The 8-Bit Video Game Gauntlet

v1.2 (2024-12-12)
By DataPacRat



You've got Pac-Man Fever, you're doing the Donkey Kong, you're goin' Berzerk, and you're singing Froggy's Lament.

In other words, you're about to live through a variety of pixelated 1980s video games. Not just by playing them, but by jumping into whatever character the player usually controls, and running around or flying your ship or the like.

(Unless otherwise noted, all standard Gauntlet rules apply, including losing access to all your previous purchases save for your Body Mod, and failing the Gauntlet not ending your Chain.)

Starting Budget: 0 Colorful Pixels

Installation

You find yourself nearly disembodied, a mere point of light (you may take this pixel as an altform if you wish) floating through a multidimensional grid of CRT screens. Sorted by year, name, and hardware, each one shows a different video game, and is accompanied by whatever instructions, artwork, or other feelies the game came with.

Diving into any screen brings you into the game, taking the form of the hero-sprite. Each becomes an altform, usable in both later games and later Jumps.

Unless modified by Scenarios, DIP Switches, or Drawbacks, all you have to do to win the Gauntlet is win ten games without losing any of them.



Scenarios

Take **Baseline**, and as many others as you wish. Each one you take and complete provides **&** **Tickets** to spend on **Rewards** at the end of the Gauntlet.

* **Baseline** (mandatory): Live through at least 10 games, of your choice, in the order you wish.
  - **Arcade Museum**: Live through at least 100 games of your choice.
    - **You're Kilo'ing It**: At least 1024.
      - **Gotta Play 'Em All**: Live through /all/ the games of this era.
* **Randomized Selection**: You no longer get to pick which games you'll play.
* **Randomized Order**: Select all your games before starting to play. You no longer pick which order you play your games in; no more easing into things with Lunar Lander or Moon Patrol before graduating to Tempest or Castlevania III.
* **High Score**: You not only have to survive, but beat every game's default top scores.
* **World Record**: You must at least tie at least one world-record score. (A perfect game of Pac-Man will do.)
* **Easter Egg Hunt**: "Ready Player One" built a whole book out of this. All you have to do is dig up every secret in every game you count towards your total.

DIP Switches

Take any, (almost) all, or none.

* IRQ Interrupt Request (incompatible with Ironman Mode): While you're in the middle of another Jump, you may be able to start this Gauntlet by starting to play one of its games and consciously deciding to go inside. (May not be available in all Chains; check with your Benefactor. Some conditions apply. Side-effects may include isekai syndrome, protagonist mentality, and excessive enjoyment of the entertainment.)
* Ironman Mode: Gain 1000 CP, and your previous Jumps' purchases. Lose the standard Gauntlet protection that failing the Gauntlet does not fail your entire chain. Enjoy a minimum duration of at least ten years.
    - Captain J Mode: Live from April 1st, 1978 (the arrival of Space Invaders) until December 9th, 1993 (the day before Doom); every so often diving into video games.
    - Crossover Mode: Some games' settings have their own Jumps. With your Benefactors' permission, you might use one of them as a supplement, keeping all points separate.
* Chain Modifier: Before every following Jump, you have to run a gauntlet of living through one or more video games, with no other Perks or Items - nothing more than your Body-Mod form and skills. The upside is that this counts as an extra Scenario, with the

extra Tickets to match. The downside is that if you fail to win your games, then in the following Jump, everything you've gained from this Gauntlet will be locked out for the duration.

* That One Game: Instead of visiting multiple games, choose one single title (and its direct sequels, if desired). Scenarios, Tickets, and Rewards are unavailable, and only Drawbacks relevant to your chosen game may be taken.

* Tutorial Mode: Many games are rather harder to survive on the inside than with a joystick; and a cautious Jumper might not want to risk visiting them. Activating this toggle removes that risk, by preventing losing a game from losing the Gauntlet - they simply don't count towards your attempted total. You also receive only half of your Reward Tickets.

* Reboot!: If you prefer, instead of your avatars becoming altforms, they can be stored on one or more disks (between the size of a badge and a frisbee), which can be used by anyone wearing them.

* Cyberspace is Real: This sets the whole Gauntlet within a larger cyberspace full of computers, games, and other programs; similar to the ones described in Tron, Reboot, and Kid Radd. (… or less similar, if P-Zombies are still running around.)

* People, Not P-Zombies: This converts everyone else in the Gauntlet from P-Zombies (lacking any more consciousness than those few lines of code that described them in their original games) into entities with some degree of self-awareness. (At least until you blow them away. You monster.) (Oh, don't worry; the next time the game restarts, they'll be back to normal and just fine, if maybe a bit grumpy.)
* An Animated Life: Instead of running around in the high-contrast, fully pixelated environment of the original games, you'll find yourself within the settings of the cartoons based on them, ala the Saturday Supercade or Captain N. (Expect both shenanigans /and/ hijinks.)



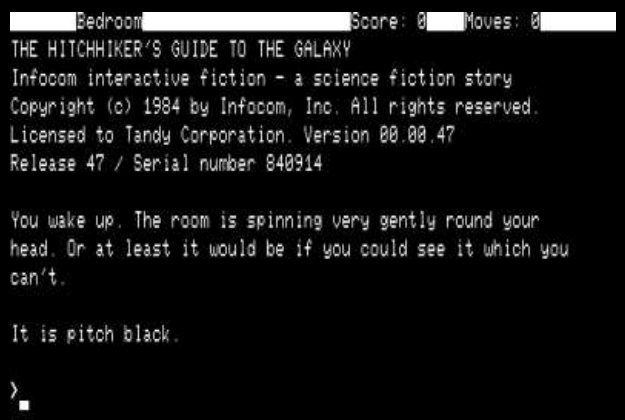


* Playable Epilogue: Once you've finished all your Scenarios, you can stay and keep playing the same way,

for as long as you like, without losses booting you from the Gauntlet.

* The Mainframe Legacy: Spacewar on the PDP! Tennis for Two on an oscilloscope! Tic-tac-toe on two tons of transistors! If you're dedicated enough to the genre to be passionate about pre-Pong pastimes, knock yourself out.

* Point and Click: … Fine, yes, technically many interactive fiction titles can count as 8-Bit games.



