantages other units have for that purpose, especially by that time. However, if you want to use them as part of a rush when they're available, especially when playing as either Carthage or Mongolia, whose UUs are based upon the Horse Archer, many of the techniques outlined in this guide will still apply.

Now, let's have a look at the early unique units I mentioned above...

## Early Unique Units

Civ	Unique Unit	Replaces	Technologies Required	Resources Required	Move	Str.	Cost	Special Abilities/Notes
Aztecs	Jaguar	Swordsman	Iron Working	None	1	5	35	+25% jungle defense; in BtS, starts w/ Woodsman I
Celts	Gallic Warrior	Swordsman	Iron Working	Copper or Iron	1	6	40	Starts with Guerilla I
Egypt	War Chariot	Chariot	The Wheel, Animal Husbandry	Horses	2	5	25	Immune to First Strikes
Greece	Phalanx	Spearman; (in BtS, Axeman)	Bronze Working; pre-BtS, Hunting	Copper or Iron	1	5	35	+25% hill defense; in BtS, +100% defense vs. Chariot
Inca	Quechua	Warrior	None	None	1	2	15	+100% vs. Archery units
Mali	Skirmisher	Archer	Archery	None	1	4	25	1-2 first strikes
Maya	Holkan	Spearman	Bronze Working, Hunting	None	1	4	35	Immune to first strikes
Native American	Dog Soldier	Axeman	Bronze Working	None	1	4	35	+100% vs. melee units
Persia	Immortal	Chariot	The Wheel, Animal Husbandry	Horses	2	4	25	30% withdrawal chance; +50% vs. Archery units; can take advantage of defensive terrain
Rome	Praetorian	Swordsman	Iron Working	Iron	1	8	40/45	Cost was increased to 45 as of Warlords
Sumeria	Vulture	Axeman	Bronze Working	Copper or Iron	1	6	35	Only +25% versus melee
Zulu	Impi	Spearman	Bronze Working, Hunting	Copper or Iron	2	4	35	Starts with Mobility

All of the unique units listed above are qualified to be used in an early rush, but each has its own considerations for such a use. I'll deal with the units that stand out the most.

The Incan **Quechua** deserves special mention, as it is by far the earliest available early rush unit, needs no resources, and is dirt cheap. When playing as the Incas, the best approach is often to only found the capital, then spam Quechuas and overwhelm your nearest neighbour with the little buggers. You may not even bother with a barracks or a Worker at first; after all, you can likely capture your first Worker from your opponent, and that Worker can then chop a barracks for you.

Notice that certain unique units (the Aztec **Jaguar**, Mayan **Holkan**, and the Native American **Dog Soldier**) can be built without any special resource requirements, unlike the unit upon which they're based. Just research the required technology, and the UU is available. This means it will not be necessary, as it usually is with the base units and with the other early UUs, to found an additional city to claim the required resource. As I mentioned above, speed is a factor in the early rush, and these three civs have a particular advantage in that regard. Because these units are generally weaker than the ordinary units they replace, it's important to both field them as soon as possible and bring along a few more than you would of their generic base unit.

The units that require the Iron Working technology (the Aztec **Jaguar** again, the Celtic **Gallic Warrior**, and the Roman **Praetorian**) all require additional time to research that technology, as does the Swordsman on which they're based. A key factor here would be the availability of an early commerce-heavy tile to accelerate research. Working a lake tile (if you start with the Fishing technology, like the Romans do) or an oasis for its 2 commerce can help, but a gold, silver, or gem mine is even better.

Mali's **Skirmisher** is definitely the weakest of the lot, since it is the only one based upon a defensive unit, the Archer. As with the Archer, a rush based upon them is rarely successful. However, they are the same price as Chariots and have their same strength value, with the added benefit of having access to Drill promotions and free strikes; they only lack the Chariot's 2 moves. So as with a Chariot rush, if you build enough Skirmishers, you may be able to overwhelm an opponent with them.

Don't think of Sumer's **Vultures** as stronger Axemen with a diminished bonus against melee units; think of them as early Swordsmen with an *added bonus*, because with 6 strength and +25% versus melee units, that's what they are. Of all the UUs based on Axemen, the Vulture is the most powerful.

The **Praetorians** also deserve special mention, as they are arguably the best UU in the game. They have the strength of their successor unit (Macemen) well before Macemen are available. In addition, unlike Swordsmen, it's not really worthwhile upgrading Praetorians to Macemen, which means the unit also benefits from an extremely long lifespan (plus you save money). Praets are so powerful—over-powered, many civ fans argue, but we Romaphiles love Praets for it—that it makes sense to pursue the ability to build them at the expense of everything else.

## Resources

As you should have noted from the tables above, most of the early rush units require a particular early strategic resource: **Horses**, **Copper**, or **Iron**. So to perform an early rush, you often need to (a) prioritize researching the technology that reveals the resource you need and (b) prioritize founding a city that will claim the resource, unless you're fortunate enough to have it appear in your capital's fat cross.

