

AQUARIUS

CARTRIDGE INSTRUCTIONS

MAZE OF ASTERIOT

A One-Player ADVENTURE GAME for Aquarius Computers



DEVELOPMENT TEAM
2026-0215

The Maze of Asterion

**An Adventure Game for One Player
for Aquarius Computers**

Based on a game designed for
Mattel Aquarius Computers

New graphics and programming
by Sean Harrington

Developed and Released
by the Aquarius⁺ Development Team
February 2026



aquarius.1stage.com

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Introduction

As you journey home from the Lowlands of Taur-Omin, your strength and supplies depleted from months of battle against the now-defeated Loffrian army, you encounter a travelling merchant, waving to you for assistance, his overturned cart on its side in a ditch.

His horse had been startled, sending the wagon tumbling into a broken heap at the bend in the road. He begs for your help, indicating the horse ran into a nearby grotto.

Against your better judgement, you head up and into the cave. After only a few cautious steps, the ground crumbles away beneath your feet. You land with a painful thud in the cavern below...

As your eyes adjust gradually to the dim light, you determine that this is no cave, but rather an ancient hallway in an endless maze of catacombs. A deep blue glow seems to emanate from every stone of the walls, floor, and ceiling.

A quick inventory of your gear reveals your bow, a shield, a dozen or so arrows, and some food. In your haste to fulfill your task and continue home, you left your armor and helmet with the merchant, who is probably running off at this very moment to sell them.

At your feet, your eye catches the remnant of a broken shield. You lift it to the light and read a desperate warning carved hastily into the back...

BEWARE THE MINOTAUR!

Objective of the Game

Your primary goals are to stay alive and exit the maze, which consists of 99 levels of twisting corridors, each composed of frustratingly featureless walls and doors (some hidden!), often terminating in a dead end. Somewhere on each level is a ladder that descends to the next floor.

If it were as simple as finding the ladder and exiting the maze, your adventure would be complete in short order, but the maze is guarded by the relentless minotaur **Asterion**, who has hidden the final exit.

To finish the game and exit the maze, you must defeat **Asterion**. But the minotaur can be a formidable opponent, so you must improve your skills, armor, and

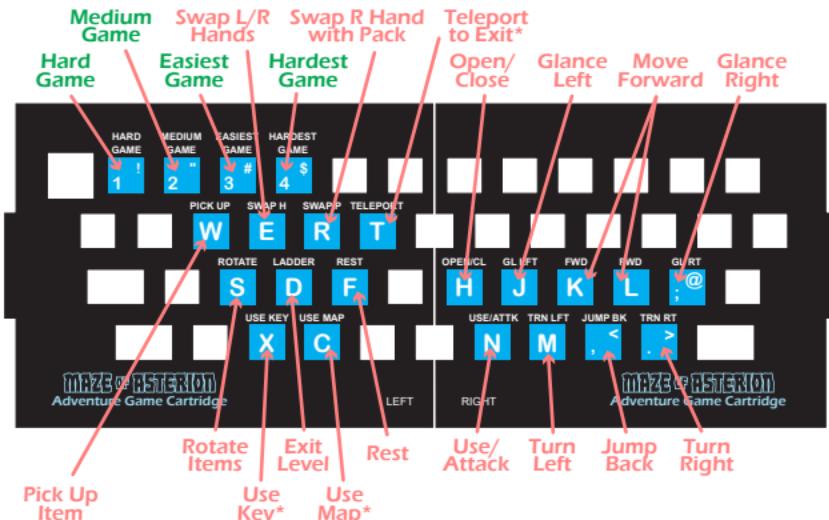
weaponry by defeating the lesser foes who attack you, either by might or by luck. To accomplish this, you'll need to explore the catacombs, deciding whether to engage or avoid monsters, all the while examining the items you find in the maze.

But choose your inventory wisely! You can wield a weapon in your right hand and a shield in your left, but there is room for only six additional items in your pack. Luckily, your armor, helmets, enchanted rings, food, and quiver of arrows do not count against your inventory.

