

GETTING STARTED WITH *MERLIN*

Version 2.16

INTRODUCTION

Below we specify the computer requirements for using *Merlin*. We also tell you how to login and register so that you can use the *Merlin* software.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

In order to use the *Merlin* web programs, you will need a computer with Internet Explorer version 6.0 or higher that is connected to the internet. (Firefox is ***not*** supported for use with these programs.) ***If you experience difficulty registering to use or opening the program, you may have to turn off any “pop-up” blockers and configure your browser to accept cookies.*** If you need assistance with this, go to <http://webmaster.info.aol.com/cookieguide.html> for directions or initiate a search for “How to enable cookies” on Google for your particular browser.

There are also features in the program that allow you to send certain files as email attachments. If you intend to use these features and are using your school’s email system, ask your instructor to have the greatsims.com web site “white listed” with your school’s IT department in charge of screening incoming emails attachments so that the attachment is not “scrubbed” from your email, or delayed in its delivery to your email address.

PREPARING TO REGISTER

You need two items before you can register to use the *Merlin* programs.

1. A company code provided by your instructor. The company code will assign you to one of the companies operating in the industry for the Team version of *Merlin*. Even if you will not be using the Team version, you need a company code to create your data file on the server’s *Merlin* database.
2. Proof of purchase. You can pay to access *Merlin* in one of two ways.
 - a. Use a credit card to pay online as part of the registration process. The cost of a credit card purchase is US\$30.
 - b. If your institution has purchased a site license for *Merlin* your instructor will supply you with the Activation Code associated with that license.

REGISTERING TO USE THE *MERLIN* SOFTWARE

Once you have received (1) a Company Code from your instructor and (2) either have a credit card ready for online purchase or received a site license Activation Code from your instructor, you can begin the registration process. To register the *Merlin* programs, follow these steps:

1. Connect to the Internet. If you are continuously connected to the Internet through a cable modem or DSL access, go to Step 2. If you use a dial-up modem to connect with the Internet, connect now.
2. Open Internet Explorer. Open Internet Explorer by selecting Start, then Programs, then Internet Explorer. Or if you have the Internet Explorer icon showing on your desk top or task bar, just click on that icon.
3. Open the *Merlin* Web Site. Enter the web address for *Merlin* in the address bar for Internet Explorer. The web address is <http://www.merlin.greatsims.com>. Once you do this, a screen like that shown in

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Exhibit 1 will appear on your monitor. Notice that there is a web link for the *Merlin* student manual. You can print the manual free of charge.

Exhibit 1



4. Register to use *Merlin*. Select the “Click Here” link to begin the registration process. A screen will appear on your monitor asking you to choose between registering with an Activation Code or a credit card. After selecting one of those two options, a screen similar to that in Exhibit 2 will appear on your monitor.
 - a. Registering with an Activation Code. Enter a **valid** activation code and the company code you received from your instructor, plus other information as shown in Exhibit 2. As stated above, you will receive an activation code from your instructor if your school purchased a site license for the *Merlin* programs. Notice that your login name and password must be 6-10 characters.
 - b. Registering Online with a credit card. If you chose to pay online with a credit card, the Activation Code entry box shown in Exhibit 2 will not be displayed. Enter the company code your instructor gave you, plus the other required information. Notice that your login name and password must be 6-10 characters. You must enter a unique Login Name. If you don't, you will be prompted to do so.

Exhibit 2

This information will be used by your instructor
to identify you and communicate with you.
Great Simulations Inc. will not release your telephone number or email address.
Great Simulations Inc. will only contact you if you request help
or we need to advise you about service related events or changes.

The Login Name and Login Password must be 6-10 characters long.

Activation Code:

Company Code:

Login name:

Login Password:

Verify Password:

First Name:

Last Name:

Email:

Telephone:

5. Remember your Login Name and Password. Once you have successfully registered to use *Merlin*, you will not need to do so again. You will only need to enter your login name and password. While your login name and password will be emailed to the email address you supplied when registering, do not forget what you entered. If you do, you will need to contact your instructor to find out what they are. You cannot open the programs without *both* your login name and password.