## Exploration

The need for a strategic resource will impact your early exploration efforts. Don't go off on a wild chase for goody huts, even if you pop a map that shows one way off in the distance. Don't follow the coastline in a desperate hunt for seafood. Don't get diverted inspecting a nearby neighbour's territory. There'll be time for all of those things later. (Well, except the goody huts, they'll probably be gone. There's a price for everything.)

Remember that speed is of the essence; it's called an early *rush*, after all. I can't emphasize this enough: *you need to explore in a circular pattern around the capital*. This will reveal nearby terrain so you know where the strategic resource you need is located. You need to know this so you can found a city that claims that resource. If you fail to explore all nearby tiles, you may think there's no copper to be had when the fog only three or four tiles away from the capital is actually concealing it.

## Technologies

**Bronze Working** is a key early technology for the early rush. It reveals copper, which is the essential ingredient for Axemen; it is a pre-requisite for Iron Working; and it enables the Slavery civic and forest chopping, both of which can accelerate production.

If your chosen or assigned civilization starts with the **Mining** technology, you obviously have a big advantage in researching Bronze Working, since Mining is its prerequisite.

Civs that start with Mining:

- Carthage
- China
- England
- Ethiopia
- Germany
- India
- Khmer
- Korea
- Mali
- Maya
- Portugal
- Rome
- Russia

If you research Bronze Working and find that copper is not located nearby, you still have options available. You may choose to research Iron Working next, though this puts the success of the early rush at risk because of the time it will take. You could abandon the idea of the early rush; or you could research Animal Husbandry.

The other early technology that may be needed for an early rush unit is **Animal Husbandry**, which reveals horses. In this case, you have an advantage in researching this technology if you start with either of its pre-requisites, **Hunting** or **Agriculture**. (Remember you'll need **The Wheel** to enable Chariots as well.)

Civilizations that start with either Hunting or Agriculture:

- America
- Aztecs
- Babylonia \*
- Celts
- China
- Dutch
- Egypt \*
- Ethiopia
- France \*
- Germany
- Greece
- Holy Roman Empire
- Inca
- Khmer
- Mongolia \*
- Native American
- Ottoman \*
- Persia
- Russia
- Sumer \*
- Viking
- Zulu

The civs listed above with an asterisk (\*) also start with The Wheel, so they have a distinct advantage in getting Chariots early. Of course The Wheel also enables road building, which makes it an essential early technology you're likely to research very soon if you don't start with it.

### ***Animal Husbandry vs Bronze Working***

So which technology should you research first—Animal Husbandry or Bronze Working?

The units enabled by Bronze Working are obviously much better suited to an early city-invading rush; Axemen and their UU variations are the best units for such work. In addition, the access to Slavery and chopping cannot be underestimated, as we'll see. So Bronze Working is the best tech for the early rush, especially if you start with Mining.

However, if you're playing as a civ with a Chariot-based UU (Persia or Egypt), it definitely makes sense to research Animal Husbandry first. It may also make sense to pursue Animal Husbandry first if your civ is in the list of those that start with its prerequisite techs. Remember that you will have barbarians to worry about as well, and Chariots, as of their upgrade to Axemen-counters in Warlords, are very well suited to barb defense.

If you are pursuing one of the Iron Working-enabled units, you have a bigger task to tackle. Bee-lining through the required technologies makes sense. When I play as Rome, for example, I research Bronze Working, then The Wheel, then Iron Working. All other Worker techs can wait; I'm after my precious Praets. I'd even skip The Wheel if I could, but I need it to connect copper and iron to my cities.

## **Workers, Settlers and Cities**

Settlers and Workers are extremely expensive in the early game, even though both food and hammers contribute to their builds. If you are pursuing an early rush, you want most of your production to go to units, so you don't want to divert more hammers and build turns than are absolutely necessary into these non-military units.

Also, you need to grow your city or cities so you have citizens working hammer-rich tiles, and also so that you can whip those citizens away to speed the build of units. Settlers and Workers delay city growth, another reason to minimize their builds during the build-up to an early rush.

But you need Workers and you need cities. How do you balance that need with the speed and hammer requirements of the early rush?

### **Workers**

First off, remember that you may be able to steal Workers. Many Civ IV players prefer to start with Hunting so they have that initial 2-move Scout. However, Scouts cannot steal Workers; Warriors can.

As your Warriors explore, survive (hopefully) their encounters with barbarian animals, and earn XPs, give them the Woodsman promotions. Woodsman II will give them 2 moves through forest and jungle, making them as fast as Scouts are on flat terrain.