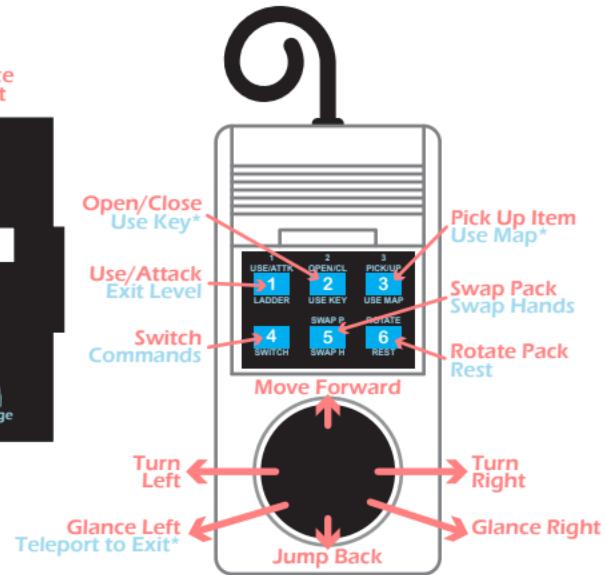
The strength and capability of the armor, weaponry, and other items scattered throughout the maze increases the lower you descend, but so does the ferocity of the monsters you encounter.

Controlling the Game

You can control the game using either the KEYBOARD or HAND CONTROLLER #1 (connected through the Aquarius Mini Expander), OR BOTH! The larger overlay fits over the Aquarius Computer KEYBOARD, while the smaller one fits over the buttons of HAND CONTROLLER #1. The other HAND CONTROLLER is not supported.



*Some actions available only after
an enchantment is enabled



Game Commands

Game Difficulty Selection

At the start of the game, select the difficulty level you want to play at...

EASIEST: Key/Button 3

MEDIUM: Key/Button 2

HARD: Key/Button 1

HARDEST: Key/Button 4, hand controller disc, or any other key

Movement

Exploring requires moving around...

FORWARD: Player moves ahead one floor tile, so long as it is not blocked.

JUMP BACK: Player moves to the previous floor tile they were in (but only once).

TURN LEFT/RIGHT: Player turns to the left or right, but stays in the same floor tile.

GLANCE LEFT/RIGHT: Player looks briefly to the left or right while key/button is pressed.

Actions

PICK UP: Takes item on floor in front of player with right hand and drops anything held in right hand onto the floor.

OPEN/CLOSE: Opens closed doors and unlocked chests; closes opened doors.

USE/ATTACK: Uses a potion or charm in player's right hand, or attacks monster directly in front of player when holding a weapon in right hand.

USE KEY/MAP: If equipped, uses key to open a locked chest, or uses map to see maze.

TELEPORT TO EXIT: If equipped, transports player to exit ladder for that level.

EXIT LEVEL: When standing in front of an exit ladder, allows player to move on to the next level of the maze.

REST: Player consumes their available food and refills health points lost during battle.

Getting Started

Item Management

SWAP L/R HANDS: The player picks up, uses items, and attacks monsters with their right hand, but the left hand is used to hold a shield for protection during battle. Use **swap hands** to pick up and enable better shields.

SWAP R HAND WITH PACK: Moves item in right hand into first inventory slot in pack, swapping between if there is an item there.

ROTATE PACK: Cycles inventory items clockwise in pack to swap with right hand.

Hand Controllers Only

SWITCH COMMANDS: Toggles upper/lower commands on hand controller, indicated by green arrow in icon bar. Switch is turned off after command is completed.

When you start up the game, you are presented with the **Title Screen**, displaying information that identifies the game and how to select a level. In the background, you may notice the ominous face of your nemesis **Asterion**, staring at you through soulless, black eyes.

Upon selecting a difficulty level, you will be transported to the first floor of the maze with only a bow, shield, quiver of arrows, a small amount of food, and an empty pack. Take time to explore, examine items, open doors, and battle a few monsters.

