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The Pac-Man Dossier

by Jamey Pittman [Design]

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Glossary

apple: The bonus symbol for levels five and six. Worth 700 points.

bell: The bonus symbol for levels eleven and twelve. Worth 3,000 points.

Blinky: The red ghost. Also known as "Akabei" or "Macky" in Puck-Man.

bonus symbol: The often fruit-related symbol that appears twice per level below the ghost house and can be eaten for additional scoring. The point-value depends on the specific symbol and can range anywhere from 100 to 5,000 points each. Also known as fruit.

cherries: The bonus symbol for the first round of play. Worth 100 points.

Clyde: The orange ghost. Also known as "Guzuta" or "Mocky" in Puck-Man.

cornering: The technique of moving the joystick in the direction one wishes to go well before reaching the center of a turn, ensuring Pac-Man will take the turn as quickly as possible.

Cruise Elroy: When a certain number of dots are all that remain in a level, Blinky (red ghost) will change "gears", speeding up as well as chasing Pac-Man even in scatter mode. He speeds up yet again when half the dots remain from the first change.

dots: The 244 objects in the maze Pac-Man must eat to move on to the next round. There are 240 small dots worth 10 points each, and 4 energizer dots worth 50 points each. Also known as pills.

energizer: One of four, large, flashing dots located near the corners of the maze worth 50 points each. When Pac-Man eats an energizer, the ghosts simultaneously reverse direction and, on earlier levels, turn dark blue. Pac-Man can then eat the blue ghosts for additional points, scoring more for each consecutive ghost eaten from one energizer: 200, 400, 800, and 1,600 points respectively. Also known as a power pills, fuel tanks, and vitamins.

flipping: "Flipping the machine" refers to when a player earns one million points. The game is unable to display a score larger than 999,999, so the score readout "flips" over to zero and keeps counting. Also known as rolling the machine.

fruit: See bonus symbol.

galaxian: The bonus symbol for levels nine and ten. Also known as a tulip or a thunderbird. Worth 2,000 points.

ghost house: The rectangular area in the middle of the maze where the ghosts start each new level and new life, returning to the house whenever they are captured by Pac-Man. Also known as the monster pen.

ghosts: Pac-Man's four enemies in the maze are typically referred to as ghosts or monsters.

grapes: The bonus symbol for levels seven and eight. Also known as a grenade. Worth 1,000 points.

grenade: See grapes.

head faking: Changing Pac-Man's direction back and forth in quick succession in an attempt to affect the turning logic of one or more ghosts in play. Blinky and Clyde do not use Pac-Man's current direction in their chase logic, so they are unaffected by head faking.

Inky: The blue ghost. Also known as "Aosuke" or "Mucky" in Puck-Man.

intersection: Anywhere pathways in the maze intersect, yielding more than one option on which way to proceed.

key: The bonus symbol for levels 13 and above. Worth 5,000 points.

monster pen: See ghost house.

monsters: See ghosts.

orange: See peach.

pattern: A memorized series of turns associated with a particular level or levels that, when repeated, clears the maze of dots without getting Pac-Man captured by any of the ghosts. Also known as a routine.

peach: The bonus symbol for levels three and four. Also known as an orange. Worth 500 points.

pills: See dots.

Pinky: The pink ghost. Also known as "Micky" in Puck-Man.

power pill: See energizer.

routine: See pattern.

side tunnel: The connecting tunnel between the right and left edges of the screen. Entering this tunnel will "wrap" the player around to the other side of the screen. The monsters always suffer a speed penalty while in the tunnel while Pac-Man does not. Also known as The Tube, The Time Warp, and The Scoot.

split screen: The 256th level of the game, where the right half of the screen is filled with garbage instead of the usual maze.

strawberry: The bonus symbol for level two. Worth 300 points.

thunderbird: See galaxian.

tulip: See galaxian.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I get past the split screen?

A: The only known way to get past the split screen is via the "rack test" feature available on some Pac-Man ROMs (see Chapter 5).

Q: What is a "perfect score"?

A: A perfect score in Pac-Man is 3,333,360 points, which can only be attained by playing a perfect game. This requires catching all four ghosts at every energizer, gobbling down every bonus fruit, and never once losing a life for 256 consecutive levels of play.

All extra lives are needed once the split screen is reached to eat the nine dots hidden on the right side of the screen the maximum number of times—they respawn every time a life is lost. This was first achieved by Billy Mitchell of Hollywood, Florida in 1999.

Q: Is it true that some of the ghost A.I. routines examine the joystick directly to make decisions?

A: This is false. The memory-mapped IN0 joystick port is completely removed from the pathfinding and logic routines in the code.

Q: What other games from the Pac-Man family will this ghost logic work with?

A: Pac-Man Plus and Ms. Pac-Man both use the same basic pathfinding/targeting logic as the original Pac-Man. Many popular bootleg ROMs like the Atlantic City Chip and Hanglyman also use this logic.

Q: Why are all of the bonus symbols food-related except for the galaxian, the bell, and the key?

A: The galaxian was added as a nod to the Namco space-shooter title, Galaxian, which was under development at the same time as Pac-Man. No one knows why Toru Iwatani chose a bell and a key for the final two bonus symbols.

It has been theorized the bell may actually be some sort of food like an Asian cashew or even a blancmange dessert, which would make it consistent with the food theme. The bell at least has the possibility of being something else—no one has any theories on the key being anything but ... well ... a key.

Q: Why are some members of the NAMCO development team listed by name but not others in Chapter 1?

A: I have not been able to find out these persons' names—I'm sure they are documented somewhere but I have yet to find that information. If you know of any reliable sources for the names of the full NAMCO development team, please let me know (jamey.pittman@yahoo.com).

[NOTE: The latest version of the Pac-Man Dossier is available at Jamey Pittman's website, and he can be contacted at jamey.pittman@yahoo.com with questions, comments, and updates. Gamasutra will be working with Jamey on new dossiers for other games to be published in the future.]

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