

An Adventure Game for the Apple II With (Almost) Everything

Robert Plamondon

What would you expect from the ideal adventure game? A good plot, of course. A game that gives you many options would be nice — too many games practically play themselves. Excitement (maybe combat) is important, too. Perhaps a series of adventures would be more fun than just one. And, of course, the game should be without obvious flaws.

Many games meet these criteria, but very few are available for less than \$5 per adventure. And only one is designed to allow you to write your own adventures without actually doing any programming. This game is called *The Wonderful World of Eamon*.

Description

Eamon is an all text adventure game, revolving around the activities of a make believe character in a make believe setting. The Computer describes the setting, and the player controls his character with two-word commands, such as GET TREASURE, or FREE PRINCESS. The adventure is usually a quest: the character must recover something, such as a kidnapped princess or a cure for the Black Plague.

Unlike most adventure games, the difficulty in succeeding in the quest is caused by unfriendly creatures, not by a series of riddles. The problem lies in reaching the goal before being hacked to pieces, not in trying to puzzle out a series of ambiguous clues. This makes *Eamon* more exciting than many adventure games.

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Eamon has a Master Diskette which contains the programs for creating characters, buying goods, and so on. It also contains a short adventure, called The Beginners' Cave. To the best of my knowledge, *Eamon* is available only for the Apple II, but it could be adapted to other computers, since it is written entirely in Basic.

Playing Eamon

When you boot up the Master Disk, you are asked for your character's name. The program searches through the list of your old characters. If it finds an old character with the same name, it reads in that character's statistics and sends you to the next program; the Main Hall.

If it doesn't find a character, it assumes you want to create a new one and rolls up some statistics. Characters have three major attributes: hardiness, agility, and charisma.

Hardiness is a measure of the character's strength and his ability to take punishment. Agility is related to his ability to hit what he is aiming at. Charisma is the ability to deal amicably with other creatures.

The Main Hall program allows you to purchase weapons, armor, and spells, and to sell the loot obtained on adventures. New characters start with a small amount of money — enough to buy second-rate armor, a weapon, and maybe a weak spell. After browsing through the Main Hall, the character is ready for an adventure.

Adventures

There are 25 *Eamon* adventures available now, and several more in various stages of completion. The adventures vary enormously in style, the wide variety being one of the best features of the game.

Unfortunately, they vary in quality, as well — but the best adventures are very good, and all of them are very cheap, so you don't waste much money if you happen to choose a poor one.

When you are ready to go on an adventure, the Main Hall program will tell you to put the adventure disk in the drive and hit the C key to begin your adventure.

The adventure usually starts with a description of what is going on. A typical situation is that some villain has done something unspeakable, and has kidnapped a princess as well. Your job is to kill the villain, undo the evil deed, and rescue the princess. (This scenario is amazingly durable; it appears not only in the usual fantasy settings, but in adventures such as *The Death Star*, as well.)

After informing you of your plight, the disk spends a minute or so reading in

the Base Dungeon Program and data for the adventure. After the computer has digested a few thousand bytes of data, the adventure begins.

Most features of *Eamon* will be familiar to adventure gamers: There are unknown areas to explore, treasures to be found, and problems to solve. Most *Eamon* adventures lack a save game feature, which makes it impossible to quit in the middle without consigning your character to oblivion. On the other hand, it avoids one problem of the other games, in which you can save the game as insurance — by saving the game every five minutes, you can undo a character's death by loading in the saved game.

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This tends to make the adventure a test of game-saving strategy, rather than a test of skill in the game itself. In *Eamon*, when a character dies, he stays dead. This makes adventuring a lot riskier, but risk makes the game more exciting.

Critters and Combat

While most of *Eamon* is similar to traditional adventure games, it has two unusual features: the ability to make friends during the adventure, and a complete combat system.

Creatures in *Eamon* come in all shapes and sizes. Some are friendly, some are hostile, and some can be either, depending on the character's charisma and luck.

Interaction with other creatures is rudimentary: if a critter likes you, it follows you around and helps fight your enemies. If it dislikes you, it attacks you. If it is neutral, it ignores you, and refuses to attack either your friends or your enemies.

Gifts can influence a creature's reaction to a character. Giving out gold can sometimes make a hostile creature friendly. Giving a friendly creature junk to carry may make it hostile. A character of mine once gave a destroyed droid to the Wookiee in the *Death Star* adventure. The Wookiee displayed his resentment at being used as a pack animal by killing my character.

Combat is a major ingredient of these adventures. *Eamon* was designed with fantasy role-playing games in mind, and has an excellent combat system.