TROUBLESHOOTING

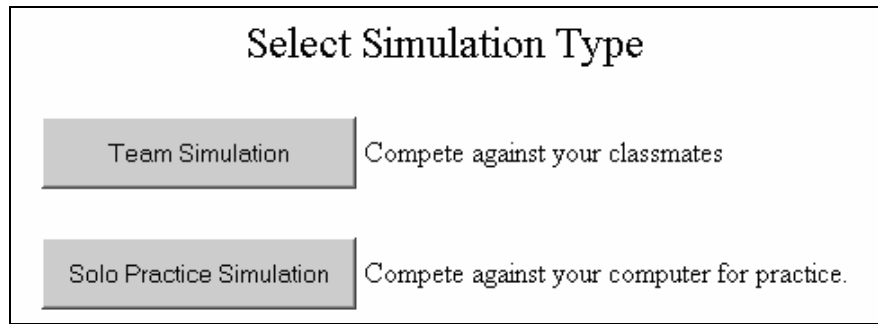
If you experience difficulty registering to use or opening the program,

- **Turn off any “pop-up” blockers and configure your browser to accept cookies.** If you need assistance with this, go to <http://webmaster.info.aol.com/cookieguide.html> for directions or initiate a search for “How to enable cookies” on Google for your particular browser.
- **Make certain that you have started Merlin directly from Internet Explorer.** Do not launch the program from inside another program environment such as BlackBoard or use a different browser such as Firefox.

SELECTING THE MERLIN PROGRAM

Once you have logged in to *Merlin*, you will see a screen like that shown in Exhibit 3. There are two versions of *Merlin* with which you can work; Team and Solo. They are two versions of the same program. The decisions you enter and the reports created by the programs are identical. In the Team program, your competition will be companies managed by other simulation participants. In the Solo program, your competition will be nine companies managed by the computer.

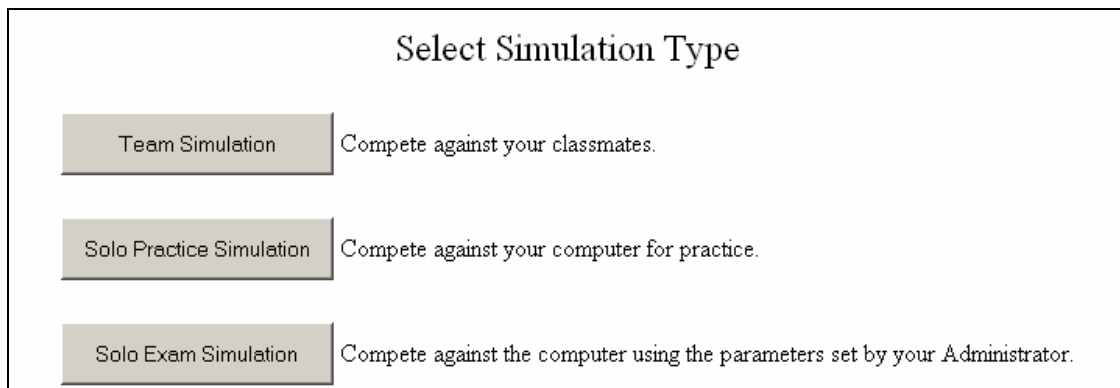
Exhibit 3



Your instructor may choose to disable the Team Simulation button, so that it doesn't appear on your monitor. This would be done either to control when you view the results of a quarter's decisions that your instructor processed, or because you will only be using the Solo version of *Merlin*.

Your instructor may also choose to have you take an exam using the Solo version of *Merlin*. If that happens, a third option called "Solo Exam Simulation" will appear on the main screen. It will look like that shown in Exhibit 4. The only difference between these two programs is that for Solo Practice you can restart the game from the beginning as many times as you wish. With Solo Exam, however, you will have only one pass through the quarters you will manage your company. You cannot restart the game as you can in Solo Practice.