Woodsman II will allow your Warrior to "surprise" an enemy Worker; normally the 2-move Worker can sprint away from a slower Warrior. Remember that as of Warlords, a Worker cannot move until the turn following its capture. If you capture the Worker on a forested tile, the Woodsman II Warrior can ably defend the Worker against most early enemy units (Warriors and Archers). The AI probably won't even try to attack, especially if the only unit available is the nearest city's sole defender. A Woodsman II Warrior can also escort the Worker back to your territory much more quickly.

The downside to stealing Workers is that you are, more or less, telegraphing your punches. The AI now knows you are an enemy and, especially with the BetterAI mod and in Beyond the Sword games, it will produce more units to counter your aggression than it otherwise would have. Try to mollify the AI into a false sense of security by keeping your units out of its territory as much as you can, and by making peace as soon as possible. Or steal workers from one AI, and rush another! (One other thing I have tried – if I see the borders of an enemy civ, I will go in a different direction so my soldiers aren't seen near their city until the miniSoD arrives.)

If stealing Workers is just not in the cards, build as few as you can get away with. One or two should be sufficient (one per city?); just don't be sloppy with their work orders. Remember that you should capture more Workers as you capture enemy cities.

## ***Settlers and Cities***

How many cities do you need for an early rush?

Answer: as few as you can get away with.

That means only one city if possible, two in most cases, and three only when absolutely necessary. Any more than that and your early rush will be too delayed to be an early rush. Your enemy will have better units than Archers by then, and more of them. If you want to REX, wait for Catapults before going to war.

The number of cities required is tied to the resources you need.

Some of the early UUs, remember, require no resources. This means you can, potentially, base your entire early rush on the capital. This is especially true of the Incan Quechua rush. It's possible with the Maya Holkan and the Native American Dog Soldier. It's less likely with the Aztec Jaguar, however, since you usually don't want to wait until after you research Iron Working to found your second city.

However, most of the early UUs do require resources. You cannot and should not bet on the resource you need appearing in your capital's fat cross. Even if it does, two cities can produce more units more quickly than just one.

So if you need a strategic resource to build your rush unit, the answer is obvious: build a Settler while researching the technology that reveals the resource. Try to time the build of the Settler so it's ready on the same turn, or earlier, as your research of the resource-revealing technology. Then have the Settler move to a location and found a city that claims the resource.

If you are fortunate enough to have the resource appear in the capital's fat cross, found the second city anyway. Choose a good production site, with at least one food resource, hills that you can mine, and optimally some forests for chopping.

With the Iron Working-enabled units, you will likely have time, while researching Iron Working, to get ready to found a third city (which will claim iron, of course). This can be very useful when playing as Rome, since Praetorians are more costly than Axemen (or even Swordsmen, since Warlords), so having 3 cities producing them means you'll have more of them. It's quite common when playing as Rome to found your second city to claim copper and the third to claim iron. Having the copper available before the iron allows you to build Axemen for barb defense. If there is no copper nearby, however, you may decide to forgo building a second city until you know where iron is located.

One other thing: found the city so the resource is in the first cultural ring, in other words, right next to the city itself. Yes, even if you're playing as a Creative leader. Speed is all, remember. You want to hook up that resource ASAP. You may have to sacrifice the long-term optimization of the city to do this. That's part of the potential price of the early rush that I mentioned before.

## Intelligence

Now let's switch our focus back to your early exploration units. Once you've explored the terrain near the capital to reveal the potential locations of nearby strategic resources, don't go sending your exploring Scouts and Warriors off to the far ends of your continent. Yes, there may be goody huts there, and the AI may beat you to them. Too bad. You have bigger fish to fry, my friend.

You need to gather information about the enemy, you see. So now's the time to bring that unit in close to your enemy's borders and reveal as much about their terrain as you can. Get on top of a hill to reveal more information, or on a nearby coastal or lakeside tile. You may even be able to see the cities themselves. Even if you don't, you'll get an idea about to the surrounding terrain.

If you have the time and a good research rate, or if you just get lucky with goody huts, research Writing soon after you have your resource-revealing tech and a few Worker techs. Get Open Borders with your target and scout out his land thoroughly, if time permits.

Things you want to know if you can:

- Does the enemy also have a strategic resource? What counter units, therefore, can you expect to run into? How easy or difficult would it be to pillage the resource tile? How will you counter their best unit(s)?
- How many defenders, and of what type, do the enemy cities have?
- Are any of the enemy cities on hills?
- Is there good defensive terrain right next to the city tile from which you can launch your attack? Forest or jungle hills are obviously best, followed by flat terrain forest and jungles, then hills.
- Is there a river next to the city? You don't want to attack across the river; you'll get a -25% penalty for doing that. This will affect your stack's approach to the city, as would a lake, peak, or other topographical feature.
- What is the city's cultural defense bonus?
- Does the city contain any wonders?
- Are any of the cities holy cities?
- What other resources do the cities have in their fat crosses? Are any of them worth having early in the game, such as early happiness resources like furs, ivory, gold, gems, or silver?
- How far is each city from your capital? What is its initial maintenance cost likely to be?

