

The Great Archeological Race!

An Absolute Zero Release

Interactive Fiction by John LaBonney

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INTRODUCTION

In The Great Archeological Race you play the Assistant Curator of The Evelyn Museum in Boston, Massachusetts. Donations are low, and it's up to you to find some new exhibits. Be aware that artifacts aren't just lying around anywhere, and when a cache is found, there are many dangers that await those who try to claim it!

PLAYING THE GREAT ARCHEOLOGICAL RACE

In an adventure game, you tell the game what you want to do. The Great Archeological Race has a vocabulary of around 800 words, and is pretty good at recognizing sentences once you've gotten used to formatting your commands.

Whenever you see the prompt ">", the game is telling you it's ready to accept a command. Your command should be a simple imperative sentence. Press [RETURN] (or [ENTER]) when you're done typing your sentence, and the game will begin processing the command. Some simple examples might be OPEN THE BOTTLE or READ THE BOOK. You can use articles if you wish, but they may be omitted.

You may use capitals and lowercase in any mixture, and you can even enter more than one command at once by separating them with a punctuation mark.

GETTING AROUND

At any one time in the game, you're at a certain location. The game gives a description of the room when you first enter, and you can see it again at any time by typing LOOK. In general, objects that you see in a room are directly accessible; you don't need to move around within a location to reach them.

To move to a different room, you type the direction you want to go. The rooms description will give a list of obvious possible travel directions. The game understands the commands NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST, NORTHEAST, SOUTHEAST, NORTHWEST, SOUTHWEST, UP, and DOWN. You can abbreviate these to N, S, E, W, NE, SE, NW, SW, U, and D. In some locations you can use IN and OUT, or you can GET IN or OUT of something.

In general, backtracking will take you back to where you started. If you start in the bedroom, go south to the hallway, then go north, you'll be back in the bedroom.

When the game describes a door or doorway, you don't have to worry about opening the door; the game will do this for you. Only when a specific impediment is described will you have to type a command to open the door, or whatever.

OBJECTS

There are many objects in The Great Archeological Race that you can manipulate. You'll want to carry objects that you find with the TAKE command. For example, TAKE THE APPLE. Some objects can't be taken because they're too heavy, or require you to solve a particular puzzle before they can be collected. You can only carry so much weight and bulk at any one time, but you can carry more bulk by putting some items inside containers. For example, you may find a sack, put the objects in the sack, and carry it instead of carrying all the objects separately. In general, objects inside containers will always be directly accessible while you're carrying the container. When you want to stop carrying an object, DROP it.

It's important to EXAMINE objects as you encounter them. When you examine an object, you get a more detailed description about the object that can give insight as to its features and possible uses.

You can OPEN and CLOSE certain objects. TURN, PULL, PUSH, LOOK IN, LOOK UNDER, and many other verbs are possible. For example, you could CLIMB a ladder, PUSH a button, or CLEAN a dish. The game will let you know when it's unclear about how you want to manipulate an object. If you asked it to SWEEP THE FLOOR WITH THE CHAIR, it might respond by saying "I don't know how to sweep the floor with that," but might respond a little more favorably to using a broom.

You can interact with multiple objects at the same time by using the words AND, BUT, ALL, and others. For example, TAKE THE

BOTTLE AND THE BOOK, DROP ALL BUT HAMBURGER AND FRIES, PUT THE CUP, THE SHOE, AND THE NEWSPAPER IN THE SACK.

When the game is unsure of what to do when you type an ambiguous command, it will try to figure out what you mean anyway. If only one object would make sense with the command, the game will make an assumption about the object and continue as though you've supplied it. For example:

>ATTACK THE DRAGON
(with the sword)
You swing the sword at the dragon, killing him. He falls to the ground unceremoniously.

If the game can't figure out exactly what you meant, it will question you for more information. You can supply the information the game requests, or enter an entirely new command. For example:

>TURN THE BOLT
What do you want to turn it with?

>THE WRENCH
Which wrench do you mean, the monkey wrench or the crescent wrench?

