

Chris Jensen
Doug Radcliffe

OFFICIAL

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STRATEGY
GUIDE

HARDCORE STRATEGIES

AND EXCLUSIVE CHEAT CODES

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Chris Jensen
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To Erika, her gaze destroys the wave function and brings me into being.

—Chris Jensen

For my parents, who always answered the question, "Can I please have just one more quarter?" with a smile.

—Doug Radcliffe

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Introduction

Summer, 1979. I was 12 years old.

My father played softball in a local league and I was the batboy. Every Wednesday night I'd tag along to some poorly lit softball field with an empty grandstand. I did this because of the fringe benefit that always occurred after a game—a trip to the pizza parlor.

Tonight would be no different, I thought.

After a short drive to Pizza Hut, my father would give me a fistful of quarters and I'd play pinball while the adults downed pitchers of beer and consumed endless quantities of pizza. This particular Pizza Hut had a single pinball machine, and after months of practice I was getting pretty good at it, something that made my father happy: the better I got, the cheaper it got.

This night wouldn't be the same, however. Entering Pizza Hut, I noticed the pinball game was gone. In its place was a strange kiosk with a TV monitor. I couldn't make out the details but I could clearly make out the name.

Asteroids.

My father placed a massive order for pizza and beer and gave me the ritualistic handful of quarters. As he moved off toward his team, I approached the new contraption cautiously, as if it were an alien visitor and I was making contact for the first time.

According to the sketchy instructions, I was to assume the role of a spacecraft dangerously situated in an asteroid belt. Armed with a front-mounted weapon and the ability to hyperspace, I was to navigate through the debris, destroying every rock I saw. Scores varied by asteroid size, and I'd get bonus points for killing enemy saucers.

This definitely wasn't pinball.

Slipping a quarter into the slot, I pressed the One Player button and there I was—a white triangle in the center of the screen. Odd-shaped asteroids approached from all sides. I started pressing buttons, thrusting the ship across the screen, firing dots at the asteroids—and I was hooked. It was immediate.

There was no "easing into" *Asteroids*. It grabbed you by throat with cobra-like speed and held on until you were out of quarters. Which, 10 minutes later, I was.

Assuming my sad posture, I headed toward my puzzled father.

"Already?" he asked, reaching into his wallet to pull forth a few dollar bills. Since there would be no haggling involved I didn't even bother to explain. I just made a beeline for the register and converted the useless paper into an infinitely more worthy pocketful of cold quarters.

Dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun.

The *Jaws*-like sounds coming from the *Asteroids* machine pulled me like a tractor field. Another 20 minutes passed, and again I exhausted my money supply. My hands were cramped, my eyes throbbed—and I needed more.

Again I assumed the depressed posture and approached my father.

“What the heck is going on over there?” he asked.

I explained the situation: Pinball was no more. There was a new game, unlike any I’d ever seen, called *Asteroids*. I made a feeble attempt to describe it, but I don’t think he believed me. Nonetheless, he bestowed a few more dollars without further questioning.

Dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun.

Twenty minutes later I was out of money again. I couldn’t bring myself to beg for more so I just stood there for about 45 minutes, watching the demo run.

My father’s hand rested on my shoulder as he moved beside me.

“This it?” he asked.

“Yeah. *Asteroids*.”

He reached into his jersey pocket and pulled out a few loose quarters. “Let me see you play it.”

I showed him the ropes, or what I thought the ropes were. When my last ship finally expired he gave the machine a curious look and gently pushed me aside, saying, “OK. Let me try this thing.”

We spent the next two hours playing *Asteroids* together. It must have cost Dad 20 bucks after all was said and done. He was hooked, I was hooked, and his curious softball buddies who’d moseyed over were getting hooked. Suddenly so many people were hooked that I couldn’t worm my way in to play another game—a problem that soon afflicted the country as *Asteroids* came to dominate the social consciousness.

I’ll never forget that day, not only because *Asteroids* represented a new form of entertainment and, ultimately, a billion-dollar industry, but because it was one of the few things for which my father and I shared a mutual fondness.

Now, nearly 20 years later, *Asteroids* is back, thanks to Activision’s brilliant update.

A Classic Reborn

What makes this new version so great is that Activision wisely has kept the elements that made the original *Asteroids* a classic. In this age of high-end computers, it’s easy for game developers to pour on eye candy at the expense of gameplay. But Activision knows what made *Asteroids* a classic, and has kept those elements firmly intact.

Which isn’t to say that *Asteroids* is the same old game. A ton of new features brings the experience firmly into the ’90s—power-ups, bosses, multiplayer, and a generous contingent of new enemies and other threats, all presented with fantastic graphics and speaker-crunching sound.

What's in This Book?

The pages that follow provide all the information you need to become your neighborhood’s reigning *Asteroids* master, including:

 **AN IN-DEPTH PILOT'S MANUAL** covering everything from choosing the right ship to the fine art of the flip;

 **HARD-CORE TACTICS** to make sure you get maximum impact out of every power-up and Wildcard weapon;

Introduction

- ◆ ESSENTIAL STRATEGIES for blasting your way through every single-player and multiplayer level in the game;
- ◆ CLASSIFIED DATA on all asteroids and enemy ships;
- ◆ THE HISTORY OF THE ORIGINAL GAME, complete with *Asteroids* memories from some of the game industry's leading figures.

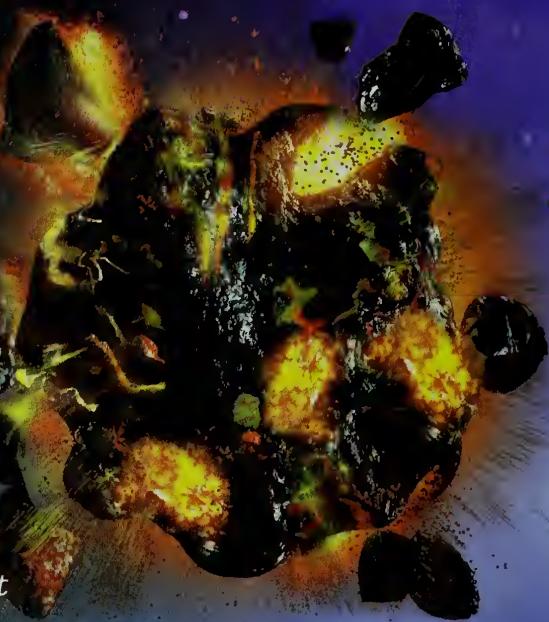
To top it all off, we scored the **exclusive** right to unleash **asteroid-shattering cheat codes** that let you jump levels, switch on invulnerability, uncover the secret fourth ship, the Excalibur, and even play the original *Asteroids* hidden within the game!

So let's not wait a minute longer: the Astro-Mining Corporation is looking for a few good recruits!



Astro-Mining Corporation Pilot's Manual

Welcome, recruits. As you know, the Astro-Mining Corporation is hiring new pilots. We need to bulk up our ranks to finish several military contracts. Our pilots will be expected to enter asteroid fields and assist in reducing large chunks of rock into smaller pieces for salvage teams. And because the military is actively engaged in combat against hostile aliens, they've asked us to help clear valuable space-lanes of asteroids and other hazardous material.



The Astro-Mining Corporation has a strict policy of accepting only the best and brightest. Successful candidates must be experienced with spacecraft controls and familiar with each ship's strengths and weaknesses. Our employees also must master a variety of core skills, from ship rotation and thruster techniques to effective shield deployment and the fine art of the flip.

If you think you have what it takes, then read on!

Spacecraft Controls

We've lost count of how many pilots believed *they* had what it takes, only to die on their first mission when a rock the size of a 10-story building slapped them upside the head. Spaceships are expensive, people, and we can't hand them out to just anyone. Before getting behind the stick, all new recruits must understand fully the controls of their spacecraft. What follows is informative documentation that applies regardless of the ship you pilot.

PlayStation Controls

Asteroids for the PlayStation has a variety of preset controls, so you're sure to find one to fit your playing style. If you can't get comfortable with the choices available, then take the time to create your own scheme (see Figure 1.1).

Having a setup that feels right is essential: *Asteroids* is a fast-paced game that demands quick reflexes. Knowing which button to push to get the effect you want is critical, especially when you're about to get nailed by tumbling boulders.

The default setups place controls on the Left, Up, Down, and Right buttons on your D-pad. We recommend you remove controls from the Up and Down buttons and leave them blank. When the action gets hot and heavy, it's far too easy to press Up or Down accidentally. Keep Right and Left active for rotating your ship. You'll score more points if you use the D-pad only to turn and assign all other commands to L1, L2, R1, R2, Triangle, Circle, Square, and X.

Here's our suggested custom setup for the PlayStation:

Button	Command
Up	No Action
Down	No Action
Left	Left



Figure 1.1

The PlayStation custom controller screen

Button	Command
Right	Right
Triangle	Shield
Square	Laser
X	Thrust
Circle	Wildcard
L1	Hyperspace
L2	Flip
R1	Hyperspace
R2	Flip

Of course, personal tastes will vary. Use what works for you.

Windows 95/98 Controls

The PC doesn't come with a fancy controller, but you can make full use of any gamepad or joystick you have on hand. Simply go to the controller configuration screen and assign commands to your controller buttons (see Figure 1.2).

We can't recommend a joystick for *Asteroids* on the PC. Instead, try the keyboard. It fires your lasers and moves your ship around the screen with more precision.

Here's our suggested custom setup for the PC:

Button	Command
A	Left
S	Shield
D	Right
W	Wildcard
Spacebar	Flip
Ctrl	Laser
Shift	Thrust
Enter	Hyperspace



Figure 1.2

The Windows 95/98 custom controller screen

Selecting a Spacecraft

Welcome to the Astro-Mining Corporation showroom. Three ships are available now, and we have one spectacular secret ship that we're showing behind closed doors. Each has unique strengths and weaknesses. Base your selection on your playing ability and the features you feel will take your gameplay to the next level.

Each spacecraft is defined by its ratings in four key categories—rotation, thrust, shield, and firepower (rate of fire). The higher the rating, the better it performs in that area. With the exception of the Dagger, each ship has a special weapon that you can unleash

by holding down fire for four seconds. Unlike their Wildcard equivalents, these weapons won't run out of charges. Use them with caution, however—you won't be able to fire your lasers while you charge up.

Now let's take a look at your options and see about getting you strapped in.

Dagger

The Dagger is an excellent choice. It sports above-average numbers in every category (see Figure 1.3). Although it doesn't excel in any one area, its balanced attributes provide a bit of everything a pilot might need to tackle the asteroid fields. If you're new to *Asteroids*, the Dagger is the perfect ship to begin your career with.

After you acquire some experience out there in the cosmos, you'll crave some extra punch. When you feel you're ready for the next step, leave the Dagger behind, as you would a pair of training wheels, and get yourself a Longsword or Rapier.

Difficulty Settings

Asteroids offers three difficulty settings. Hotshot space jockeys can jump into the game at Expert level. Green recruits should begin their careers at Normal. Move on to Hardcore only after you complete the game at Expert: you'll need the practice. Which difficulty level you choose determines how many ships you start with, how many continues you get after you use up your ships, and how many bonus points you'll need to earn extra ships.

Here's how it all breaks down:

Level	Number of Ships	Continues	Points to Earn Bonus Ships
Normal	5	3	8,000
Expert	3	1	12,000
Hardcore	3	1	16,000

Expert and Hardcore levels also influence the way you'll use Wildcard weapons (see "Wildcard Weapons" later in this chapter). Hardcore offers you no such bonus weaponry.



Figure 1.3

The Dagger

Special Ability

The Longsword unleashes a Wideshot when the fire button is held down for approximately four seconds. Wideshot is a volley of three lasers that spread out and do considerable damage. This weapon is especially useful for taking out large asteroids and crystals with a single shot. Keep in mind, while preparing your Wideshot, your lasers will be inoperable.

Rapier

The Rapier is all about control. It's like a sports car for space travel—quick in a turn with powerful thrusters to get you moving fast (Figure 1.5). But this speed and precision come at a cost in shield strength. The Rapier pilot should

keep the ship on the move, use its agility to avoid trouble, and deal damage with its solid, front-mounted guns.

Longsword

If you love firepower, you'll love the Longsword (Figure 1.4). Its front-mounted guns have a rapid rate of fire, and so you're seldom at a loss for bullets when you really need them. This boost in firepower comes at the expense of stable shields, however, so don't expect to live long after taking a hit from even the smallest asteroid. If you enjoy taking the offensive, however, the Longsword's steady stream of lasers can offset its defensive weaknesses.

We recommend recruits wait to pilot the Longsword until after they gain some experience in the field.

Although the Longsword can cut through the game's initial levels without much problem, its slow thrust and rotation can be a handicap in later zones.



Figure 1.4

The Longsword

Ship Name	Rotation	Thrust	Shield	Firepower
Longsword	30%	30%	15%	80%

Use this extra speed and rotation to acquire power-ups quickly. The Rapier also lets you avoid enemy saucers far more easily than either Longsword or



Figure 1.5

The Rapier

Excalibur

The Excalibur is our top-secret prototype. Normally it's unavailable at the beginning of your career. There are two ways to acquire the Excalibur: beat every level in *Asteroids* in Expert or Hardcore levels, or hack your way there by entering a cheat code. (Chapter 5 provides detailed cheat code information.)

When you do get your hands on the Excalibur (Figure 1.6), consider yourself a lucky pilot. This spacecraft is the best thing to roll off the production floor in quite some time. Its shields and firepower are above average, and its rotation and thrust have been maximized to their fullest. If you thought the Rapier was agile and quick, you haven't seen anything yet!

Dagger. If you're a speed demon and sharp on the controls, the Rapier is an excellent choice.

Ship Name	Rotation	Thrust	Shield	Firepower
Rapier	70%	70%	30%	60%

Ship Name	Rotation	Thrust	Shield	Firepower
Excalibur	100%	100%	60%	60%

Special Ability

The Rapier drops a mine once the fire button has been held down for approximately four seconds. These mines work exactly like the equivalent Wildcard weapon except you can only drop one every few seconds, with the disadvantage of losing access to your laser while you charge up. The upside is, you'll have an unlimited supply of mines at your disposal.

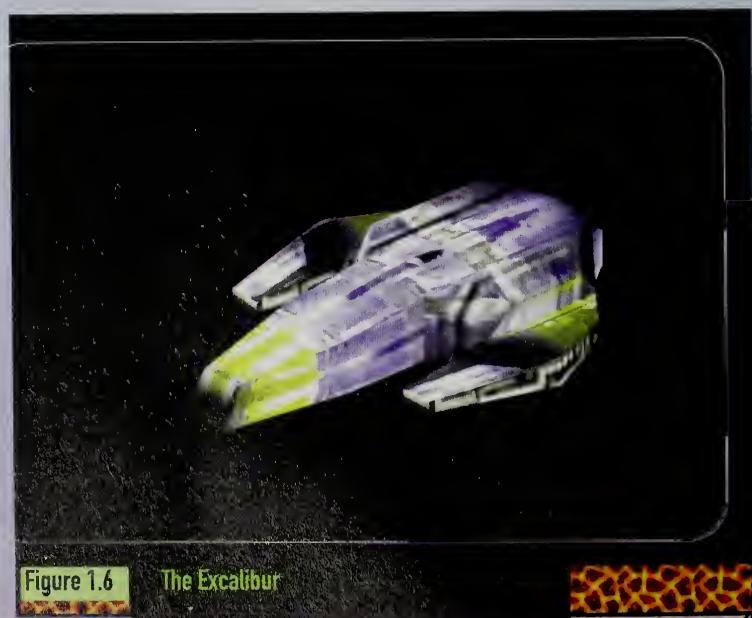


Figure 1.6

The Excalibur

Special Ability

The Excalibur can unleash a powerful Armageddon blast when the fire button is held down for approximately four seconds. This special ability works like the Wildcard version, except this time you'll have an unlimited supply. As with all ship-specific special abilities, the drawback is that you'll have to wait a precious four seconds before using this weapon—four seconds that will find you unable to use your lasers.

Spacecraft Features

So you have a shiny new spaceship. Now what? It's time to learn what it can do. Any yahoo can buy a new craft. But it takes a *pilot* to master the controls. You'd be surprised how many new pilots freeze up at the controls. Worse, there are pilots who fail to use them all, a mistake that always ends with an asteroid winning the fight. Don't let this happen to you.

Rotation

Rotation is the first skill you should master. Each ship you fly will have a different rotation rate. The higher the rotation factor, the more quickly you can turn left and right. This skill comes into play when you steer your vehicle while moving forward and, more importantly, when you line up your laser fire.

Rotation may seem like a no-brainer, but there's a lot of skill involved. Most important is the *leading* maneuver: instead of firing at a moving object at its current position, fire where you think it will be in a second or two. Rotate carefully and fire your lasers quickly.

Rotation combined with a stream of laser fire is your best tool for destroying asteroids (Figure 1.7). By unleashing an arc of laser fire at a passing asteroid



Figure 1.7

instead of a straight line, the last half of your volley will hit even as your target moves out of range. A skilled pilot will fire and rotate at the same time, sending out a wide arc of laser blasts that will reduce the biggest asteroid to bite-sized chunks in seconds.

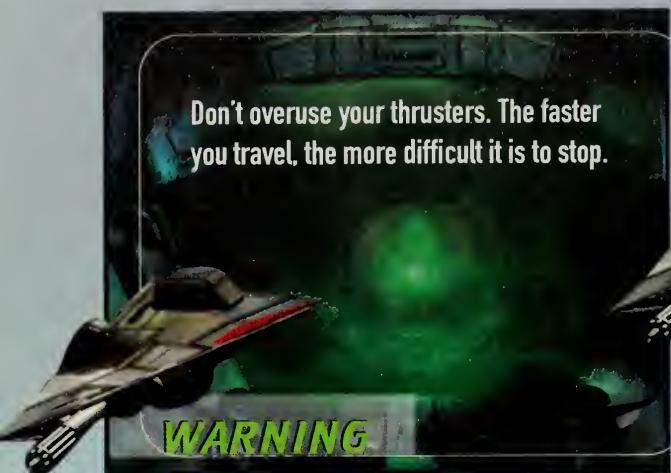
Thrust

Kick in the thrusters and your ship will accelerate. The longer you hold the acceleration, the faster you'll go. But this is space, not a racetrack, and you'll soon realize you're missing a very important component—brakes. Once you have momentum, your ship will travel in a given direction until you apply an opposite thrust. There are no brakes in space, so the talented pilot will use *reverse thrusting*. It's a tricky skill to master, but master it you must if you expect to come home alive.

To pull off a quick reverse thrust, flip your ship (see "Flip" later in this chapter) and step on the gas. Why not just rotate? Two reasons:

1. Rotating takes too long. If you're in a hurry or trying to dodge an object, it won't work out in your favor.
2. Rotating isn't precise. If you rotate to slow your craft and you don't point exactly in the opposite

direction, your craft will drift right or left and possibly crash you into an asteroid.



Shields

Shields play an important role in *Asteroids*. Like the flip command, discussed later in this chapter, effective shield deployment is easy to overlook in the thick of battle. Practice your shield tactics until they're second nature.

As the foregoing ship sections showed, each ship has its own shield rating; some are stronger, some weaker. So, for example, you can keep your shields up longer when you pilot the Dagger than when piloting the Longsword.

Effective shield deployment is your most valuable ally. When it kicks in, the shield will protect you against any kind of attack, whether oncoming asteroid or alien weaponry (see Figure 1.8). You lose overall shield energy for every second your shields are deployed.

Notice that when you activate the shields your energy diminishes relatively slowly. Once an object contacts them, however, your energy goes down at twice that rate for the duration of the contact. Get out of the

Deploy your shields as close to impact as you can. This saves you valuable energy and allows you to find other ways to get out of trouble.

TIP

way as soon as you can. The less time you spend with your shields up, the more energy you'll have later.

Laser

The laser mounted at the front of every craft is your bread and butter. You'll use it to blow apart asteroids and take out alien ships. Lasers differ slightly from craft to craft, depending on firepower rating: the higher the rating, the more shots you can fire before you must pause to cool down the guns.