If your player loses all health, you will see a message detailing their fate, and you go back to the **Title Screen** to try again.

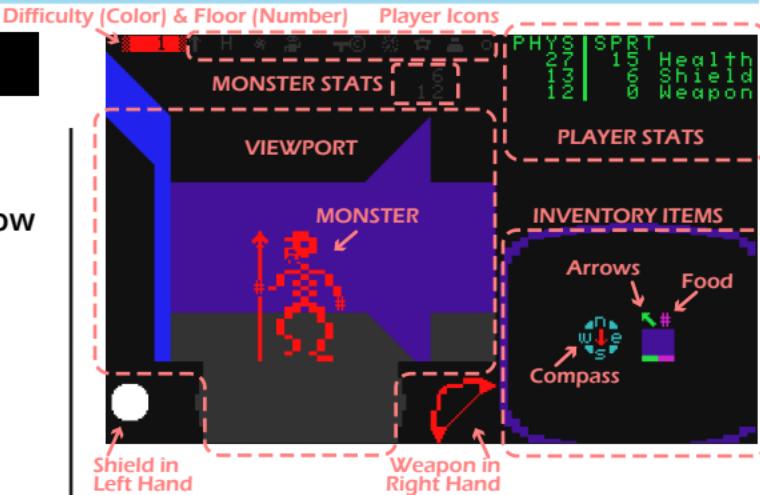
An Adventurer's Guide

After exploring a few floors, you may become curious about other things you see on the screen. You don't need to know every detail to play the game, but knowing the purpose of things can help you explore even further through the maze to eventually defeat Asterion!

The screen is divided into many parts:

VIEWPORT: On the left is a view of the maze from the player's perspective, showing walls, doors, items, monsters, and stats.

LEFT & RIGHT HANDS: At the bottom left of the Viewport is the player's shield item, with the player's weapon item at the bottom right. These items can be swapped with newer items as they are picked up with the right hand.



PLAYER ICONS: Above the Viewport are icons that indicate player enhancements.

PLAYER STATS: At the upper right are indicators for the player's health, shield, and weapon strength. Be sure to keep an eye on these!

INVENTORY ITEMS: In the lower right side is a representation of the player's pack, including a compass, arrows, and food.

Speaking of color, it is the quickest way to determine how useful, powerful, difficult, or rare something is in the game:

RED: Easiest difficulty in both gameplay and monsters; **red** items are not powerful, but rarely break; **red** monsters are not difficult to beat.

YELLOW: Medium level of difficulty in both gameplay and monsters; **yellow** items are more powerful, but can break; **yellow** monsters can pose a challenge.

PURPLE: Hard level of difficulty in both gameplay and monsters; **purple** items are powerful but rare; **purple** monsters attack with greater power and range of weapons.

WHITE: Hardest level of difficulty in both gameplay and monsters; **white** items are very powerful, rare, and break easily in unskilled hands; **white** monsters are very difficult and unpredictable in nature.

Deciphering Stats

Numbers are confusing for some people, but in the game, knowing what they mean can make a difference in how you play:

PHYS: Measures the **Physical** power of player, armor/shield, or weapon.

SPRT: Measures the **Spiritual** energy of player, armor/shield, or weapon.

HEALTH: Player's current energy levels; may decrease in battle, but can be restored with rest or modified with potions.

SHIELD: Combined energy levels of the player's armor, shield, and ring.

WEAPON: Combined energy levels of the player's weapon and experience.

Other items you collect can alter your health and enhancements!

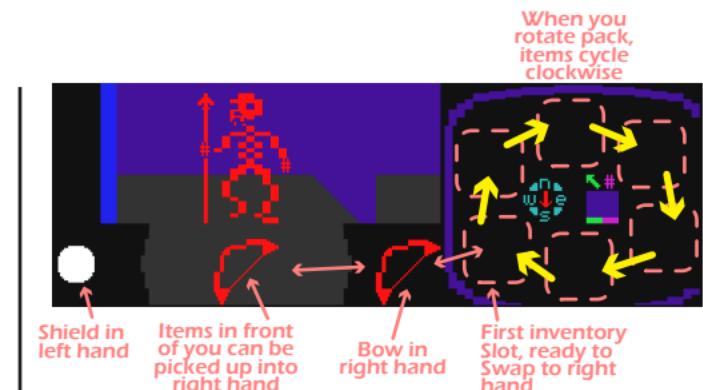
Managing Your Inventory

As you explore the catacombs, you will begin to gather items to aid you in your journey. In the **viewport**, items appear tiny when they are furthest away, larger when they are at your feet.