>CRESCENT
The wrench fits perfectly on the bolt. You turn it and the gate opens, revealing a pathway to the north.

You can also refer to objects with words like IT and THEM to refer to the last objects you used in a command.

TAKE THE BALL
PUT IT IN THE BOX
TAKE THE PAPER AND THE SOCK
PUT THEM ON THE TABLE

The following list of commands should give you a general idea of the ones that you'll be able to use while playing the game. You might not encounter any of these objects in the game; it's just a sampling to illustrate how your commands might be structured.

TAKE
LOOK IN THE CABINET
OPEN THE SAFE
TURN THE OVEN ON
PUSH THE BLUE BUTTON
EXAMINE THE FLOWER

DROP BALL
WEAR THE RING
TAKE OFF THE RING
GET IN THE TAXI
GO NORTH
GIVE MICHAEL THE RADIO
ASK MICHAEL ABOUT THE MACHINE
NW
INVENTORY
READ THE LEAFLET
TYPE "PASSWORD" ON THE KEYBOARD
TYPE 6789 ON THE NUMBER PAD
TAKE THE KEY. UNLOCK THE DOOR. GO SOUTH.

OTHER CHARACTERS

You may encounter other characters in The Great Archeological Race. You can interact with them just like with people in real life. You can GIVE things to a character, SHOW something to a character, ATTACK a character, and so on. You can also query a character for information:

ASK THE DOCTOR ABOUT THE MEDICINE

You can also give commands to a character, telling them to do something. To address a character and give him a command, type the character's name, then a comma, and then a regular command. For example:

LARRY, GIVE ME THE BASEBALL
LARRY, GO SOUTH
LARRY, TELL ME ABOUT THE GUN

You shouldn't expect a character to follow your commands blindly; usually they have minds of their own and won't automatically do what you ask.

TIME

Time in The Great Archeological Race passes only in response to the commands you type; nothing happens with the game is waiting for you to enter a command. Each turn takes about one minute of game time. You can display the current time by typing TIME, the current day by typing DAY, or get both by typing DATE. If you do something that takes more time than a regular command, the game time will be updated accordingly. If you want to wait because you think something is going to happen, type WAIT (or Z).

SCORE

The Great Archeological Race gives you points when you solve certain puzzles or do something of merit in the game. The score is intended to give you a measure of how well you're doing; it isn't necessary to get the maximum score to win the game. You can see your score by typing SCORE.

UNKNOWN WORDS

The Great Archeological Race uses many more words than it understands. You may see something in a room's description that you somehow can directly manipulate. For example, "You can see that the moon is full and blue from your position in the clearing." If the game doesn't understand the word "moon" when you type it, you can pretty much assume that it isn't needed to play or win the game. In most cases, such words and descriptions are there to provide a more realistic atmosphere.

SAVING THE GAME

It's important to save your game at regular intervals while playing. If you should break or lose an important object, or get killed (gulp!) making it impossible to finish the game, you can restore a previously saved game instead of restarting the game from scratch. Saving stores a snapshot of the current game in a file on disk; you can save a game as often as you wish, assigning different names for each saved game. You may create an unlimited number of saved games at any point during the adventure, limited only by your available disk space.

To save a game, type SAVE. The game will prompt you for a filename (you must supply a valid filename for your computer system) and then write the file to disk. If you choose a filename that is already being used on your disk, the file will be overwritten (the game asks for a confirmation). The game will tell you if a game was not saved for some reason.

After you've saved a game, the current game continues as normal. Saving a game takes up no turns or time.

To load a previously saved game and resume play at the point when the game was saved, type RESTORE. The game will ask you to supply the filename of a saved game, and then the game state will be restored to exactly the position it was in when you saved it.

IMPORTANT COMMANDS

Here's a list and descriptions of important commands that you can use with The Great Archeological Race.