* The Indie Renaissance: It's hard to say when the 8-bit era ended; perhaps as soon as the first 16-bit console came out, maybe as late as when Doom was released. But that hasn't stopped people from making retro-inspired games on everything from emulations of the original hardware to the PICO-8 virtual engine. You may optionally include these in the games you can choose from.



Drawbacks

* **Bad Translations (+25 CP)**: All your base are belong to us.

  - **Untranslated (+50 CP)**: すべてのゲームを元のクリンゴン語でお楽しみください。

* **Bootleg Remakes (+25 CP)**: Get ready to play Mighty Mouth instead of Pac-Man, Apple-oids instead of Asteroids, Killa Gorilla instead of Donkey Kong, and all manner of other off-brand imitations. They won't inherently be any harder, but the optimized play-styles and tricks you're used to won't apply.

* **GORILLA.BAS (+25 CP)**: Not all games from this era can be described as "good". Some are, in fact, quite amateurish and terrible. In addition to all the other games you'll be playing, you have to suffer through interminable rounds of solitaire, Snake, Minesweeper, and the like; and, yes, gorillas throwing bananas at each other.

  - **License to Suck (+25 CP)**: Transformers that don't transform! Superheroes that don't supe! Use your sonic screwdriver to shoot smiley faces! Swap between shallow, repetitive gameplay and unnecessarily difficult slogging!

* **Poorly-Synthesized Speech (+25 CP)**: "Stay awhile. Stay… forever!" Stephen Hawking, eat your heart out.

- 8-Bit Audio (+25 CP): The only sounds you can make are limited to standard arcade bleeps and bloops.

* The Smell of Coffee and Cigarettes (+25 CP): Always present, always annoying, and you won't get used to it.

* Atari Joystick (+50 CP): You can only face and move in the eight cardinal directions.

  - Old NEWS (+50 CP): Did I say eight? I meant four.

* The Grind (+50 CP): These games are mostly from before the "clever" invention of spending hour upon hour of Make Number Go Up. …Mostly. Now, if there's any stat that you think you can improve, from your high score to your accuracy to your time taken, you'll find it practically impossible to resist working on bettering it.

* Inventory Issues (+50 CP): Carry no more than half what you otherwise could.

  - Overloaded (+50 CP): One thing at a time.

* Itchy Trigger Finger (+50 CP): So many targets, so little - whoops, did you just shoot all your power-ups and that kidnapped girl you were trying to rescue?

* Protagonist Mentality (+50 CP): You just can't resist rescuing any princesses you come across, diving into sidequests, annoying jaywalkers, etc.

- Cold War Fever (+50 CP): A different sort of black-and-white vision. There's the Good Guys of democracy and capitalism and apple pie, and the Bad Guys of dictators and communism and borscht; and as far as you're concerned, never the twain shall meet.
  - Constricted Horizons (+50 CP): The opposite of zeerust; some now-obvious ideas just won't really occur to you: social media, smartphones, the web, wifi, on-demand streaming…

* VGA Vision (+50 CP): Everything looks blocky to you, with a resolution of 640x480, at best.
  - Black-and-Green Vision (+50 CP): Or, if you prefer, black-and-amber, black-and-white, or Virtual Boy's black-and-red.
  - CGA Seeing (+50 CP): 640x480? Hah! Try 160x100, and no more than 16 colors!
    - Text Mode (+50 CP): AKA "ASCII Nightmare".
  - Two-dimensional Perspective (+50 CP): Goodbye depth perception.
* Cheat Detection (+100 CP): You can't take other games' altforms until after the Gauntlet.
* Digital Vulnerability (+100 CP): Yes, even in the 1980s there were viruses, worms, and other such hazards. Keep an eye out, because at least one is going to start infecting one of the

games you're in - and if you're not careful, you, as well.

* **"Don't copy that floppy" (+100 CP)**: From your perspective, glitchy copy protection causes random games' in-game physics to break down every so often - and not in your favor.

* **The Golden Age… (+100 CP)**: … of science-fiction is "12 years old", and now so are you.

  - **Jocks vs Nerds (+50 CP)**: In the 1980s, being a nerd still meant something; liking comics, scifi, and so on meant you'd get beat up, not that you expected to found a billion-dollar company. Consider this a social malus with all non-nerds for the duration.

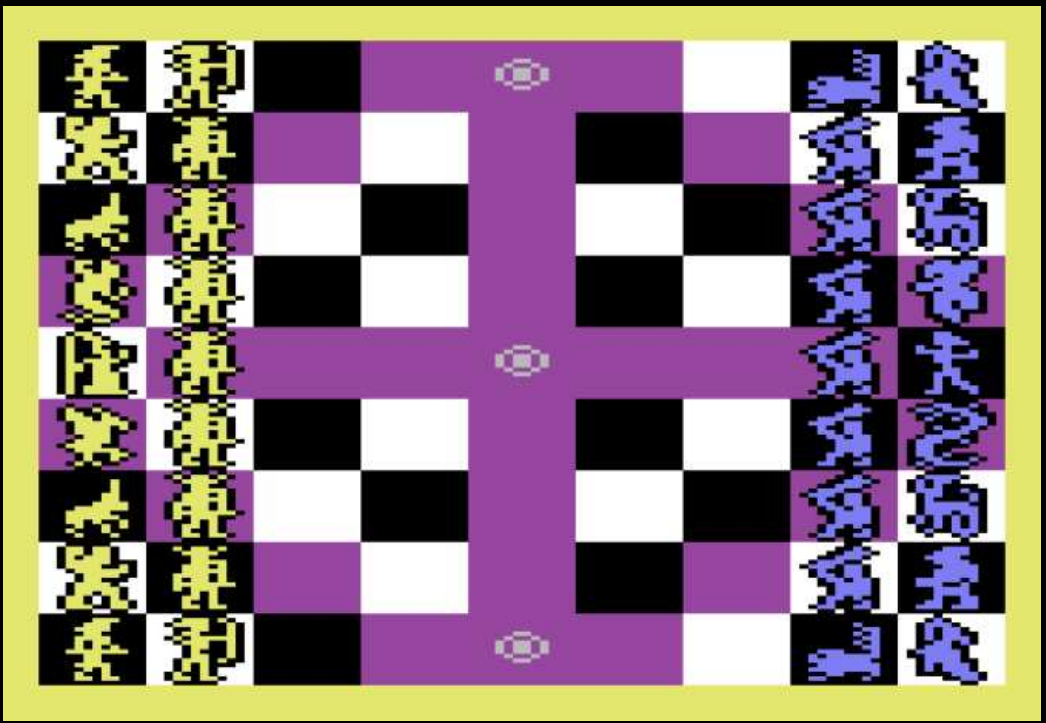
* **Longplay (+100 CP)**: Your selected games now have to include several that are similar to the Ultima series, Dizzy's Adventures, Zelda, or Final Fantasy; that is, games that take more than a full day even for an expert to finish.





