

How to play ADVENTURE Games

An INTRODUCTION by Peter Killworth, author of such best-selling games as 'Castle of Riddles', 'Countdown to Doom', 'Philosopher's Quest', and 'Giantkiller'.



What is an adventure game? It's probably quicker to explain what it's not. Here you will find no aliens to zap with the touch of a key or a joystick; no mind-numbing repetitive music; no twelve-year-old wizard of the keyboard will be able to score a million while you're still fumbling. Instead, you can proceed at a pace that suits you; you'll be able to leave the keyboard for a cup of coffee and a long think. (And you may need it; adventure games are intelligent, and expect thought in return. Don't expect to succeed unless you're prepared to think.) You'll find that you control the game - it doesn't control you.

Inside any adventure game from TOPOLOGIKA you'll find a world of enjoyment. It may be a fantasy world or an exotic planet; or it may be far closer to home, set in the pre-war houses of Greater London. The choice is yours. The world will have rules, just as the real world does. You won't necessarily know those rules, and finding out about them is one of the charms of playing an adventure game. You'll have a goal to achieve. This, too, will vary. In one game you might be trying to prove your rightful inheritance to the throne; in another, to regain your memory; or simply to collect as much treasure as possible. Your goal may be to find out what your goal is!

But achieving your goal will never be easy. Puzzles, varying from the easy to the mind-bending, will block your way. Sometimes you'll discover after a week that you hadn't solved a puzzle you thought you had; and feel that way again a week later. There will be other inhabitants of the world, most of whom will be there to hinder you. The computer will become a 'puppet', an extension of you; it will act as your eyes, hands, and ears. But you'll rapidly stop seeing it as a puppet; YOU will react as if the events in the game happen to YOU. You'll say to yourself, 'I got hit by a falling rock!'; not,

'I got hit by a falling rock!'; not, 'The computer got hit by a falling rock!'. It's this personal involvement that gives adventure games their flavour.

FICTION?

The leading characters of a novel inhabit a world and have goals. An adventure game is like a novel - but rather an interactive novel. Have you ever bought a book and then wished that the ending had been different? Or that the hero or heroine had explored that small island instead of sailing off into the sunset? In an adventure game, you will find you have the chance to modify what happens; within limits, you can explore where you will, and try out actions you would shirk from in real life. Ever wondered what would happen if you jumped off a cliff? Now you can find out! We don't buy novels to see a collection of illustrations. Nor will you find any distracting illustrations in a game from TOPOLOGIKA. Instead, you'll find literate text, with descriptions that conjure up images as strong as those conjured up by pictures. Further, the text will probably contain important clues, so it pays to read it carefully.

GO

So how do you go about playing an adventure game? Let's suppose you've got one of TOPOLOGIKA's games running on your computer. Let's also suppose that you've read the instructions, which perhaps say that your goals are to find as much treasure as possible and to store it in a building. You might see something like this on your screen:

```
End of road 0
You are standing at the end of a
road before a small brick building.
Around you is a forest. A small
stream flows out of the building
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and down a gully.

The 'colon' above is known as a 'prompt'. Whenever you see that, it means that the computer is waiting for you to tell it you want to do something. (Note: The symbol used for a 'prompt' varies from machine to machine.)

The first thing that will strike you, if you've never played an adventure game before, is that nothing will happen unless you interact with the game by typing something after the 'prompt'. Reaction times are not important here.

STATUS

The top line of the display shows your 'status'. 'End of the road' is a brief reminder of your location, and '0' is your score (which would normally begin at zero, as here). You will receive points for solving puzzles and achieving your goals, but may lose points for doing badly too. The rest of the text, which 'scrolls' up the screen as you play, shows what you can 'see', and tells you what happens to you as you proceed.

COMMS

To talk to the program, you don't need to know any special keys; the standard QWERTY keyboard is all you need. You must command the program to do something, using reasonable, short, English phrases. What would be a sensible thing to try first in this imaginary game of ours? Suppose you want to tell the game that you want to move into the building? Various possibilities come to mind: 'ENTER BUILDING', or just 'BUILDING', or 'GO IN', or 'WALK IN', or 'ENTER', or 'INSIDE'. (Here, and in what follows, what you might type at the keyboard is indicated for clarity as being inside single quotes, though you obviously don't type them as part of

your input. Either capital or lower case will do, as you prefer.)

By and large, moving around is easiest if you simply give direction (e.g. a compass direction like 'NORTH', or an 'ordinary' direction like 'UP', or 'OUT') though many other versions are usually understood in our games. More to the point, why type, 'ENTER BUILDING' when just 'IN' will do? You could try 'CRAWL IN' if you really felt like it... If this exceeds the wide vocabulary built into the game, the program will tell you. On typing 'IN' followed by RETURN, the screen will change to:

```
Building 0
You are inside a building, a well-worn
house for a large spring. The only
exit is out the way you came in.
There are some keys on the ground
here. There is a shiny brass lamp
nearby. There is some tasty food
here. A bottle of water lies on the
ground.
```

The status line has changed to reflect your new circumstances. If the program has a lot to display, it may go into 'paged mode' so you don't miss any text. The text will freeze at the bottom of a 'screenful', and only proceed after you have unfrozen it by pressing whatever key the program asks you to press. The building's interior sounds pretty featureless. Notice that, once inside, you are told where the exits lie, because you would be able to see them in real life. Outside, in the open air, you could, of course, walk in any direction you choose. But of greater interest to you should be the collection of objects. Careful manipulation of objects is vital to achieving your goal, and these four will be no exception. What you do with them is up to you. Suppose you decide to eat the food. Obviously, you try:

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'EAT THE FOOD' (or just 'EAT FOOD')
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to which you find:

You're not holding any food!

which is certainly true. The status line didn't change while you were obtaining this earth-shattering information, because you haven't moved anywhere or scored anything. It's clear that you have to pick up the food first. The program isn't being awkward; if the food had been suspended twenty feet in the air, it would have been legitimate to require that you be holding the food before you ate it, so why not here? Suppose that you now decide to pick up everything except the bottle, for no obvious reason. Try:

'TAKE EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE BOTTLE'

or 'GET ALL BUT BOTTLE'

or 'GET KEYS AND LANTERN AND THE FOOD'

or 'GET KEYS, THEN GET THE LAMP, AND GET FOOD'

or 'GET KEYS, GET LANTERN, GET FOOD.'

or any other variant. The definite and indefinite articles are understood (indeed, the program is quite clever at grammar) but unnecessary, so there's no need to waste time typing them. Synonyms are frequently understood too; for example, the LAMP on the floor would be understood as a LANTERN. Occasionally you might want to try moving quickly, say; in which case you could try 'RUN NORTH' and see if it's understood. You needn't worry about adverbs. 'GET FOOD CAREFULLY' would take the food, but the 'CAREFULLY' is unnecessary, the program assuming you take care in doing anything! Adjectives, too, are never needed. If you really need to distinguish between a blue button and a red button, 'PRESS BUTTON' would probably give you the question 'Do you want to press the red button (y/n)?' You should never have to guess what the

program wanted as input - that's the job of the program itself. To any of the above list of commands, the program might respond with:

Keys taken.
Lantern taken.
Food taken.

as confirmation that it has done what you asked. At any time you can remind yourself what you're carrying by typing 'INVENTORY', or just 'INV' for short; this is jargon for 'What am I carrying?' Back to that food. Now you can repeat:

'EAT FOOD'

to receive the reply:

'Thank you, it was delicious!'

and a check with 'INV' will confirm that the food really has disappeared (inside you). You should now feel worried. Whoever wrote the program carefully included the food, either as a red herring - possible but unlikely - or for a purpose. If the latter, then you just lost the food - permanently. However, don't worry. There are ways of recovering previous positions, restarting, etc. We'll discuss them later. You can perform sensible actions at this point. Try:

'GET BOTTLE, THEN EMPTY BOTTLE'

which responds with:

Bottle taken.

You pour the water out of the bottle onto the floor, where it soon evaporates.

and 'INV' will tell you now that:

You are carrying:

Some keys.

A lamp.

An empty bottle.

since the building is a well house, you can also assume that:

'FILL BOTTLE'

will refill your bottle with water. However, it may be clear that there is nothing extra to be found here. You could see if 'SEARCH' or 'EXAMINE' are understood; most TOPOLOGIKA games assume that you saw what there was to see, making further examination pointless. (This is not to say that you have X-ray vision, of course; you won't get told what's in a closed cupboard unless you type 'OPEN CUPBOARD'.)

MORE

It's clearly time to leave, via 'LEAVE' or 'OUT.' You will usually find that the program accepts shortenings of most words, so 'O' may suffice for 'OUT'. The worst that can happen is that it isn't understood! On leaving, you're greeted by:

End of road 0

You're at the end of the road.

This isn't the same description as before; because you recognise the area. However, in a large game it's almost certain you will need to refresh your memory about the long descriptions of various areas, so you can tell the program to 'LOOK'. This will give you the long description once again. Where now? Given no clue from the forest around you, you might try 'N' (short for North). There are normally eight horizontal directions (N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW) plus UP and DOWN, together with IN and OUT. Going N produces:

Open forest

You are in open forest, with a deep valley to one side.

Continuing, with another 'N' we get:

Open forest by road 0

You are in open forest near both a valley and a road.

Yet another 'N' produces the surprising:

End of road 0

You're at the end of the road.

In other words, after going north three times you have ended up back where you started! Well, forest paths are the very devil to follow in a straight line. Indeed, you should never assume that following a route north means that you can retrace your steps south; paths bend about somewhat under normal circumstances. You may well have the feeling by now that forest exploring isn't overly helpful. (This may or may not be correct, depending on the game - just because attempts to do something yielded nothing does not imply that they never would under other conditions.) Perhaps a move in the other direction is called for. Try 'S' or 'VALLEY' - often games recognise the names of certain areas and will head you to them if they are nearby. This gets:

Valley beside stream 0

You are in a valley in the forest beside a stream tumbling along a rocky bed.

You could do worse than carry on: 'S' (again). You could have combined the last two moves, of course, by typing 'S,S'. You find:

Slit in rock 0

At your feet all the water of the stream splashes into a 2-inch slit in the rock. Downstream the streambed is bare rock.

It's always worth exploring slits. 'D', or 'DOWN', produces:

You don't fit through a two-inch slit!

which serves us right. Continuing with another 'S', we get to:

Grate 0

You are in a 20-foot depression floored with bare dirt. Set into the dirt is a strong steel grate mounted in concrete. A dry streambed leads into the depression. The grate is locked.

Now this really is promising, 'GET GRATE' produces:

Just how, pray, should I take a grate mounted in concrete?

which is fair enough. Next we try 'ENTER GRATE' to find:

You can't exactly enter a grate!

so that what we should have said was simply 'DOWN'. This produces:

You can't get through a locked grate!

Clearly the grate needs unlocking. A moment's recollection tells us that we already have the technology for the job - keys. 'OPEN' (a mistake - we meant to say 'OPEN GRATE') produces:

Open what?

to which we answer, 'GRATE'. The result is treated as 'OPEN GRATE':

The grate is now unlocked.

And now we can go 'DOWN':

Chamber beneath 0

You are in a small chamber beneath a 3 x 3 steel which leads to the surface. A low crawl over cobbles leads inward to the west.

Without stopping to think, we add 'W':

It is pitch dark. 0

(Notice that the short description has vanished - since we can't 'see'!) Moving around in the dark in adventure games is often dangerous; a light source (which we possess) comes in handy, even though batteries can wear out. Useful words are 'ON' and 'OFF' here (shorter than 'LIGHT LAMP' and 'DOUSE LAMP').

MAPS

You are now in a position to begin exploring properly - and also to start drawing a map, without which you'll soon get lost. This is also the time to leave you to experience an adventure yourself. However, some extra suggestions, hints, and information will not come amiss.

CHAT

If you see any written information, always try saying it. You can type 'SAY XXX', or just 'XXXX' for short.

MAZE

Sometimes you may find yourself in a maze, in which a whole series of areas look identical. To find your way out, you must seek a way to make each area look different. A simple maze can be mapped by dropping an object in each area, so that the areas become 'the bottle room', 'the food room', and so on. However, mazes in games from TOPOLOGIKA are seldom so simple!