Your **right hand** is where you **pick up** and hold items to **use** (keys, potions, maps) or to **attack** monsters (bow & arrow, axe, fireball, scroll, staff).

Your **left hand** is where you hold a **shield** to protect yourself. You can **swap hands** to exchange items between your right and left hands.

Your **pack** is where you can store up to six additional items. You can **rotate pack** to cycle items clockwise to the 8 o'clock



position (bottom left). From there, you can **swap pack** to exchange it with your **right hand** to use or attack.

In the middle of the pack is your **compass**, indicating the direction you are facing. Also there are indicators for your **arrows and food**. **Food, arrows, maps, and keys** do not take up pack space.

Types of Items

Items are categorized by the types of functions they perform. These categories indicate how the player interacts with them in the game:

SHOT WEAPONS: Bows and crossbows attack by shooting **arrows** that are kept in **quivers** throughout the maze; **count arrows** to hear the quantity remaining.

THROWN WEAPONS: Axes and maces attack by being thrown, and can only be used once before Asterion's magic sends them elsewhere in the maze.

MAGIC WEAPONS: Fireballs, scrolls, and wands cast magic **attacks** on monsters; fireballs are used once; a scroll or staff can be reused until it breaks.

SIELDS: Bucklers or pavises are held in the left hand for additional protection.

ARMOR: Helmets, armor, and rings are worn immediately when **picked up**; when new armor is **picked up**, the best version is kept, and the old disappears.

CHESTS: Unlocked or locked chests can contain potions, maps, keys, or trinkets. Locked chests require a key of the same or better level to **open**.

POTIONS: Warrior, Mage, and Chaos potions can be **used** to enhance your stats.

MAPS: Can be used to show features of the maze, but they disappear after one level!

KEYS: Can be used to **open** locked chests of the same or lower level.

TRINKETS: Necklaces and chalices are used to add enhancements to the player's abilities. Save them for later use!

FOOD: Used by **resting** to restore health.

LADDER: Use **exit level** to descend.

Engaging Monsters

Asterion has populated the maze with monsters that exploit your weaknesses. To stay alive, it's important to know how the battle process works:

SEEING: Given a clear line of sight in front of you, monsters can be seen one or two floor tiles away. But this maze has walls and doors, and you don't have eyes on the sides or back of your head. Explore cautiously, using the **glance left** and **glance right** actions to see monsters.

AVOIDING: A monster's level can be seen from a distance. If you're low on health or out of weapons, move around them. If you stumble across one, use **jump back** to retreat to your previous floor tile (once). If you happen to be in front of the ladder

and a monster has not attacked you yet, you can **exit level** to avoid them. If you have a **yellow or purple map**, it can be used to find the ladder or avoid enemies.

FIRST STRIKE: A monster will attack you if you are in a floor tile adjacent to them that is not blocked by a wall or closed door. They can gain the advantage of a first strike, but players with quick reflexes can counter attack. Your viewport will turn to face the direction of the attacker. You can also attack a monster before they surprise you, causing them to counter attack with less power.

ATTACKING: Attacks will continue until either you or the monster dies, or until you jump back to retreat. The monster gets one last attack when you retreat, so don't delay until your health is nearly

depleted. During an active attack, no other actions can be performed besides picking up or **swapping** items between hands and pack. While monsters will attack without warning, they will wait for you to attack before the battle continues... strangely courteous of them! During an attack round, images of the Some potions can limit your ability to wound a monster. You may see your weapon fly at them, but if you watch the monster's health stats (top of the Viewport), you may notice that little or no damage is done to them. Keep an eye both on these and your own health stats to monitor your progress in the battle.