* NOOb (+100 CP): You revert to your pre-Chain skills (if any) for the duration. (Consider these bonus points if you're just starting out.)
* Ninja Attack! (+100 CP): It's hard to overstate how popular ninjas were in the '80's, and in how many places they ended up. It seems a few of them were left over, as now they'll be infesting every game-environment you visit.
* The Cambrian System Explosion (+150 CP): Before the winnowing down to Windows, Apple, and Unix, there were dozens of incompatible system architectures rising and falling. Now, in order for any game to count towards your total, you'll have to play at least half-a-dozen subtly different variations of it.
  - Good Games, Bad Ports (+50 CP): And some of those variants are not-so-subtly different, and not in a good way, and not in your favor.
* Hard Mode (+150 CP): If a game has difficulty settings, they're turned against you. If it doesn't, assume Murphy's Law is in full force.
  - Nintendo Hard (+200 CP): Not only is Murphy's Law in effect, it's actively trying to force you to lose. (You get to play the /real/ SMB2.)
    - ~~E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial~~: (As a mercy to everyone, this option is unavailable.)

* **Player Two (+150 CP)**: By default, you play through this Gauntlet solo. With this **Drawback**, you get to "enjoy" the company of another intelligent person, who's doing their best to beat you at your own games.
* **Playing the Player (+150 CP)**: Many games, there's one hero per player, which is generally easy for everyone concerned. Some are more strategic, with the player fielding anything from an adventuring party through a set of chess-pieces to whole armies. Now in such games, instead of being in charge of all of them - you'll be a single pawn, or whatever the local equivalent is. Don't worry, the abstract force that runs your side won't do any worse than you would have on your own; but you won't be in control of the moves it makes, and will only have your own, limited perspective to watch the play from.



* **Too Awesome to Use (+150 CP)**: Your hoarding instincts are magnified to the point of trying to hold only everything you can collect, even when you're facing the final boss.

* **The Hacker Crackdown (+200 CP)**: The Law is after you. All of the Law. Don't worry about what you're actually guilty of, they'll come up with something.

* **Hardware Limitations (+200 CP)**: Galaxian only let you have one bullet on the screen at a time; the sprites in Kangaroo flickered; some games' CPUs could only calculate during the vertical blanking interval. Whatever you think you should be able to do, you can probably do about half that.

* **Memory Swapping (+200 CP)**: If you have 64kB of memories, and your processor can only access 8kB at a time, what do you do? Point your CPU at 8kB at a time, and swap to a new bank when you need other things. With this, for the duration of the Gauntlet, you can access no more than 1/8th of your memories at a time, and it will be annoyingly awkward to switch which eighth you're using.

* **Uncompressed Time (+200 CP)**: Some games only take hours, but feel like they last for years. Now, for you, they will. From the months of M.U.L.E. to the years of WW2 sims to the century of Dragonriders of Pern, whatever the in-setting duration of the game is, that's how long the game will last, for you. (And you will find yourself taking at least one such game.)

* **Use Thing on Thing (+200 CP)**: With a good text interpreter, interactive fiction and point-and-click adventures can figure out most anything you want to do! …You no longer have a good interpreter, and will find yourself frustrated when attempting even the most basic tasks, let alone anything as complicated as trying to 'walk east' instead of 'go east'.

* **The 16-Bit Invasion (+400 CP)**: Times change, Moore's Law ticks on, and what was once mind-bogglingly impressive gets tossed in the bit-bucket. Before you leave, while you're still limited to your 8-Bit self, you'll face a gauntlet (small-g) of opponents who aren't just twice as good as any you've met before, but are as-good squared.



Perks

* Chiptunes (FREE): Summon 8-bit songs out of thin air, whether specific ones you want to hear or generally appropriate environmental music.
* 1337 Skillz (25 CP): NEET-level skill at playing video games, as if you'd spent far too many school-years pushing a joystick instead of a pencil
* An Extra Guy (25 CP each): A one-shot one-up. You can spend a 1up from another source to refresh it, letting the other 1up recharge however it usually does. May be bought multiple times.
* Blow on the Cartridge (25 CP): Like The Fonz, fix glitching things with the simplest of efforts.
* Attract Screen (50 CP): Toggle this on, and whatever you're doing, no matter how mundane, will inexplicably start drawing an audience.
* The Bump 'n Grind (50 CP): Skilled arcaders don't just tap buttons, they dance with the machine, expanding their self-conception to include it. Not only do you have intuitive expertise with controls, but your tools can literally count as part of you.
* Dithering (50 CP): Who'd imagine you could get so few colors to look so photorealistic? You can take any hardware and push it all the way to its limits, and just a tiny bit beyond.

- Shareware Versions (+100 CP): If someone is selling an expensive version of something you want, then with a little digging you can find a just-barely-usable version for free. It only lasts a short time, and you'll have to put up with nagging urging you to get the real thing, but it may be just enough for your needs.

* Encyclopedic Knowledge of Video Games (50 CP): As if you'd read through all those video-game magazines and reference books.

* Enemy Loot Drops (50 CP): Even when it doesn't make sense, when you KO or kill someone (or something), there's surprisingly good odds you'll find some coins or ammo, or on rare occasions, power-ups.

* Mini-Map (50 CP): You can call up a mental HUD which displays up to fifty metres around you, identifying allies, enemies, and terrain.