These last four questions will impact your decision to keep or raze the city when you capture it.

## **Food, Hammers, and Forests**

These are the three key ingredients that your early cities need to fuel the early rush.

You need food so the city can grow, obviously. You need citizens to work the tiles and thereby build the units. You also need food for whipping. Whipping converts food into hammers, which is kind of amazing when you think about it.

However, it's difficult to build things just with whipping alone. It takes a long time for the whipping-generated unhappiness to wear off, and it also takes a long time for the citizens you whipped away to grow back. So you also need hammers.

In the early game there are three map-based sources of hammers: hills, forests, and resources. Hills will need to be mined to yield a respectable number of hammers; three from a grassland or desert hill, four from a plains hill. Plains forests contribute two hammers, grassland forests only one. Horses, copper, and iron all contribute hammers, as do stone, marble, and cows. You'll want to improve and assign citizens to work these tiles to accelerate your unit builds.

Chopping forests is invaluable as a way to accelerate unit builds. Unlike whipping, the immediate consequences of forest chopping are minimal. Therefore, try to place your early cities among forest tiles. After your initial strategic resource tech and Worker tech research are complete, you may want to prioritize researching Mathematics to improve chopping yields.

## ***Preparation***

Just because you've assembled the essential ingredients, it doesn't mean you're ready to cook your enemy's goose. In times of peace, prepare for war. Since you're generally in a period of relative peace in the first few turns of the game, it's time to do that.

## **Builds**

Remember that time is of the essence, so you need to focus your builds, especially since they take so long in the early game and you have so few cities to do them.

### ***Warrior***

Building a Warrior first is probably the best choice. It will allow the capital can to grow to size 2, first of all; this will make later builds a little faster. In addition, having a second exploring unit accelerates the revelation of terrain and increases your chances of finding tribal villages, locations of rivals and strategic resources, and enemy Workers ripe for stealing.

### ***Worker***

You'll need at least one Worker to hook up any strategic resources, unless you're lucky enough to be playing as a civ whose early UU requires none. Remember that you may be able to use an exploring Warrior to steal a Worker, in which case you could potentially avoid having to build one. However, don't count on it, especially on the lower difficulty levels where the AI does not get a Worker at the start. If your initial Warrior doesn't come across an enemy Worker by the time your second Warrior is finished being built, build a Worker yourself. It's not like you're not going to find a use for him.

### ***Settler***

As mentioned above, unless you have a resource-free UU, you should expect to have to found a second city to claim the resource you need for your chosen rush unit. Try to have the Settler ready by the time you finish researching the resource-revealing technology, if possible. Remember your Worker(s) can chop forests to help rush the Settler, but don't use all of your capital's forests; you'll want some to chop-rush units later on.

### ***Barracks***

Obviously a Barracks is very desirable early building to have in place for the early rush, as it gives all the units you're about to produce one extra promotion. Building a Barracks should also allow the city to grow by another population point or two. If you're playing as an Aggressive leader, definitely build these, because they're cheap. If you're not, you may want to forgo the Barracks at first in order to have more units available sooner. However, I usually manage to build a Barracks before the early rush, and I'm always glad when I do.

## Work Boats

If you start with Fishing and you have a seafood resource available, a Work Boat is a good idea. Food is a priority, and your city will grow while you build the boat. The commerce from the water tile will also help with research. Working a seafood tile will allow for much quicker population growth, which is especially useful when recovering from whipping a unit.

## Units

Once the initial builds above are done and your required resource is hooked up, it's time to focus on unit builds almost exclusively. Keep building them until the war is done, because, as you'll see, you're going to lose a lot of units.

How many units is enough? This is where your intelligence about the enemy comes into play. Remember that you will have no siege weapons to remove cultural defenses or cause collateral damage in suicide attacks. You should expect to lose the units whose initial attacks function as pseudo-siege weapons, damaging a defender so a later attacker will be successful.

Here are the most commonly recommended ratios of attackers to defenders:

Cultural Defense	Defensive Bonus from Terrain	Ratio of Attackers to Defenders
0%	None	2:1
	25% (hill)	3:1
20%	None	3:1
	25% (hill)	4:1
40% or higher	None	4:1
	25% (hill)	5:1

In addition, if the enemy leader has the Protective trait, increase the attacker's side of the ratio by 1 or even 2 in each instance. You may also want to do this if your enemy is defending with stronger units like Axemen or Swordsmen, but if you've done everything correctly so far (meaning quickly), this should be highly unusual.

Also increase the ratios if you're using a weaker attacking unit, such as Chariots, instead of Axemen or Swordsmen. In fact, for generic Chariots, you should probably double the attackers' side of the ratio. At least. Seriously.

(Conversely, you might think you'd be able to reduce the number of required attackers if you have a stronger unit such as Swordsmen or, even better, Rome's awesome Praetorians. However, given the amount of time required to research Iron Working and build a force of these units, the enemy will probably have better defensive units, and more of them. So, no.)