certain actions are risky. It's frustrating to have played for half an hour only to 'die' unintentionally. To avoid this - and also to allow you to leave the game and return later to the same point - three commands are included: 'RESTART' does what its name suggests, and returns you to the initial stage of the game. This is often useful in the early parts of a game, when you're getting the feel of it. To take a copy of your position, type 'SAVE'. You will be prompted for a filetitle and a disc. It would be sensible to make the filetitle refer to your position somehow. After saving, the game continues from the point at which you saved. You can then return to this position at any time by typing 'RESTORE'. This too will prompt for a filetitle and a disc; and you will then be back at the same position at which you saved previously. This gives you an easy way to try jumping over that dragon several times (always fatally, no doubt) without having to play through from the beginning each time.

HELP

You'll find that puzzles differ in their degrees of difficulty. Some are easy - such as opening the grate. Some are very hard - but always 'fair'. Others may seem easy, but have more than one layer to them. It's likely that, sooner or later, you'll get stuck. Fortunately, there is an 'on-line' HELP system built into TOPOLOGIKA games. Provided with each program is a list of frequently asked questions, each numbered, together with other questions like, 'What is the *** used for?', or 'Where do I find the ***?' or 'I can't find all the treasure'. Just type 'HELP' and, when you're asked, input the number of your question. You will get a subtle hint to its answer. You can continue, receiving steadily less subtle hints, until -

usually after a warning - you are given the solution. Since you get maximum enjoyment by solving a puzzle yourself, try to avoid accessing the solution until totally stuck!

If after all these clues you still can't get through, drop us a line enclosing your name and address, your telephone number, the name of the game, the version, the point at which you're stuck AND A STAMPED, ADDRESSED ENVELOPE. We'll do our best to get you off the hook!

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adventures from...



Countdown to Doom by Peter Killworth

Peter Killworth's original BBC adventure sold 25000 copies. This new version includes more challenging puzzles and locations. Orbiting the treasure-rich planet of Doomsungara, deserts, jungles, glaciers, swamps, and the crashed spaceships of previous adventurers just visible through the swirling clouds, your ship faces a sudden and savage attack, and crash-lands on Doom. Can you find the spares to repair it, before Doom's highly-corrosive atmosphere rots both your ship - and you?

GAME SIZE: Medium, with an S-F flavour. DIFFICULTY: Average.

Philosopher's Quest by Peter Killworth

Waving that old magic wand you found in the junk shop off Market Street was a big mistake, for, when you did, the atmosphere turned inside out, taking you with it and doing the same to you. And when it swirled back again, the quaint old shop - and the shabby old shopkeeper whose back had been turned - were nowhere to be seen...

GAME SIZE: Compact, but packed with unexpected twists. RATING: Difficult.

ACHETON by Jon Thackray

The Ruling Council of Acheton issues the following telex to life-forms everywhere: 'We hereby challenge the greatest adventurers in the UNIVERSE to uncover the dread secrets of our Realm. Deeds of heroic valour will be required, and feats of intellect that Newton and Einstein would have boggled at... The rewards will be great: riches immense, power supernatural, and the knowledge that you have succeeded where thousands have failed.'

GAME SIZE: Expansive, with a wide range and very high standard of problems.

RATING: A real challenge.

Kingdom of Hamil by Jonathan Partington

Night, blackest night. Bones weary after days and nights in the saddle, you seek shelter from the savage night in a strange, derelict chapel, and dream of the place you seek: Hamil... Hamil, a Kingdom of green pastures and sparkling fountains, of sorcery and romance, and strange but loyal beings, - a land that should be yours. Have you the intellect, stamina - and the courage - to win it back?

GAME SIZE: Moderate, with many unusual puzzles. DIFFICULTY RATING: Average

GIANTKILLER by Peter Killworth

Ever been to market to buy a pig? Chances are you haven't, but it CAN happen; it just depends what sort of Mug you have, where you live, and when... 'Giantkiller' is based on the popular story 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. That doesn't mean it's for little kids, though, because when you plant a magic bean, anything can happen. (BBC version a best-seller to British schools.)

GAME SIZE: Medium, with puzzles that are mainly Mathematical... RATING: Suits ages 10 up.