* Palette Swapping (50 CP): For all you crafters; whatever you can make, from a sword to a pack of wolves, you know how to make a better version of, in a different color.

  - Sprite Swapping (+50 CP): And if you really want, you can make that sword /look/ like a pack of wolves, and vice versa (without changing their actual nature).

    - Sprite Editing (+50 CP): Want to merge two sprites into a bizarre amalgamation that will make all the Satanic Panic believers clutch their pearls

and exclaim they were right all along? This, and many more possibilities, are available with this digital version of "Polymorph Other". (I'll even throw in "Polymorph Self", in case you want to join in the 'fun'.)



* Pause Button (50 CP): Freeze time, at will. You can't move, either.
  - Konami Code (+50 CP): You're still rooted in place while paused, but you can move enough to shuffle your inventory, eat power-ups, read books, and so forth.
* The Proto-Fandom (50 CP): Choose any topic; within a year, piles of people will realize how much they're interested in it, start up their own zines, conventions, communities, and such; and as they continue growing, will acknowledge you as one of the founders. If you nudge things just right, you just might take over a vital industry, like furries and IT.
* Difficulty Toggle (100 CP): Some arcades had hidden hardware switches to make them slightly easier (to attract more customers) or harder (to

extract more quarters per customer). You can apply similar nudges to any quantifiable real-world tasks.

* High-Density Storage (100 CP): Did you know that it was once possible to double a floppy disk's capacity using nothing but a hole punch? Now you can double the volume of any storage space just by touching it. (Just once per space, you cheater.)

* Hitbox Tricks (100 CP): Mentally draw a box around your foes; as long as you hit the box, it's as good as hitting any part of them. Draw another box around your largest part, usually your torso; unless your foes hit it, they've missed you entirely. (It also applies when you're operating a vehicle, for when your wings are getting hit.)

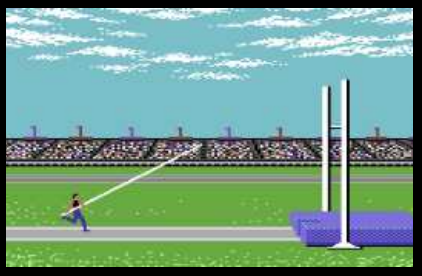
* "I Survived the Atari Apocalypse" (100 CP): In 1983, greed and shovelware nearly killed video games … But, eventually, they rose from the ashes. Now, so can you. When reduced to single-digit HP (or equivalent), you not only fully recover, but come back tougher and more creative - just like gaming did.

* Life Skills (100 CP): The video-game version of Basic Training: how to run and jump and shoot, including at the same time. Plus just enough riding, driving, piloting, punching, and sports skills to avoid embarrassing yourself.

  - Sportsball (+25 CP each): Professional level ability, at one sport of your choice.

- World Games (+125 CP): Training good enough to compete in events at the Olympics. (/All/ the events.)





* Loading Screen (100 CP): Almost but not quite a "Someone Else's Problem field"; when you activate it, however exciting events may appear to be, nothing actually significant will happen until you turn it off. (Only lasts until you do something more than stand or sit still, capped at one day.)
* Minus World (100 CP): You know a trick to pass through doors in a special way, leading to a strange, funhouse-mirror dimension. If you don't find an exit, after five minutes there, you're booted back out where you came from. (It's a new world every time, and is thus unsuitable for storage.)
* Pixel-Perfect Perception (100 CP): Sometimes you have to find a needle in a haystack; sometimes it's a needle in a stack of needles. Luckily for you, plot-relevant items just seem to pop out in your vision.
* 1up (200 CP): You have an extra life! Usable once per Jump or decade, whichever comes second.

- Pushing Reset Solves All Problems (+100 CP): You can now use your

1up once per Jump or decade, whichever comes /first/.

* **Import Saved Game (200 CP)**: Isn't it weird how after you finish leveling-up in Ultima I, when you start Ultima II you're back to being a beginner? Now you can take someone's skills (including your own) and copy them into physical form - a floppy disk - which can then be transferred into someone else. Takes about a minute either way.

* **Paradroid Body-Surfing (200 CP)**: Want to wander around as one of the bad-guy mooks, mini-bosses, or even the big bad themself? It'll take more risk and effort the more powerful they are compared to your current host, but with skill and luck even a beginning warrior just might take over the end-game dragon.

* **Rollover Bugging (200 CP)**: If 1+1=2, what does 255+1=? 0, of course! If someone is at the extreme of any scale - strength, intelligence, even a personality trait - and that offends you, all you have to do is nudge them one notch further, and they'll suddenly find themselves at the opposite end. ("The words of Gandhi are backed with… NUCLEAR WEAPONS!")

* **Save-Game Slot (200 CP)**: Possibly even better than a 1up, you can mentally choose a moment to 'save', and if you don't like how the next ten minutes go, roll back to that moment and try again. Activating the roll-back has a cool-down period of 1

day, because nobody likes a save-scummer.

- Save-Scumming (+200 CP): Go back to the ten-minute save-point as many times as you can stand.

* Protagonist-Summoning Portal (250 CP): Why do all the work yourself, when you can con… er, convince some other schlub to do it for you? Up to once a year, choose a quest and draw a circle; someone will appear inside who just might be able to get the job done. (They'll at least give it their best shot.) Their odds of success go up the more closely they (and you, as their summoner) follow the standard tropes. Feel free to zap them home when they're done.

* +++ ATH (400 CP): In any place that you could be kicked out of - a bar, a fantasy pocket-realm, a single game in cyberspace - if you die, you're instead just 'disconnected' and find yourself outside.



Items

During this Gauntlet, any you can use in a game will show up next to your starting point. If stolen, lost or destroyed, will reappear in your Warehouse or Inventory after one full school-week (next week's Saturday).



* **Inventory (FREE)**: It's a backpack.
* **Arcade Snacks (25 CP)**: A free-for-you counter of unending candy, pizza, pop, and suchlike. Quality's what you'd expect with a captive market, but hey, at least it's cheap.
* **Fan Zines (25 CP)**: Monthly mags on you and everything you're focused on, by and for enthusiasts.
* **Game Guides (25 CP)**: A library of gaming magazines and books, covering all the details that've been written about 8-bit games.

