

Level Editor 101 - Basics to Advanced

Foreword

I know this first one is going to look a bit like a large wall of text, I'm sorry, but there's not much to show off in pictures when it comes to interface. There will be plenty of pictures later, though.

This tutorial will cover both beginner and advanced methods for the majority of things in the level editor. Even if you have no experience with modding, you should be able to follow these tutorials. If you can't, either you skipped a section of the tutorial, or there's something wrong with my tutorial. You can PM me on the FG forum (Kiandra) and let me know what I need to clarify.

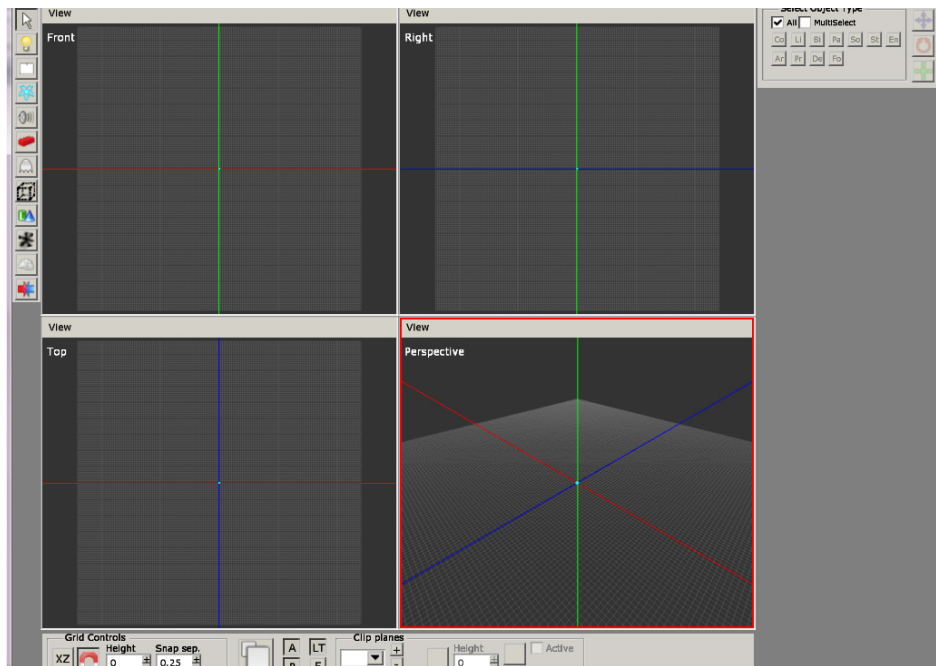
For the sake of not swamping everyone with everything, I'm going to start with the absolute basics. If you haven't downloaded the level editing suite, you can do so [here](#). There are adequate instructions on the linked page on how to download and install the editing suite, so I won't be covering that in this tutorial.

If you wish to add to this page or would like to see your tutorial in the Useful Links Section (coming soon), feel free to edit this page and give yourself credit. Just try to stick with the same format used by the rest of the tutorial.

Part 1: The Level Editor's Interface

Okay, so I'm hoping you know where the level editor is. For windows users, like me, it's C:/Program Files (x86)/Amnesia - The Dark Descent/redist just double-click on the level editor application *not the PDB file* to get started.

Part 1A: Level Editor Buttons



So what is this thing, exactly? It's a lot of buttons! We'll go through each one of them in a bit of detail. Don't panic about needing to know all of them right off the bat, I'll refer back to the hotkeys and appearances of the buttons every time they're used in the basic tutorials. You'll become more familiar with them as you use them.

As we go through them, I will start with the buttons in the left side-bar and move counter-clockwise to the bottom bar, then right side-bar, then the top menu. It would be beneficial if you follow along in the level editor and click on the buttons or press the hotkeys when they're mentioned.

Don't worry if your screen doesn't look exactly like mine. I have the perspective viewport enlarged (you can do this by hovering your cursor over the bottom right quadrant and pressing spacebar). To enlarge the pictures beside each tool, you can right-click and select Open Image in New Tab.

