Guide contents

Choose a first project

Start with a tiny plugin

Keep mods separate with OpenMW data folders

Assets and scripting

Test and package

A complete first project: the OpenMW magic ring

Status and original sources

Sources / References

Documentation: In progress **Quick start: In progress**

Offline copy from ModDocs. Source links remain clickable.

Morrowind and OpenMW modding

Morrowind and OpenMW use much of the same game content, but they are different runtimes. Decide whether your mod must work in the original Morrowind engine, OpenMW, or both. A normal Morrowind plugin or texture replacer may work in OpenMW; features tied to the original executable, such as Morrowind Script Extender or Morrowind Code Patch, should not be assumed to work there. OpenMW's comparison explains the distinction.

> **Quick start:** choose the engine you will test, make one small item or cell change in its construction editor, save the plugin, enable it, and check the result in game. Keep the first test free of engine-specific scripts.

Choose a first project

Goal	Starting point
New or changed item, NPC, or cell	A plugin in the Construction Set or OpenMW-CS

Goal	Starting point
Texture or mesh replacement	A separate data folder with the expected asset paths
OpenMW-only game behavior	OpenMW Lua scripting and its API reference
Compatibility with both runtimes	Use shared content features and test in both

OpenMW's modding reference covers install layout, textures, models, sound, and engine-specific extensions. Its OpenMW-CS manual covers content creation. The modding reference itself notes that it is mainly about configuring and using mods; use the editor manual for authoring.

Start with a tiny plugin

The OpenMW-CS manual includes a guided project that makes a magic ring. That is a useful first exercise because it touches records, editing, saving, and testing without requiring a huge quest. Follow the magic-ring tour in the editor version you have installed. Use a unique ID for your own record, save your new plugin outside the base game's master files, and test it in a clean profile. Confirm that the item appears and behaves as intended after a save/reload.

Content records and placed references are different: editing an item's base record can affect every copy, while placing a reference puts an instance in a particular cell. For locations, check doors, cell transitions, and object placement in-game. The OpenMW-CS manual has separate sections for record tables, cell view, and drag and drop.

Keep mods separate with OpenMW data folders

OpenMW supports multiple data folders. Instead of copying every mod into one game directory, you can give each mod its own folder and list it in OpenMW configuration. The launcher then lets you enable plugins and adjust their order. This keeps asset replacements easier to remove and makes testing less destructive. The OpenMW differences page describes data-folder ordering and warns that programs hooking the original `morrowind.exe` will not work in OpenMW.

```text
OpenMW configuration
  → Morrowind game data
  → your mod's separate data folder
  → enabled plugin
```

Do not assume that changing plugin order also changes the order of loose texture or mesh replacers. OpenMW's data-folder order matters for file overrides. Test your mod with a simple load order before adding many other mods.

Assets and scripting

OpenMW documents texture and model formats, including routes for custom models from Blender and other tools. For a visual mod, first replace one texture or simple static model, then verify it appears in the game with the right scale and material. Keep source art separate from the files you package. Texture modding and custom models are indexed in the official reference.

OpenMW also has a Lua scripting API. This is an OpenMW-specific path, not a drop-in replacement for original Morrowind executable extensions. Begin with the Lua overview, check which context and API package your script needs, and keep the first test to one observable effect. If your release claims original-engine compatibility, do not rely on OpenMW-only Lua behavior.

Test and package

Test the exact combination you plan to support: original Morrowind, OpenMW, or both. Use a clean content list and a disposable save. Verify that the plugin is enabled, dependent masters are available, models/textures load, and cell transitions work. Document any required engine version or OpenMW-only feature. Package only the plugin and assets your mod needs; keep a source backup and a short list of the records you changed.

A complete first project: the OpenMW magic ring

The OpenMW-CS tour is an unusually good end-to-end sample: it creates a Night Vision ring without scripting, defines the record, then places an instance in the world. Start OpenMW-CS and select **Create a New Addon** with Morrowind as the base content file, as the manual instructs. Name the project, create the ring record, assign its enchantment and appearance using the tour's current editor fields, then place it into a reachable cell. Save the addon and enable it in the OpenMW launcher.

Test **both** pieces separately: the ring record should exist, and the placed ring should be reachable in the cell. Pick it up, equip it, check the effect, then save and reload. If the record appears in the editor but not in the world, inspect the placed reference and cell rather than recreating the enchantment. If the effect is wrong, inspect the enchantment and ring record. The drag-and-drop reference explains how records become world instances.

Package the addon with any custom assets it actually references; the tour's use of existing game assets is simpler. This project proves a complete **OpenMW** plugin path. It does not establish original-engine compatibility by itself. For a dual-runtime claim, open the plugin in the original Morrowind setup and independently test it there, using the runtime-differences reference as the checklist.

Status and original sources

Unfinished: the workflow is based on OpenMW documentation but has not been independently validated as a complete release for both runtimes. Use the OpenMW modding reference, OpenMW-CS manual, and runtime differences for current instructions. Original Morrowind Construction Set workflows still need a separately verified section.

Sources / References

External project and documentation links cited in this guide. Check the upstream release and version before following version-sensitive steps.

- OpenMW's comparison
- modding reference
- OpenMW-CS manual

- magic-ring tour
- Lua overview
- drag-and-drop reference