* **The Jargon File (25 CP)**: Lists translations of any collection of words into terms you can grok.

* **Dial-Up Bulletin Board System (50 CP)**: "It Just Works", regardless of where you are or what you have available; though it may take some time for FidoNet's echomail to get very far, up to a week for the most distant part of the inhabited universe.

* **Hall of Fame (50 CP)**: Type in the name of a skill; this display screen reveals the names of the ten best individuals in the local universe at it.



* **Personal BASICs (50 CP each)**: Some things are so vital that they're practically built into your own source code. Choose from these essentials, each one as unobtrusive and reliable as your favorite game-mechanic.

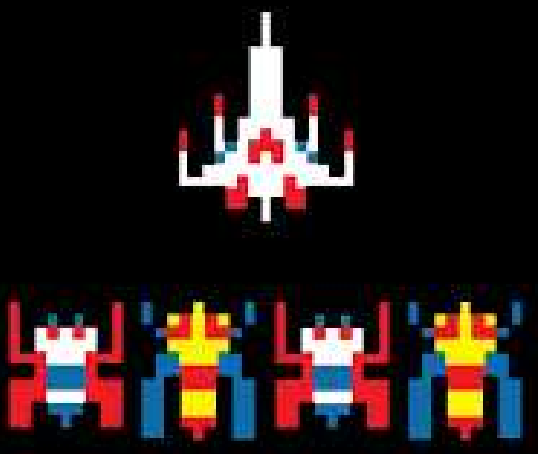
    - **Basic Storage**: It's a backpack. … Or a suitcase, purse, safari vest, or whatnot. Which is bigger on the inside.

- **Basic Flight**: A jetpack by default, but if you're feeling fancy, go for winged boots, a hoverboard, or a magic carpet. (Half price if you just want super-jump boots.)
- **Basic Blaster**: It's a gun that fires bolts of… energy… stuff. Look, do you want a physics lesson or do you want to shoot things? You can pick the color, and decide whether you want a pistol, rifle, or arm-mounted cannon.
- **Basic Melee**: Literally everyone who was alive at this time wanted a lightsaber, and you can finally have one. (… Fine, fine, if you insist, you can have an e-mace or golden axe or whatever. But we all know you're getting a lightsaber.)
- **Basic Shield**: For when you feel like keeping everyone at arm's reach. A force-field bubble generator; choose either a techno-belt or a classic fantasy-style shield.
- **Basic Multitool**: It's a crowbar, it's a hammer, it's a drill, it's a firestarter… look, it's a super-advanced, ultra-portable stick that anyone from a caveman to a post-apocalyptic robot can do stuff with. If it were any more useful, it'd be a cheat-code.
- **Basic Ride**: Choose what suits your vibe, from motorcycle to jousting ostrich. (For anything larger, see Shmup Fighter.) If mechanical, it can derez into a convenient baton.

If it's alive, it can "dive" into your digital soul and chill there - no worries, your storage partitions can handle it without any side-effects (unless you want there to be).



* **Quarters & Tokens (50 CP)**: All the money you could want, in the form of a change machine that you don't have to feed bills into. May take some time for however many quarters you want to be expelled.
* **Generic Game Gadgetry (100 CP)**: Vending machines that provide Lazur™ guns, Armur™, Bullut™ Boxes, Healthur™ Packs, Powur-Ups™, etc. Will accept any currency. If you're out of cash, they provide mini-games providing credit at roughly a penny every five seconds or so.
* **Polybius Cabinet (100 CP)**: So fun, once someone starts playing, they won't (voluntarily) stop. Includes blueprints and research papers.
* **The Shmup Fighter (100 CP)**: One standard video-game vehicle (not necessarily a spaceship; tanks and planes are popular), large enough to hold one standard pilot, equipped with one standard blaster-gun.
  - **Metamorphic (+50 CP)**: In case you don't feel like showing off your spacecraft during WW2, reskin it to look local. Can also derez the machine into its control-grip, for your convenience.



- **Upgradable Upgrades (+100 CP)**: Better blasters, more guns, shields, wingman drones, warp-jump escapes - any improvement you make at least once, you can reactivate at a button-press.

* **The Labyrinth (200 CP)**: Want to delay someone from getting somewhere? Just call this up and it'll get itself between them and where they want to be. If you're not using it for anything else, you can leave it protecting the entrance to your Warehouse. You can set it to match any maze-game you've completed; or, by default, leave it as a good-sized hedge maze.

* **Debug Room (1000 CP)**: Contains (non-fiat-backed) copies of every major plot-relevant item in the setting, and teleporters to each main plot area.

Grab-and-Go Items

You have to visit a specific setting to grab one of these. If you finish this Gauntlet without having picked up all your Grab-and-Gos, your CP will be refunded to purchase something else.

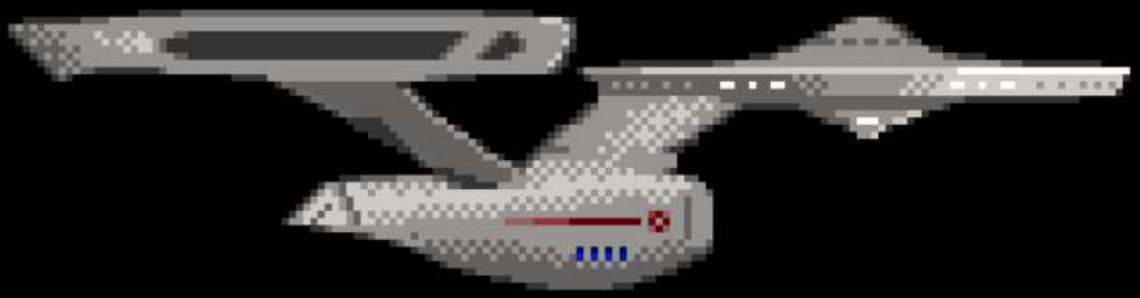
* **Specific Souvenir (25 CP each):** Jumpers tend to be inveterate looters and hoarders, grabbing every potential power-up in sight. (Sort of like a lot of game heroes…) Want to not only take something man-portable out of a game, but make it a proper **Item**, with all the fiat-backing implied? Just buy this, and make sure you're holding it at the finish of the game.