A lot of rookie pilots go out and start shooting at anything that moves. Smart pilots, however, take aim at an object and blast away only when they *know* they'll connect. Every time a laser shot misses, that stray

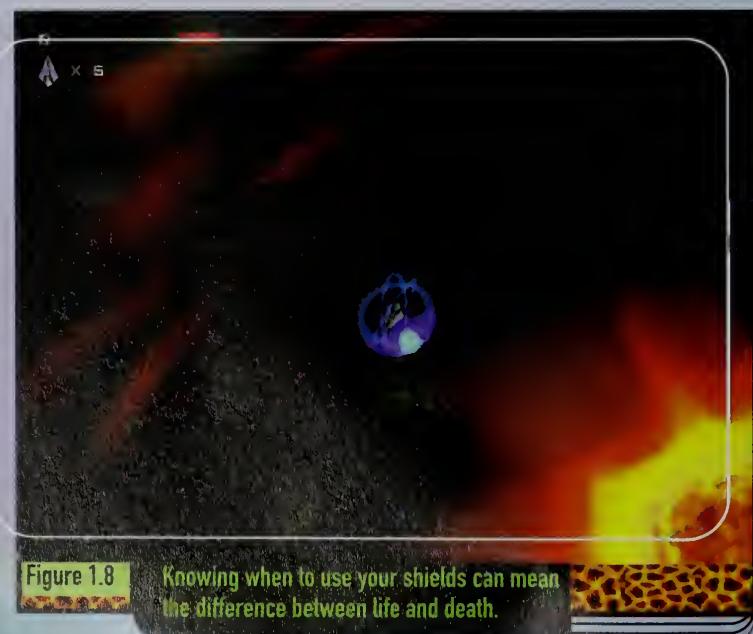


Figure 1.8

Knowing when to use your shields can mean the difference between life and death.

sliver of light can impact something else. When this happens, you'll suddenly find yourself surrounded by all kinds of rubble. *Rubble equals trouble.*

Send a steady stream of firepower toward an oncoming full-sized asteroid. Once it breaks apart, quickly shoot a stream of ammo to right and left. This usually nails the smaller chunks before get very far.

TIP

Flip

Of the available controls, pilots most often fail to use the flip. They're too used to vintage spacecraft that lack this feature, and find it difficult to adapt. Rotation is fine for strafing asteroids, but it's virtually useless when you must protect your rear.

By reversing your ship's orientation immediately, this control flips you around instantly—a particularly useful technique when an asteroid or alien craft sneaks in

If you don't have time to flip and attack an asteroid, then flip and kick in the thrusters! In Asteroids, sometimes it's better to run from a problem than to face it head-on and die trying.

TIP

from behind and catches you off guard. With one press of the button, you're ready for the flip.

The flip is also useful in conjunction with lasers to mimic a rear-firing gun. Simply fire straight ahead, flip, fire again, flip, and so on. Use this trick to clear the areas behind and ahead without budging an inch from your position.

Hyperspace

Consider this the panic button. There's no law against it, but a lot of pilots frown on using hyperspace.

Unlike shields, hyperspace doesn't require energy.

TIP

Skilled pilots would never get themselves into a situation where they'd need to use it. It's a matter of pride, nothing more, and there's always the slim chance you might get nailed by an asteroid on re-entry.

So what is hyperspace? Only Einstein knew for sure. All you need to know is that it can save you and your craft from certain doom. There will be times, no matter how great you are at piloting your ship, when there are just too many asteroids closing in. With nowhere to go and no useful Wildcard weapon at your disposal, you must teleport from your position to a random spot. This can save you, but it's no guarantee. Remember the old adage, "Out of the frying pan, into the fire." You may think you're jumping to safety, but you may reappear in a spot that's worse.

No one said this would be easy.

Wildcard Weapons

Periodically, the Astro-Mining Corporation drops off Wildcard weapons for you to pick up (see Figure 1.9). Our cargo craft must keep a safe distance from the asteroids, so we're forced to float this equipment toward you. We apologize for the inconvenience this may cause.



Figure 1.9

Wildcard weapons will appear at any edge of the screen and slowly drift to the other side.

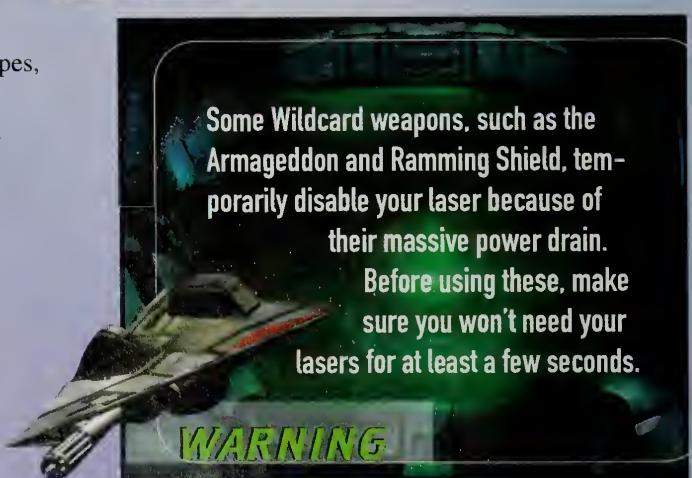
Wildcard weapons come in a wide variety of types, from rotating Gun Satellites (GunSats), Plasma Drills, and Robo Walls to Missile Armageddon,

Trigger Bombs, and Ramming Shields. Every Wildcard weapon is a valuable tool. Chapter 2 provides complete details on Wildcard weapons.

Because your ship is relatively small, you can outfit only one Wildcard weapon at a time. However, you don't need to use all of the charges in a Wildcard weapon in order to pick up a new one. Simply fly

over the new Wildcard weapon and your old one immediately disappears. Depending on the level you're playing, some Wildcard weapons will be better suited for the situation than others, so you should always be on the look out for a potential upgrade. Fly your ship carefully if you're happy with the Wildcard weapon you currently have or you may accidentally lose it

Some Wildcard Weapons, like Armageddon, have only one charge while others have more. If you have just a few shots left in your Wildcard Weapon and you see the same weapon floating around the level, you can pick it up and get all of your charges back.





Power-Up, Weapon, and Enemy Tactics

Greetings, pilots. Before you suit up, hit the textbooks. The Astro-Mining Corporation Research and Development team has been hard at work the past few years on a series of powerful utilities and weapons. Many of these can be fitted to your Astro-Mining vessel. Others provide special bonuses to help you survive deep space. Study these new tools carefully before heading into the field, their strengths and weaknesses and which zone each is dropped in. Using appropriate power-ups and Wildcard weapons can mean the difference between a successful mission and failure.

After you've been briefed on our experimental technology, check out the extensive section on enemy-specific tactics. Our reconnaissance team has recovered vital statistics on all the bad guys as well as their locations. If you know what to expect, you can jump them before they jump you.

Throughout this chapter, test pilots experienced in using these power-ups and Wildcard weapons will provide special tactics. You'll also find strategies straight from our recon pilots—vets who've faced the enemy and lived to tell about it. Ignore these notes, tips, and warnings at your peril.



Hyperspace to the appropriate zone strategies in Chapter 3 to find tactics for tracking down specific asteroid types.

NOTE

Power-Ups

Research and Development reports that power-ups "are different from Wildcard weapons because they don't offer firepower against the asteroids or enemy craft." Nonetheless, they can be lifesavers. The Development team will scatter these throughout the zones. When you see one, snag it.

Shield Recharge



- ◆ COLOR: Light Blue
- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: A11
- ◆ FREQUENCY: Common

As you learned from the Pilot's Manual, the shield can save your life more often than any other ship feature. Asteroids and enemy vessels will crush your craft unless your shield is activated. But it lasts only so long. R&D has developed a Shield Regeneration power-up that replenishes shield power to maximum every time you pick one up.

TEST PILOT 56-AZ: "If a freighterload of asteroids lies ahead, think before you snag that Shield Regeneration power-up. If your shield's already near max and the road looks rough, ignore this power-up. It's only worth the risk if your shield is at less than 50 percent."

TIP

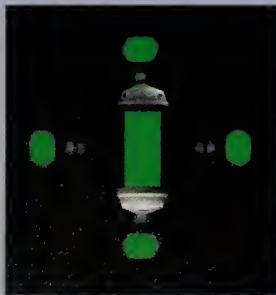
Free Ship



- ◆ COLOR: Yellow
- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: A11
- ◆ FREQUENCY: Very rare

All experienced pilots have lost a ship or two in their day—asteroid-smashing is a tough business. No pilot can keep enough ships in reserve. Dispersed around the deep space area of operations are several Free Ship power-ups. R&D will drop off these technological wonders at various times during your mission. They're very rare finds, so don't miss them; an extra ship can mean the completion of your mission. Make every attempt to grab the Free Ship power-up unless the region is just too cluttered with space rock.

Bonus Points

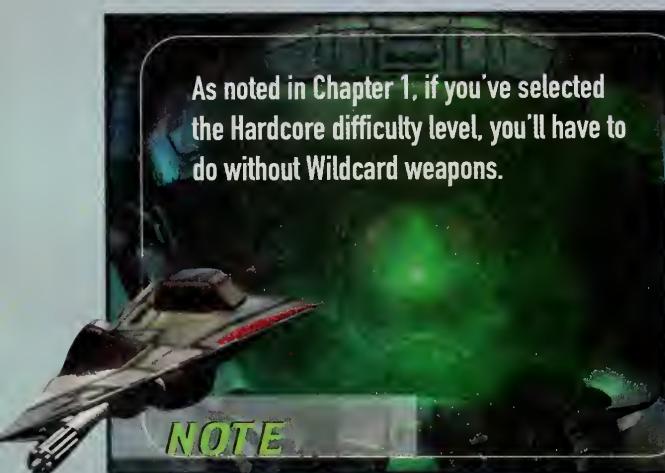


- ◆ COLOR: Green
- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: A11
- ◆ FREQUENCY: Rare

Your performance, which is based on the points you score, is very important to the Astro-Mining Corporation. To help you out, R&D will occasionally drop in Bonus Point power-ups worth 5,000 points each. These are not as critical as the Free Ship, but they're far more common. Try for the Bonus Points power-up as often as possible.

Wildcard Weapons

Sure, it's powerful, but for most pilots, a ship's laser isn't enough to complete a mission. Developed over a number of years, these Wildcard weapons fit nicely



into your ship's computer systems; just press the Wildcard button on your controls to activate the upgrade. Each weapon includes a finite number of charges, as detailed.

Gun Satellites



COLOR: Green

APPEARS IN ZONE: Sigma Delta

CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 4

Extra firepower never hurts. Grab the green Gun Satellite Wildcard and activate it to put a small satellite in orbit around your vessel. This "buddy" aims and fires a small laser bolt at the nearest enemy or asteroid. At four charges per, the GunSat can last through multiple levels (see Figure 2.1). Although you lose the one orbiting your ship when you complete a level, any reserve GunSats will make it to the next screen intact.

Gun Satellites are especially effective against the crystal asteroids of Sigma Delta. Crystal asteroids

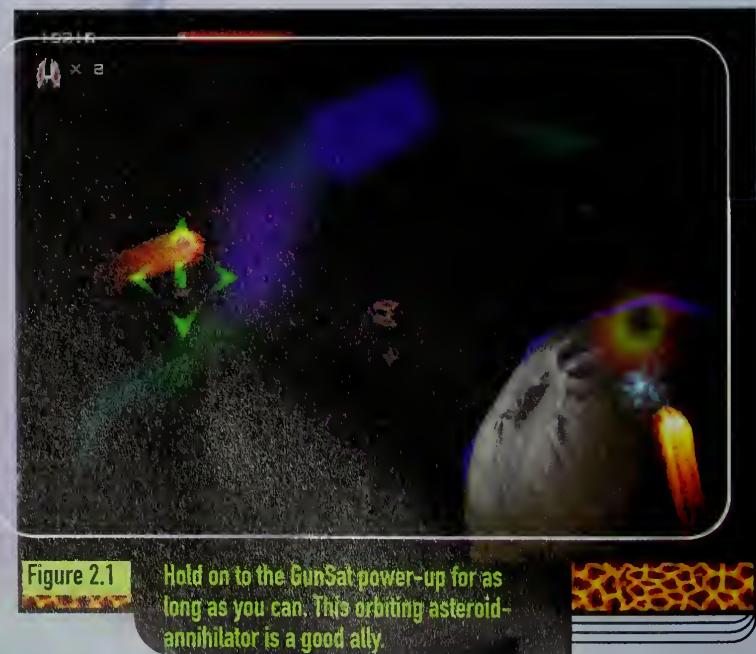


Figure 2.1

Hold on to the GunSat power-up for as long as you can. This orbiting asteroid-annihilator is a good ally.

regenerate quickly; your orbiting pal's added fire-power will help you destroy even the smallest crystals. If you grab a GunStat in this zone, try to use all the charges before grabbing a different weapon. The GunStat is arguably the most powerful Wildcard weapon in Sigma Delta—even more powerful than the Armageddon. It can assist you through several levels of asteroid destruction. In contrast, the Armageddon only has one charge...use it once and it's gone.

Mines



 COLOR: Red

 APPEARS IN ZONE: Sigma Delta

 CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 5

With five per power-up, mines can knock out a region of asteroids faster than two or three standard ships. The R&D team has programmed mines to detonate only if it impacts against an asteroid or enemy spacecraft: in other words, don't worry about tripping your own mine.

Examine an asteroid's trajectory and lay down a few mines in its path. A full complement of mines can

TEST PILOT 21-D: "If nothing triggers them, the mines will detonate automatically after a few seconds, so always place mines in an asteroid's path or use them for defense. A mine that detonates near nothing is wasted."

TIP

take out a large asteroid—even a crystal asteroid—completely. Mines also provide an effective defense: Rotate your ship as you lay down a string of mines. Now you're temporarily protected within an explosive wall! Use this technique in emergencies, when asteroids approach from all sides.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Rapier ship already includes a supply of mines on board, though they can only be used one at a time.

Armageddon



 COLOR: Purple

 APPEARS IN ZONE: Sigma Delta

 CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 1

Armageddon is a mass asteroid killer. Don't blow your Armageddon weapon around only a few asteroids. After you secure the technology, fly into a cluster of space rocks, push the Wildcard button, and let

TEST PILOT 119-F: "Using the Armageddon completely drains laser power. Standard laser is nonfunctional for a few moments after Armageddon deployment."

WARNING

the Armageddon device take over. Your ship will spin rapidly, unleashing laser bolt after laser bolt at nearby space rocks. Some pilots reserve the Armageddon for

defense; others take the fight to the asteroids, so they can head into the next region.

Asteroids' secret ship, the Excalibur, includes an onboard Armageddon device. Hold down the fire button for four seconds and then release to activate.

Plasma Sword



◆ COLOR: Red

◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Black Hole

◆ CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 3

Astro-Mining engineers have found a way to turn your ship's standard thrust into a powerful weapon by dumping volatile plasma out the exhaust (see Figure 2.2). Your ship won't move any

faster, but you can quickly destroy chunks of asteroids by firing this Plasma Sword into them.

Test pilots recommend two ways of using the Plasma Sword. First, activate it as you would the mines in Sigma Delta: that is, station your ship in an asteroid's trajectory and fire the Plasma Sword into the oncoming rock. Second, fly into a cluster of asteroids and rotate your ship quickly as you fire the Plasma Sword. The quick rotation combined with the sword's destructive power should eliminate all rocks within range.

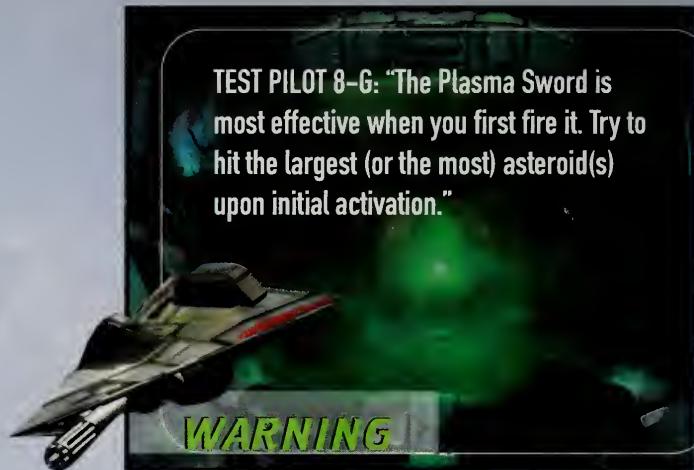


Figure 2.2 Fire the Plasma Sword straight into a cluster of asteroids.

Homing Missiles



 COLOR: Light Blue

 APPEARS IN ZONE: Black Hole

 CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 6

When a region is particularly cluttered, staying in one place can be your best strategy. Engineers developed the homing missile to allow pilots to attack asteroids and craft from a distance. Using special tracking systems, the homing missile locks onto the nearest asteroid, space debris, or enemy craft and pulverizes it.

Although they have powerful tracking systems, the missiles are most effective when shot directly at a target. If the homing missile must travel an odd flight path, you could be ambushed by enemy craft or blind-sided by a hurtling space rock before the missile strikes its target.

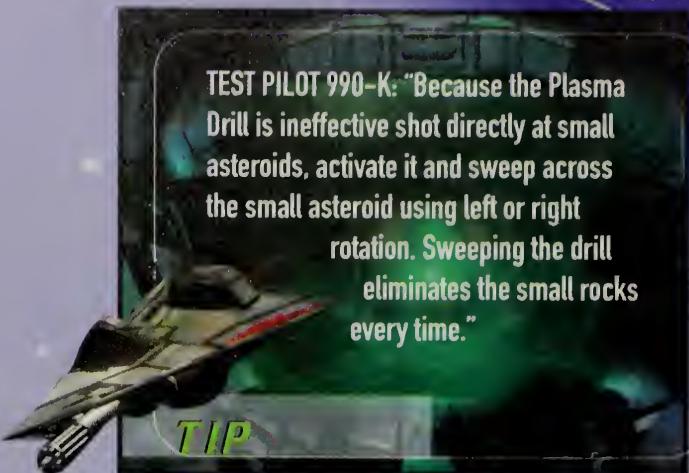
Plasma Drill



 COLOR: Light Blue

 APPEARS IN ZONE: Black Hole

 CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 3

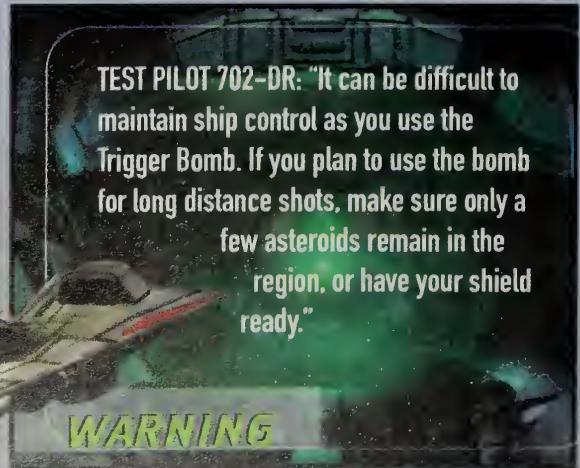


TEST PILOT 990-K: "Because the Plasma Drill is ineffective shot directly at small asteroids, activate it and sweep across the small asteroid using left or right rotation. Sweeping the drill eliminates the small rocks every time."

TIP

Typically used for deep-core drilling, R&D has modified the Plasma Drill to allow our spacecraft to outfit it. The drill consumes a massive amount of power and is active for only an instant. Aim carefully, pointing your craft directly at a target asteroid or enemy craft, before activating the drill.

Trigger Bombs



TEST PILOT 702-DR: "It can be difficult to maintain ship control as you use the Trigger Bomb. If you plan to use the bomb for long distance shots, make sure only a few asteroids remain in the region, or have your shield ready."

WARNING



COLOR: Dark Blue



APPEARS IN ZONE: Sun



CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 5

The Trigger Bomb is a welcome addition to any pilot's arsenal. When you activate it, the Trigger Bomb, packed with heavy explosives, releases from the ship and follows the ship's last trajectory. Continue holding down the Wildcard button to keep it moving toward its target. Release the button to detonate the bomb, or let it explode on its own when it reaches a target.