We'll go over each of these buttons in more detail as they become relevant.

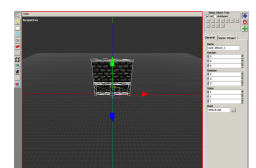
Left Menu Bar

1. Select Tool

Hotkey: 1

Button Appearance: White, triangle-shaped pointer

What it does: You can click on anything and move it, duplicate it, turn it, or stretch it

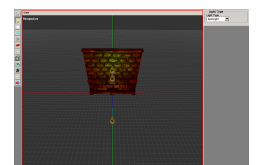


2. Lights

Hotkey: 2

Button Appearance: Yellow light bulb

What it does: allows you to add lights so your map isn't a pitch black when you load it

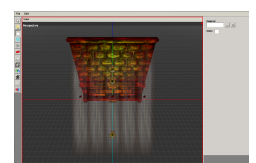


3. Billboards

Hotkey: 3

Button Appearance: White rectangle

What it does: The stream-like things coming from the window as displayed in [this](#)



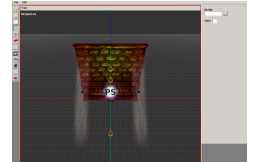
[link](#).

4. Particles

Hotkey: 4

Button Appearance: Blue atom-like thing

What it does: Makes neat special effects like fire, smoke, fog, dust, and water droplets

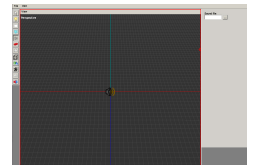


5. Sounds

Hotkey: 5

Button Appearance: Grey megaphone

What it does: Places different, looping sound effects (like ambient noise) around the map, causing a 3D effect with the sound

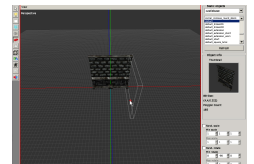


6. Static Objects

Hotkey: 6

Button Appearance: Red Lego brick

What it does: Brings up a menu on that large blank right-hand column which will let you place in objects that cannot be interacted with, such as walls, pillars, door frames, stairs, and railings.

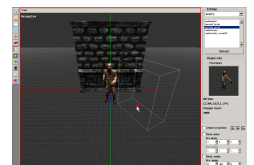


7. Entities

Hotkey: 7

Button Appearance: A little white ghost

What it does: Brings up the menu for objects which can be interacted with (mostly), such as furniture, paintings, lamps, monsters, tinder boxes, lanterns, in-game items, and notes

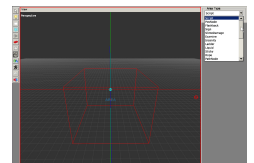


8. Areas

Hotkey: 8

Button Appearance: Transparent-looking box

What it does: creates the superimportant player start areas, script areas, ladder areas, water areas, etc

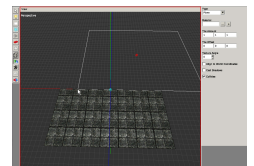


9. Primitives

Hotkey: 9

Button Appearance: A cone and a cylinder

What it does: Places in the visual effect for deep and large pools of water, add ceilings, floors, and ground to large areas with more texture options, pretty much whatever you think a flat piece of repeating pattern could be useful for

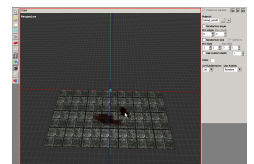


10. Decals

Hotkey: 0

Button Appearance: A black goo splat

What it does: Allows you to place images that wrap around surfaces, such as blood and dirt stains

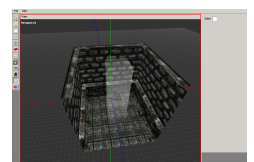


11. Fog Areas

Hotkey: Ctrl+1

Button Appearance: Cloud

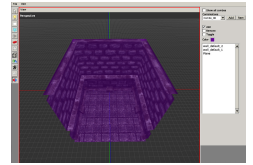
What it does: Creates an area filled with fog