- AGAIN (or G):** Repeats your last command.
- DATE:** Displays the current day and time in the game.
- DAY:** Displays the current day in the game.
- INVENTORY (or I):** Shows a list of all the items you are currently carrying.
- LOOK (or L):** Gives you a full description of the room.
- OOPS:** Allows you to correct the spelling of a word in the last command. When the game issues the complaint, "I don't know the word <word>," you can type OOPS followed by the correct spelling of the word, instead of retyping the entire command. You can only type one word after OOPS, and it only works on the previous command. This is useful for correcting a long command where you made a misspelling.
- QUIT:** Stops the game and returns you to your computer's operating system. You must SAVE your game first if you want to continue from that point when you play again.
- RESTART:** Starts the game over from the beginning.
- RESTORE:** Restores a position previously saved with the SAVE command.
- SAVE:** Saves the current game in a file on disk. You can use the RESTORE command to retrieve a saved game and continue play at the point at which the game was saved.
- SCORE:** Displays the current score, maximum possible score, and the number of turns you have taken so far.
- SCRIPT:** The SCRIPT command writes everything on the screen (your commands and the game's responses) to a disk file as the game's being played. The game will prompt you for a filename to which the script will be written. A script file can be viewed and printed like

any other text file. UNSCRIPTS stops making the transcript.

TERSE (or BRIEF): Sets the game in TERSE mode. The game will display short descriptions of locations you've already seen. You can always get a full description of a location with LOOK.

TIME: Displays the current time in the game.

UNSCRIPT: Turns off a transcript being made with the SCRIPT command.

VERBOSE: Sets the game in VERBOSE mode. The game will display full descriptions of locations, regardless of whether you've seen them before or not. You can always get a full description of a location with LOOK.

VERSION: Give the current version and serial number of the game.

WAIT (or Z): Causes time to pass. Since nothing happens while the game is waiting to accept a command, this forces time to pass while you wait for something to happen.

COMMAND EDITING AND RECALL

On most computer systems, the game has a special feature that allows you to use your keyboard's editing keys to modify an input line as you are typing it, and to recall commands that you have previously typed for editing and re-entry. The specific keys you use vary depending on your system, and some systems don't support this feature at all; see the system-specific documentation for more information.

While you are typing a command, the game allows you to go back and change part of the line without "backspacing" over the rest of the line to get there. Simply use your left and right cursor-arrow keys to move the cursor to any point in the command line. The BACKSPACE key deletes a character to the left of the cursor, and the DELETE key deletes the character at which the cursor is located.

You can insert new text at the cursor simply by typing the text. You can press the RETURN (or ENTER) key with the cursor at any point in the line (the cursor need not be at the end of the

command line).

You can recall the previous command that you entered by pressing the up cursor-arrow key; pressing the up-arrow key again recalls the command before that, and so forth. Using the down cursor-arrow key reverses this process, until you get back to the original command that you were typing before you started pressing the up-arrow key.

Once you have recalled a prior command, you can re-enter it by pressing the RETURN key. In addition, you can edit the command, as described above, before entering the command.

The exact number of commands the game retains depends on the lengths of the commands, but more than a hundred of the most recent commands are generally retained at any given time.

REVIEW MODE

Another special feature that the game supports on many computer systems is called "review mode." The game remembers text as it "scrolls" off the screen; by invoking recall mode, you can go back and look at text that is no longer visible on the screen. On most systems, review mode is activated by pressing the function key F1.

Once in review mode, the status line that is normally at the top of the screen will be replaced by the review mode help line. This line shows the keystrokes you use to view previous screenfuls of text, and also shows you the key that exits review mode and resumes normal game play (this is generally the game key that you used to activate review mode).

While in review mode, your screen becomes a window onto the text that the game has stored away. When you first activate review mode, you are looking at the very bottom of this text, which is the screenful of text that was just displayed. Use the up and down cursor-arrow keys to move the window up and down. Pressing the up cursor-arrow key moves the window up one line, showing you one line of text that has scrolled off the screen. Most systems also provide keys to move up and down by a full screenful (also called a "page.")

To resume game play, press the same key that you used to activate review mode.

The number of screenfuls of text that the game stores away for review depends on how much text is actually on each screen, since

the game has a limit on the number of characters it can store, not on the number of lines. Normally, more than twenty of the most recent screens of text are saved and available for review at any given time.