Don't hesitate to detonate a Trigger Bomb near your ship: they can't hurt Astro-Mining spacecraft. These bombs can be powerful defensive weapons (see Figure 2.3).



Ramming Shield



COLOR: Red



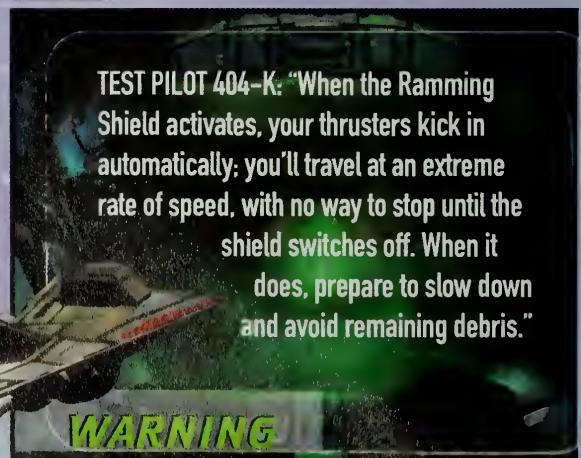
APPEARS IN ZONE: Sun, Worm



CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 2

Your ship's shield protects you from collisions, but the object it collides with remains unaffected. The Ramming Shield plugs into your ship's systems to upgrade your shield—exponentially!—and allow you to ram objects at will. Your ship remains protected but the colliding object is incinerated. Because it consumes so much power, the Ramming Shield lasts a only few seconds.

This weapon appears in two zones, Sun and Worm, and is an essential grab. Ramming a region's asteroids eliminates them quickly and allows you to move on to the next area. Pick up the Ramming Shield whenever you can and line up several targets before you



activate it. Because of its massive power drain, you can't use laser fire for a few moments after the shield switches off.

Smartbomb



- ◆ COLOR OF POWER-UP: Dark Blue
- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Sun
- ◆ CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 2

Nothing blows apart asteroids quite like a big bomb. The Smartbomb creates a massive explosion when you deploy it. A circular shockwave expands from the detonation point and destroys everything in its path. (Our engineers programmed the Smartbomb to exclude Astro-Mining ships from this effect.)

Don't waste the big bomb against a few chunks of space rock. Wait until you come to a cluster of asteroids and release the bomb so the shockwave penetrates them all. The Smartbomb is especially effective against the Sun zone's Ancient Energy asteroids, which regenerate over time: releasing the Smartbomb near one destroys it completely.

Laser

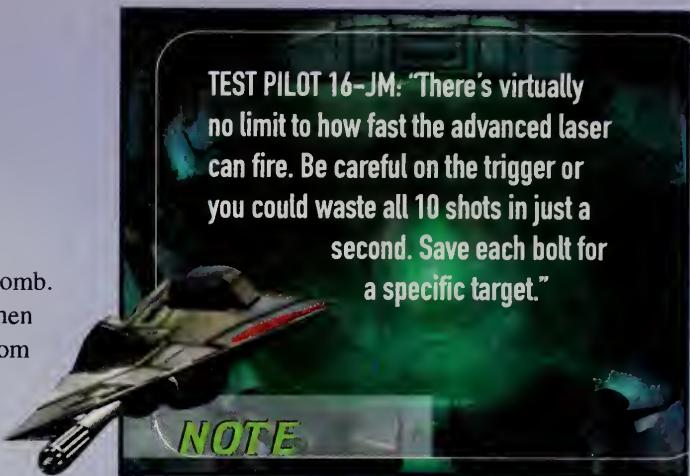


◆ COLOR: Light Blue

◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Sun

◆ CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 10

More powerful than your ship's standard laser, this confined power beam can penetrate virtually any armor or rock in a single shot. The upgrade allows for 10 shots: save most of them for enemy craft or large asteroids. The advanced laser beam is narrow, so hitting smaller asteroids can be a real challenge. You must use the Wildcard button to fire the advanced laser.



Wideshot



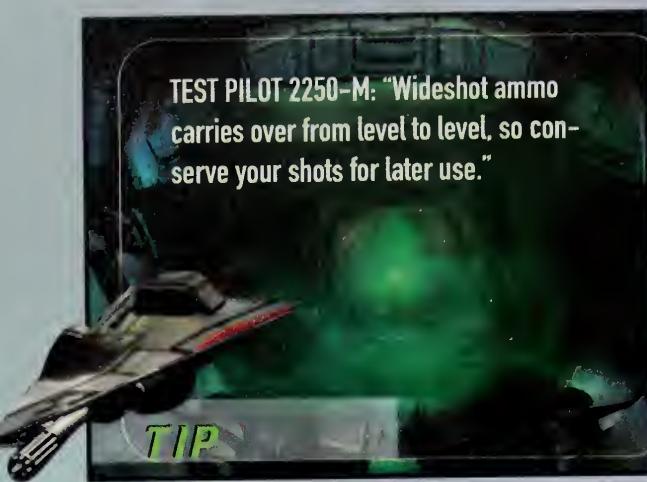
◆ COLOR OF POWER-UP: Green

◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Worm

◆ CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 50

One of our most powerful new technologies, the Wideshot is also one of the rarest. The Wideshot

releases three photons simultaneously with each press of the regular laser button. With an ammo limit of 50, you can fire 150 bolts fairly quickly.



As the photons extend from your ship, they broaden. An easy way to eliminate asteroids and alien egg asteroids is to move in close and tear it to pieces with the Wideshot. Your three photons for every press of the Fire button will disintegrate an asteroid in nanoseconds.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Longsword vessel includes a limited Wideshot cannon. Hold down the fire button for four seconds to fire one bolt of Wideshot.

Robo Wall



- ◆ COLOR OF POWER-UP: Light Blue
- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Worm
- ◆ CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 5

Useful both offensively and defensively, the Robo Wall Wildcard lets you drop mechanical walls near your craft that adjust to your ship's orientation. The Robo Wall can sustain a few hits before it evaporates.

Drop a few walls in the path of an oncoming asteroid. Or surround yourself with Robo Walls and assume a defensive posture, firing at asteroids from a distance with impunity (see Figure 2.4).

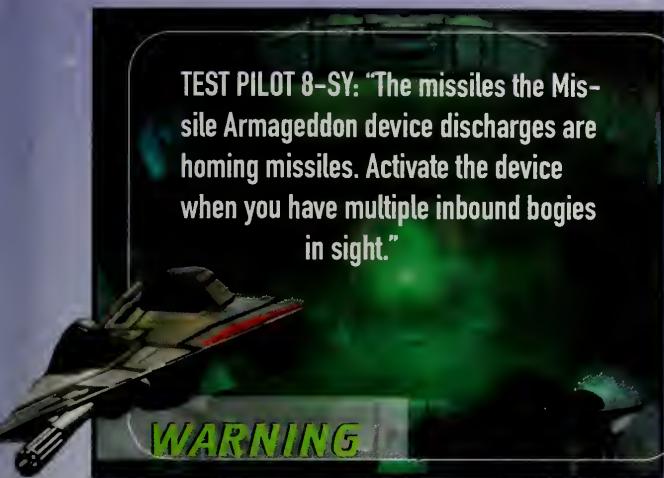
Missile Armageddon



- ◆ COLOR OF POWER-UP: Purple
- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Save the Earth, The Crystal Boss
- ◆ CHARGES PER POWER-UP: 1



With all other Wildcard weapons deployed out into the asteroid-filled regions of space, the Missile Armageddon is the only weapon available if the aliens launch an attack on Earth. Much like the standard Armageddon, this missile variant spins your ship rapidly while firing dozens of plasma missiles. As with its counterpart, fly into a cluster of asteroids or enemies before you activate it. If you use the Missile Armageddon when only a few chunks are around, you'll waste it.



Enemies

As if the asteroids weren't trouble enough, an occasional enemy craft can enter a zone and pound your ship into metallic slivers. This section provides a detailed breakdown of all the enemy craft.

Pay special attention to data on enemy speed, aggressiveness, and armor strength, and memorize their patterns. Get to know your enemy, using any and every advantage to survive their onslaughts.



Standard Saucer



- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Sigma Delta
- ◆ SPEED: Slow
- ◆ AGGRESSIVENESS: Low
- ◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: Low

The extremely bulky Standard Saucer should be a cinch to nail with your standard laser. With its inaccurate targeting system, slow movement, and low aggressiveness, the Standard Saucer is a pushover. They hang out in the Sigma Delta zone. If you see one approaching, point your ship toward it and fire. The Standard Saucer is so large, one shot is sure to hit its target.

Super Saucer

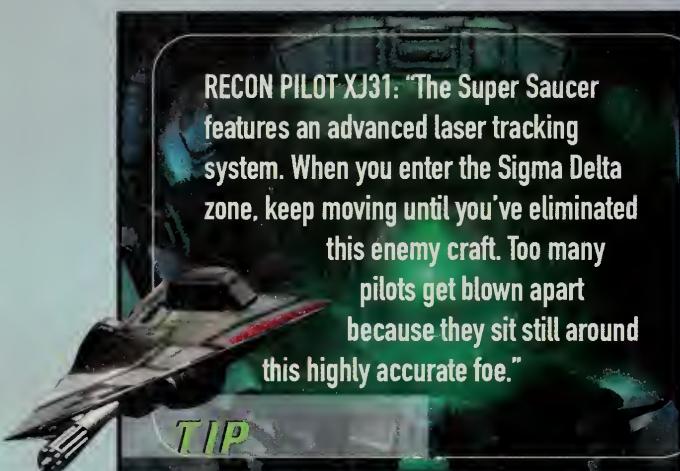


- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Sigma Delta
- ◆ SPEED: Medium

◆ AGGRESSION: High

◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: High

Stay on high alert when a Super Saucer enters Sigma Delta: they're called Super Saucers for a reason! These highly accurate alien craft boast extra armor and are quicker than their larger counterparts. Super Saucers can withstand three or four shots from your standard laser, so it's wise to use a Wildcard weapon, such as the Armageddon device, against them.



Asteroid Tug



◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Sigma Delta

◆ SPEED: Slow

◆ AGGRESSION: Extremely Low

◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: Extreme

The Tug has no offensive weapons, but it causes trouble for Astro-Mining pilots by capturing the last remaining small asteroid on a level. Don't attack the Tug unless it carries an asteroid in tow. Without cargo, the Asteroid Tug has an impenetrable shield. After it captures an asteroid, attack the Tug from the front. When the Tug is destroyed, it releases the asteroid. Knock out the asteroid to clear the level.

Hex

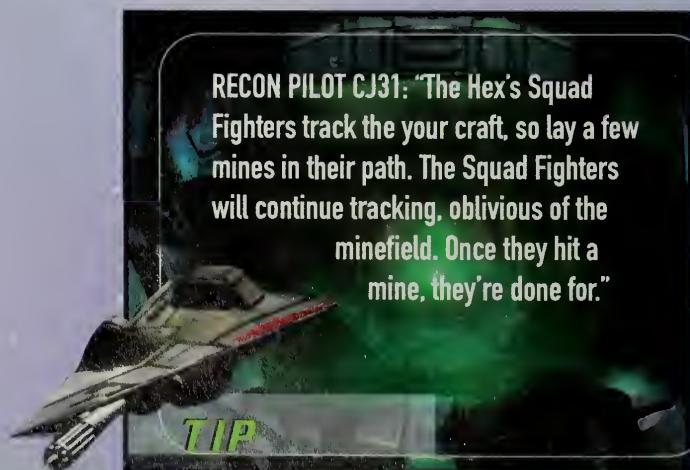


◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Sigma Delta

◆ SPEED: Medium

◆ AGGRESSION: Medium

◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: Moderate



When struck, the Hex breaks into two Battle Stations of equal size. When these Battle Stations are struck, they, in turn, split into Squad Fighters—the most dangerous part of the Hex craft. Squad Fighters will home in on a Astro-Mining ship and track it until either the Fighter or its target is destroyed. Wildcard weapons are indispensable for succeeding against the Hex craft, particularly the GunSat and Armageddon.

Nuke Driver



- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Black Hole
- ◆ SPEED: Very Slow
- ◆ AGGRESSIVENESS: Low
- ◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: Moderate

The Nuke Driver moves and fires slowly. The ship is nuclear powered, so its exhaust lingers behind for several seconds as the Nuke Driver travels. Destroy the Nuke Driver from a distance and stay away from the harmful exhaust (see Figure 2.5). If you must get past the exhaust residue, shoot it with your standard laser; a few shots and the lingering exhaust will disappear.

Vulturoid



- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Black Hole
- ◆ SPEED: Medium
- ◆ AGGRESSIVENESS: Varies
- ◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: Moderate

What a coward this guy is. The Vulturoid only attacks your vessel from the rear. Though quick and equipped with a somewhat powerful laser weapon, the Vulturoid becomes timid once you direct your own firepower at it.



RECON PILOT KR23: "When you spot a Vulturoid in the Black Hole zone, head straight at him. When it's turned away from you, it can't fire. If a direct attack isn't possible, launch a few homing missiles in his direction."

TIP

Kamikaze



- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Black Hole
- ◆ SPEED: Extreme
- ◆ AGGRESSIVENESS: Extreme
- ◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: Low

The Black Hole worries many pilots in this zone, but most fret more about Kamikaze enemy craft. Usually hiding just offscreen, the Kamikaze seeks an opportunity, blasts into the region, and heads straight at the Astro-Mining ship. Lacking offensive and defensive weaponry, the Kamikaze's goal is to bust through your hull itself, destroying you both.

RECON PILOT OR89: "Don't mess around with the Kamikaze. Avoiding the Kamikaze with your thrusters may send you spinning into the region's Black Hole. Instead, turn directly toward the Kamikaze and fire your laser weapon repeatedly. The Kamikaze can take only one hit."

TIP

Fuel Transport



- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Sun
- ◆ SPEED: Slow
- ◆ AGGRESSIVENESS: Medium
- ◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: High

Although they're slow and only moderately aggressive, the Sun zone's Fuel Transports are covered with strong

RECON PILOT 11-XZ: "When destroyed, Fuel Transports leave behind flaming fuel that can ignite an Astro-Mining vessel if it makes contact. Attack the transport from a long distance to avoid the fuel."

WARNING

armor and can take several shots to the cockpit before they go down. Dealing with them can be tricky, especially given the region's many asteroids. The Ramming Shield works wonders against Fuel Transports. Pick one up in the Sun zone, activate it, and barge into the transport.

Repulser Beam



- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Sun, Worm
- ◆ SPEED: Slow
- ◆ AGGRESSIVENESS: Medium
- ◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: Moderate

Like the Kamikaze, Repulser Beam ships carry no weapons. Rather, they're outfitted with reverse tractor beams. Fly your ship too close and the beams will repel you in a random direction (see Figure 2.6).



Figure 2.6

Approaching the Repulser Beam could spell doom for your little ship.

RECON PILOT 123A: "These guys like to travel in packs. I've seen two or even three enter a region at once. Handling one is easy, but if a pack enters the region, use a Wildcard weapon, such as a Smartbomb or Wideshot."

WARNING

Don't let them get too close; activate a Wildcard weapon against them if your ship passes near their front end.

Living Turret Cruiser



- ◆ APPEARS IN ZONE: Worm
- ◆ SPEED: Very Slow
- ◆ AGGRESSIVENESS: High
- ◆ ARMOR STRENGTH: Moderate

Slow, yet very accurate, the Living Turret Cruiser lives in the Worm zone. With only moderate armor and an inability to avoid your shots, the cruiser shouldn't trouble you significantly.

RECON PILOT LSR5: "The Living Turret Cruiser fires from the front only. Move your ship around its side; the cruiser moves so slowly you can get off several shots quickly before its targeting system can compensate."

TIP

RECON PILOT 000Z: "Regenerators aren't a match for the power of the Wideshot. Aim this awesome laser upgrade at the Regenerator and let loose. The Wideshot's power makes quick work of the bladed enemy."

TIP

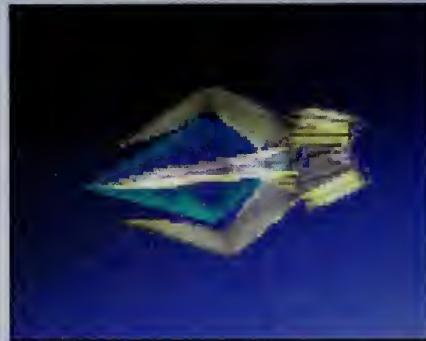
Regenerator



- APPEARS IN ZONE: Worm
- SPEED: Very High
- AGGRESSIVENESS: High
- ARMOR STRENGTH: High (regenerates)

Spinning like a ninja throwing star, the Regenerator attacks like a Kamikaze—although, thankfully, far more slowly. The Regenerator is stronger than the Kamikaze and can withstand multiple shots before going down. Each time it's struck, the Regenerator loses a blade." Don't ignore the Regenerator after pelting it several times: the blades will soon regenerate and restore the full ship!

Crystal Ice Ship



- APPEARS IN ZONE: Save the Earth
- SPEED: Slow
- AGGRESSIVENESS: Medium
- ARMOR STRENGTH: Moderate

Radar has spotted this high-level alien craft hovering around Earth. Although it's slow, the Crystal Ice ship can paralyze opposing craft for a few seconds. Allowing a crystal ship to hang around the region for any length of time is asking for trouble. When you spot one, eliminate it immediately. The price you'll pay for paralysis will be high—especially if you're defending Earth from attack (see Figure 2.7).



AGGRESSIVENESS

High



ARMOR STRENGTH:

Off the scale

The alien mothership is the most feared craft in the known universe. It's constructed of high-density crystal, and Astro-Mining's standard laser barely penetrates its surface. But our recon pilots have discovered a weakness: We believe the orange star at its crystal core powers the massive craft. If you can concentrate an attack on that star, you can defeat the alien mothership.



Figure 2.7

Avoid the Crystal Ice plasma bolt. It's difficult to save the Earth when you're paralyzed within a crystal cage.

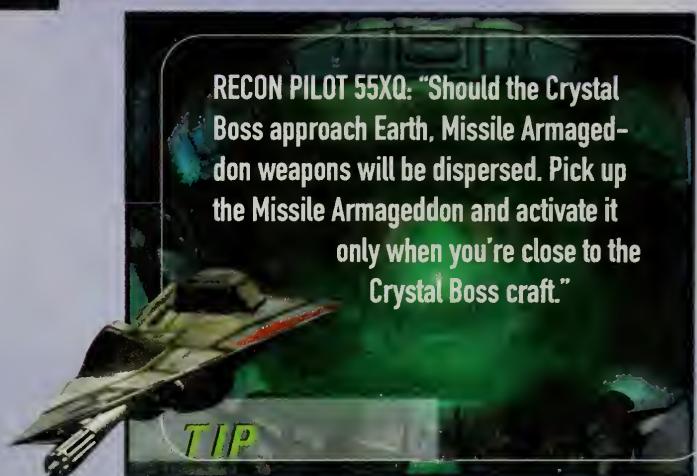
Crystal Boss



APPEARS IN ZONE: Save the Earth, The Crystal Boss



SPEED: Slow



RECON PILOT 55XQ: "Should the Crystal Boss approach Earth, Missile Armageddon weapons will be dispersed. Pick up the Missile Armageddon and activate it only when you're close to the Crystal Boss craft."

TIP

Single-Player Zone Strategies

It's time to head out into the vast regions of space and test your skills across five zones and dozens of levels. To succeed in Asteroids, you'll need to keep every facet of the game in mind: Should I hyperspace or perform a flip, stick with Armageddon or grab that Gun Satellite? Every second counts. With the following tips in hand, you'll quickly turn asteroids, meteors, and flying saucers into space dust and smoke.

General Strategies

Asteroids is separated into five zones with 15 levels each. Every zone has its own dangers, power-ups, and enemies. As you progress through a zone, you encounter more and more space debris and increasingly challenging alien craft.