RECOVERING: It's best to **rest** after an attack, assuming you have food to spare. But remember that monsters can attack from all four sides, so **glance** before resting.

REPLENISHING: After healing yourself, carefully explore the area for food, arrows, and replacement weapons. While some items can break during combat and thrown weapons disappear, they sometimes reappear elsewhere on the same level of the maze.

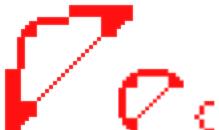
This battle process will become second nature as you play the game.

Warning: Spoilers Ahead!

You now have all the information you need to master the game, but there is more to learn! The next section provides detailed information on items, monsters, and player statistics, as well as strategies for better gameplay. Read only if you're stuck and need assistance!

Weaponry

BOW: Requires arrows to attack; can break, especially when higher level weapon is wielded by an unskilled player.



CROSSBOW: Requires arrows to attack; delivers more damage than a bow; can break easily, even at lower levels.



AXE: Thrown for attack; disappears after use; effective in dealing PHYS damage to monsters.



MACE: Thrown for attack; disappears after use; very effective in delivering PHYS damage to monsters.



Remember: White > Purple > Yellow > Red!

FIREBALL: Single-use; delivers SPRT damage to monsters; not as effective against magical monsters.



SCROLL: Delivers fireballs until it breaks; deals SPRT damage, slightly more effective against magical monsters.



STAFF: Delivers more powerful fireballs; breaks less frequently than a scroll; delivers more SPRT damage.



QUIVER: Contains arrows to replenish those used in battle; when picked up, added to your arrow inventory.



Armor & Shields & Potions

HELMET: Protective hat that increases armor; used immediately when picked up; best helmet remains active.



ARMOR: Chest plate that increases armor; used immediately when picked up; best armor remains active.



RING: Enchanted item that increases shielding; used immediately when picked up; best ring remains active.



BUCKLER: A small round shield that increases armor; must be picked up and swapped to left hand to become active.



Remember: White > Purple > Yellow > Red!

PAVISE: A large shield that increases armor; must be picked up and swapped to left hand to use.



WARRIOR POTION: Increases PHYS health; disappears when used, but shown as active in PHYS health stats.



MAGE POTION: Increases SPRT health; disappears when used, but shown as active in SPRT health stats.



CHAOS POTION: Can randomly increase or decrease PHYS or SPRT health (or both); removes other potion effects.



Tools & Treasure

CHEST: Open to access contents; contains useful items and tools; disappears after opening.



LOCKED CHEST: Requires a key of like or better level to be opened; contains more valuable items and trinkets.



KEY: Use when standing over a locked chest to open; can open locked chests of same or lesser level; good forever.



LADDER: Exit to the next level of the maze; use exit level to climb down; always appears in purple; cannot be used during battle.



Remember: White > Purple > Yellow > Red!

AMULET: Pick up and use to upgrade your map, key, or an item on the floor in front of you; save for later!



CHALICE: Pick up to activate enchantments that alter the magic within the current maze!



FOOD: Pick up to add to your food inventory; when resting, each serving increases health scores by one, PHYS then SPRT.



MAP: Use to briefly see the layout and details of the current floor; disappears after each new level.