When one creature tries to hit another, its ability to hit is equal to its weapon skill minus the dodging skill of the target. The amount of damage done by a blow is determined by the weapon type. Armor absorbs a certain amount of damage per blow; the remainder is subtracted from the defender's hardiness. If the creature's hardiness drops to zero, it dies.

This applies to characters, too; characters die quite often in *Eamon*. Fortunately, these deaths aren't random or arbitrary (as they are in some of the poorer commercial games). Combat is dangerous, and if you fight, your life is in danger. If you pick your fights carefully, you lose fewer characters.

Every time your character uses a weapon or spell successfully, there is a chance that his ability in that skill will increase. This lets your characters learn from experience, and as their skill increases, they can tackle progressively more difficult adventures.

Figure 1 shows part of a game, including combat.

Designing Adventures

One of the special *Eamon* diskettes is the *Dungeon Designer Diskette*, or *DDD*, which has a collection of programs to help you create your own adventures.

Eamon is structured so that information about the adventure, such as monster descriptions, room layout, and artifact data, are all stored in disk files. The Base Program uses these data to run the adventure.

This means that all you have to do is write the data files; the adventure program is already written. The upshot is that *Eamon* adventures can be written without doing any programming at all.

The programs on the *DDD* prompt the user for input, and have several useful text editing commands, making it easy to input the data for an adventure. The procedure for typing in an adventure is really quite simple; the hard part is coming up with good ideas for adventures.

Recommended Programs

Eamon was developed by Donald Brown for the purpose of putting a computer role-playing games system in the public domain. While most designers are content to design each adventure from scratch, Brown designed an adventure system, with programs to help authors create their own adventures.

Since *Eamon* is in the public domain, it is legal, ethical, and fun to make cop-

Eamon, continued...

ies of the programs for your friends. Finding them is something of a trick, however. While I know of 25 adventures, there may well be hundreds of which I have not heard, because the authors haven't made their creations known.

A complete list of adventures known to me is in Figure 2. The adventures I recommend for beginners are:

Eamon Master Diskette by Donald Brown. You *must* have this diskette to go on adventures. The Master Diskette includes *The Beginners' Cave* (a simple adventure), a couple of utility programs, and the special Master Diskette programs.

The Temple of Ngurct by James and Robert Plamondon. This is a very sophisticated adventure, if I do say so myself. My brother wrote the adventure itself, and I tinkered with the programs. Your character is sent on a quest to steal the medallion of the demon Ngurct.

Death Star by Donald Brown. This is by far the funniest adventure. Your character must shut off the tractor beam in the Death Star so he can escape in the Millenium Falcon. The Storm Troopers are even worse shots than they were in the movie. Donald Brown told me that this adventure was supposed to be a serious science fiction adventure, but failed. I think it is a great success as a slapstick fantasy adventure.

The Caves of Mondamen by John Nelson. Second only to *Ngurct* in sophistication, this adventure pits you against the evil Mondamen, who has an army, a magician, the demon Vaprak, a captive princess, and an underground stronghold. You have your wits and two friends, a big guy named Fred, and a short guy named Barney. This one is difficult, but fun.

Finding Eamon disks

Donald Brown told me that a group called Magnetic Fantasies is the official *Eamon* distributor. Whether this actually means anything is unclear. I have been unable to find Magnetic Fantasies' address, and I know nothing about them, beyond the fact that Donald Brown recommends them.

One source I *do* know something about is the Apple Avocation Alliance, Inc. (AAA). The AAA has 20 of the 25 "known" adventures, and will probably have them all by the time you read this.

The AAA's main function is to distribute public domain software for the Apple at low cost. There are several ways of getting programs from AAA:

1. Send a disk with ten Apple programs that aren't in AAA's catalog, and receive a disk of AAA programs in exchange. AAA even pays return postage.

2. If you don't have programs to exchange, you can always pay cash. The fee for copying AAA disks onto your disks is \$1.00 per disk side (a common practice is to put programs on both sides of the disk).

3. If you don't want to send disks, you can buy them with the programs. AAA charges \$3.50 for Verbatim Datalife disks, for \$3 Memorex disks, and \$2 for used disks.

There is also a fee of \$27 on your first order or exchange.

Send orders and inquiries to Ron Maleika, Apple Avocation Alliance, Inc., 721 Pike St., Cheyenne WY 82001.

