

Adventure Playground

The computer can be a source of constant entertainment. In an Adventure game you are not just an onlooker but a participant

Mention the word Adventure and most people think of a book, a film, a television programme, perhaps even a personal experience. But many people would think of computers, because there is an army of computer owners to whom the word Adventure (with a capital A) refers to a very specific kind of computer game.

To get an idea of what computer Adventures are like, compare them with books. When you read an adventure story you enjoy the dangers, mysteries and exciting events — but they are happening to someone else. In a computer Adventure, you do not sit observing the action — you are part of it. As the leading protagonist in the story, you are plunged into the action and it is you who lives out the experience.

In a book, the reader cannot influence the course of events of the story. The order and outcome of happenings is always the same and no amount of re-reading will alter it. In a computer Adventure, your decisions, judgments and actions determine how the plot unfolds. There can be any number of variations to the order of events, and many different endings, some pleasant, some unpleasant. The essential thing about computer Adventures is that you take an active part — though in the comfort and safety of your own home.

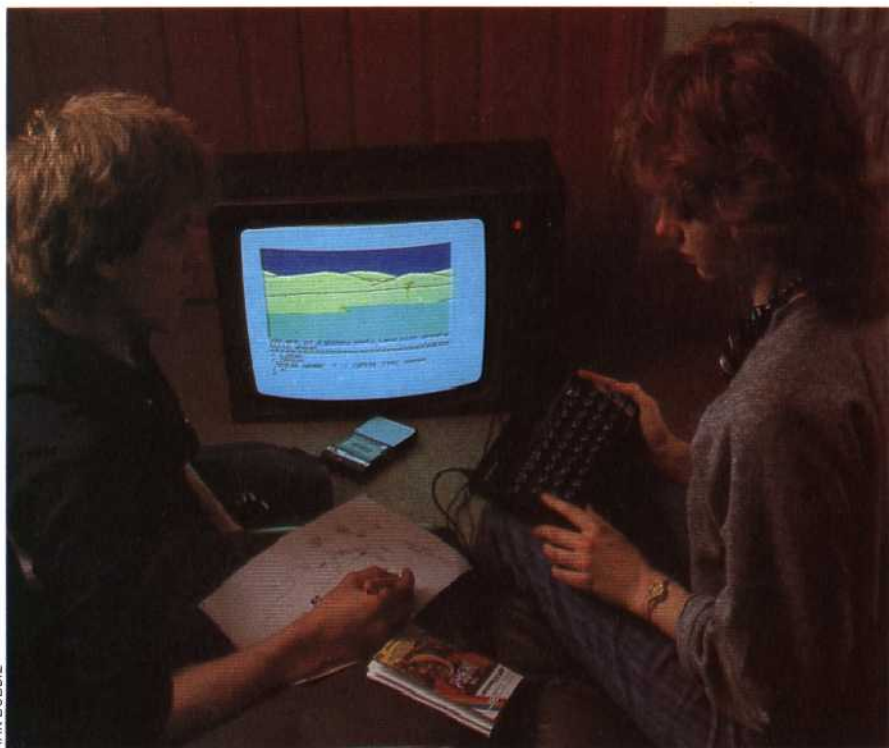
Each Adventure takes place in a particular environment. This might be a strange world under the earth, a fairground, a ghost town, another planet, a mythical land — in fact, just about anywhere. It can be set in the past, present or future.

The Adventure usually has a consistent theme that includes an ultimate objective. For example, you might have to escape from an alien planet, find and destroy an evil wizard, rescue a princess, collect treasures, or solve a crime and arrest the perpetrator.

Interesting as these factors are, the pleasure in playing an Adventure comes in solving the puzzles. These form an intrinsic part of the Adventure. A puzzle may be encountered in one of four situations. The most common situation is one where the puzzle must be solved before further progress can be made — such as when confronted with a dangerously dilapidated bridge. At the other extreme, the puzzle constitutes a red herring — having crossed a canyon to tackle the strange figure who has been staring at you from the other side, you find only an enormous mirror. The puzzle might be one to which the solution is

helpful but not essential for the successful completion of the game — the discovery of a secret passage leading past a vicious Troll, perhaps. It could be a matter of life and death — you are stranded on a ledge with no obvious way up or down, and no food or drink.

Puzzles are capable of being solved by common sense and require no special expertise or knowledge. However, the Adventurer must be on the alert as clues to the solutions are always to be found in the text, or deduced from it. Random elements, except in very small doses, have no place in the well written Adventure.



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It is likely when playing an Adventure that you will come across objects, messages and characters that seem to have no relevance to the story. Bear in mind at all times that almost everything in an Adventure has a specific purpose, even if occasionally that purpose is to throw you off the track. Of what significance is a collection of broken rum bottles? What notice should one take of a hollow voice saying, 'PLUGH'? How can one make practical use of a pile of evil-smelling mud? Why was this rug nailed to the floor when there was nothing under it? These puzzles all come from actual Adventures and were essential components of the plot. When you first find an object, no matter how mundane or strange, you are unlikely

Leading Role

Adventure games such as Dungeons and Dragons have existed for many years, but the home computer has recently introduced them to a far wider range of players. Adventure games are starting to rival arcade-style games in popularity. Though most can still be played only by one person at a time, they can be an absorbing recreation for all members of the family. The player takes on the role of an historical or fictitious character, and travels widely in search of treasure or some other goal