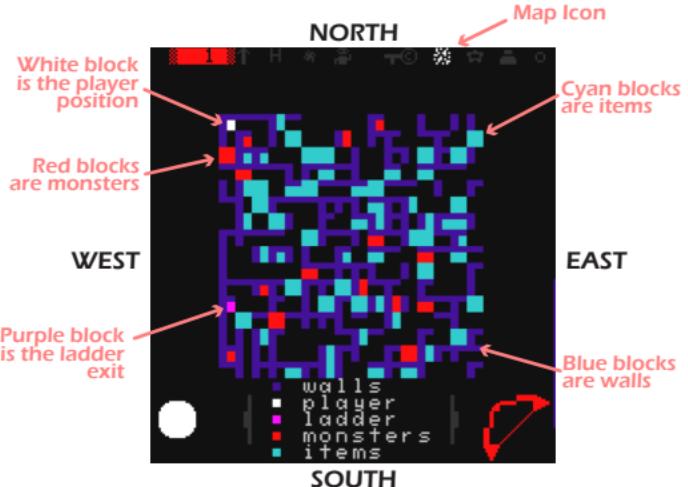


Using the Map

The **map** is a very useful tool in the exploration of the maze. Once picked up, the **Map Icon** activates, showing the level of map you possess. To use a **Map**, **press and hold** the **V key** on the keyboard, or press the **4 button** (Switch) and then **press and hold** the **3 button** on the hand controller. Asterion's magic only allows you to use a **Map** on the level it is found, so it will disappear after you use the **Ladder**.

As with most maps, the top is **NORTH**, the bottom is **SOUTH**, the left is **WEST**, and the right is **EAST**. But remember that this is an enchanted maze, so when you travel off the sides of the map, you appear on the other side! If you travel **NORTH** or **SOUTH** off the edge, you appear in that same

WHITE Map Shown



"column" on the opposite side, but if you travel **EAST** off the edge, you will appear one "row" lower in the **WEST**, and if you travel **WEST** off the edge, you will appear one "row" higher in the **EAST**. **Use this to your advantage to cover every part of the maze!**

Monsters of the Maze

Remember: White > Purple > Yellow > Red!

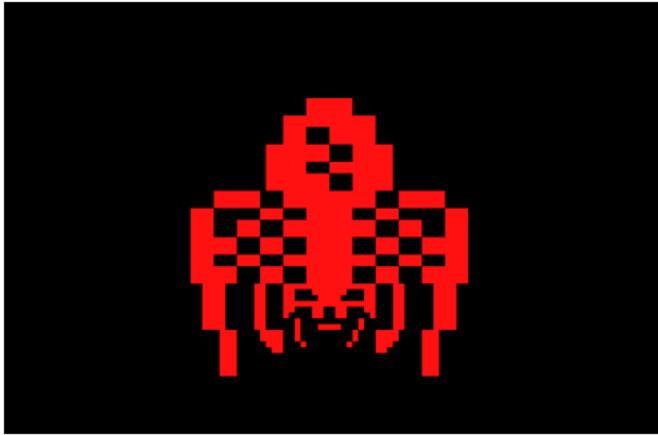


SKELETON: These are the reanimated bones of some unfortunate adventurer from ages past, enchanted and bound to the Maze to eternally serve Asterion. Although summoned through dark magic, skeletons inflict and respond to physical damage. Higher level skeletons inflict more damage.

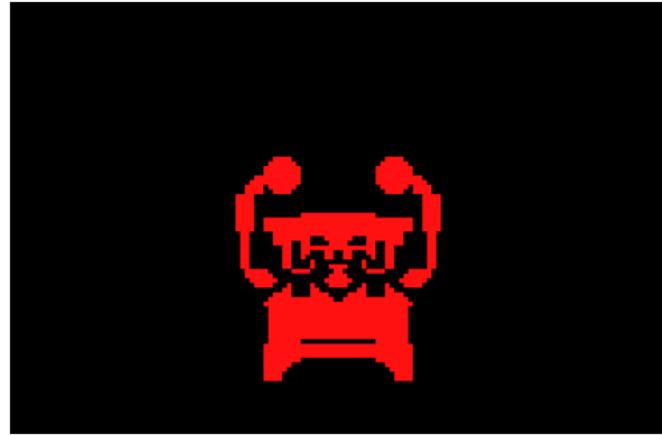


SNAKE: Enchanted by Asterion, these reptiles grow dozens of times larger than their overworld cousins. These massive serpents attack physically. Snakes are rarely caught off guard by surprise attacks, particularly at higher levels, but are usually the initiators of a first strike against the player.

Remember: White > Purple > Yellow > Red!