In the first four zones, your task is straightforward: clear the region of asteroids and space debris. In the fifth zone, however, you must defend Earth from inbound asteroids. Don't worry about destroying every last bit; just make sure they don't strike your home



planet. After you clear all zones of asteroids, you'll face the toughest challenge yet—the alien boss, a giant crystal ship.

Although each zone features items and obstacles specific to that area, some strategies are effective on every level. Chapter 1 covered ways to get the most from your ship's features. Chapter 2 provided tactics for using power-ups and Wildcard weapons, and for dealing with enemies. This chapter explores ways to approach the missions themselves—and your primary foes, the asteroids.

Playing Center Field

New players inevitably keep their ships planted in the center of the playing field; they're scared to death to hit that Thruster button. Some might call this cowardly, but it's actually a sound tactic. The thruster can be dangerous. Nothing has killed off more *Asteroids* veterans than losing control of a craft and careening into a huge chunk of rock.

At the beginning of a new level, stay in the middle (see Figure 3.1). Chess experts say you shouldn't bring your Queen out too early. In *Asteroids*, you shouldn't fly your ship out too early, either.

From the screen's center, it's easy to spot asteroids incoming from all positions. If you're close to an

edge, you might miss a hurtling rock screaming across from the other side, wrapping around the space-time continuum to smack you right in the fuselage. Remain in the center and knock down some of the larger asteroids. Then, as things become more hectic, use your thruster to venture out and dodge the rocks. Spotting the first power-up is a good cue to begin your motion around the screen.

Don't Overstay Your Welcome

Classic *Asteroids* players often stuck around at the end of a level, leaving one small asteroid intact so they could take out wave after wave of saucers. It's

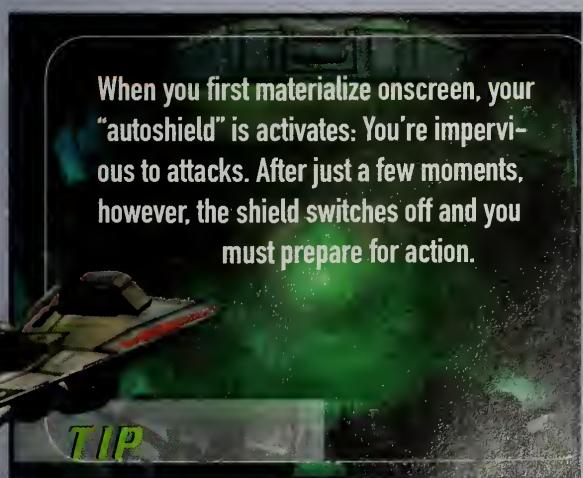
tempting to apply this approach to the new game and collect extra points killing flying saucers or waiting for the next power-up—but don't. Too many things can kill you. Many flying saucers, for instance, are extremely tricky. If you get cocky and expect the saucers to just lie down, count on meeting an early death.

Furthermore, many zones include new dangers that make waiting around even riskier. For example, the frequent solar flares and flaming meteors in the Sun zone make sticking around extremely hazardous to your health. If you're trying to pump up your score to get a new free ship, it's wiser to continue on to the next level, where fresh targets await. If you stick around waiting for saucers, you have a greater chance of being killed than scoring lots of points.



Figure 3.1

Your friends might make fun of you for sticking to the middle, but you'll have the higher score.

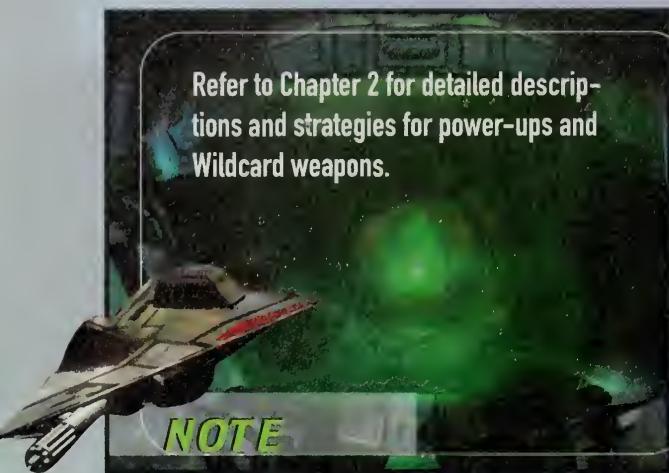


When you first materialize onscreen, your "autoship" is activated. You're impervious to attacks. After just a few moments, however, the shield switches off and you must prepare for action.

TIP

Snag the Prizes!

Power-ups and Wildcard weapons show up in many varieties. Every power-up and weapon in *Asteroids* is useful and many will mean the difference between completing the level and eating space rock. But even acquiring Wildcard weapons requires you to use



tactics. Once you snag a weapon, think twice before heading after another. The instant you grab the new weapon, the old one disappears from your arsenal. For instance, if you grab the Gun Satellite, which has four charges, use most of it up before downgrading to a weapon that's not as powerful, even if it's an Armageddon. As mentioned back in Chapter 1, if you select the Hardcore difficulty level, no Wildcard weapons are available.

Play the Angles

In the *Asteroids* universe, when a chunk of space rock exits one side of the screen, it appears on the opposite side. Not only that, but it continues at the same trajectory. Use this to your advantage. Note when an asteroid heads off one side of the screen. Turn your ship toward the opposite side and lay down a stream of laser fire; lead the oncoming asteroid at the angle at which it exited the other side (see Figure 3.2).

Using this tactic means you needn't approach every single asteroid to destroy it. Even after you've chased one off the side of the screen, just flip your ship, get a tad closer and fire at the opposite side; in a microsecond the asteroid will appear there and probably will be destroyed.

Edges and Corners

Although you should stick to the center for as long as you can, eventually you must venture out near the edges and corners. But that doesn't mean you're sure to be killed. The edges and corners can be very useful and boast many tactics of their own.

For starters, all the power-ups appear from the sides of the screen. The closer you are to the edges, the closer you are to the power-ups. Also, the corners provide an excellent vantage over the rest of the screen. Because laser shots go out one side of the screen and reappear on the opposite side, use the edge or corner position to attack asteroids on the opposite side of the level. Just remember, keep an eye on asteroids and debris wrapping around the screen; the corner doesn't give you much room to react if an asteroid suddenly appears beside you.



Scoring

Some players just want to make it through the game; others, are fighting for the highest score. With that in mind, below is the complete list of objects in *Asteroids* and how much each is worth. Typically, the more difficult the object is to destroy, the more points you'll get. Check the following table and keep it in mind when you're deciding which object you go after first and struggling to get that next free ship.

Object	Points
X-Large Asteroid	10
Large Asteroid	20
Medium Asteroid	50
Crystal Asteroid	50
Space Debris	50
Alien Worm	50
Small Asteroid	100
Alien Egg Asteroid	100
Asteroid Tug	100
Crystal Ice Ship	100
Standard Saucer	200
Nuke Drivers	200
Living Turret Cruiser	200
Repulser Beam Ship	200
Mined Asteroid	300
Ancient Asteroid	400
Vulturoid	400
Kamikaze Ship	600
Fuel Transport Ship	600
Super Saucer	1000
Regenerator Ship	1000
Hex Ship	1200

Sigma Delta Zone

The spatial distortion leaves you in a new region of space called Sigma Delta. Asteroids clutter the area. Your orders are to clear the belt of asteroids and make interstellar travel safe again. Use extra caution when dealing with the crystal asteroids. If you don't take care of the smaller chunks quickly, they could regenerate into their original size. Experimental technology will be dropped in the area to assist you.

Growing Crystals: Not Cool

Regular asteroids are tough enough, but can you imagine asteroids that regenerate from tiny rocks back into huge boulders? The crystal asteroids in this region of space will torment you all throughout the Sigma Delta zone.

Say you have the level nearly beaten. All you have on the screen are three tiny crystal asteroid pebbles. Before you can blink, you could have three huge crystal asteroids—and after you shoot these big crystal asteroids a few times, you'll have nine tiny crystal asteroid pebbles. The problem gets worse before it gets better. But there's a smart way to deal with these irksome space rocks.

First, leave all the large crystal asteroids for last. If the level contains regular, rock-style asteroids, take them out first. Remove everything from the level except for the crystals. Then, when you do take on the crystal asteroids, don't attack every big boulder at once (Figure 3.3). Don't allow the screen to become cluttered with tiny rocks; if you do, loads of huge crystals will appear before you know it. Knock out all the small ones before you resume blowing apart the larger ones.



Figure 3.3

Remove those big crystal asteroids one at a time.

Stay still when you try to eliminate the smaller portions of the crystal asteroids. Scooting all around the map just makes lining up your shots more difficult.

TIP

The Mined Asteroid

The mined asteroid is another mass of space debris you must deal with in Sigma Delta. Although you won't have to worry about regeneration, the mined asteroid presents its own problems. To reach the next level, you must remove the mined asteroid. The tricky part is that a cage embedded with high-powered explosives surrounds the mined asteroid. Don't get too close when the mined asteroid explodes. A shockwave spreads out from all sides; if you're in that mess, you're done for.

Destroy the mined asteroids from far, far away. Protect yourself on the other side of the screen. The crystal asteroids are tough enough; you don't want residue from an explosion blowing your ship apart.

Fun with Weapons

Two of the game's most enjoyable power-ups appear in Sigma Delta—Gun Satellites and mines. Dealing with the ever-expanding crystal asteroid force becomes much easier with a stash of mines or GunSats in your power-up belt.

Cure the crystal blues with a handy minefield. Fly your ship near a huge crystal asteroid and lay a minefield directly in its path. More often than not, the line of mines will reduce the

huge crystal to tiny rocks; occasionally, the mines will eliminate the whole crystal mass altogether. After laying the minefield, just clean up what's left of a particular rock and move on to the next one.

Don't leave home without your Gun Satellite. This sharpshootin' buddy takes out asteroids faster than Bruce Willis in *Armageddon*. Like the mines, the Gun Satellite is the perfect tool against both large and small crystals. A set of four comes with every Gun Satellite power-up. Try to use all the charges (the stash even carries over to the next level).

Black Hole Zone

Crucial cargo ships move through this sector. A black hole lies in this area and sucks in anything that gets too close—including you! You must clear the region of asteroids and debris so the cargo ships can pass through unharmed. Be on the lookout for indestructible asteroids that also move through this region.

Black Holes Suck!

Remember everything you learned about sticking to the center of the screen? Well, forget it. In the Black Hole zone, a nasty looking black hole spins in the center, glowing fiercely as it tries to suck your little craft inside (see Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4

Astronomers say black holes are bad news.
You'll probably agree.

You can avoid the black hole's pressure effects by flying over its center at high speed. If at all possible, don't risk it: you're safer staying away.

TIP

Getting around the screen effectively is the greatest challenge presented by the ominous black hole. The hole itself isn't the only problem. If you get close, your ship will slide toward the center. Move too close and your ship will implode from the pressure. In other words: don't even think about getting near this thing.

Stay around the edges of the screen, away from any portion of the black hole. Don't use the thruster excessively—you're liable to fly straight into this fatal space phenomenon accidentally. If your ship starts sliding toward the hole, use your thruster gently to make a quick getaway. Or, if you're brave, you can punch hyperspace and pray your ship emerges in a safe area of the screen.

The Asteroid That Won't Budge

Gray, indestructible asteroids float around many of levels in the Black Hole zone levels. There's nothing you can do about these beasts. That's why they're called indestructible. Don't get trapped by these huge hunks of space rock. When you spot one, move to the other side and contend with the asteroids over there. Staying too close is flirting with disaster. Pilots who thought they could tame these monsters have found themselves splattered on the side of an asteroid or spinning out of control into the black hole (see Figure 3.5).

Fun with Weapons

Whenever you spot the Plasma Sword power-up in the Black Hole zone, grab it! With three uses per power-up, the Plasma Sword effectively rids any level of space debris. When you deploy it, your tail-end morphs into an asteroid-whuppin' tool. Save the Plasma Sword until you're at the center of a few chunks of space rock; then activate the power-up, spin rapidly, and turn the rocks to dust.

Grabbing the Homing Missiles assures success in this zone. You don't want to move much around the dangerous black hole, and the Homing Missiles are perfectly suited to taking out rocks from a distance. Keep the ship safely back from the black hole and just fire and forget.

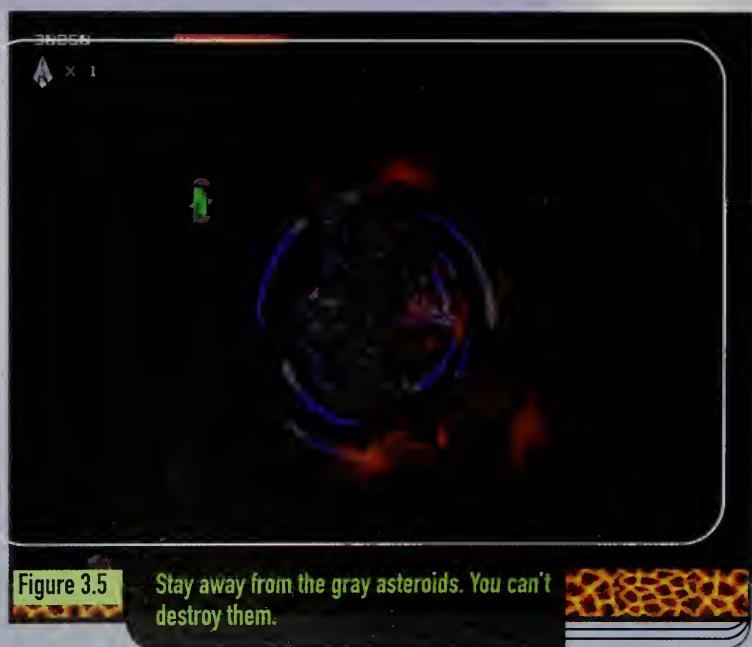


Figure 3.5

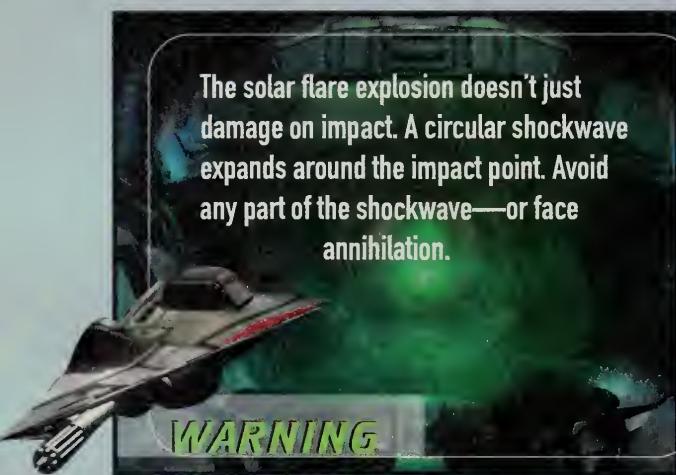
Stay away from the gray asteroids. You can't destroy them.

Sun Zone

Burning hydrogen fills this area of space. Stay away from the sun. Its solar flares are extremely dangerous. Destroy all asteroids and comets in the area; the Poseidon Corporation wants to construct a resort here. Beware of the Ancient Energy asteroid, which can absorb your energy and fire back at you.

The Ring of Fire

Like the Black Hole zone, the Sun zone features an area of the screen that's extremely hazardous to your little ship. Solar flares shoot from the sun's surface in the lower-right corner, and explodes on the upper-left screen area. Beware of that impact area. Although you can venture up there from time to time, be wary of solar flares. After the sun unleashes a flare, you should have a few moments to make a getaway. If you remain in the area, though, the flare's fiery explosion will burn your ship to a crisp. Use the hyperspace or thruster to make a quick getaway.



Ancient Energy Asteroids

Remember those blue crystal asteroids from Sigma Delta? Well, they have a big brother. A very *old* big brother. A very old, *mean* big brother. "Ancient Energy asteroids," fiery orange crystals that not only regenerate but absorb laser shots, occupy this region and they use the energy they absorb to fire a plasma shot back at you (see Figure 3.6).

Let's start with regeneration issue. As with the blue crystal rocks, never leave a small energy asteroid scattered on the level or, before you know it, the full-sized energy asteroid will be back. Either leave the energy asteroid for last or concentrate on eliminating the entire ancient asteroid before going any further.

Don't sit still after filling an energy asteroid full of laser lead. The energy it absorbs heads straight back at *you*. Knock it down with a few shots; then ease on your thruster to dodge the oncoming flaming bolt. At this point the energy asteroid should be reduced to a tiny pebble. Take it out quickly: the energy asteroid regenerates fast.

Uninvited Fireball Comets

At the higher levels of the Sun zone, fireball comets shoot from the sun. Even after you've nearly cleared the level of asteroids, a new comet appears, presenting a whole new problem. Once hit, the comet explodes into two tiny asteroids. You can't complete the level without knocking out all the space rocks, so this constant stream of comets can be annoying.

Take on the comets as they come. As the end of the level approaches, focus on the comet when it launches from the sun. Knock it out, and the two smaller asteroids it breaks into. The level ends when the screen is clear of debris.



Figure 3.6

Ancient Energy asteroids don't play nice.

Fun with Weapons

There's nothing better than a big bomb to brighten your day. Assisting in your efforts against the burning sun is the Smartbomb power-up. Though you get only two shots per power-up grab, they pack a wallop. Seek the power-up as soon as you spot it. Then, when you're at the center of a space rock cluster, activate the Smartbomb. The resulting explosion should take care of the surrounding asteroids easily (see Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7

Unleash a Smartbomb to knock out asteroid clusters.

Does it bother you that you can't use your ship's shield as a ramming device? No problem. The Sun zone features the Ramming Shield power-up, a protective shell that surrounds your ship and allows you to bust into asteroids without taking damage—and destroy the asteroid in the process. Like the Smartbomb, the Ramming Shield will be an item you seek again and again.

Worm Zone

The military has contracted us to clear this area so they can construct a large outpost. This area lies at the edge of colonized space. Military scans report only small life forms in the area.

However, our probes indicate the presence of large life forms—as well as crystal alien. Is the military covering something up?

The Angry Alien Queen

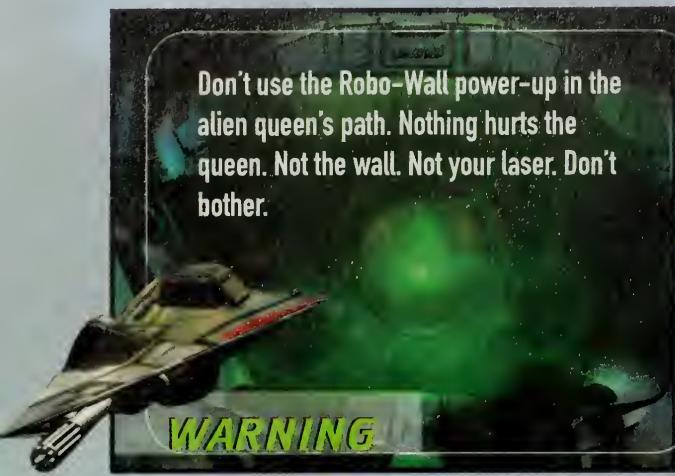
Our probes were correct. A large spaceworm-like thing inhabits this region, and it's not pleased about your invasion. It's the alien queen, and her humble home is the crater in the lower-left area of your screen. At some time during the level, she'll put in an appearance. The Queen is not unlike a long train (see Figure 3.8) and she won't deviate from a fixed path. If you run into any portion of her, your ship will bust apart.

The alien queen slithers through the middle of the screen to the upper right and then around the edges, passing through the middle twice more and eventually heading back to her crater. When she appears, stay just below the crater at the lower left. The queen never moves into this area. Just hang there, destroying nearby asteroids and small worms, until she hides again.



Figure 3.8

The alien queen worm doesn't enjoy company.



Eradicating Space Worms

Unlike the asteroids, which tend to follow a fixed trajectory, space worms slide along any which way. Although they won't turn on a dime or switch directions instantly, their unpredictable movements can cause problems when you try to predict angles from across the screen. Furthermore, they're thinner and harder to hit than asteroids. Occasionally, you must get up close and personal: just stay away from their heads. Move above or below them to avoid being rammed.

