Write Your Own Adventure Game

# Intent

This and all attendant documents are primarily intended for fun. They are designed in such a way as to be broken down into a number of weeks so as to be easily run as a coding club in a school or similar situation. This is not the only way they could be used and there is no hard and fast need to stick to the weeks. Copyright and all other rights remain with the author, this document may not be distributed, used or re-purposed in any way other than by express permission of the author.

The intent is not to teach people how to program; by the end the programmers may well be able to program, but that is a by-product. The intent is also not to teach good programming practice; by the end the programmers may well have identified some good practice, but they may well pick up some of the bad habits, shortcuts, and non-pythonic ways of doing things that the author has developed over 30+ years of programming. The intent – and this really cannot be repeated enough – **is to have fun**!

# System Requirements

This experience is designed to require minimal software requirements and to be as system-agnostic as possible.

Therefore, the minimum requirement is to have a working copy of Python 3 installed. The exemplar software is developed and tested on version 3.7.1. This is available on Mac, Windows and Linux. The software will also work, with minor amendments, using an online system such as repl.it which currently uses Python 3.7.4.

An IDE is needed if using a system other than repl.it. The author uses a range of IDEs and recommends programmers find one that suits them. Print screens will be provided in IDLE on a Mac. This is **not** the author’s recommended IDE but a base-case which should be available to all.

An Internet connection is a good idea. As this workbook progresses, students may find themselves making minor mistakes which can have large ramifications. It is always a good idea to work through these problems, debug the code, and fix it yourself. However, in the interest of this being a **fun** project, it is possible at the start of each ‘week’ to start with a fresh set of code as if you had completed up to the end of the previous week perfectly. This will be made available online. Note though, it is always always always recommended to modify, fiddle with, dare we say it ‘hack’ the code to make it your own. Particularly if you are developing your own adventure. In this situation if you revert to the author’s clean code you will lose all you own modifications!

# Week One: An Introduction

If you grew up in the 1970s and 1980s or happen to have read “Ready Player One”, you may have heard of the games “Adventure” and “Zork”. These two genre-leading games have a really simple concept:

* They are text based.
* You enter instructions to move around and/or solve problems.
* When you have solved the correct problem(s) in the correct way, you win.

These games are not the latest Call of Duty, GTA, or other mega-title. And the graphics make Minecraft look like it is in 4k. Because they don’t have graphics. What they do have is playability; in the same way as reading a book can be more enjoyable than watching the movie, letting your imagination run free to decide how a game should look can be more enjoyable than bowing down to the design choices of Rockstar North or Activision.

During this course you will design and make one of these adventure games. In fact, it would be particularly great if you could make two. You will be taken through step-by-step making a very simple one, but why not design your own at the same time?

The steps we will follow – which may or may not be the right way of doing things (in fact they probably aren’t!) will be as follows:

* Come up with a general concept for the game
* Design a game map
* Design routes through the game map
* Program the game map
* Design a player
* Program the player
* Designs some objects to be in the game
* Code some objects to be in the game
* Design some puzzles
* Code some puzzles

This is a version of agile development; rather than designing the program to death before starting anything we will design just enough, program it, try it out, and then design the next bit. While in some cases this can lead to disastrous outcomes with programs that don’t work properly, we are in the business of having **fun** and this gets you playing quickly! Do note though that this will not be a linear thing. We may need to go back and redesign things as we go through so as to keep things moving forward.

## Coming up with a general concept

Adventure – whose full name is *Colossal Cave Adventure* – is based in a cave system filled with wealth. Zork is set in dungeons in a great underground adventure, with the objective of getting through the dungeons alive, with all the treasures, and having solved the puzzles. Haunted House, which inspired this project, was based in (surprise surprise) a haunted house, with the objective to get back to the exit having collected all of the objects around the house.

The point is, the concept of the game is up to you. You can be as specific or as vague, as realistic or as fantastical as you like.

What about this example we’re going to supply you with? Good point! Like all sensible grown-ups, the author likes pirates! So here’s the back-story:

Ahoy me hearties! Avast! You were sailin’ along yonder sea when a foul plague took upon yer ship-mates and one by one they fell into the sleepin’ sickness. Ye can’t sail the ship alone so ye need to drop the anchor before ye run ashore on the reef. Ye need to get to the foredeck to drop the anchor, but the ship, she is in a mess!

You don’t need a back story. I could have just said ‘You’re on a pirate ship and you need to get to the room where the anchor is to drop it.’ But where’s the fun in that?

## Designing a Game Map

The fact is that the map is the single most important part of your game. Traditionally text adventure games were split into squares you could walk between using direction commands. In the early basic games such as Haunted House these were often organised in a square grid to make the programming easier and more efficient. We can skip some of these rules if we want to although in the spirit of things, we will keep fairly close to the originals.

You will want paper and a pencil for this. Preferably a **big** bit of paper.

So, the exemplar;

* Firstly I had to come up with a decision. I’ve decided I’m on a pirate ship, so I made the decision to have two decks.
* So I drew a ship with two decks. You can make these as fancy or as basic as you like – the design will never be seen in the game but you might give a map to your users.

[IMG1 - INSERT IMAGE OF TWO SHIP HULLS]

A close up of text on a white surface

Description automatically generated

* I split the two ship decks into sections that linked together and gave each one a name. The name isn’t essential, but it helps us know what we are talking about and can be the basis of the descriptions when we start programming the rooms.

[IMG2 - INSERT IMAGE OF HULLS SECTIONED AND NAMED]

A close up of text on a whiteboard

Description automatically generated

* I plotted a route I wanted the player to have to take to get to the end point. This is because I want my game to end by the player getting to the anchor and dropping it into the sea. If my intent was to have them collect every object or gain a set amount of points, I would have to adjust this step to ensure they can get everywhere needed. This is not to say they won’t have to visit other routes on the way – I just wanted to make sure that they would be able to get where they needed.

[IMG3 - INSERT IMAGE OF HULLS WITH ROUTE PLANNED]

A close up of text on a black background

Description automatically generated

* I gave each room an ID number. This makes it easier to dealing with players moving around.

[IMG4 - INSERT IMAGE OF ROOOMS WITH NUMBERS]

A close up of text on a white background

Description automatically generated

* I added extra pathways between rooms. These are paths which may lead to dead ends, lead the player in circles, or whatever. It’s what makes the game explorable rather than just following a set map. I used single headed arrows for one-way routes and double-headed arrows where the player can move in both directions. I also added double heads on to the routes I planned earlier. At this point you may even start thinking about some puzzles the player may need to solve and add notes on to the map while you’re at it. I’ve added a trap that will cause the player to fall into the sea and added a secret room to make this happen. You don’t need to be exhaustive – it’s an iterative process!

[IMG5 – INSERT IMAGE OF MAP WITH ROOMS AND DIRECTIONS ADDED]

A close up of a map

Description automatically generated

If you are just following the examples, have a good look at the maps and make sure you understand it. If you are creating your own adventure game as well, go ahead and design your own map. That should take you to the end of this session!

# Week 2: Programming the Game Map