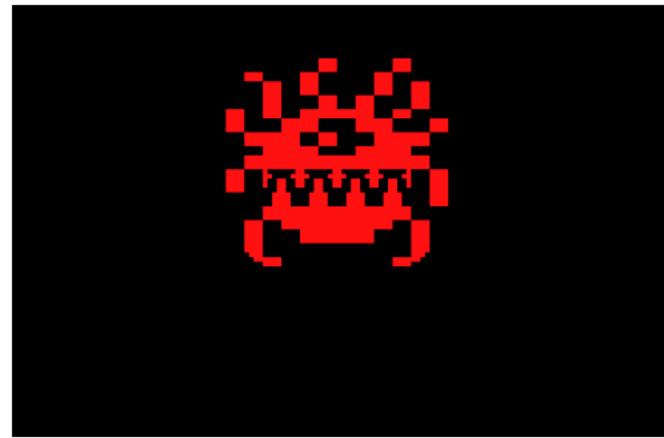


SPIDER: Grown from eggs and mutated by magic, these giant arachnids are set on killing all adventurers who enter here, consuming and turning them into **skeletons** to guard the maze. Spiders primarily inflict and respond to **spiritual damage**. Spiders inflict **physical** damage caused by their poisoned webs.



MIMIC: You spy a harmless treasure chest from the corner of your eye, but it springs suddenly to life, gnashing sharp teeth and swinging club-like arms. A **mimic** often enjoys the benefit of surprise attacks, dealing **physical** damage and luring greedy adventurers to their doom.

Remember: White > Purple > Yellow > Red!

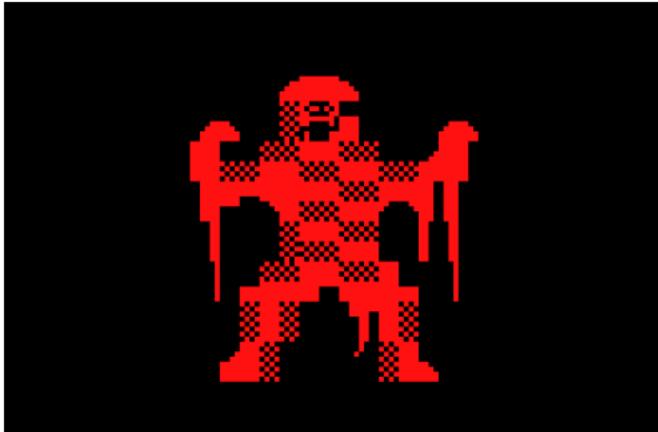


MALOCCHIO: An angry, floating guardian of the maze, this ethereal sentry silently patrols the corridors, waiting to cast a gaze from its single, horrible eye on intruders. **Malocchio** responds to physical damage but inflicts spiritual damage. A higher level **Malocchio** is dangerous, so keep your spiritual health high!



DRAGON: These massive, vengeful reptiles were summoned to the maze by **Asterion** to do his bidding, but harbor unbridled rage at the loss of their freedom. Unprepared adventurers are often the target of a **dragon's** anger, resulting in spiritual damage to even well-equipped warriors.

Remember: White > Purple > Yellow > Red!

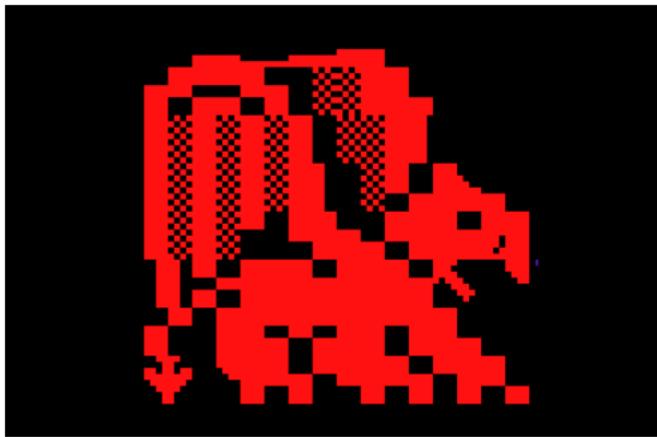


MUMMY: These undead warriors, transported by Asterion to this maze from beneath the sands of a long-forgotten tomb, are drawn to the life force of any who venture here. Mummies inflict and respond to spiritual damage. Mummies inflict more damage, always of a physical nature.