12. Combine

Hotkey: Ctrl+2

Button Appearance: two arrows, a blue and a red, facing each other



Bottom Menu Bar

1. Grid Planes

Hotkey: none

Button Appearance: an XY, YZ, or XZ depending on which plane you're using

What it does: cycles through grid planes - changes how objects move when you're placing them (vertical or horizontal)

2. Toggle Grid Snapping

Hotkey: none

Button Appearance: U-magnet

What it does: changes whether objects will "snap" to the grid (move in multiples of 0.25). When it's deselected, you can move objects by multiples of 0.001

3. Height

Hotkey: none

Button Appearance: White text box with a 0 in it currently

What it does: changes the height of the grid. Standard walls in amnesia are 4 tall and 4 wide. You can change whether the grid is visible by pressing G

4. Snap Separation

Hotkey: none

Button Appearance: White text box with 0.25 currently in it

What it does: changes the distance between grid spaces (precision of grid-snapping), most useful as 0.125 or 0.25

5. Enlarge Current Viewport

Hotkey: Spacebar

Button Appearance: Two white boxes stacked on each other

What it does: makes the box which is highlighted red (because your cursor is hovering over it) fill up the screen

6. A - Ambient Light

Hotkey: None

Button Appearance: A capital A

What it does: Toggles between having the ambient boxlight; the one that makes everything evenly bright so there's no black-holes-of-doom (more on these later)

7. Global Pointlight

Hotkey: None

Button Appearance: A capital P

What it does: Toggles the global pointlight; this one enhances normal maps. Translation: it makes flat things look 3D.

Note: the global pointlight and ambient light do not show up in-game; only in the level editor

8. Focus

Hotkey: F

Button Appearance: A capital F

What it does: zooms the camera so that the selected object fills your view. This button is indispensable if you don't have a mouse or middle mouse button (the one used to pan)

9. Lock Tracking Grid

Hotkey: None

Button Appearance: An LT

What it does: Your view will move according to the grid's height if this is selected

10. Clip Planes

Hotkey: None

Button Appearance: The +/- buttons beside the drop-down menu

What it Does: Causes certain parts of the map to turn invisible; useful when you're making very large maps and file size is causing lag

11. Faded Buttons

Hotkeys: None

Button Appearance: The faded buttons which become more distinct when a clip plane is created. We'll go over these in detail later.

Right Side-Bar Menu

The large, dark-grey area is where item-specific menus will show up. Each of these menus will be covered as they become relevant; I don't want to throw too much information at you all at once :p

Select Object Type

Co = grouped objects

Li = lights

Bi = billboards

Pa = particle systems

So = sound

St = static object

En = entities

Ar = area

Pr = primitive

De = decal

Fo = fog area

Edit Menu

Undo

Hotkey: Ctrl+Z

What it Does: Undoes your previous actions, including selections and focusing on objects

Redo

Hotkey: Ctrl+Y

What it Does: Reverses Undo

Delete

Hotkey: Backspace or Delete

What it Does: Deletes selected object(s)

Duplicate

Hotkey: Ctrl+D

What it Does: Replicates selected object(s)

Create/Destroy Compound

Hotkey: B

What it Does: Groups objects together so that selecting one of them will select all of them; compounds are outlined in red

Find Objects

Hotkey: Ctrl+F

What it Does: brings up a search menu so you can find objects by type or name

Browse Groups

Hotkey: none

What it Does: Allows you to search up and manage specific compounds

Level Settings

Hotkey: none

What it Does: There are several functions. The *Skybox* menu allows you to select a skybox. Indoor maps do not need skyboxes unless the windows are transparent. It's just a waste of memory. *Fog* toggles the global fog and all its variables. It's like a never-ending fog area. *Decals* changes the maximum number of triangles allowed in your decals. Translation: changes how much memory and how complex your decals are.