A third source of *Eamon* adventures is John Nelson at 1226 E. University, Des Moines, IA 50316. John has written several excellent *Eamon* adventures, and always seems to have a few more in the works. He is also trying to coordinate the *Eamon* adventures by making sure new adventures don't have the same names and volume numbers. People who are considering writing an *Eamon* adventure should drop him a line.

There are some differences between John Nelson's inventory and AAA's, mostly because AAA doesn't have all of John's adventures at this writing.

Eamon adventures can be obtained from John Nelson for \$5 each.



Eamon, continued...

Figure 1: Part of an Eamon adventure. A character named Marcus Antonius buys a spell in the main hall, and goes adventuring in The Beginner's Cave. After meeting a friendly warrior named Heinrich, Marcus Antonius encounters a wolf and a cave man.

AS YOU WANDER ABOUT THE HALL, YOU
REALIZE YOU CAN DO ONE OF SIX THINGS--

1. GO ON AN ADVENTURE.
2. VISIT THE WEAPON SHOP FOR WEAPONS AND/OR ARMOUR.
3. HIRE A WIZARD TO TEACH YOU SOME SPELLS.
4. FIND THE BANKER TO DEPOSIT OR WITHDRAW SOME GOLD.
5. EXAMINE YOUR ABILITIES.
6. TEMPORARILY LEAVE THE UNIVERSE.

(HIT THE KEY FOR YOUR CHOICE, 1-6)5

YOU ARE THE MIGHTY MARCUS ANTONIUS

YOUR ATTRIBUTES ARE:
HD=14 AG=21 CH=22

YOU KNOW THE FOLLOWING SPELLS--
NO SPELLS

YOUR WEAPON ABILITIES ARE--
AXE BOW CLUB SPEAR SWORD
5% -10% 20% 10% 0%

ARMOUR: LEATHER AND SHIELD AE=0%

GOLD IN HAND=87, BANK=0

WEAPONS CMLPX DAM
SWORD 10% 1 D 8
(HIT ANY KEY TO CONTINUE)

AS YOU WANDER ABOUT THE HALL, YOU
REALIZE YOU CAN DO ONE OF SIX THINGS--

1. GO ON AN ADVENTURE.
2. VISIT THE WEAPON SHOP FOR WEAPONS AND/OR ARMOUR.
3. HIRE A WIZARD TO TEACH YOU SOME SPELLS.
4. FIND THE BANKER TO DEPOSIT OR WITHDRAW SOME GOLD.
5. EXAMINE YOUR ABILITIES.
6. TEMPORARILY LEAVE THE UNIVERSE.

(HIT THE KEY FOR YOUR CHOICE, 1-6)3

AFTER A FEW MINUTES DILIGENT SEARCHING,
YOU FIND HOKAS TOKAS, THE OLD MAGE. HE
LOOKS AT YOU AND SAYS, 'SO YOU WANT OLD
TOKAY TO TEACH YOU SOME MAGIC, HEH HEH?
WELL, IT'LL COST YOU. TODAY MY FEES ARE:

BLAST 1429
HEAL 476
POWER 48
SPEED 2381

WELL, WHICH WILL IT BE?'

(HIT THE KEY FOR YOUR SPELL, B,H,S OR P)
POWER

HOKAS TEACHES YOU YOUR SPELL, TAKES
HIS FEE, AND RETURNS TO HIS STOOL ON
THE BAR. AS YOU WALK AWAY YOU HEAR
HIM ORDER A DOUBLE DRAGON BLOMB.

AS YOU WANDER ABOUT THE HALL, YOU
REALIZE YOU CAN DO ONE OF SIX THINGS--

1. GO ON AN ADVENTURE.
2. VISIT THE WEAPON SHOP FOR WEAPONS AND/OR ARMOUR.
3. HIRE A WIZARD TO TEACH YOU SOME SPELLS.
4. FIND THE BANKER TO DEPOSIT OR WITHDRAW SOME GOLD.
5. EXAMINE YOUR ABILITIES.
6. TEMPORARILY LEAVE THE UNIVERSE.

(HIT THE KEY FOR YOUR CHOICE, 1-6)1

INSERT DISKETTE WITH ADVENTURE (OR KEEP

THIS DISKETTE FOR BEGINNERS CAVE) IN
DISK DRIVE IN SLOT SIX, DRIVE ONE THEN
HIT 'C'

YOUR COMMAND? FLEE

YOU ARE STANDING IN
THE MIDDLE OF A LONG PASSAGE

>> HEINRICH IS HERE.
>> WOLF IS HERE.

YOUR COMMAND? FLEE

YOU ARE IN A SMALL, STARK CELL WITH A
DOOR ON THE WEST SIDE.