At the higher levels of the Worm zone, additional space worms appear from the sides of the screen. The longer you take on the level, the more tiny worms you must deal with. Keep the worm population down as you remove the asteroids. After clearing all the asteroids, eradicate the remaining space worms.

Fun with Weapons

Wideshot. Wideshot. Wideshot. Defeating the alien world rests in the hands of the game's most powerful power-up (see Figure 3.9). Grab this green power-up as soon as you spot it on the screen. Fifty bullets come with each pick-up; don't snag another power-up (unless it's another

Wideshot) until you've drained your laser of every bonus shot. Don't waste them either: the remaining bullets carry over to the next level.

Save the Earth

Emergency transmission: the military's information about the alien zone was false. Although the zone was cleared, the alien population that exists just beyond isn't too happy about it. They've launched a response, sending attack crafts and directing tons of asteroids at Earth.

Ignore the Bottom

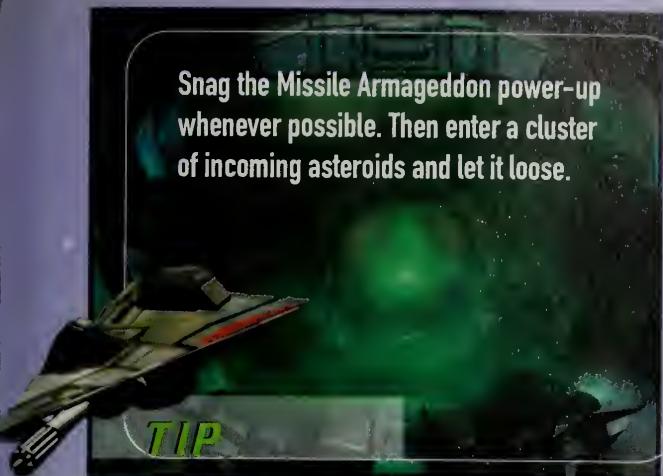
With asteroids bearing down on Earth from the top of the screen, hang close to the bottom or near the top edge of Earth. No asteroids approach from the rear or the sides: they all charge in from the top. Stick close to Earth and remove any asteroids sneaking up to Earth's atmosphere. Don't worry about broken asteroid pieces; the large meteors are the only chunks that threaten your home planet.



Figure 3.9

Grab the Wideshot every time you spot it on the level. Nothing clears asteroids and alien spaceworms quite like it.

At the higher levels of this zone, several satellites orbiting Earth create a barrier between you and the incoming asteroids. Pick a spot just above or below the orbit. Moving through the orbit path continually can be dangerous: inevitably, you'll collide with a satellite.



Out of My Way, Satellite!

The orbiting satellites block your laser shots—quite annoying. By the time the asteroids reach the satellite orbit, they've already entered Earth's atmosphere (see Figure 3.10). If you allow the destructive space rocks to get past the satellites, you'll have a hard time rid- ding the atmosphere of them.

Keep an eye on the satellite positions and the asteroids they'll soon obstruct. Staying above the satellite orbit path is wise, but it gives you less time to deal with the incoming rocks.

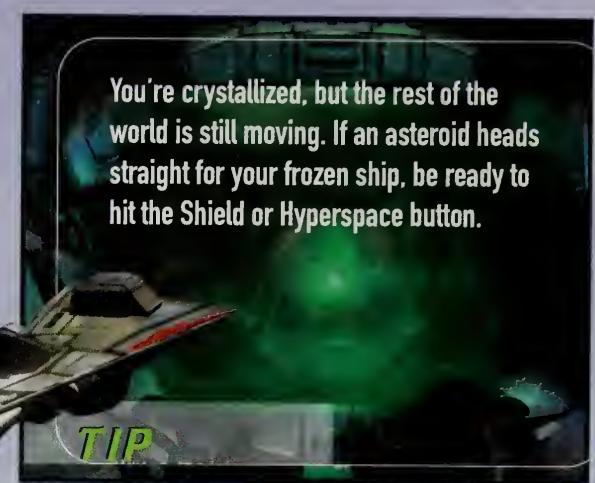


Figure 3.10 Satellites get in the way of saving mankind.

Staying below works, too: you'll have more time to deal with the rocks—but you also must deal with the shot-blocking satellite.

Avoid Crystallization

As if incoming asteroids weren't enough to deal with, a Crystal Ice ship patrols this area. The ship fires a single bolt, which heads straight for your vessel's last position (it typically fires when you're sitting still). The bolt crystallizes your ship on impact, paralyzing it for a few seconds. The asteroids descend on Earth, with you unable to move or fire from within the crys- tal cage (see Figure 3.11).



When you spot the Crystal Ice ship, eliminate it immediately. If that's not an option, keep an eye out for its crys- tal bolt. As the bolt approaches, ease on the thruster to move out of harm's way. Given this level's hectic activity, dodg- ing the crystal bolt can become a night- mare. But the alternative is worse.

You can't get hit too often; every sec- ond you're stuck in that crystal forma- tion is another second the asteroids



Figure 3.11 If you keep getting trapped in that crystal cage, who's gonna save Earth?

have to get closer to Earth, which can only withstand 20 impacts before—well, *lights out*, and you'll have to restart the zone.

The Crystal Boss

You've saved the Earth from a deluge of asteroids, but your job's not quite finished. The alien boss, in the form of a giant crystal, enters the solar system and heads straight for your home planet.

Your last mission in *Asteroids* is two-fold: First, you must complete an extremely difficult stage filled with dozens of asteroids. After you accomplish that, you must confront the crystal alien boss in a head-to-head deathmatch assisted by only one power-up—the Missile

Armageddon.

All bosses have a vulnerable spot, and the crystal alien attacking Earth is no exception. Point your laser toward the orange spinning star at the crystal's core. Striking the boss anywhere inflicts damage, but the orange star is particularly vulnerable. You'll know you're making progress when the crystal morphs to protect its susceptible area. Keep attacking until it's finally destroyed.

Sure, the Crystal Boss is bigger, stronger, more heavily armored than you. But this thing is incredibly slow. Use that to your advantage! The Crystal Boss turns like an eighteen-wheeler. Don't ever let it face you. With its back turned, it doesn't fire or attack. The sluggish Crystal Boss is no match for your agile space fighter. Circle around the slow beast, pelting it with laser fire as you move (see Figure 3.12).

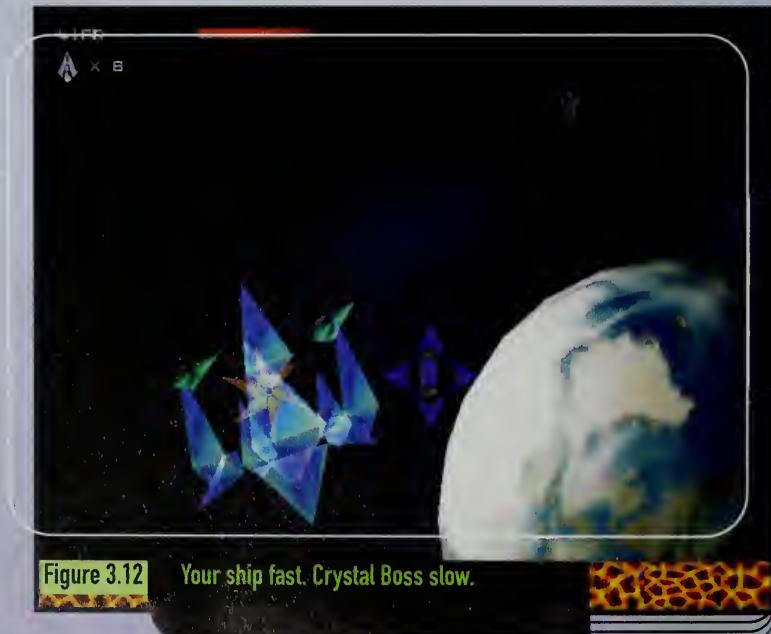


Figure 3.12 Your ship fast. Crystal Boss slow.

In some formations, the Crystal Boss carries nasty laser weapons on its outer shell. The guns themselves can be destroyed; take them out with your laser!

TIP

Another way to confuse the end boss is to stay on the opposite side of the screen. Because the boss always moves toward you to attack, stay on one side of the screen and shoot through to the other side. Then, as the Crystal Boss approaches, head offscreen, appear on the other side, and repeat!



Multiplayer Strategies

It's one thing to go it alone in the cosmos, but when you have company everything changes.

In single-player gaming, the world is your oyster. Every asteroid, every power-up, and every enemy is yours for the taking. In multiplayer, however, you must fight for everything—and it won't be easy.

Multiplayer *Asteroids* drops you and your opponent into a random level in any of the first four zones. After you hyperspace in, it's everyone for themselves. Although you can't shoot one another, there are plenty of other ways to overcome the opposition. What follows is a thorough guide to the many tactics you can employ, and a complete scoring breakdown of multiplayer targets.

Multiplayer Briefing

After Multiplayer has been selected from the main menu, each player chooses a spacecraft for the coming battle (see Figure 4.1). You'll have no idea which zone or level you'll fight



on, so select the ship you're most comfortable piloting. Shield energy is an important consideration. Staying



Figure 4.1

Each player selects a ship and heads into battle.

alive is your first priority, and opponents will do their best to wipe you out: shields can make all the difference. Be sure to also consider the special abilities of each ship. For instance, if you want to drop mines, take the Rapier. On the other hand, the Longsword can cause all kinds of havoc with its Wideshot ability.

After each player selects a craft, the game loads a random zone and the battle commences. The first thing you'll notice is that you can't kill your opponent directly with weapons fire. To kill your opponent in multiplayer *Asteroids*, you must get tricky.

Getting Tricky

The object in multiplayer *Asteroids* is to *outscore* your opponent, and to do that you need a few tricks up your sleeve. Obviously, if you shoot more targets you'll outscore your opposition. But it's not quite that simple. What you really want to do is take out your opponent as often as you can.

So how do you do this when you can't shoot your opposition's spacecraft?

Rubble Trouble

Always keep an eye on your opponent, and on their location in the level. Chances are, they're trying to dodge a few nearby asteroids. And although it's

pretty easy to out-maneuver a big, lumbering asteroid, it's not quite so easy to dodge lots of little ones.

With this in mind, make every attempt to shoot the asteroids near your opponent (see Figure 4.2). If you start breaking up all the big rocks, you'll create a screen of havoc and thus force your opponent to kick in the thrusters, and use precious shield energy.

Be Greedy

If the opposition is busy shooting large asteroids, do your best to clean

up the small chunks left over. Smaller asteroids are worth more points than their larger counterparts, so this way you'll outscore your enemy in the long run.

Power Hungry

It's one thing to clean up small asteroids, but if you let your opponent get all the power-ups, you'll have no hope of winning. The instant a new power-up appears on the screen, forget everything else and go get it. Players that are quick to get the better power-ups will have a huge advantage. Since multiplayer

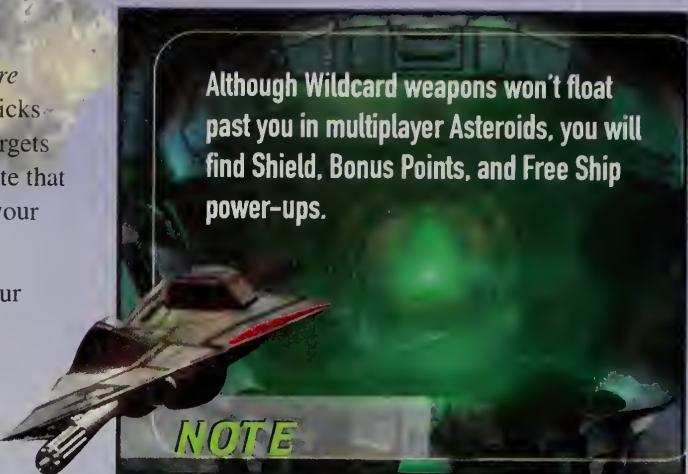


Figure 4.2

Shooting asteroids near your opponent is a great way to take your foe out of the action.

Asteroids is all about having more points than your opponent, a power-up like Bonus Points (1,000 points in multiplayer) can make the difference between chortling victory and shame-faced defeat.

Forget the Old Asteroids

In the original *Asteroids*, you simply blasted away at an ever-increasing number of rocks. In the updated version, asteroids are only one of your concerns. Each zone introduces new hazards such as space debris and the dreaded Black Hole, forcing you to develop new strategies for each. Often, the winner in a multiplayer game is the one who can quickly change their tactics to match the level they're playing.

Move the Debris

When space junk starts filling the screen, try to shoot it towards the center of the level without actually making it explode. If your opponent gets nailed, they'll be unable to re-appear until the debris is cleared, giving you plenty of time to move about the level scoring points.

Zone Strategies

As with the single-player game, each region in multiplayer *Asteroids* requires a distinct tactical approach. What follows is a run-down of the best zone-specific multiplayer strategies.

Sigma Delta Zone

If you're quick on the thrusters and slick on the stick, Sigma Delta gives you ample opportunity to pile on points. Expect the usual mix of asteroids, including crystal and mined (see Figure 4.3).

If you'd like to cause some grief for the opposition, try shooting a mined asteroid when it's close to your opponent. If their ship is within range of the blast, you'll blow them up in the process.

The Longsword is an excellent ship for this zone. Its Wideshot special ability can be used to annoy your opponents by blasting at several nearby asteroids. This usually causes just enough carnage to destroy them in the process.

Black Hole Zone

Black Hole is a challenging multiplayer level. You must not only outshoot your opponent, but do so while avoiding the center of this hungry singularity. Your best tactic here is to stake a claim to one half of the screen and hold it. Don't thrust around if you don't have to; your opponent could make life miserable by blowing up an asteroid and sending the rubble toward you. This would force you to change course—perhaps into the black hole.



Figure 4.3

Hazards are few in Sigma Delta, so you can concentrate more on rock blasting than running away.

Try shooting the rotating space debris towards your opponent's ship. If they're not paying attention, you can send this debris into the side of their ship and destroy them!

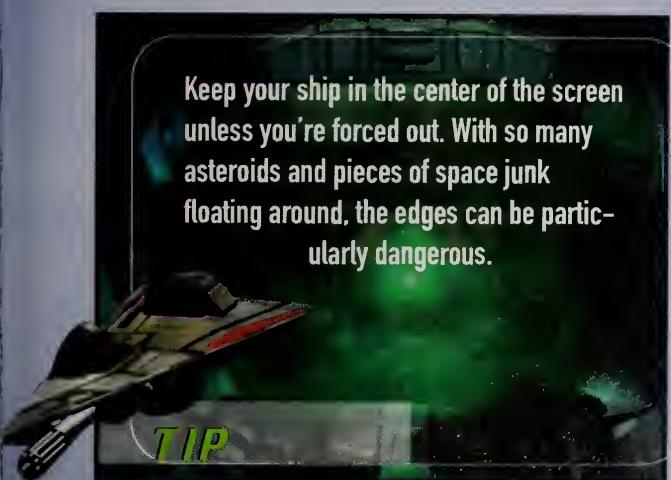
Sun Zone

The Sun zone will throw all sorts of objects at you, including space debris, crystal asteroids, and mined asteroids. Fortunately, you won't have to worry about sun flares in the multiplayer version, making this particular level a shoot-out of the highest order.



Figure 4.4

Players won't have to worry about flares in the multiplayer version of the Sun Zone.



The Rapier's innate ability to drop mines can be put to good use in this zone. The key is to drop your mines near the edge of the screen; when they explode, they'll most likely push some nearby space debris into your opponent. By placing mines near the edge, you'll also make them harder to see.

Worm Zone

The Worm zone will be a lot more manageable in multiplayer. You don't have to worry about the Alien Queen sticking her head out and bothering you. You only have one thing to concern yourself with in this zone, and that's taking out as many asteroids as possible.

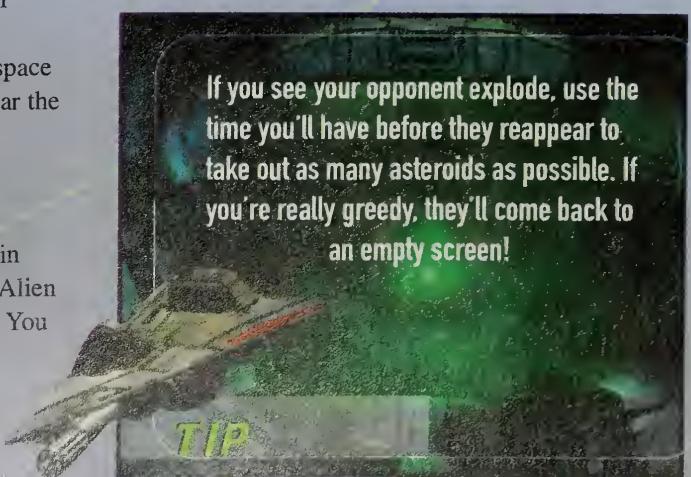
When the screen is thick with crystal asteroids, do you begin to hoard them for yourself. If possible, shoot some debris towards your opponent and keep them occupied while you score the big points.

The Excalibur's ability to deploy Armageddon explosions can make the difference on this frenetic level. With so many objects on the screen at once, a well-timed Armageddon blast can destroy several large targets at once, and, more importantly, cause small asteroids to slam into your opponent.

Point Values

Because the victor of multiplayer *Asteroids* is the player with most points, it'll help to know the point value of asteroids and other targets. Memorize these, and you can focus on knocking out high-value objects instead of wasting your time on shooting chump change.

Object	Points
Large Asteroid	20
Medium Asteroid	50
Crystal Asteroid	50
Space Debris	50
Small Asteroid	100
Mined Asteroid	300
Bonus Point Power-Up	1,000



Cheat Codes, Easter Eggs, and Classic Asteroids

You've completed pilot training, mastered the game's power-ups and Wildcard weapons, and examined zone strategy and tactics. And the asteroids still knock your ship around like a cosmic piñata. If you've given up all hope of defeating the space rocks, flying saucers, and nasty alien worms, you've come to the right chapter.

Here you'll find exclusive cheat codes for the Sony PlayStation and Windows versions of Activision's *Asteroids*. Plus, the classic Atari version of *Asteroids*, first released in 1979, awaits discovery deep inside this updated sequel. Use the info in this chapter with caution, however: Although the Level Jump and God mode cheat codes are great for a sneak peek at what lies ahead, you'll miss most of the fun if you zip through the entire game with little effort.

Cheat Codes

There's not a gamer around who doesn't hunt for a game's secret cheat codes. After attempting level after level and mission after mission, at some point gamers everywhere set off in pursuit of these goodies. Typically a combination of buttons and gamepad directions, cheat codes provide extra support in the game's more



difficult sections. Often, they're buried so deep most gamers can never hope to locate them. Fortunately for all you asteroid-bashers, we've got the complete list.

PlayStation Cheat Codes

To activate the cheat codes on the Sony PlayStation version of *Asteroids*, head to the main title screen. As the "Press Start" message flashes, hold down the Select button and press the following button combinations to activate a given cheat. If the cheat activates correctly, you'll hear a sound effect. If you don't hear it, start the process over and try again.

Level Jumping and God Mode

To activate *Asteroids*' secret menu, get to the aforementioned "Press Start" message, and then press Square, Triangle, Circle, Triangle, Triangle, Square, Circle.

After entering the Secret Menu cheat code, start up a game of *Asteroids*. Then hold down Start and Select keys simultaneously during gameplay. When the Secret Menu pops up, you can perform the following functions (see Figure 5.1):



Figure 5.1

The secret menu allows you to warp to any zone or level and toggle Collision Detection.

LEVEL SELECT: With the secret menu active, you can warp to any of the game's 75 levels. Just press the D-pad until the word "Level" or "Zone" is highlighted. Press Left or Right to select a zone and level, and then L1 to warp.

COLLISION ON/OFF: When the secret menu is active, you can toggle Collision Detection on or off. Without the cheat, it defaults on, meaning anything you hit—asteroid, saucer, or laser bolt—will kill you. By toggling it off, you become invincible. Fly through asteroids and laser beams at will! This cheat is commonly called "God mode."

