

mixture of the two. Sound effects are used mostly in graphics-only Adventures. Text-only Adventures can be thought of as un-illustrated books, the words describing places, objects and events. The graphics in most text-and-graphics games serve to supplement the textual descriptions and are often static scenes of locations and objects. They range from simple line-drawings to detailed pictures. The graphics in graphics-centered Adventures are normally used for stylised maps or pictures of terrain, and for representing the interiors of buildings. Characters and objects are represented by symbols or miniature figures. In these, the player is usually restricted to a small number of commands, mostly single keystrokes for moving and controlling the character.

The textual display in an Adventure generally covers three elements: where you are, what you can see and where you can go. For example, the screen text might read: 'You are in a dark forest. Above you, the sky is blotted out by dense foliage. There is a well-worn track leading east and west. Just ahead, to the north, a yawning pit beckons. You can see a sword lying on the ground; around the sword is curled a green snake.' You are given a description of your immediate surroundings, some of the directions you might take, and the objects in view.

Commands usually consist of two words, a verb followed by a noun, although the more sophisticated Adventures understand full sentences. Some of the standard verbs include GET, DROP, PUSH, PULL, THROW, LIGHT, KILL, EAT and DRINK. GO NORTH, for example, would be the usual way of specifying movement, although most Adventures allow you to abbreviate these — for example W for GO WEST.

EXAMINE is an essential verb — it is often the means of acquiring further information. EXAMINE SNAKE in the illustration (left) might result in the message 'It is a grass snake', or perhaps 'The snake notices your movement towards it and strikes at you'. Some verbs do not need a noun.

INVENTORY is used to tell you what you are carrying. Some objects can be placed inside others — water in a bottle or an axe in a bag for example — while some may be worn — a ring, perhaps, or a cloak.

SCORE is often used to let the player know what progress towards the objectives has been made. Typing HELP may result in a hint for overcoming a difficulty, but usually advises you to keep trying. Occasionally, in response to a particular command, the Adventurer may be told 'You can't do that — yet!', which implies that the verb-noun combination will give a result but not now, and perhaps not in this place. Part of the challenge comes in finding out which verbs and nouns are relevant to the Adventure. Words and combinations that the Adventure does not recognise are often met with a response such as 'I don't understand you.'

Most Adventure publishers supply hint sheets



Treasure Hunting

The Hobbit is a graphic Adventure for the Sinclair Spectrum and takes its name from the story by J. R. R. Tolkien, a copy of which is supplied with the cassette. You take the part of Bilbo, journeying through Middle Earth, and encountering many of the other characters and events from the book, in search of the dragon and his treasure

for those who get stuck. These offer subtle clues.

Some Adventures are too large for the computer's memory. To overcome this, they are supplied on disk, the main program being loaded into memory at the start and chunks of text or graphics swapped in and out from the disk as needed. But thanks to clever techniques for compressing large amounts of text into restricted memory, and the use of machine code programming, a large Adventure can now be stored in a computer's memory, which means that such Adventures can be supplied on cassette tape.

There are Adventures for virtually every micro. Any one of them should give you an enjoyable experience and could be the start of a lifetime hobby.

Happy adventuring!



On The Case
Deadline is a variation on the Adventure theme. You play a detective who has to solve a murder. Your file contains such items as the results of the post mortem, some pills found near the body, and other case notes. The game is not played in real time (a couple of weeks is considered fast), but every action you take, such as moving from room to room, or interviewing a suspect, knocks vital minutes off your 12 hour limit