Options

Hotkey: none

What it Does: allows you to change certain level editor options. These are handy for making the level editor actually fit your screen.

File Menu

New

Hotkey: none

What it Does: Create a new, empty map

Open

Hotkey: none

What it Does: Opens a previously saved .map file, including those made by FG. Go take a look at them some time; they're useful case studies.

Save

Hotkey: Ctrl+S

What it Does: Saves your map. Save early, save often - especially with the level editor (it crashes quite frequently on my computer)

Save As

Hotkey: none

What it Does: Saves your map under a different file name. If you mess around with someone else's map (which is not okay without their permission), *always save as something else before making any changes*. That way, you don't do what I did and delete the entire Cellar area of ATDD (I was experimenting with lighting).

Open Recent

Hotkey: none

What it Does: opens a drop-down menu of recently saved maps. If this is your first time on the level editor, the menu will be blank.

Import Objects

Hotkey: none

What it Does: allows you to import exported objects, such as compounds other people have made

Export Objects

Hotkey: none

What it Does: Saves your .map file as an .expobj (EXPorted OBject)

Quit

Hotkey: Alt+F4

What it Does: Closes the level editor; it will always prompt you to save before it closes.

Part 1B: Navigating Around the Level Editor

This isn't too bad; you'll be moving around a lot, but give it a try while I explain here anyways.

Magnifying Screens

Currently, there should be **four** different views on your screen. Starting in top left, moving counter-clockwise, they say Front, Top, Perspective, and Right. I've never found much use for Front, Top, or Right. You can zoom in on specified screens by pressing **spacebar** while your cursor is hovering over it. You can also press **spacebar** again to zoom back out. If you're following along, highlight the *perspective* screen and press **spacebar** to magnify it if you haven't already done so.

Moving Around The Level Editor in Perspective Mode

Rotating Camera

Hotkey: Alt + Left Mouse Button

This is more useful than zoom in a lot of cases. Click and hold down **alt and the left mouse button**;

you should notice the border of your screen turned from red to yellow. Move your cursor like you're dragging the screen around - the same way you would if you were to put your finger on a piece of paper and rotate it.

Zooming the Camera

Hotkey: Alt + Right Mouse Button

The second most useful button. You can get by without pan if you're creative with the focus tool and tracking grid (which is what anyone without a middle mouse button is going to do). Hold down **alt** and the **right mouse button** then move the cursor **up** to zoom in, **down** to zoom out.

Panning the Camera

Hotkey: Alt + Middle Mouse Button

Hold down **alt** and the **middle mouse button**, now move the cursor in any direction. From what I've seen of other people using the level editor, using pan is like placing your finger on top of a sheet of paper and pushing it around to view different parts - like the hand tool in Photoshop.

If you're now in Narnia in the Level Editor

- Go down to where **Grid Control** is
- Type 0 in the box labeled Height
- Press the **XZ** Button
- Type 0 in the height box again
- Press the **XY** button (same as the XZ button)
- Type 0 in the height box
- Press **YZ** button (same as the XY and XZ button) to return the grid to normal

Building a Map

I'll try to keep this from turning in to a "do this task and then good luck" tutorial (unlike its previous unedited version). Instead, let's think of what any map is going to need. Since Amnesia is generally made from indoor environments (and outdoor environments are my downfall), let's pretend this is some sort of indoor room.

So first, we should start by figuring out how big our room will be. I'm going to just make an 8×8 room (each wall piece has a length of 4 in the level editor).

At this point, I would like to recommend that you start off making a small room. While large room can look very impressive, it is much more difficult to make them actually look interesting and not empty. What I consider 'small' is anything between 2×4 room (smallest possible room with a door) and 12×12.

To start building the room, press 6 or go to Static Objects (the lego brick in the left bar menu) and click the drop-down menu above the large white box. This will allow you to choose a base to work with. Personally, I find the mansion and castle bases easiest to work with because they have the largest variety of uses, but choose one that you would like to work with.

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