Exhibit 4

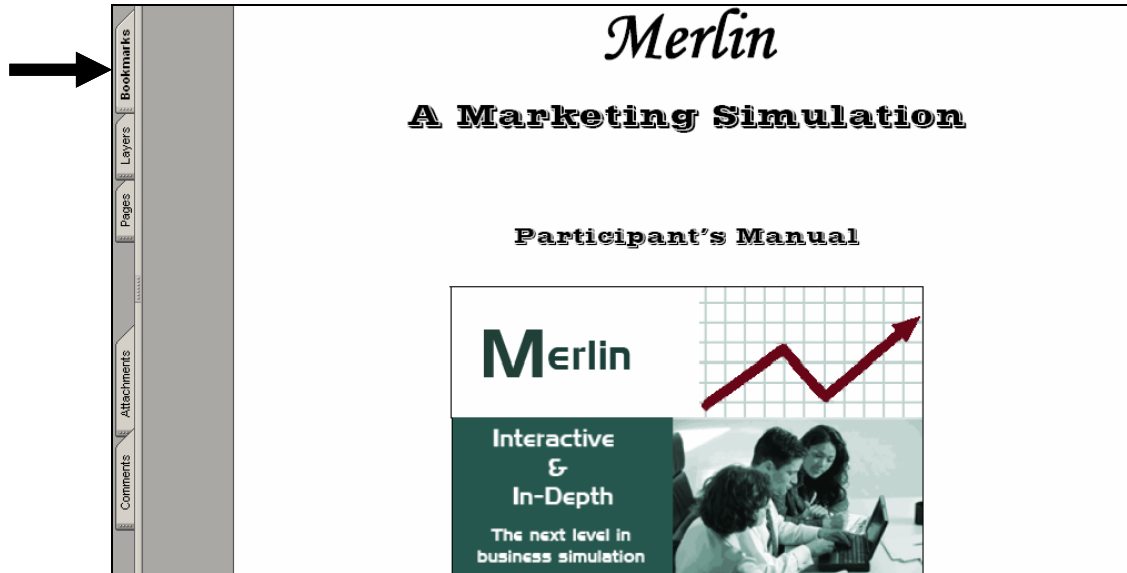


Whether you will be using the team or the solo version of *Merlin* in your course, we recommend that you use the Solo Practice Simulation as a tool to learn the fundamentals of working with the *Merlin* program. Use the Solo Practice Simulation to try out each step as you read about it in your manual. Do not worry about what decisions you enter. Any of the decisions you enter now can be changed later. If you cannot get access to a computer as you read the manual, you will still be able to understand the information presented. Read the text and look at the sample screens in the manual to see what you will see on the computer monitor. Then try things out on a computer as soon as possible.

USING THE STUDENT MANUAL WHILE ONLINE

When you access the *Merlin* Student Manual online, rather than a printed version, you have the option to navigate quickly around the manual using the "Bookmark" feature imbedded in the Adobe Reader software in which the manual is formatted. You access this feature by clicking on the Bookmark tab on the left side of the screen (See arrow in Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5



The Bookmarks we created correspond to the headings and sub-headings we used throughout the manual. Most of these are also listed in the Contents section of the manual. By clicking on a Bookmark item, you move directly to that item in the manual. For example, Exhibit 6 shows that after scrolling down through the Bookmarks and selecting the “Chapter 5” item, that section of the manual is displayed in the right-hand side of the screen. Using the Bookmarks will allow you to navigate around the manual, quickly and easily.

Exhibit 6

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CHAPTER 5 MAKING DECISIONS

OVERVIEW OF DECISIONS

This chapter will discuss the content of the decisions, not the process for entering them. Since this simulation emphasizes the marketing functions of the business, most of the decisions that you will need to make and enter concern elements of the marketing mix. You must make decisions for:

- Product
- Price
- Promotion

Your channels of distribution are fixed for the duration of the simulation – you will sell your products to retailers. In addition to these marketing decisions, as operators of a small business, you must make several decisions that support your marketing operations.

- Marketing research
- Sales forecasting
- Process cost reduction
- Product ordered
- Short term loan

These decisions are entered on the decision screens that you previewed in Chapter 5. In this chapter we will describe each of the decisions you will make. Refer to Chapter 5 if you are uncertain how to use the software to enter the decisions on the screens.

THE MARKETING PLAN

In *Merlin Solo* you compete in an established industry consisting of your company plus nine competitors. In *Merlin Team*, the simulation administrator will inform you of the number of competitors. As stated in Chapter 2, you are taking over the leadership of a company that was started two years earlier. *All firms in your industry start this simulation in an identical position.*