Access the Secret Fourth Ship

Asteroids features three selectable ships, but none are quite as powerful as the mighty Excalibur, the secret fourth ship. (Refer to Chapter 1 for details on this vessel.) The Excalibur becomes selectable after you complete the entire game in Expert or Hardware levels. For access from the get-go, however, just hold down Select during the main title screen and press Triangle, Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square, Circle, Square.

Head over to the ship selection screen, where the

Excalibur is now displayed. Featuring full thrust and rotation and above-average shield strength and firepower, the Excalibur is the ship of choice for the *Asteroids* elite.

Unlock Classic Asteroids

Although there's another way to uncover the classic *Asteroids* game (see the following "Easter Eggs" section for more), you also can dig it up via cheat code. As with the other codes, head to the main title screen and hold down the Select button. This time, press Circle, Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square, Square, Circle. Check out the new selection at the bottom of the main menu screen: "Classic Asteroids" (see Figure 5.2).

You'll find fundamentals, strategies, and cheat codes for classic *Asteroids* a little later in this chapter.

NOTE



COLLISION ON/OFF: *Asteroids* for the PC includes a Collision On/Off option, just like its PlayStation counterpart. By toggling it off, you'll fly through asteroids and enemies without a scratch. This cheat is commonly called "God mode." As with Full Lives and Level Jump, you can access this code by pressing the Escape key to pause the game. Now type eye and another easy-to-use menu will appear.

Windows 95/98 Cheat Codes

Asteroids for the PC has all the cheat codes from the PlayStation version plus an easy way to increase the number of ships you have left if you find yourself on the ropes.

Level Jumping, Full Lives, and God Mode

All three of these codes are initiated while a game is in progress. Start by pausing the action by pressing the Escape key.

 **LEVEL JUMP AND FULL LIVES:** For the first two codes, type okeydokey at the Pause Menu to make a new menu appear. From here, you'll be able to select whatever level and zone you'd like. This menu also includes a Full Lives option that automatically gives you however many ships you started the game with (this varies depending on the difficulty level you've selected).

Accessing the Secret Fourth Ship and Classic Asteroids

Excalibur, the game's hidden ship, becomes selectable after you complete the entire game. If you're looking to cut corners, just type alex from the game's Main Menu. When you get to the ship selection screen, you'll see Excalibur in all its glory.

Although there's another way to uncover the classic *Asteroids* game (see the "Easter Eggs" section that follows), you can speed things up with a handy cheat code. As with the code for Excalibur, go to the Main Menu. This time, type vector and get ready for an instant flashback. To play the game, simply select the Classic Asteroids option that's now been added to your Main Menu.

Easter Eggs

Easter eggs are hidden game features a player can uncover by performing some action during gameplay.

Legend has it the first Easter egg was discovered in the Atari home video game *Adventure*. Released for the Atari 2600, *Adventure* showcased a square-shaped hero slaying dragons, recovering chalices, raiding castles, and avoiding bats. During a trek into gloomy catacombs, the square hero discovered a sparkly dot.

Returning that dot to the home castle unveiled the first-ever Easter egg—a credit to the designer. It was placed there by, yep, the designer.

Uncovering Classic Asteroids

The Easter egg in Activision's *Asteroids* is the ability to play the classic vector-version of the game. Both Sony PlayStation and Windows versions feature the hidden game and provide the same means to uncover it.

To play classic *Asteroids*, watch for the vector asteroid that pops up in the Sigma Delta zone's Level 15 (see Figure 5.3). The vector asteroid moves across the level slowly; destroy it with your laser weapon or a power-up. At the end of the level, save your game. The next time you head to the main menu, classic *Asteroids* will be selectable.

If you miss the vector asteroid on Level 15, you're out of luck; you'll have to head back there again to destroy it (unless, of course, you use the cheat code from earlier in this chapter).



Figure 5.3

Quick! Destroy that vector asteroid!

Playing Classic Asteroids

Regardless of which route you take to classic *Asteroids* (Easter egg or cheat code), you'll need to learn some new tactics if you hope to survive in its vector world. Because the classic version doesn't feature as many asteroid or enemy types, it's reasonable to suspect the task would be easier. Not so. Although there are only two basic enemy types, your little ship will find no power-ups to assist it against them. Worse, your vector ship lacks a shield. That's right: you must rely solely on quick thrusters and hyperspace to get yourself out of jams.

What follows are some tips and tricks for getting through classic *Asteroids*.

Scoring

The original *Asteroids* featured fewer targets than its successor. The following table provides info on the points you receive for each item you destroy.

Item	Points
Large Asteroid	20
Medium Asteroid	50
Small Asteroid	100
Large UFO	200
Small UFO	1,000

You get a bonus ship for every 10,000 points you score.

Controls

Classic *Asteroids* controls are simpler than those for the updated version. Only the thruster, laser fire, rotation, and hyperspace are at your disposal.

 **HYPERSPACE:** Lacking shield and Wildcard weapons, the only way you can get yourself out of a jam is to use hyperspace button. As in the newer version, using hyperspace is very risky. You may get out of one jam only to materialize in the middle of another. Avoid using the Hyperspace button until only a few asteroids remain on the screen (see Figure 5.4). Using hyperspace excessively is far more dangerous in classic *Asteroids* than it is in the update.

 **LASER:** A big advantage you have over the lumbering space rocks is

that your laser can travel off one side of the screen and appear on the opposite one. Shoot through the top of the screen and watch the beam appear at the bottom. You can station yourself near an edge, fire through to the other side, and remove asteroids from a safe distance.



THRUSTER: The thruster performs the same function in the classic version, but your rate of acceleration is much lower. Getting out of a

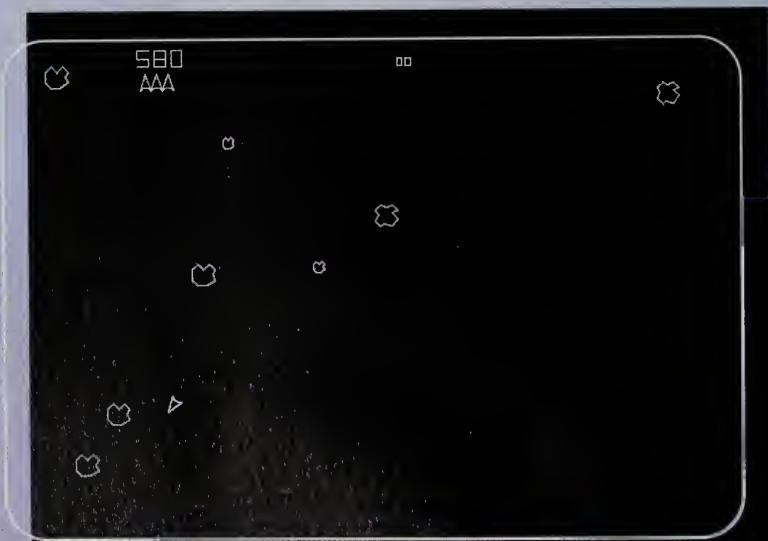
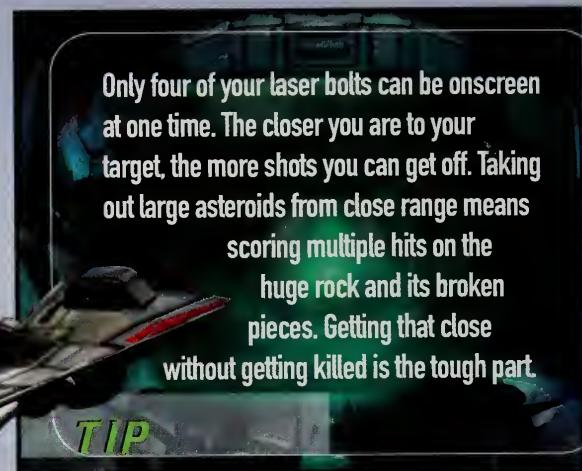


Figure 5.4

If you're really desperate, you can use hyperspace to avoid collisions. Just remember your ship may not survive re-entry.



tight jam with your thrusters is nearly impossible. The asteroids, especially the small ones, are lightning quick. Your feeble thrusters don't have a chance of outrunning them. Keep an eye on incoming asteroids, particularly when they leave the screen and appear on the opposite side. If you're lingering and not paying attention, your chance of escape is virtually nil.

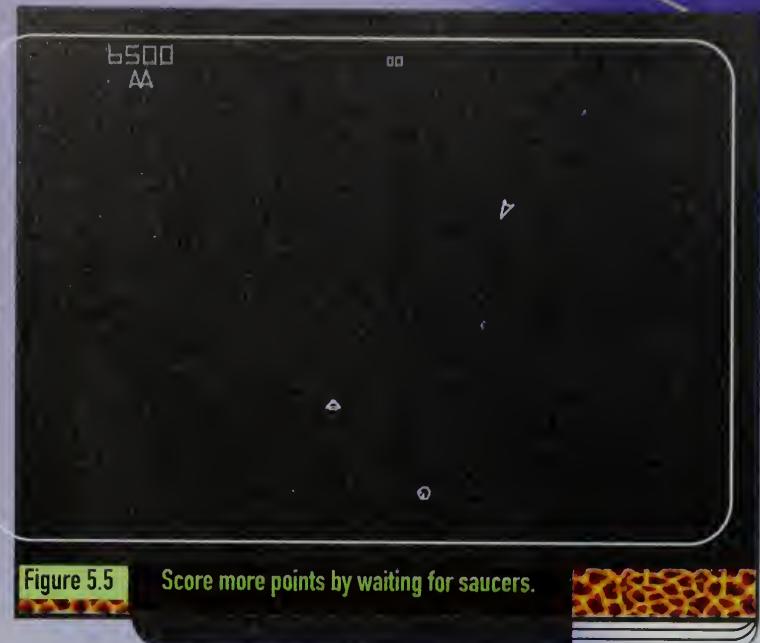
Strategies

Several of the general strategies from Chapter 3 apply as well to classic *Asteroids*, but with a few twists. The older version includes no bonus power-ups or weapons, so staying far away from the asteroids becomes even more important. Classic *Asteroids* is all about awareness. Constantly monitoring your position in relation to the asteroids' trajectories is vital to eliminating wave after wave of space rocks.

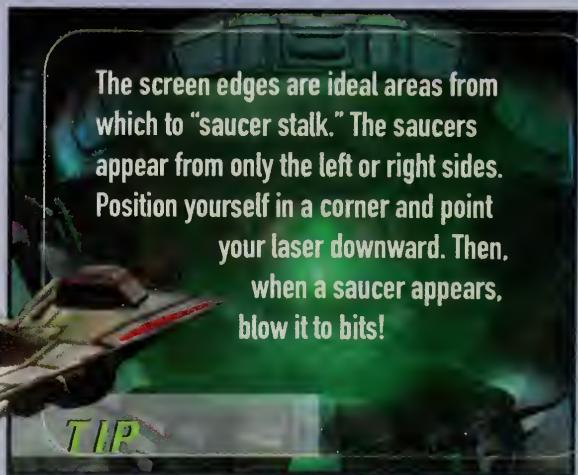
The following tactics will assist you in dominating classic *Asteroids*' vector world.

Saucer Stalking

After clearing a level down to the last small or medium asteroid, wait around for some flying saucers. Increase your score by eliminating each saucer that comes onscreen. This is risky, but it's a sure winner when it comes to scoring points (see Figure 5.5). Fewer asteroids means less risk of collision. Concentrate on the flying saucer and use your thruster to avoid its laser.



Score more points by waiting for saucers.



Mean Little UFO

The smaller saucer is more difficult to hit. Worse, its shots are far more accurate. The larger saucer fires randomly around the screen, but the small one shoots directly at you. When contending with the little guy, use your thruster conservatively to dodge its shots. Remember, you can't thrust in one direction and fire in another; use both thruster and rotation to get a good angle as the small saucer moves across the screen.

Edge with Caution

Stay somewhere in the center portion of the screen as you destroy the bigger rocks. Venture near the edges only after you've destroyed most of the asteroids on the level. Because they can travel off one side of the screen and re-enter from the opposite one, keeping an eye on all the angles and trajectories can be extremely challenging.

Big Boys First

Each large asteroid you hit splits into two medium ones. Each medium asteroid you destroy splits into two small asteroids. Simple math dictates, then, that one large asteroid holds four small asteroids. Don't begin a level by firing away at every large asteroid in sight. Before you know it, small asteroids will blanket the level, making survival nearly impossible. Take each asteroid one at a time and knock out as many small rocks as you can before heading to the next big (see Figure 5.6).

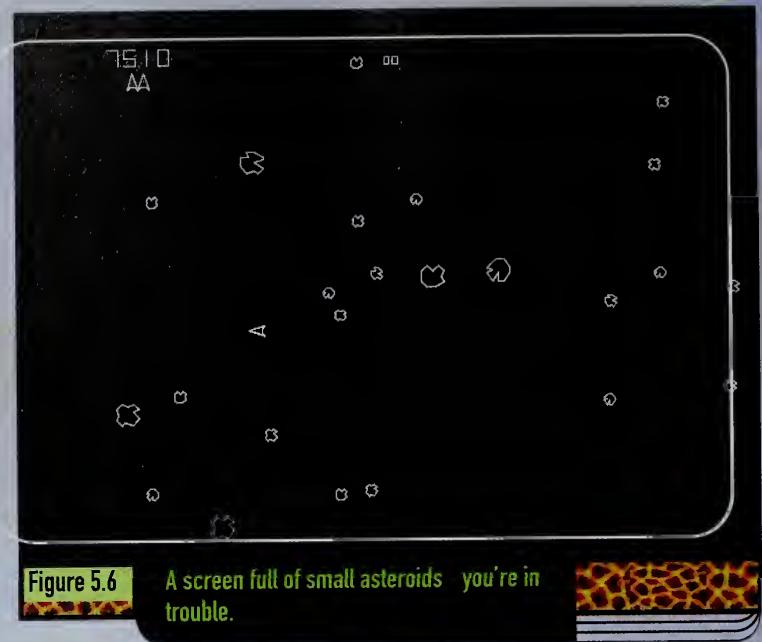


Figure 5.6

A screen full of small asteroids— you're in trouble.



New Level, Look Out!

In the updated *Asteroids*, you start most levels in the center of the screen. Not so in the classic version. You'll begin each new level where you ended the last one. After shooting the last asteroid on the screen, use your thruster to coast back toward the center of the screen. The asteroids approach from the screen's perimeter; if that's where you are when a level begins, a big rock may be on you before you have a chance to break it down to size.

Classic Asteroids Cheat Codes

Many of today's players won't last long in the asteroid fields of 1979. But here's the good news: this cheat code has its own cheat codes! The hidden classic *Asteroids* game features enough cheat codes to allow a player of any skill to get through every level.

Small asteroids cruise at different velocities depending on the angle you used to crush the medium rock. Use care when you strike a medium asteroid at close range; a small rock may head straight into your ship's nose.

WARNING

PlayStation Cheat Codes

Hit the Select button to pause the game. Then plug in the appropriate sequence to activate the following cheats:



+1 LIFE: Up, Down, Left, Right, Circle, Square, X, Triangle

- 99 LIVES: Up, X, Down, Triangle, Left, Square, Right, Circle
- INVINCIBILITY: Down, Down, Up, Up, Circle, Square, Triangle, Triangle

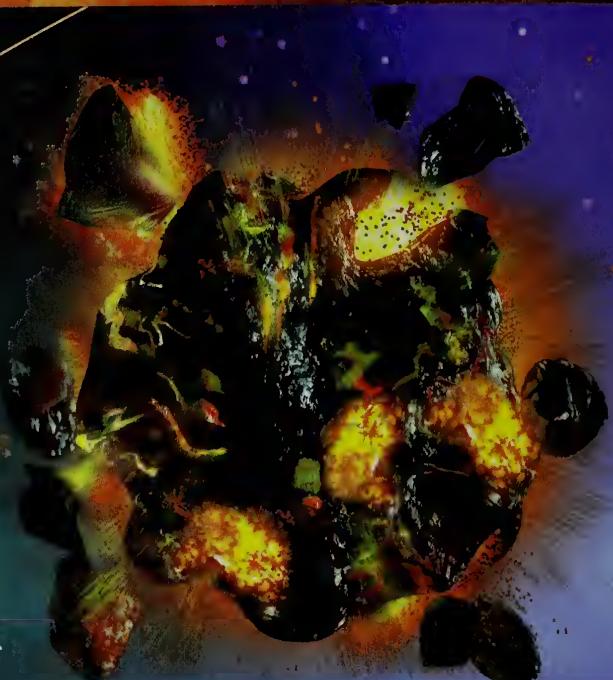
Windows 95/98 Cheat Codes

Hit Escape to pause the action. Then type the appropriate sequence (minus the commas, of course) to activate the following cheats:

- +1 LIFE: I, K, J, L, D, A, S, W
- 99 LIVES: S, I, W, K, A, J, D, L
- INVINCIBILITY: D, D, E, E, L, J, I, I



A Brief History of Asteroids



Asteroids is one of the most beloved and popular video games of all time. To this day, arcades around the globe keep space set aside for this 20-year-old digital masterpiece. Its impact on popular culture and the future of video and computer games was second to none. Asteroids brought electronic entertainment to the masses, just as the Model-T Ford brought the automobile to the average citizen.

This chapter covers the important role *Asteroids* played in the genesis of computer games, and where it came from. It also explores the social phenomenon it was—and remains..

The Dawn of Asteroids

The first video game, created in 1958, was something like tennis on an oscilloscope. It had one purpose—to

entertain visitors to the lab where it evolved. Sadly, the inventor didn't patent his work.

In 1962, engineering student Nolan Bushnell enrolled at the University of Utah, where he was exposed to a game called *Spacewar*. Steve Russel had developed it for the high-end mainframe Digital PDP-1 computer. *Spacewar* was simple: two players in spaceships try to shoot one another while avoiding the gravity pull of a star at the center of the screen.

Spacewar may have been the first death-match game ever created, an early form of the head-to-head competition so popular in this age of the Internet.

NOTE

The Creation of Atari

In 1971, Bushnell and fellow Ampex researcher Ted Dabney converted a suburban bedroom into a workshop and created an arcade version of *Spacewar* called *Computer Space*. But when they released it to arcades, it met with little interest and soon faded from sight.

In 1972, Bushnell and Dabney filed papers in the state of California, attempting to form a company by the name of “Syzygy”—a word meaning the sun, moon, and earth in total eclipse. But, incredibly, another company already owned the rights to it. They finally settled on “Atari,” a Japanese word from the game of *Go* that means something like “checkmate.”

Pong Paves the Way

The new company needed a product.

Nolan hired another Ampex employee, Al Alcorn—the first Atari engineer—and together they developed a simple game of electronic ping-pong called—*Pong* (see Figure 6.1).

It was an amazing arcade success, and would soon prove its strength in the home market. In 1975, Atari showed its game to Sears-Roebuck, the mail-order company ordered 150,000 units of “Home Pong,” and by Christmas it was the best-selling item in its catalog.

Profits from *Pong* went right back into development, this time for a piece of hardware known as the Atari VCS (later called the Atari 2600). In 1977, Bushnell sold his stake in Atari to Warner Communications (now Time-Warner) for a crisp \$28 million.

After selling Atari, Nolan Bushnell began other businesses, including the Chuck E. Cheese pizza chain. Bushnell has enjoyed the game industry spotlight often since 1977, and recently served as inaugural commissioner for the Professional Gamers League (PGL).

NOTE



Figure 6.1

Pong was a huge success in the arcades and, later, home systems of its time.

The Asteroids Revolution

1979.

Disco is making an exit from popular culture. The Atari VCS, later known as the Atari 2600, is gaining support with a trickle of games allowing people to play on their television set. Arcades, once the exclusive domain of pinball machines, are making room for a new form of entertainment called “video games.”

Hot on the heels of the popular *Lunar Lander* is a game known as *Asteroids*. In matter of weeks, *Asteroids* became a social phenomenon, ultimately selling over 70,000 units and netting Atari more than \$150 million dollars.

It was unlike anything the world had seen.