So if, for example, you're facing two Archers fortified in a city on a hill with a 20% cultural defense, you should bring along at least eight attackers. The reasoning behind this is as follows: You should expect to lose two units performing the initial damage attacks on the defenders. If you're unlucky, one of those attacks will fail to cause any

damage to the defender, so expect to lose a third unit. Units 4 and 5 should win their battles, but again assume you're going to be unlucky and lose one of them. Hey, life's a bitch and so is Civ sometimes. So a sixth unit is needed to guarantee that you can take the city. Obviously, if the city's cultural defenses are higher, and/or the leader is Protective, the number of units you'll lose to damage attacks will increase.

What are the other two units for? One will defend your stack of damaged units, the other will defend the captured city, or if you raze it, it will at least defend the damaged unit that captured the city. Don't be cavalier about this. There's no point in capturing a city if the enemy pries it from your battle-bloodied grasp on the next turn, especially if you lose all the units (and their lovely XPs) fortunate enough to survive the battle in the bargain. They're also included in case your luck is really, really bad. I prefer to use units for defense that can, in a pinch, also be used for offense. So I prefer to bring along a Combat I Axeman and a Combat I Spearman rather than Archers to defend the city. If all the other units die, they will still probably have the strength to finish off the remaining defenders.

One other thing: If you're playing with the BetterAI mod, or with the Beyond the Sword expansion pack, you can expect the number of defenders in the first targeted city to increase by at least the number of turns it will take your stack to reach the city from just outside its borders—in other words, the AI will add one defender each turn that your units are on the move after the declaration of war, minimum. Make sure you bring along enough units to deal with this expected increase in opposition.

### ***Granaries***

If you manage to finish researching Pottery while still preparing for, or while in the midst of the early rush, you should consider building Granaries. These buildings help the rush by reducing the number of turns required for the city to grow back after having population whipped away.

### ***What NOT to build***

- **Wonders.** Sorry, but you just can't spare the turns or the hammers. If you're lucky, your target will build one or more and you can capture them.
- **Scouts.** Even if you start with Hunting, Warriors are better for the early rush since they can steal Workers. Make do with the initial Scout you started with, or with none.
- **Obelisks/Monuments.** These are an unacceptable diversion of hammers that should go into barracks or units. Mysticism is also a low-priority tech for the early rush. Try to found your early cities right next to the resources you need if at all possible.

## **Tile Improvements**

### ***Farms/Pastures***

Food is vital. You need the city to grow so you have citizens for (a) working hammer tiles for builds and (b) whipping. Surplus food also frees up citizens to work hammer-rich, food-poor tiles. Remember that food tiles also help accelerate Worker and Settler builds. Improving food resource tiles, therefore, is your top priority.

Focus on food resources. Farming ordinary tiles like flood plains and grassland is a lower priority as long as there are better food sources available.

Keep in mind that if you don't start with Agriculture, you may have to wait before you can build farms; you'll be researching strategic technologies before worker techs.

### ***Roads***

You need roads to hook up your strategic resource(s). You'll also want to run roads towards the enemy so your units can get to them faster. Aside from that, however, leave roads for later. You generally won't be near the very low happiness or health caps you have at the beginning of the game, so you can usually wait a while before building roads on health and happiness resource tiles.

If you lay down roads outside of your borders, leading towards your target or to the strategic resource before the claiming city is founded beside it, be sure to escort your precious Worker(s) with a Warrior at the very least to protect against barbarians.

If you locate your strategic resource before the Settler to claim it is ready, build roads leading to the resource and on top of it so you can have it available as soon as possible. Ensure you have a Worker standing on top of the resource on the turn you found the city next to it so you can start improving the tile immediately. Besides making the resource available as soon as possible, this will also quickly make the hammers available to the city for building units.

If you happen to have spare Worker turns, use them to build roads through forests in anticipation of chopping. You can also use these spare turns to pre-chop forests. Chop the forest until it's within one turn of finishing, then select the worker and stop the chop. Move on to the next forest and repeat. When you have a unit in the queue, move the Worker back to the pre-chopped forest, tell them to chop, and presto! Instant hammers.

### ***Mines***

The top priority mines to build are those on copper and iron tiles, of course. Aside from that, you also want to mine a hill or two for additional hammers. You'll probably have time to do this while you wait for the strategic tech to finish researching. If you don't start with any of the Worker techs, in fact, mines may be the only tile improvement your Workers can perform for some time. This is not a problem; you'll be glad to have several good sources of hammers.

## Slavery and Whipping

When you're ready to start building units, you'll have two techniques available to accelerate production of your army: forest chopping and pop-rushing. Note that you will need to have researched Bronze Working for these techniques to be available, and that you have to subsequently change to the Slavery civic to be able to sacrifice population to accelerate production.