>> HEINRICH IS HERE.
IN THE ROOM IS A CAVE MAN, ROASTING A
DEAD RAT OVER A TINY FIRE. HE IS DRESSED
IN ANCIENT HIDES, AND HAS A BIG CLUB ON
THE FLOOR NEXT TO HIM. HE SEES YOU AND
SMILES. 'FAT ADVENTURER,' HE SAYS. 'YUM
YUN.'

YOUR COMMAND? ATTACK CAVE MAN
MARCUS ANTONIUS ATTACKS CAVE MAN
--A HIT!

CAVE MAN TAKES DAMAGE BUT
IS STILL IN GOOD SHAPE.
HEINRICH ATTACKS CAVE MAN
--A MISS.
CAVE MAN ATTACKS MARCUS ANTONIUS
--A MISS.

YOU ARE STANDING IN
AN EAST CELL

>> HEINRICH IS HERE.
>> CAVE MAN IS HERE.

YOUR COMMAND? ATTACK CAVE MAN
MARCUS ANTONIUS ATTACKS CAVE MAN
--A CRITICAL HIT!

CAVE MAN IS VERY BADLY INJURED.
HEINRICH ATTACKS CAVE MAN
--A MISS.
CAVE MAN ATTACKS MARCUS ANTONIUS
--A FUMBLE!
WEAPON DROPPED!

YOU ARE STANDING IN
AN EAST CELL

>> HEINRICH IS HERE.
>> CAVE MAN IS HERE.

YOU SEE THE CAVE MAN'S CLUB. IT'S A HUGE
PIECE OF WOOD, BOUND WITH IRON BANDS.

YOUR COMMAND? S

YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LONG HALL.
DOORS ARE BOLTED ON BOTH SIDES OF YOU
(EAST AND WEST). THE HALL EXTENDS NORTH
AND SOUTH.

>> HEINRICH IS HERE.

YOUR COMMAND? W

YOU ARE IN A SMALL, STARK CELL WITH A
DOOR ON THE EAST SIDE.

>> HEINRICH IS HERE.
IN THE ROOM IS A HUGE WOLF. IT JUMPS UP
FROM WHERE IT WAS SLEEPING, AND BARES
ITS LONG YELLOW FANGS.

YOUR COMMAND? ATTACK WOLF
MARCUS ANTONIUS ATTACKS WOLF
--A MISS.
HEINRICH ATTACKS WOLF
--A MISS.
WOLF ATTACKS MARCUS ANTONIUS
--A MISS.

YOU ARE STANDING IN
A WEST CELL

>> HEINRICH IS HERE.
>> WOLF IS HERE.

YOUR COMMAND? ATTACK WOLF

MARCUS ANTONIUS ATTACKS WOLF
--A MISS.
HEINRICH ATTACKS WOLF
--A MISS.
WOLF ATTACKS MARCUS ANTONIUS
--A MISS.

YOU ARE STANDING IN
A WEST CELL

>> HEINRICH IS HERE.
>> WOLF IS HERE.

YOUR COMMAND? ATTACK WOLF
MARCUS ANTONIUS ATTACKS WOLF
--A MISS.
HEINRICH ATTACKS WOLF
--A MISS.
WOLF ATTACKS MARCUS ANTONIUS
--A MISS.
YOU ARE STANDING IN
A WEST CELL

>> HEINRICH IS HERE.
>> WOLF IS HERE.

Figure 2: The Known Eamon Adventures.

No.	Name	AAA No.
1	Master Disk & The Beginners' Cave	E01
2	The Lair of the Minotaur	E02
3	The Cave of the Mind	E03
4	The Zephur Riverventure	E04
5	The Castle of Doom	E05
6	The Death Star	E06
7	The Devil's Tomb	E07
8	The Abductor's Quarters	E08
9	Assault on the Clone Master	E09
10	The Magic Kingdom	E10
11	The Tomb of Molinar	E11
12	The Quest for Trezore	E12
13	The Caves of Treasure Island	E15
14	Furioso	E16
15	Heroes Castle	—
16	The Caves of Mondamen	E17
17	Merlin's Castle	—
18	Hogarth Castle	—
19	The Death Trap	—
20	The Black Death	E20
22	The Senator's Chambers	E19
23	The Temple of Ngurct	E18
—	The Lost Island of Apple	E13
—	The Underground City	E14
	Dungeon Designer's Diskette	EDD
	EAMON Utilities	EU

The numbers in the left-hand column are the ones John Nelson uses. The ones on the right are the AAA catalog numbers.