Previous video games had enjoyed a lackluster acceptance as entertainment, but *Asteroids* changed the course of game history. Suddenly, pizza joints were packed with players huddled around the upright console and quarters stacked around the frame.

A day didn’t pass where you didn’t see a news report about the *Asteroids* craze. Psychologists droned on about possible side-effects of playing too much.

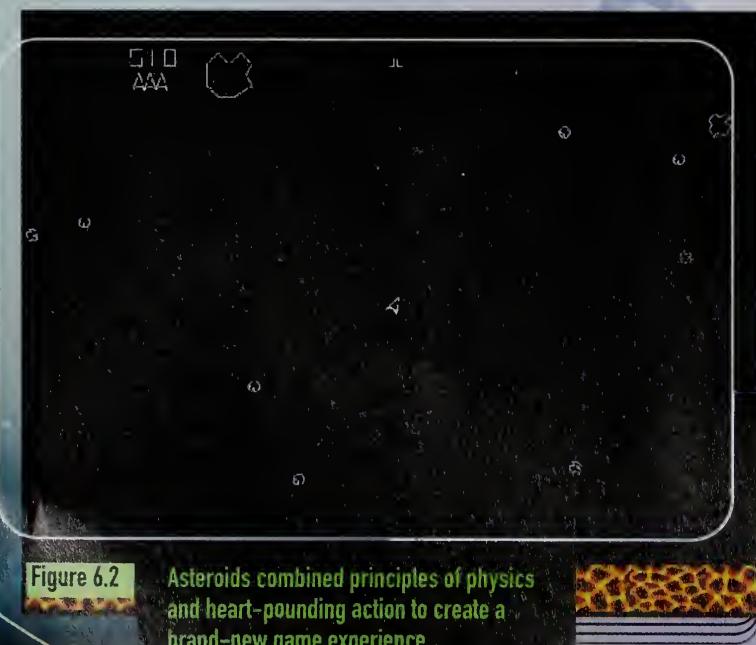


Figure 6.2 Asteroids combined principles of physics and heart-pounding action to create a brand-new game experience.

Attorneys played it during their lunch hours to relieve stress. Soon gaming magazines were tracking leagues, official scorers, and records.

Asteroids had arrived.

Ideas

Atari employee Lyle Rains came up with the idea: Somehow he concluded players might like to shoot large rocks into smaller pieces. He discussed this nugget with Ed Logg, an Atari programmer, who spent the next nine months bringing the concept to life.

Rains and Logg spoke about the creation of *Asteroids* at a gaming convention in the '80s, quoted in Scott Cohen's excellent, although out of print, *Zap!: the Rise and Fall of Atari*. As Rains explained, “I guess the way I describe it is that I’m the father of *Asteroids*. Ed Logg is the mother of *Asteroids*, because he had to live with it for nine months and deliver a finished product. All I had to do was provide the seed.”

Once production began, the game experience proved so absorbing that Rains and Logg found themselves dreaming about it.

Said Lyle, “In the course of my work I have always found that there are times during the development process when the project gets to me in such a way that I’m eating, drinking, sleeping, and breathing the project. When I close my eyes the images of the screen are there and I dream about them at night. There is something just very intense when you live with a project like that day and night, for months at a time. When we were working on *Asteroids*, I would play for a number of hours in the evening, then I’d go home and I’d close my eyes, and as I was drifting off to sleep I’d see the asteroids floating around the screen.”

Logg had the same experience. "I was shooting the asteroids all night long. I'd just play the game over and over and over in my head, just as if you were playing it in real life. To a certain extent, I play a lot of the games in my mind long before I ever write them because you have to get all the interactions down pat before you can start programming. I know what it's going to look like before I even get there."

As cool as *Asteroids*' 1024×768 resolution vector graphics were, the sound effects were just as impor-

"You had to keep your eyes constantly in motion around the screen because the danger could be coming from any direction, at anytime, and it was always so *imminent*," Rotberg says. "In *Asteroids*, it was just you out there, trying to survive. It's an incredibly intense game. The tuning, in terms of how fast the spaceship turns and how fast the bullets move and how far they go and how fast the asteroids can go, just all the tuning that Ed Logg put into that, is real artistry. *Asteroids* is a video game artistic masterpiece."

Often, Logg and Rains returned from lunch to find Atari employees swarming around the game. Lyle once reflected, "Development on the really good games gets bogged down, because people want to... play them all the time."

NOTE

tant, effects that resonate in memory after 20 years. Atari's Howard Delman was responsible for the *Asteroids* sound effects.

"In those days there were no all-purpose sound chips like we have now, so I had to create a hardware circuit for each sound," Delman recalls. "I'd string together electrical circuits that would produce an output wave-form that corresponded to the wave-form of the sound. When put through an amplifier and a loud-speaker, it would sound like whatever I was trying to create. The boom-boom-boom background sound was sort of meant to be like a heartbeat, and the idea was that as the game progressed, the sound sped up, and the player's heart would speed up, too. You know, stress!"

Asteroids' intense environment had it all over the competition. If anyone knows intensity, it's Ed Rotberg, cocreator of the game classic, *Battlezone*.

Asteroids Debuts

Orders for *Asteroids* were arriving at a blistering pace. All production on *Lunar Lander* came to a quick halt and, to meet the demand, Atari was forced to ship 200 units of *Asteroids* in a *Lunar Lander* cabinet. (Now there's a collector's item!)

When *Asteroids* finally debuted, another classic, *Space Invaders*, was the nation's number one game. Within weeks, *Asteroids* had dominated the market and claimed the number one spot for itself. Atari was well on its way to becoming the fastest-growing company in U.S. history.

Asteroids' influence was felt immediately. Unlike most fads that start slowly and gain momentum, *Asteroids* was a blockbuster from the moment it hit the street. It grew impossibly large from there. Suddenly, everyone was plunking in quarters and thrilling to the experience of shooting vector rocks with a triangular ship.

This single game gave people around the globe a common experience. Ultimately, *Asteroids* also gave game companies credibility, as it erased the line between niche market and mainstream acceptance. Electronic entertainment has never been the same.

And all because Lyle Rains thought people might like to blow up big rocks and make them smaller....

The Aftermath

With a warehouse full of *Asteroids* money, Atari sank funds deeper into the Atari 2600 by acquiring home licenses from competitors. The first was for a home version of *Space Invaders*. Soon they released the cult classic *Adventure*, in which the “easter egg”—an undocumented feature or hidden goodie—first appeared. By now, Atari was grossing \$415 million a year, an amazing one-third of Warner Communications’ annual sales revenue.

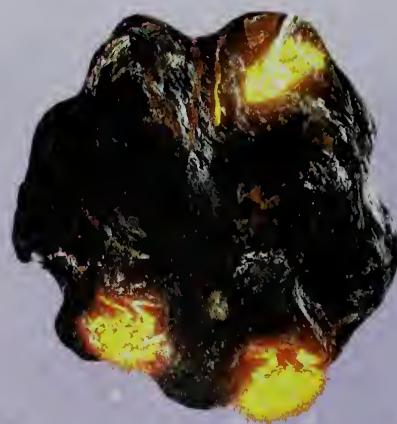
Several enterprising Atari employees ventured out on their own and started Activision, the first third-party developer. Twenty years later, Activision purchased the *Asteroids* license and remade the classic for today’s home computer and console systems (see Figure 6.3).

But you knew that.



Figure 6.3

Activision’s *Asteroids* retains the classic gameplay while incorporating new features and astonishing, state-of-the-art graphics.



Asteroids Remembered

Asteroids is important not only for its effect on popular culture and the creation of a new industry, but also for the way it inspired a generation of future game industry professionals. Their crystal clear memories testify to *Asteroids*' lasting appeal. Here's a sampling.

George Broussard (project leader on Duke Nukem Forever)

Being a lot older than most of the guys I work with now (35), I actually remember when *Asteroids* came out. Back in those days there were less games and less arcades, so a popular machine would be jammed with players. I remember standing in line for an hour or more just to play. People would do things like put an entire roll of quarters on the machine, or quarters would be 2 rows high across the bottom of the glass. It was insane.

Asteroids quickly became my favorite game, as well as Scott Miller's (my partner at 3D Realms). We would play the game for hours on end, and got so good that we would challenge each other to things like playing cross-handed or playing with elbows only. The sad thing is that we could reach scores of 500,000 or so doing things like this.

The challenge in *Asteroids* was to get so many ships (50 or so) that they stretched all the way across the top of the screen and off the right-hand side. I heard of a guy in Japan that supposedly got the world record of some 30 million points or so. I decided I'd take a crack at it and see how far I could go. I started Friday afternoon at a local convenience store with one quarter. I had ships so far off the screen that I just walked away to get a Coke or go to the restroom and came back and kept playing. But a mere 15 hours (and 15 million points later) I got sleepy and gave up. It was something like 6 am the next day and all my "well-wishing" friends had long since gone home. I blamed their lack of support and tried to make them feel guilty, but secretly I just got sleepy.

John Cutter

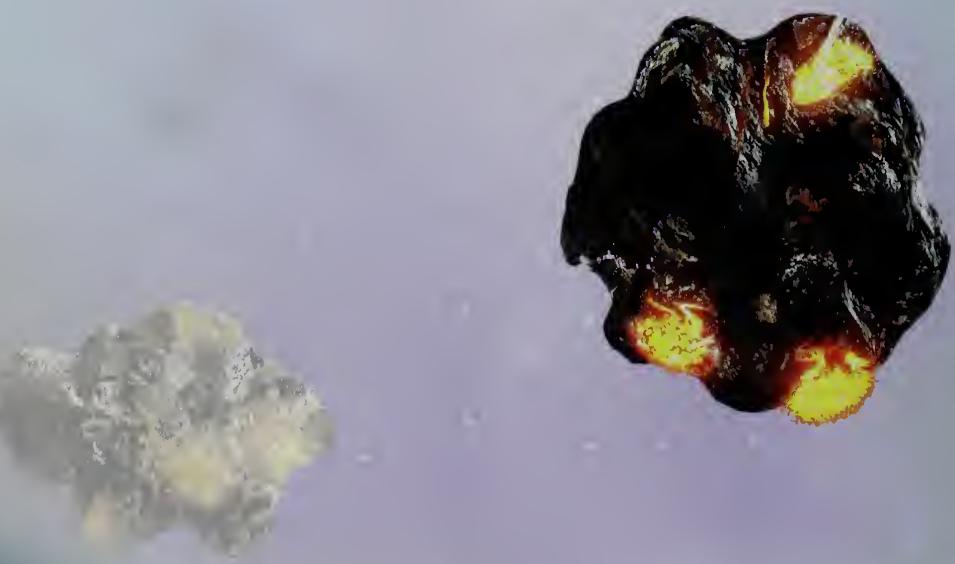
(producer, *Amen: The Awakening*, and producer/designer, *Elysium*)

I first encountered the game *Asteroids* in an arcade at the local county fair. Unfortunately, my friends and I didn't have enough quarters that night, so we had limited playing time. But I was hooked.

My pockets were loaded with quarters when I went back the next night, and I had visions of impressing my new girlfriend with my playing skills. Unfortunately, she decided that, first, she wanted to go on the

Zipper, a clever Ferris wheel-like ride that turns you upside down. Big mistake. My pockets emptied and we were soon being pelted by quarters. As I shielded my horrified face from the perilous coinage, an enthusiastic crowd gathered below to collect the shower of quarters that rained from the cage with every revolution.

When the torture finally ended, I managed to retrieve my wallet, my car keys, and about a buck and a half.





Willem Knibbe (editor, PC Games)

I distinctly remember the day they put the Asteroids machine in the basement arcade at Garcia's Pizza. I'd long since mastered Space Invaders and, after my usual pepperoni slice, was on my way downstairs to put my greasy quarter in and play for a few hours. But there it was, its crisp and clean graphics beckoning.

The new machine had that nice, fresh-electronics smell, and the controls didn't have the layer of pizza grease on them yet. Good-bye aliens, hello rocks. Over the course of months I plunked in quarter after quarter to hone my strategies.

Of course, at first I obsessed on staying in constant motion—wooh, the screen wraps—trying to move faster than those pesky asteroids. Well, that didn't work, so I tried the timid approach, staying in the middle and moving only when necessary. But that was just entirely too boring. Finally, I became adept with the thruster (you could pick a spot on the screen, and I could stop within a few pixels of it) and settled on an approach somewhere in between.

Mastering it took me much longer than Space Invaders had. I was still playing it long after the pizza grease had claimed the controls.

Bill Roper (producer, Starcraft, Diablo, and Warcraft)

When I was a kid, my parents were into bowling. Now, I'm talking about two or three nights per week in a league with those now very *in* shirts with the script lettering. Because I wasn't old enough to bowl on their team, I would often gravitate toward the arcade. My pockets filled with quarters, I would always be on the lookout for the latest technological marvel on which to spend my hard-earned allowance.

As I turned the corner, there sat an obelisk of metaphysical gaming proportions—a brand new *Asteroids* machine. I walked up

to it, turning my inquisitive and critical eye toward this new addition, and was instantly mesmerized from the first quarter. It was just simply an awesome experience—shooting, moving, shooting, dodging the ever-smaller and ever-faster fragments of the asteroids and, when all else failed, finally using the hyperspace button to escape certain death.

By today's standards, it isn't flashy and it isn't complicated, but it still has the most critical element of any game going for it: it's still fun.



Phil Steinmeyer (lead designer, Railroad Tycoon II)

I played *Asteroids* for the first time in a miniarcade at Sears-Roebuck. (Yes, even Sears had arcades back then.) I liked it, but couldn't master it on the few feeble quarters I could scrounge up as an 11-year-old kid. A year or so later I got

the Atari 2600 cartridge, which was one of the best arcade ports ever done for Atari. Awesome game.

I also like the various rip-offs created for Intellivision, Commodore 64 etc. *Asteroid*-type games were an entire genre back then.

Chris Taylor (designer, Total Annihilation)

The first time I saw the game *Asteroids* was when I walked into an arcade called "Circuit Circus" some 20 years ago. (I had a card to get into the arcade which was essentially forged.) It was definitely one of the most popular games in the arcade, sporting the fluid motion of vector graphics. People would place quarters on the machine to reserve a turn. Sometimes the button-pressing would get so frantic that the quarters would start cascading down the front of the game, past fingers and buttons,

annoying the enthusiastic destroyer of rock.

It quickly became obvious that the secret to achieving a high score lay in shooting the deadly little space ships that flew out every once in a while, and the experts made this an obsession. The trick was to leave one little asteroid and just wait for the saucer to appear. If you timed it right, you could circle around and around and then lay down a wall of fire at the moment the little bugger appeared. Those were definitely the good ol' days.

Asteroids Factoids

- ◆ Asteroids was released in 1979 as a coin-op arcade game.
- ◆ Atari released *Asteroids* in 1981 for the Atari 2600 game system. Atari was the first company to license an arcade game.
- ◆ In 1982, *Asteroids* was the fastest-selling home video game in the United States.
- ◆ *Asteroids* was the first game in history with the potential for limitless high scores. Achieving the highest score became a quest for teenagers around the world.
- ◆ *Asteroids* saw the dawn of the video-game superstar. As video games became an entertainment form, teenagers became “theatrical” performers.
- ◆ World record holder Scott Safran logged more than 60 hours of continuous gameplay on one quarter.

- ◆ National media outlets covered tournaments, record-breaking challenges, and gaming marathons around the globe.
- ◆ Lacking the Internet, gamers watched for published scores in magazines and telephoned to issue challenges.
- ◆ Walter Day became the official scorekeeper for *Asteroids* and other video/arcade games.
- ◆ Atari became the fastest-growing company in the history of American business, thanks to *Asteroids* and other top sellers.
- ◆ Atari made more than \$150 million with the launch of *Asteroids*. Revenues were put into launching the 2600 console game.



Internet Resources

Can't remember the arcade sequels to Asteroids? Want to reminisce about classic video arcade machines? Ever wonder what happened to the Atari 2600? For those who want to take a trip down memory lane (or to learn about an era in video games that's a little before their time), the Internet offers plenty. The sites covered in this section offer excellent content on Asteroids, Atari, and classic arcade video games, in general.

The following sites offer excellent content on Asteroids, Atari, and classic arcade video games in general.

Getting on the Web

While the purpose of this book isn't to teach you how to get on the Internet or use the World Wide Web, here are the very basics. First, you'll need a computer with a modem. Next, you'll need to sign up with an Internet Service Provider (ISP), such as American Online, Mindspring, or a local provider. Finally, to browse Internet Web sites, you'll need a Web browser. The two

most popular browsers are Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer. Do a little research before picking a provider and a Web browser. If you know someone who's already online, start by asking them what they use and how they like it.

Once you're online, visit the Web sites below by entering the appropriate Web address in your browser's location box—the space toward the top of your screen that already has a Web address in it, like <http://home.netscape.com/>. You're ready to begin a nostalgic trip down classic gaming lane.

Asteroids

Several Web sites honor this classic arcade game, complete with photos, original documentation, scanned flyers, and technical tidbits. Lucky Asteroids fans who search the Web may even find the original arcade game for sale or the lyrics to the 1982 Buckner & Garcia song *Hyperspace*, dedicated to the classic rock-bustin' game.

Activision's Asteroids Page

Activision's official home page for their new version of *Asteroids*, at <http://www.activision.com/games/asteroids> (see Figure A.1), features the most up-to-date information. Check back often for the latest news, updates and specials.

Game Archive's Atari Arcade Game Page

Remember when arcade video games were nothing more than monochrome or colored lines called "vectors"? Check out GameArchive's Atari Arcade Game

Page, at <http://www.gamearchive.com/> manufacturer/atari (see Figure A.2). Even if you can't remember the good ol' days, the Web site offers a chance to learn a little more about where and how video games came to be.

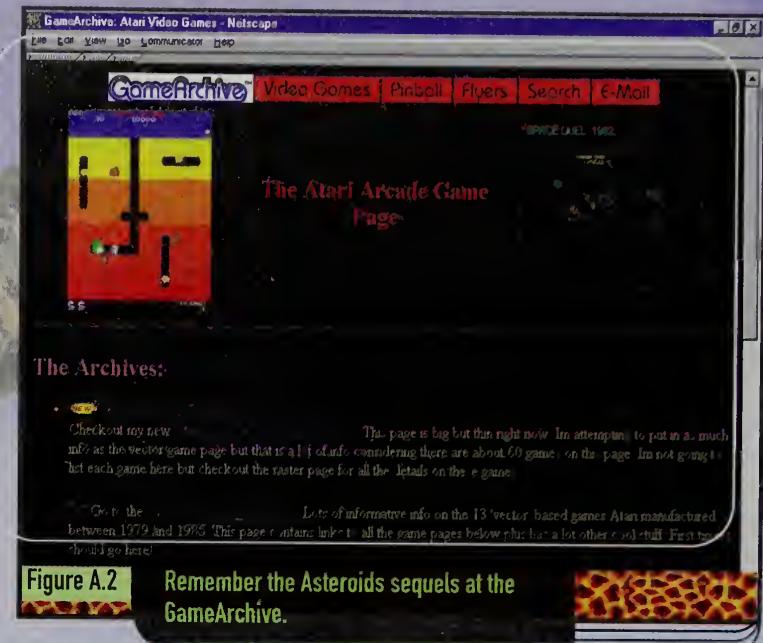


Figure A.2

Remember the Asteroids sequels at the GameArchive.