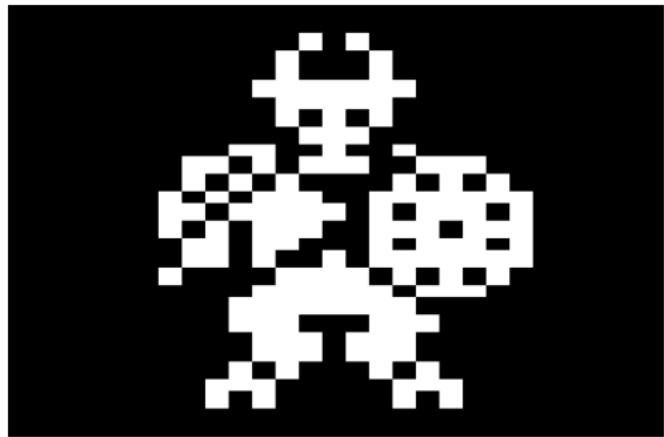


NECROMANCER: These dark mages are tasked by Asterion to summon skeletons and mummies, but will also attack adventurers to sap their life force. A necromancer always delivers spiritual damage, and deflects magic attacks with ease. Necromancers are most affected by physical damage, so save up powerful weapons.

Remember: White > Purple > Yellow > Red!



GRYPHON: Normally noble and benevolent beasts, these hybrids between a lion and eagle have been twisted into wicked submission by Asterion. Gryphons inflict physical damage, but are protected against spiritual attacks. High level gryphons inflict significantly more damage.



ASTERION, THE MINOTAUR: An abominable hybrid between a human and a bull, Asterion is the highest level of all monsters. He appears on every level after 3-7, (depending on the difficulty of the game). Relentless in dealing massive spiritual damage, he goes after the player's weaker health value.

Final Words of Wisdom

- Pick up all quivers and food you find, and monitor their levels carefully.
- Pick up every **key**, **map**, **helmet**, **armor**, and **ring** you find. The game will enable the best item and discard the other.
- Resting heals **PHYS** health first, then **SPRT** health, but cannot be done consecutively. Explore more, then heal.
- **Warrior potions** improve **PHYS** health.
- **Mage potions** improve **SPRT** health.
- **White chaos potions** can be harmful!
- **Chalices** activate on pick up. They can remove hidden doors, walls, or even monsters, or enable you to teleport to the exit ladder on the current level.
- **Amulets** can upgrade your map, key, or even some items on the ground in front of you. Save them until needed!
- Keep backup **weapons** in inventory.

Remember: White > Purple > Yellow > Red!

- **Chests** are dead weight, but they can also be thrown as weapons.
- **Axes** and **maces** used in battle can reappear elsewhere in the maze.
- Don't forget to try **opening** blank walls to discover **hidden doors**!
- Travel from west to east, progressing down the map through every floor tile.
- Kill all **monsters** and use all **items** on each floor for maximum experience.
- Every floor tile has a way in, even if it's a **hidden door**.
- Use **glances** to keep **monsters** from getting the first strike on you!
- Fighting is not always the best solution.
- Avoid the **Minotaur** until you're ready to end the game.

Finally, relax... it's just a game! Have fun!

AQUARIUS⁺

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Created in Woodland Hills, California, USA 91367

Manual written and designed by Sean Harrington

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Some content in this manual was created using Adobe Firefly generative AI.

Some code and inline documentation for this project was generated using Copilot for GitHub with various models including Claude Sonnet & Opus 4.5, GPT-5.1-Codex, and Gemini 2.5 Pro.

The style and format of this manual is an homage to the under-appreciated work of the Mattel Electronics Product Development Team from 1978-1984.