* **Specific Substance (100 or 200 CP each):** Crystite, dilithium, starla - all sorts of neat crystals can be found. (And a few other sorts of materials.) The lower price will grant fiat-backing to however much you can collect; the higher price creates a regenerating supply.

* **Specific Ship (400 CP each):** Time to join the ranks of the innumerable gamers who flew the Enterprise from sector to sector, hunting down

Klingons. … Or to acquire another good-sized piece of engineering, if you're feeling more piratical.



* **Specific Specifications (600 CP each):** The full techbase: all the manuals and references and papers and such to build everything, from the player's gear to enemy robots to the environments to the plot MacGuffins. (Along with fiat-backing for all the particular examples you're holding when the game ends.)



Companions

Digital Companions gain a mundane physical alt-form, matching their general shape, for use in future Jumps. To respawn any, insert a quarter into a Player Two slot in your Warehouse.

* Bit (FREE): Small, geometric, floaty sidekick, who can say 'yes' or 'no'.
* Multiplayer (100 CP each), up to 3: The Luigi to your Mario, the Bob to your Bub, the Jimmy to your Billy Lee. Import or create one Companion.



* **Game Sprite (50 CP each)**: Once you've rescued the princess, why not bring her with you back to the real world? Or maybe the first enemy-sprite you ever met, or a final boss; no judgement here. (Well, some judgement, if you try to grab sprites more powerful than yourself.)



* **Mook Sprites (25+ CP)**: Your followers. If outside of your direct command, roughly smart enough to turn around when they hit a wall. **25 CP** for an eight-pack, each further **25 CP** doubles their numbers. Get half as many to increase their intelligence a notch, to Saturday-morning cartoon minions; half again for a mini-boss squad.

* **The Gamer (50 CP)**: We're going meta now, baby. On buying this, you're put in mental contact with an entity outside any multiverse you can visit, who sees your entire existence as a sort of entertainment. While they have a limited sort of omniscience, they won't share (too many) spoilers; what they will do, whenever you ask, is take direct control of your whole body, puppeting you with consummate skill. May or may not be another dimension's version of your pre-Chain self.

Rewards

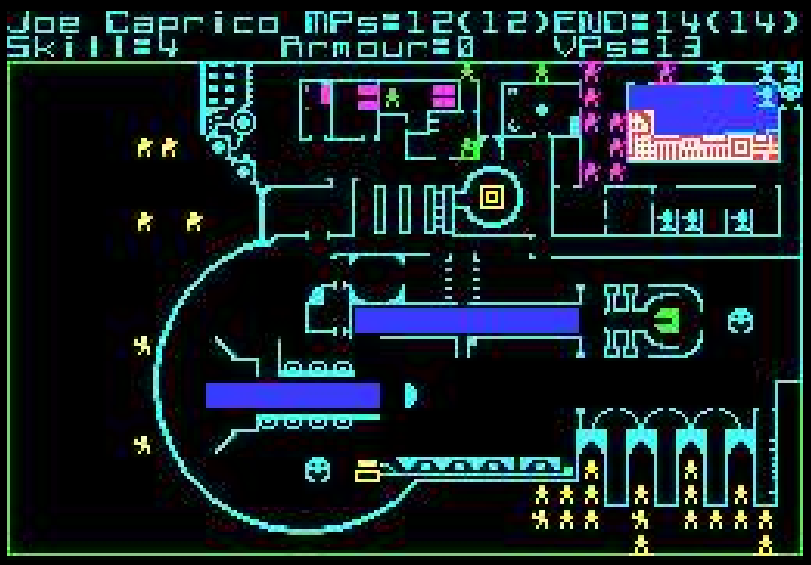
After winning this Gauntlet, you can collect your Rewards by spending the Tickets from the Scenarios you've toggled on and succeeded at.



* The Games You Played (FREE): The original game-versions of all the games you've lived through in this Gauntlet, including whatever hardware is needed to play them. Comes with one 1980s bedroom or den to complete the atmosphere.
* 25 Colorful Pixels (1 Ticket each): If you just can't resist that one Perk, Item, or Companion.
* Arcade Warehouse (1 Ticket): All the 8-bit (and earlier) arcade games,

consoles, and computer video games ever made, and all the extra bits needed for play. Attaches to your Warehouse.

* **Mass-media Tie-Ins (1 Ticket)**: Showcasing your adventures, in the form of cartoons, movies, novels, board games, RPGs….
* **Cheat Cartridges & Software (1 Ticket)**: Game Genie, Game Gear, GameShark, and similar gizmos for consoles; and the equivalent software for other platforms. Works on any 8-bit game. (Only works on actual video games, not weird situations like living through them.)
* **Universal Interface Items (1 Ticket)**: Joystick, trackball, lightgun, glove, etc. The RS-232-style plugs somehow manage to fit any digital-type device.
* **Game-Development Skills (2 Tickets)**: You could be a one-Jumper game company if you tried. It would be an exaggeration to say you have the skills of all the devs of the era, but you could certainly make a good game for any 8-bit console.
* **Repair Magnetic Media (2 Tickets)**: Have you ever felt the visceral shudder of seeing a floppy disk held to a fridge by a magnet? Relax, you have the magic touch. Specifically, it restores storage media and the information that was last held on it, as long as it isn't more sophisticated than a rotating hard drive. Holding onto a 3.5" floppy for 30 seconds would reverse entropy and get all the data back.



* **Pixelate Your Environment (2 Tickets)**: Transform the world around you into a vibrant, 8-bit wonderland, complete with pixelated landscapes and characters. Immerse yourself in retro beauty, simplify complicated structures, entertain your friends, confuse just about everyone.
* **Arcade Business (2 Tickets)**: Comes with enough part-time teens to keep the place running, and a small apartment above. Provides enough income to fund a basic indie programmer's lifestyle. "Flynn's" sign optional.
* **Next in Line (2 Tickets)**: Merely by placing a coin somewhere visible, everyone involved will accept that you have "dibs" for the next turn, from games to restaurants to promotions.
* **Seed of a Franchise (2 or 8 Tickets)**: Pick one game you've won here; in future jumps, if you wish, it will be the core of a multimedia empire as vast as the ones spawned by the plumber, the hedgehog, and the 'mons.