Remember that you can only whip away half of a city's population at most, which underlines the need for early growth. The best time to whip is when the city has 4 population or more and you can whip away 2 population, especially if the city is about to grow beyond its happiness limit.

To maximize the hammers you get from whipping, you want to take advantage of hammer overflow. Simply put, extra hammers contributed to the current build are carried over into the next build, with very few exceptions (whipping or using Great Engineers to rush wonders, which doesn't concern us at this juncture). Each population point contributes 30 hammers at normal speed, 44 at epic (before modifiers such as Organized Religion or Forges). There is also a penalty for whipping with no hammers in the current build. All this means you'll need to whip the early units (Axemen and Chariots in particular) on the very first turn they're in the queue. This will, however, result in the excess hammers going towards the next build and making it finish faster.

Remember that whipping results in 10 turns (at normal speed) of an additional unhappy citizen. It's usually best to wait until that unhappy citizen goes away before whipping again, or at least wait until there are very few turns of unhappiness left. Otherwise you'll end up with a city of unhappy citizens that's incapable of producing anything.

## Chopping

Chopping forest is even better than whipping at this stage of the game. Seriously. I know there are big fans of the power of whipping out there, but you usually have to wait for whipping-induced unhappiness to go away. The word "wait" is bad for the early rush, in case you haven't figured that out yet. When chopping, no waiting is required. Whipping also temporarily reduces your cities' production capacity, while chopping almost never does. For me, chopping is often the key to a victorious early rush - even more so than whipping.

So chop like mad. Chop like a fiend. Chop without mercy or regard for the future.

Chop the forests nearest the city first, within your cultural borders, as they yield the most hammers. Then chop further away from the city. If you're going to found a city on a forested tile, chop it first, even if it's only giving you a lousy 9 hammers or so. To paraphrase a Monty Python song, every hammer is sacred. Every hammer helps build your army of conquest and brings you that much closer to victory.

A side benefit of clearing the land around your cities is that you reduce the amount of defensive terrain around your cities. This makes it easier to kill the enemy if they counter-attack into your territory. Ditto for barbarians.

Of course there are several costs involved here. First off, chopping for units means you won't have the forest available for chopping other things, such as wonders. But remember what I said about wonders above. If you're going for an early rush, you're generally passing on early wonders. Grin and bear it, kiddo.

In addition, you're losing the potential health benefits of all those forests. It doesn't matter at the moment—the health cap is less important at this point than the happy cap - but later in the game, you'll notice it. In games where I go for an early rush, I notice that by the middle of the game, my early cities have Aqueducts; in games without the rush, they usually don't unless they're surrounded by flood plains. In other words, you'll have to find ways to compensate for the loss of health from forests later in the game.

The war might allow you to do this. Does your target have a health resource in one of his cities' fat crosses that you lack? This may be another reason to go after him, and to keep instead of razing that city. The early rush is very focused on the short term, but don't lose sight of the long term. That's why you're going to war, after all: to gain a long-term advantage. Consider your options carefully to ensure that you do.

## ***Execution***

You've founded your core cities. You've whipped and chopped your units. You're ready to cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs of war. Or are you? A successful early rush involves more than just throwing cannon fodder at the enemy.

## **Unit Movement**

Remember what I said about roads above. Have your Workers build roads towards the enemy. You should now have decent units to escort them and protect them from barbarians. The roads will ensure your units can move into position that much faster; the same goes for reinforcements. The roads can also provide trade routes; shortly, your economy is going to need all the help it can get.

Do *not* move your units into enemy territory piecemeal, fortifying one outside a city you intend to take while all the others are produced and catch up. First of all, remember that every unit outside your own cultural borders costs you gold per turn in maintenance. This early in the game, that's going to add up quickly. Second, this telegraphs your punches. The BetterAI you can add to vanilla and Warlords, and that is included in BtS, will read your intentions and spam defensive units, even whipping them. Gather your stack, such as it is, within your own borders until you have enough units to attack.

Wait until your stack is as close as possible to your first target, while still outside enemy cultural borders, before declaring war. Once again, you want to diminish, as much as possible, the amount of time the enemy has to react to your aggressive intentions.

Take the most direct route to the targeted city. Use defensive terrain if possible, but this early in the game, it may be less vital; after all, your enemy won't have siege weapons either, and perhaps no units that counter yours.

Also, look for opportunities to pillage any strategic resources in your enemy's territory. You may want to have a unit or two separate from the stack that will perform this function. If you deny the AI the ability to build better units to defend against your army, you practically guarantee your victory.

(A possible exception to this: horses. The AI will spam Archers to counter your attack, but if it has horses, it will build several Chariots instead. Provided you have at least one or two Spearmen in your stack, you have nothing to fear from Chariots. Since mounted units cannot fortify (except Immortals), and do not benefit from defensive terrain (again, with the exception of Persia's Immortals), it's easier to attack Chariots than Archers, especially in a city on a hill. Remember that Chariots' bonus against Axemen only works when they *attack*, not when they defend. So if your enemy has horses, leave the tile unpillaged!)