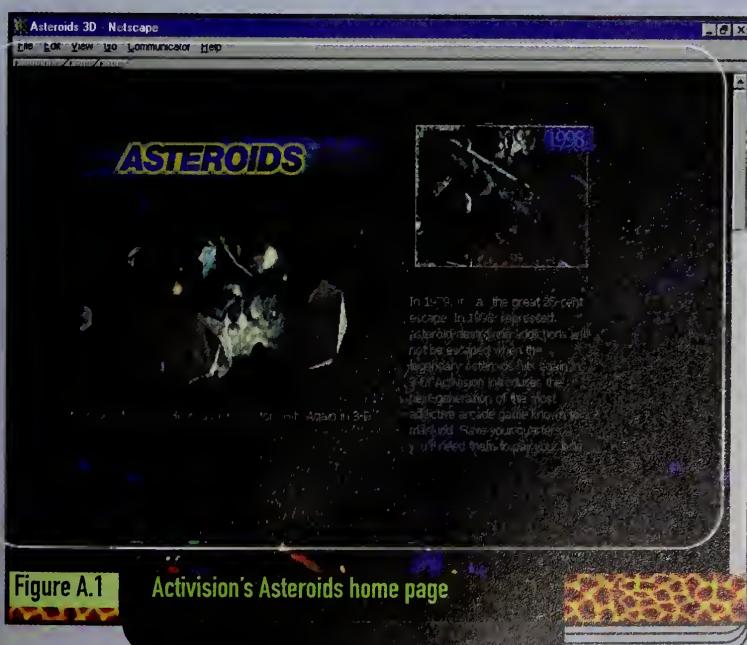


Figure A.1

Activision's Asteroids home page

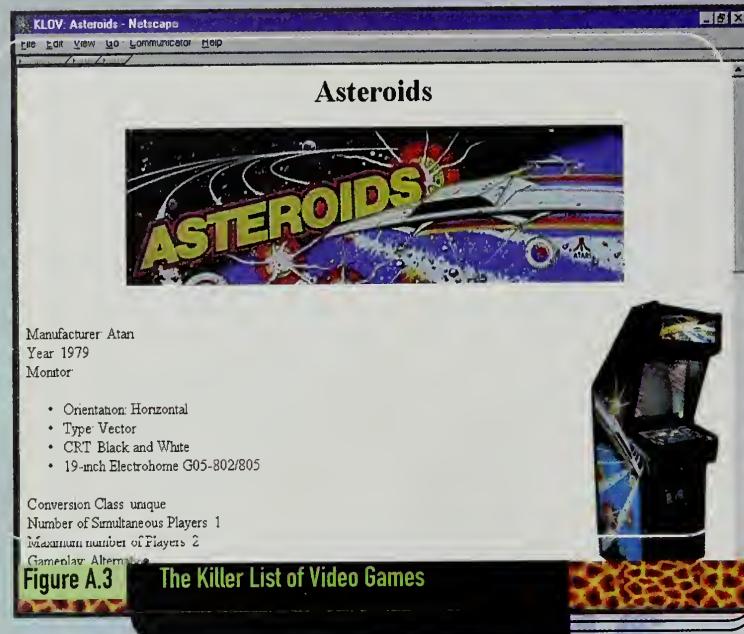
Games have come a long way since the early days of Atari; a few minutes snooping around GameArchive's Atari Arcade Game Page reinforces that fact. It features information on 13 vector-based Atari games released between 1979 and 1985, and loads of data on the classic *Asteroids* and its vector sequels, *Asteroids Deluxe* and *Space Duel*.

Killer List of Video Games

Eager to locate goodies on your favorite quarter-eaters of yesteryear? Make your first stop Killer List of Video Games, at <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~johns594/arcade/klov> (see Figure A.3). With its intuitive search engine

and hundreds of titles, the KLOV boasts descriptions and photos of hundreds of classic coin-operated games. You'll also find technical info, facts and figures, player support, button and joystick configuration, and cheats and bugs.

Pages on *Asteroids* and all its sequels (including 1987's *Blasteroids*) are readily available with pictures



and statistics. And if you hold updated data on any featured game, you can send in amendments, and even add your own entries for missing games.

Atari

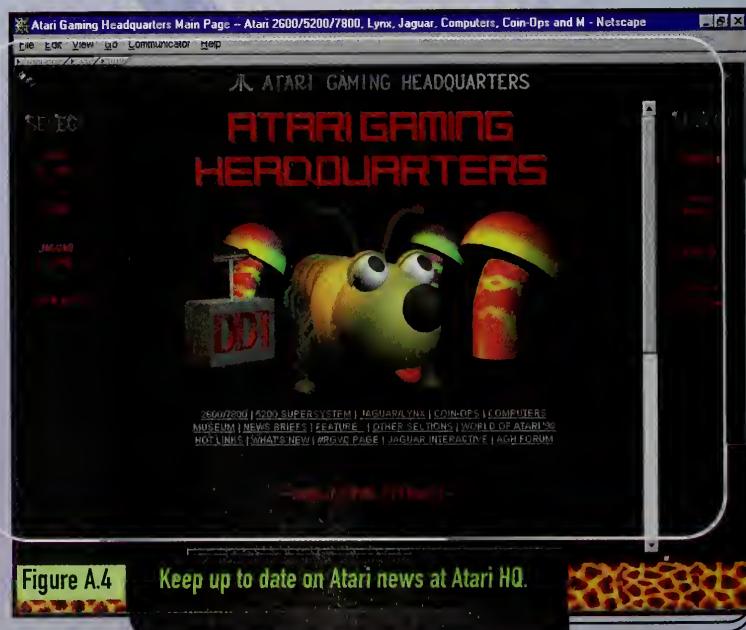
Atari released *Asteroids* at the dawn of the arcade and home video game explosion in 1979. Over the next 20 years, Atari continued manufacturing arcade machines and home systems, and even dominated the home market for nearly a decade. The following sites are excellent resources

for learning about Atari's domination of the '80s video game universe.

Atari Gaming Headquarters

Atari Gaming Headquarters, at <http://www.atarihq.com> (see Figure A.4), contains up-to-the-minute news items about the world of Atari gaming. Keep current on rereleases—including Activision's Atari 2600 classic game products for the PC—and learn classic coin-operated conventions and information on the "World of Atari" show. Atari HQ covers every Atari product from the early days of the Atari VCS to the more recent handheld Lynx and Jaguar console systems.

Some of Atari HQ's more intriguing features include facts on never-released Atari VCS games (*Miss Piggy's Wedding?*) and a round-up of Atari Easter Eggs. Also, if you can't remember what your favorite game looked like, take a look at Atari HQ's Atari screenshot section.



History of Atari

Remember Pong? And whatever happened to Atari's follow-up to the Atari 5200 and 7800? If you're curious about the rise and fall of Atari, check out this well-written History of Atari Web site, at <http://wolf.tierranet.com/ataririp.htm> (see Figure A.5).



Figure A.5

Spanning the years 1972 through 1996, the History of Atari page breaks down Atari's evolution from its first coin-op game, *Pong*, to Atari 400, 800, and ST computer systems. The History of Atari also serves as an effective launching point, with links to dozens of other Atari gaming-related sites.

Atari Timeline

Compiled by Robert Jung, the Atari Timeline, at <http://www.digiserve.com/eescape/atari/AtariTimeline.html>, offers a quick recap of the up-and-down history of Atari video games and computer systems, broken down by year.

Classic Video Games

Disco's back. People are wearing bell-bottoms again. Radio stations devoted to oldies music from the '70s and '80s are cropping up across the country.

Retro is in. Even retro video games are in. So, conform to society. Load up the following Web sites and get nostalgic, even if you didn't live through those days the first time around.

Videotopia's Culturally Significant Video Games

Videotopia is an international traveling museum exhibit showcasing the history of video games. Featuring more than 75 restored and new arcade video games, Videotopia focuses on video games of cultural significance in terms of popularity or technology.

Videotopia's Culturally Significant Video Games page, <http://www.videotopia.com/games.htm> (see Figure A.6), displays dozens of the restored

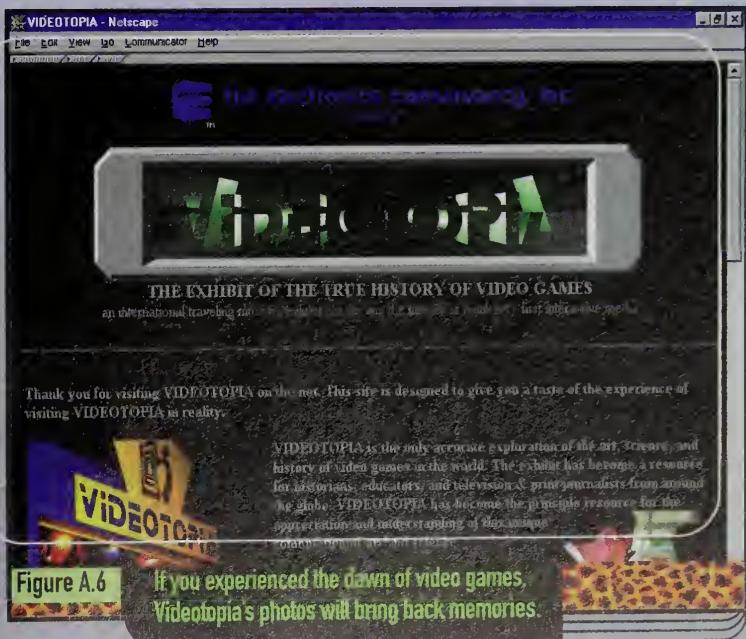


Figure A.6

and new arcade video games that make up the exhibit. Included are dates, designer credits, photos, and info about what makes a given game important. Atari's *Asteroids* is featured prominently on the Videotopia game page, as it is in the traveling museum itself.

I.C. When's History of Video Games

There's so much information at this site, plan on sticking around for a while. Sorted by month and year, I.C. When's History of Video Games, <http://www.icwhen.com/index1.html> (see Figure A.7), offers facts about when companies were founded, mergers, acquisitions, yearly revenues, games developed—everything anyone could want to know about arcade, video, and computer games.

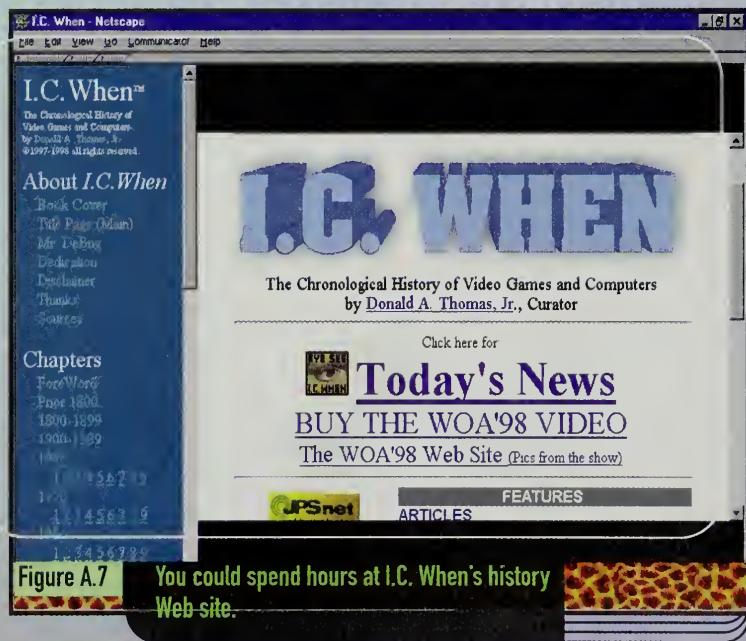
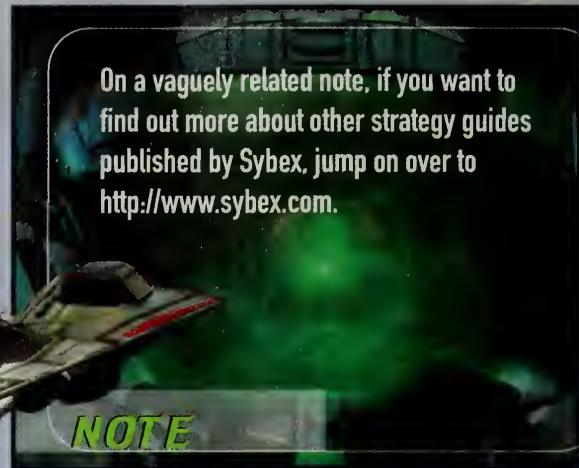


Figure A.7

You could spend hours at I.C. When's history Web site.



Remarkably, I.C. When's History of Video Games is updated daily with news and important events in the video and computer game industry. At I.C. When's history site, readers get a balanced education about the past, present, and future of video games.

Asteroids

Ultimate Strategy Guide

OFFICIAL CONTEST PAGE

Win a Free Game!

Now that you've cleared away every Asteroid, Sybex and Activision are teaming up to bring you even more fun!

You may be one of 20 lucky winners who get a FREE Activision game for the platform of your choice.

Just fill out the information requested below and send the form (or a reasonable facsimile) back to Sybex.

We'll draw 20 names at random and award prizes to the winners.

Send entries to:

Asteroids Contest
Sybex Inc.
1151 Marina Village Parkway
Alameda, CA 94501

Contest ends March 31, 1999. All entries must be postmarked on or before March 31, 1999, to be eligible.

CONTEST RULES

Please limit entries to one per person. No purchase is necessary to enter. All entries must be postmarked no later than MARCH 31, 1999, to be valid. Sybex Inc., is not responsible for any entries that may be late, lost, misdirected, ineligible, or illegible. All entries become the property of Sybex Inc. By entering this contest, you give permission for your name to be printed in Sybex books and to appear on the Sybex website.

Winning entries will be chosen by Sybex Inc., and the announced decisions will be final. All taxes on prizes are the sole responsibility of the winner. Prizes are nontransferrable. Sybex Inc. reserves the right to substitute a prize of equal or greater value if one of the announced prizes is not available at the time the contest winners are announced.

Contest winners must respond within 30 days or forfeit their prize. Sybex Inc. is not responsible for contacting or forwarding prizes to entrants who leave incomplete or unintelligible information. Sybex Inc. reserves the right to terminate or withdraw this contest at any time, with or without notice.

Entrants under 18 years old must include signed permission from a parent or guardian. The contest is open to all persons internationally, subject to local laws and regulations. The contest is void where prohibited or restricted.



Name _____ Age _____

Street _____ Apt _____

City _____

State/Province _____ Postal Code _____

Phone (_____) _____

(If outside the US, include country and city codes.)

Email _____

Platform (You must choose a platform to be awarded a game)

PC PlayStation

Please print legibly.

Classic '80s Action.

ACTIVISION



Sleek '90s Design.



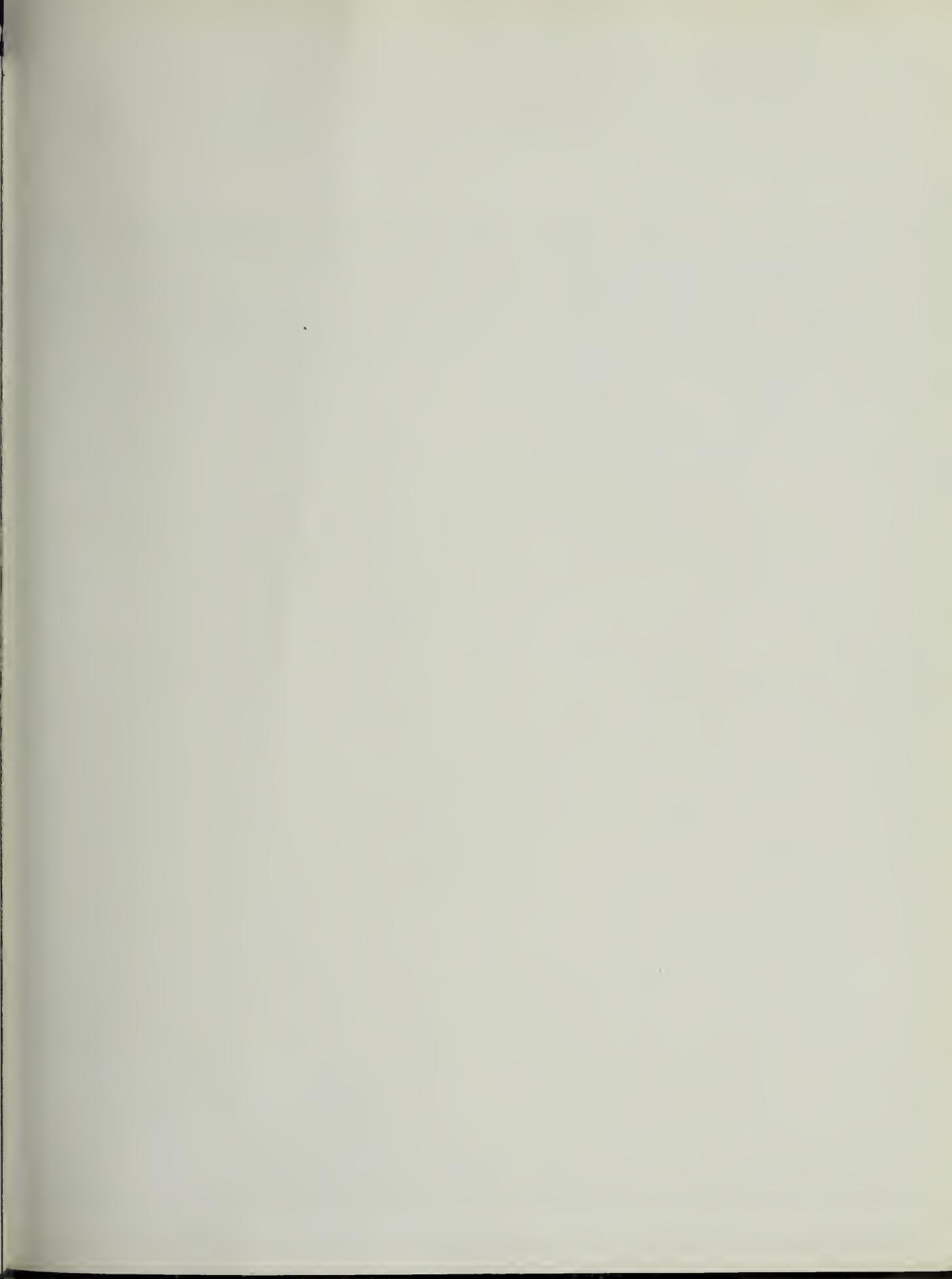
At the super low sticker price of about **a buck a game**, this baby's fully loaded with 30 of your all-time video game favorites! In the first and largest arcade collection ever, Activision Classics gives you all the gameplay mileage of the original Atari 2600 games, newly "engineered" for your PlayStation® game console. With timeless classics like **Pitfall!**, **River Raid** and **Kaboom!**, you'll be reliving the good old days for hours on end. Handy carrying case, standard.



www.activision.com

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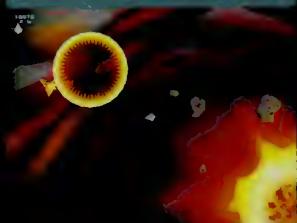
ASTEROIDS

ULTIMATE
STRATEGY
GUIDE

READY TO ROCK?

Strap yourself in for all the **classic gameplay** that made Asteroids a true phenomenon, plus a **super-charged arsenal** of spectacular new features—**radically upgraded 3D graphics**, a host of **potent power-ups** and **wildcard weapons**, **interstellar hazards** ranging from the dreaded Black Hole to the aptly named Worm Zone, and a whole **new breed of enemies and asteroids**.

Move quick or get fried by a solar flare!



Want to make it through all **5 zones** and **75 ship-shattering levels** without getting blown away? Reach for the Official Asteroids Ultimate Strategy Guide!

Protect the Earth against a deadly meteor storm!



INSIDE THIS FULL-COLOR GEM YOU'LL FIND:

- **Essential strategies** for blasting your way through every single-player and multiplayer level
- **An in-depth pilot's manual** that takes you from choosing the right ship to the fine art of the flip

- **Hardcore tactics** for getting maximum impact out of your power-ups and wildcard weapons
- **Classified data** on all asteroids and enemy ships

You'll also hear from some of today's leading game developers and journalists as they look back at the game that, for many, started it all.

Best of all, you'll get **exclusive access** to **asteroid-shattering cheat codes** and **Easter Eggs** that'll let you **jump to the level of your choice**, switch on **invulnerability**, uncover the **secret fourth ship** they call "Excalibur," **play the original Asteroids** hidden within the game, and more!



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Chris Jensen has written numerous strategy guides for a wide variety of genres. For the past three years he has assumed the role of West Coast Editor for Online Gaming Review and was the former editor of Next Generation magazine.

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