(Adapted to whatever the local mass-media are. With details you'd generally approve of.) For an extra 6 Tickets, all the royalties have been accumulating, and continue to accrue, in a trust fund you now control.

* Theseus Hardware Upgrading (4 Tickets): First you just swap the RAM, then the video card, the CPU, the drives, the power supply, the case, the motherboard; keep the old pieces; and you end up with two computers instead of just one. Any machine you can maintain and work on, you can keep fiddling with and end up with two of 'em. (Both are as functional as the first; any fiat-backing only sticks with one, your choice of which.)

* Computer Restoration (4 Tickets): Computer hardware doesn't last forever even under ideal circumstances, and many consoles get stored in rather unideal conditions. You can restore computer systems to mint condition by touch. This works best with CPUs whose features are at least 1,000 nm, becomes exponentially harder for anything smaller than 500 nm, and works fastest when you've taken the system apart and are poking around at the capacitors and such. If you start actually repairing or cleaning it, it goes faster still.

* Game Modder (4 Tickets): The power to control any digital game-world you find yourself in. Customize platform placements, alter enemy behaviours, even alter local physics; almost

nothing that's binary is beyond your reach.



* **The Arena (4 Tickets)**: Need a racetrack for riding ostriches, a set of hills and valleys for artillery, or just a set of karate mats? You've got it, along with stands for an audience, a concession stand, parking, and all the other accessories.
* **Personal Video Game Dimension (6 Tickets)**: Design and enjoy your own pocket dimension, a personalized 8-bit environment you can run through whenever you feel like retreating to the old-fashioned good life.
* **Bonus Stages (6 Tickets)**: Whenever you complete a Jump or Gauntlet, you will be presented with the option to run through one or more mini-games with both challenges and rewards themed after the place. (Nothing there will affect the 'real' Jump.)

* **Summon Game (6 or 12 Tickets)**: Let other people experience what you just did, and live through a video game. Arrives in the form of a purple, building-sized cube which drops from the sky, and disappears back up afterwards. Base version costs **6 Tickets**, with another **6 Tickets** if you want your cubes to transform losers into foot-long, colorful, and near-mindless slugs.

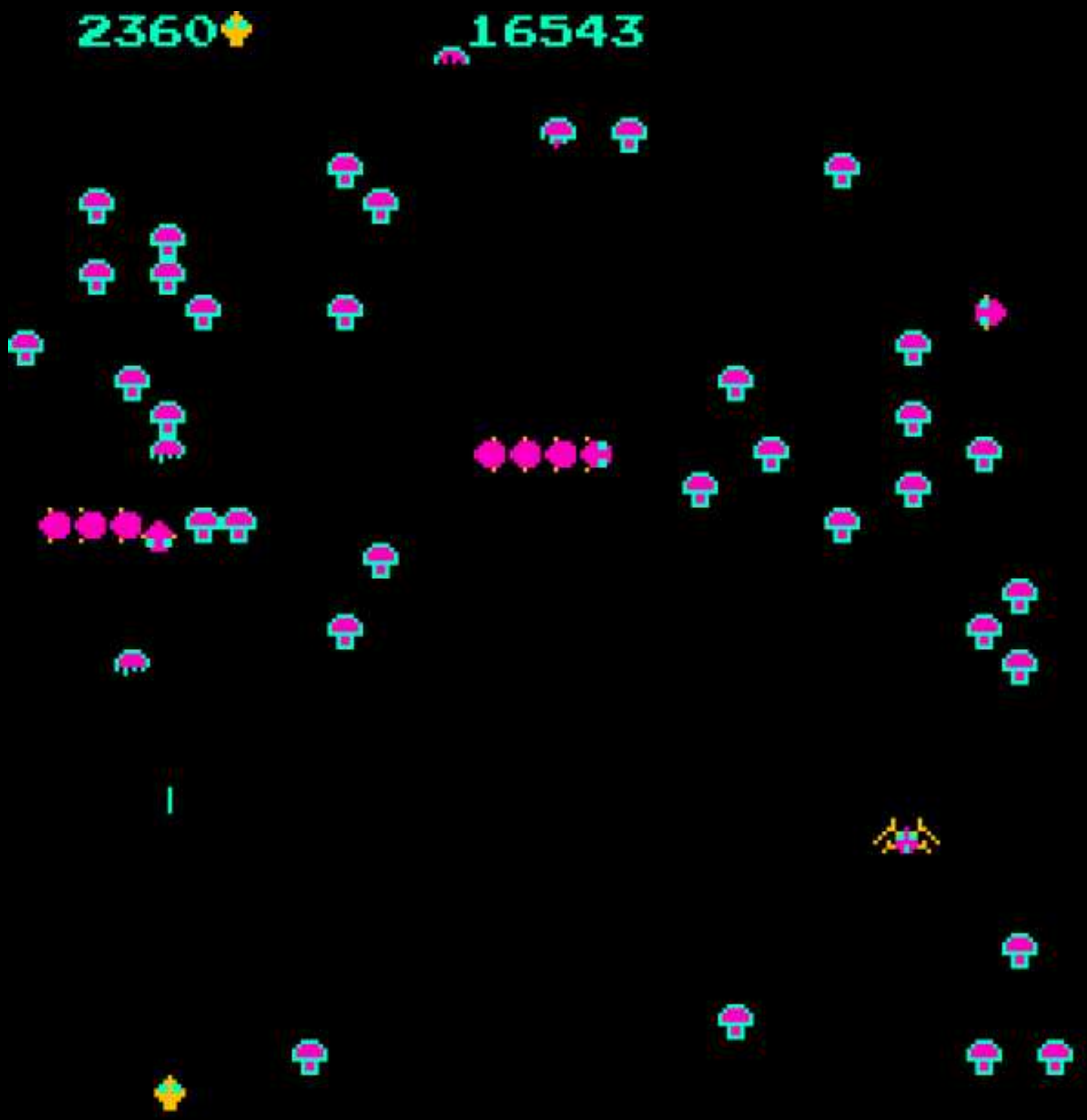
* **Completely-Not-Tron™ Digitizer Laser (8 Tickets)**: Turn a solid object or living being into data, and shove them into the nearest computer or storage device. Keeping your starship on a 3.5" floppy disk when you're not using it can really save a lot of space. (Just, you know, keep it away from magnets.)