Remember to avoid attacking across a river. If you can position your stack on a good defensive tile adjacent to the city, such as a hill or forest, do so.

## Sidebar: Barbarians

There's another reason to keep your gathering army inside your own borders at first: barbarians. Ah, you thought I'd forgotten about them, didn't you?

Of course not. Before you can deal with an AI civ, you'll need to deal with the first few waves of barbarians.

Barbarian units will not enter your cultural borders until there are  $n \times 2$  cities on the continent, where  $n$  is the number of civilizations on the continent—generally, until after everyone has founded their 2<sup>nd</sup> city. Shortly after this, the barbarians will start showing up in seemingly-relentless waves. However, within a few turns, the barbarians will found cities, settle down, raise kids, and only go out raiding when the ol' ball and chain starts complaining about the state of her butchering block and why doesn't her fearsome barbarian warrior put down his mead, get off his buckskin-clad butt, and go to the nice young civilization down the road and, er, *borrow* their butchering block? Or better yet, pillage something for some gold to buy a new one. Go on now, you big useless lout!

In other words, the waves of barbarians will eventually diminish. But it won't seem like that for a while, and you have to be ready for them. If the barbs pillage your strategic resource tile, it can set back your early rush several turns, or even eliminate all possibility of its success. In that period of early barbarian attacks, your units should definitely remain within your borders. This is another side benefit of the early rush: you'll have plenty of units for barb defense. Not only will they be defending your territory, they'll also be accumulating valuable XPs and promotions.

Once the barbarians found cities, you may want to launch your first city attack against one, especially if the city is on the way to the enemy and/or is in a good location. Again, it's an opportunity to gain XPs and gold. However, taking cities, even barbarian ones, is challenging in this game, so you can expect to lose a unit or two in the attempt, and you may not want to do that. If the city is out of the way, leave it for later. Attacking the AI is your priority.

Remember that barbarians will still keep coming at you as long as there's "fog of war" territory on the map, so you'll need to keep a strong unit or two in each city instead of sending them out with the stack. Somebody has to keep the home fires burning. Or keep them *from* burning, in this case.

## Attacking: Losing to Win

As mentioned above, you should expect to lose several units. The initial attacks will, most likely, merely damage the defenders. You may get lucky and win a low-odds battle or two, but don't count on it. Don't get discouraged when your first few units die. As you keep attacking, you should start winning fights, and if you brought enough units, you'll be able to take the city you're attacking and defend it and your surviving units as well.

The key is to bring enough units, so make sure you do. Remember to follow the recommended ratios of attackers to defenders listed previously in this article.

Also realize that because of the expected loss of so many units, you'll need to keep building more. You'll also need to leave units behind to defend each city you capture and keep. So don't stop building units at home, not until the toughest cities are captured and you have enough veterans to take care of whatever weakly-defended cities remain.

## Keep or Raze?

If your opponent managed to settle more cities than just a capital, which is likely, you need to carefully consider if you want to keep all of them. Too many captured cities will give you the same headache as if you'd founded too many: high maintenance costs and a crippled economy.

So here's some criteria to help you determine if a city is worth keeping.

- Capital cities are almost always in excellent locations and are therefore almost always worth keeping.
- Cities with wonders should be kept, as should holy cities. As of Warlords, once a city is within visible range of your units, you can check the Information screen's "Top 5 Cities/Wonders" page to see if any wonders are located there. Razing a holy city will also result in diplomatic negatives with any civ practicing that religion, so you should be especially leery of doing so.
- Cities that can pay for their own early maintenance can be kept. Cities with commerce-rich resources such as gold, gems, or silver can be afforded thanks to these resources. These resources are also invaluable for early happiness.
- Cities that have other valuable resources in their fat crosses are also candidates for being kept, especially if there's a risk that the area will be re-settled by other AI civs, who will deny you access to the resource in question.
- Cities that only claim resources you already have can and probably should be razed. Granted, you may be able to trade the surplus resource away, but for most of the game that's a break-even proposition versus the city's maintenance at best.
- Cities in poor locations should be razed. Cities 1 tile away from the coast are prime candidates, as are cities that lack food, or cities that could claim additional resources or other benefits if they were located 1 or 2 tiles from their current locations, or that are built on top of resources that are better if worked. You may want to bring a Settler along with the stack if there's a risk of the AI claiming the site instead of you.

## To the Death?

Besides deciding upon individual cities to keep or raze, you'll also have to decide what the ultimate fate of your opponent will be. Should you wipe him from the face of the earth, or should you settle for weakening him?