* **Reality Hex Editor (4 Tickets)**: The Reality Genie cartridge lets you poke at the codes underlying how everything works. Unfortunately, there's no way to tell what codes correspond to what; but by writing random values, you can cause glitches in nearby physics and objects. (You

may want to have a Save Game on standby, in case you accidentally flip a chair's atoms into antimatter.)

- Hex Manual (12 Tickets): A separate Reward from the Hex Editor. Once you've read and grasped this, you'll have Great… Cosmic… Powers! Though still only an itty bitty interface, typing in one hex-code at a time.



Notes



What counts as an 8-bit game? The first 16-bit consoles started coming out in late 1987, so one-rule of thumb is to ask yourself, "can the game run on hardware that came out by mid-1987?". (That would be a 20 MHz 386, for you PC people.)

Games without defined endings, like Tetris or Missile Command, aren't the traps they might seem. To "win", all you have to do is demonstrate the same level of skill needed for more finite games. Most often, that will mean showing you can maintain steady play even at the hardest levels.

In a game without a clear protagonist (such as Tetris, Missile Command, or Qix), you will find yourself to be a disembodied intelligence, with a perspective and the ability to shove things around, but no form or substance. When you assume such an insubstantial avatar, you can only shove things around that match that game's playing pieces - line-drawing tools in Qix form, tetromino-shaped things when in Tetris form, and so forth.)

When in doubt, go with "whatever leads to the most and most-complicated fun".

A game released on multiple platforms counts as a single one, for the number you've completed. Feel free to run through 'em all, anyway, though, just for the fun of it. :-)

Changelog:

* v1.2:
  * Added Captain J Mode, Crossover Mode, That One Game, The Mainframe Legacy, Text Mode, The Smell of Coffee and Cigarettes, Cold War Fever, The Cambrian System Explosion, Good Games, Bad Ports, The 16-Bit Invasion, Inventory Issues, Overloaded, The Golden Age…, Constricted Horizons, Jocks vs Nerds, Itchy Trigger Finger, License to Suck, The Hacker Crackdown, Blow on the Cartridge, The Proto-Fandom, Dithering, Palette Swapping, Sprite Swapping, Sprite Editing, Paradroid Body-Surfing, "I Survived the Atari Apocalypse", The Bump 'n Grind, +++ ATH, Fan Zines, The Jargon File, Polybius Cabinet, Personal BASICs, Debug Room, Specific Ship, Specific Specifications, Seed of a Franchise, The Arena.
  * Renamed and tweaked The Shmup Fighter, added Metamorphic, Upgradable Upgrades.
  * Added Grab-and-Go Items subsection, moved "Specific" items under it.
  * Tweaked Mook Sprites.
  * Sorted most sections by cost.

* v1.1a: Fixed budgets of Chain Modifier and Tutorial Mode. Added 25 Colorful Pixels.

* v1.1:

  * Added section Installation.

  * Added You're Kilo'ing It, Easter Egg Hunt, Ironman Mode, An Animated Life, IRQ Interrupt Request, Playable Epilogue, Indie Renaissance, CGA Seeing, 8-Bit Audio, Hardware Limitations, Use Thing on Thing, Cheat Detection, Playing the Player, Ninja Attack!, The Grind, Uncompressed Time, Atari Joystick, Too Awesome to Use, Chiptunes, An Extra Guy, Import Saved Game, Hitbox Tricks, Konami Code, Protagonist-Summoning Portal, Rollover Bugging, Pixel-Perfect Precision, Arcade Snacks, Specific Souvenir, The Space Fighter, The Labyrinth, Mook Sprites, The Gamer, Pixelate Your Environment, Game-Development Skills, Game Modder, Personal Video Game Dimension, Theseus Hardware Upgrading, Bonus Stages.

  * Changed Insert Quarter to Continue into Tutorial Mode, and Disk of Rebooting to Reboot!.

  * Renamed VGA Vision, Old NEWS, Multiplayer.

  * Changed Rewards structure. Misc clarifications. More clipart. Moved things around.

1UP HIGH SCORE
00 403980

- SCORE RANKING -

1ST	403980 PTS	♥♥♥
2ND	302450 PTS	♥♥♥
3RD	299620 PTS	♥♥♥
4TH	291550 PTS	♥♥♥
5TH	279210 PTS	♥♥♥
6TH	270050 PTS	♥♥♥
7TH	264620 PTS	♥♥♥
8TH	255250 PTS	♥♥♥
9TH	237920 PTS	♥♥♥
10TH	230750 PTS	♥♥♥

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CREDIT 0

Inspirations

* Games: Archon, Asteroids, Bubble Bobble, Centipede, Chip's Challenge, Choplifter, Civilization 1, Crush Crumble and Chomp!, Defender, Dig Dug, Dizzy (& sequels), Donkey Kong (& Jr.), Dragon Quest series, Frogger, Galaga, Gauntlet, Ghosts 'n Goblins, IK+, Joust, Jumpman, Lode Runner, Lunar Lander, Mail Order Monsters, Missile Command, Montezuma's Revenge, Moon Patrol, M.U.L.E., Pac-Man (& sequels), Pitfall, Popeye, Q*bert, Qix, Space Invaders, Spy Hunter, Super Mario Bros., Sword of Fargoal, Tetris, Ultima (I to VI), Wizard of Wor, World Games (& Summer & Winter & California Games), Zaxxon, and thousands more…
* Hardware: Apple II, Atari 2600, Colecovision, Commodore 64, Intellivision, Nintendo Entertainment System, Sega SG-100, Sega Mark III, TRS-80…
* Music: "Pac-Man Fever" album, at http://youtu.be/A-qdk-11aiM&list=PLx8MTfjdgOLGhCRbofBOjrgS9II5IOL7o .
* Ambient Audio: http://youtu.be/x6aNPsjNwFo&list=PL5G6BYUMbQ3CVBS1crNATUOYTy1nAWZse .



YOU WIN!

GAME OVER

CONTINUE Y/N?