Wiping out an opponent completely has definite advantages. For one thing, you will not face "We wish to rejoin our motherland!" unhappiness in the captured cities. You won't face any cultural pressure on the coveted tiles you've just gained, at least not from your vanquished opponent's culture, which will be gone. You also won't have a potential future enemy next door, seething with resentment (the AIs *do* hold grudges) and waiting for an opportunity to strike back at you. It also simplifies diplomacy; if you want to finish off this opponent later, you may face "You declared war on our friend!" diplomatic demerits.

However, there can be benefits to keeping an opponent alive.

Remember that the AI will not trade monopoly technologies—techs that it alone, as far as it knows, possesses. This means that if you and your opponent share your continent with one other civ, and no others are within pre-Caravel reach, killing your enemy off will render your remaining neighbor unwilling to trade any techs to you whatsoever for a very long time.

Speaking of techs: If you manage to research Alphabet while still at war, you may be able to obtain one or more technologies from your opponent in return for peace. So that could be another reason to leave your enemy alive and kicking. You can always come back and finish him off later.

Finally, you may want to make your opponent into a vassal. True, it's unlikely that an early rush would still be going on by the time you finish researching Feudalism. That could be all the more reason to leave him alive, so that you can obtain that technology and then declare war to push him into capitulation. The risk you run here is that your weakened opponent may become the vassal of another civ unless you bee-line to Feudalism and get there before anyone else.

## **Aftermath**

All hail the conquering hero! You've vanquished the enemy. Their cities are either yours or lie in smoldering ruins. The air is filled with the stench of their rotting flesh, the smoke from their burning homes, and the lamentations of their captured women. You stand astride the world as you know it like a colossus! (You're a bit of a jerk, but hey, you want an omelet, you gotta break some eggs, right?)

But what's this? Other civilizations are sniffing around your kill like the filthy jackals they undeniably are. *They're* founding cities in the territory *you* recently conquered. And their scores are higher than yours. Worse still, they're out-teching you! Your research slider has plunged to well below 50%; if things are really bad, you're losing money at 0% research and your units may soon start going on strike and disappearing when you run out of gold.

Sheesh, didn't you *win* the damn war?

As the slave standing in the chariot behind the triumphant Roman generals used to whisper, remember that thou art mortal, and that all glory is fleeting. Civ isn't just a war game, and this is proof. Now that the early rush is over, it's time to pick up the pieces and prove your true Civ mettle by getting your civilization, especially its economy, back on its feet.

How do you do that? Well, that could be a whole strategy article in and of itself, but here are some pointers.

- One word: Cottages. Even if you're running a specialist economy, at least one city should be heavily cottaged, usually the capital and/or a holy city. What the heck were your Workers doing once the road to enemy territory was finished?
- You didn't keep *every* enemy city, did you? Maintenance costs are probably what's crippling you. If you kept some cities with dubious value, see if you can gift them to the nearest civ. Or empty them of defenders and leave them for the barbs to capture or raze. Next time, keep the best, raze the rest.
- What happened to all that war booty? If you're careful, you can amass enough of it to keep your research slider elevated while you run a deficit until your economy recovers.
- There may still be gold available. What about improvements the enemy built around cities you razed? Pillage them for whatever gold you can get. Since the AI is likely to settle that newly-freed territory, why let them benefit from the improvements that were left behind?
- Prioritize economic technologies. **Currency** and **Code of Laws** are both extremely helpful at this point. Currency will immediately give you an additional trade route in each city, let you build commerce-multiplying Markets, and trade resources and technologies for gold. Code of Laws will not only let you build maintenance-reducing Courthouses; it will also let you run the **Caste System** civic so you can run commerce-generating merchant specialists long before you have Markets and Grocers that allow you to do so.

- **Alphabet**, while not an economic technology, is also a worthwhile tech target at this point so that you can potentially trade for some of the technologies that you need, or at least their prerequisites. Being the first to be able to trade technologies is a very good thing.
- Do you have units outside your cultural borders? Pull them back in to save on maintenance costs. Do you really need to fog-bust now that you have an army of veterans that can eat barbs for breakfast?
- Do you have any units you could do without? Delete them. Or use them as cannon fodder against the nearest barbarian city, and earn a little more cash in the process. Better you choose them yourself than letting the computer do it for you when the strike hits.
- Micro-manage your cities. Assign workers to any tile with commerce, even if it's just one, and even if that leaves your cities running a hammer or two max.
- If worse comes to worst, maybe you should turn right around and declare war again. Pick another neighbour, and fund your economy by way of “pointy-stick research”—research funded by the gold you get from pillaging tiles and capturing cities.

Eventually you'll recover and find yourself surpassing the AI civs thanks to your enlarged empire and additional cities and resources. You'll also have an army of veteran units, and you'll shortly have access to handy units such as Catapults and maybe even War Elephants thanks to Construction, if you don't already. And aren't your neighbours who snuck in to settle the territory you cleared - often *right on top of a city you razed* - getting on your nerves? Just a little? Maybe a lot?

The early rush may be over, but it may be time soon to let the dogs of war off that leash again...