



FIRST

THINGS

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You've just arrived at home from your nightly visit to the science and invention section of the local public library, where you spend each night dreaming your dreamy dreams of one day inventing a time travel machine. Tonight, for some reason, you're especially fatigued, and can't wait to get inside and go right to bed. Seems like a good plan, but somehow you have a premonition it's not going to be that easy...

Welcome to First Things First!

You are about to experience a classic interactive adventure game. You, a dedicated time-travel buff, are about to go on the journey you've always dreamed of. Not through space, but through time, of course! You will have the chance to put things right that you didn't even know were going wrong—but be careful, you may also end up doing more harm than good. Fortunately, you will find one or two friends to call on during your exploration. When in doubt, ask someone. Of course, they don't have all the answers, because winning the game is up to you to do. Good luck!

About the Author

J. Robinson Wheeler is a filmmaker in Austin, Texas. A fan and author of interactive fiction since 1982, he has written the games *Four in One*, *Centipede*, and *The Tale of the Kissing Bandit*. He won the Xyzzy Award for Best Game of 2000 for *Being Andrew Plotkin*.

Playing Interactive Fiction

(If you are already familiar with Interactive Fiction, you may skip this section.)

In Interactive Fiction, you type your commands in a style of plain English each time you see the prompt (>). Most of the sentences that the game will understand are imperative sentences. The game will then respond, telling you whether your request is possible at this point in the story, and what happened as a result. The game will understand verbs, nouns, and adjectives, as well as prepositions and conjunctions.

To see where you are, type LOOK (or L). To get a list of what you are carrying around, type INVENTORY (or I). To look at a particular object or person more closely, type EXAMINE (or X) and then the object's name. To move around, type the compass direction (plus UP and DOWN) you want to go. Directions can be abbreviated: NORTH to N, SOUTH to S, EAST to E, WEST to W, NORTHEAST to NE, NORTHWEST to NW, SOUTHEAST to SE, SOUTHWEST to SW, UP to U, and DOWN to D. To pick up an object, use TAKE or GET. You can use ALL to mean everything in range.

Here are some example commands:

- >TAKE ALL
- >X SELF
- >SEARCH THE HAYSTACK
- >OPEN THE LIBRARY BOOK
- >READ ABOUT TIME TRAVEL
- >GET ON TIME MACHINE PLATFORM
- >CLIMB DOWN ROPE
- >SWING ON SWING
- >YELL FOR HELP
- >SWIM IN THE FLOWING STREAM
- >PUT DUPLICATE KEY IN LOCK

You can use multiple objects with certain verbs if you separate them by the word AND or by a comma. Some examples:

- >TAKE THE DOG BISCUIT AND THE BROOM
- >DROP BREAD, JAM, AND SPOON
- >PUT ALL BUT THE SPONGE IN THE KITCHEN SINK

Interacting with Other Characters

During the game, you will come across other characters in the story. Feel free to greet them by saying hello (MARY, HELLO or HI MARY). The best way to interact with people you meet is to ask them questions, either about objects you have seen or about more abstract topics. Occasionally, you will have more information than they do, so you can tell them about a subject. You can also give orders, in the following format: GROUCHO, FOLLOW ME. Of course, the character may choose not to obey. Examples:

>ASK THE DOCTOR ABOUT CYBERMEN

>TELL MORTIMER ABOUT HIS FUTURE

Useful Commands

This game has a large vocabulary, but of course it won't understand every command that you will think of trying. There are some common verbs that will be useful many times during gameplay. The ones you might want to try are:

BUY SELL PUSH SMELL LISTEN CLOSE PUT UNLOCK
KNOCK READ THROW DROP TIE UNTIE EAT SEARCH
TOUCH EXAMINE LOOK SHOW TURN GIVE OPEN SIT
JUMP PULL CLIMB SET ASK YELL

With the addition of prepositions, unique combinations are possible. You can LOOK AT, LOOK IN, LOOK OUT, LOOK UNDER, LOOK THROUGH, and so forth.

Special Commands

AGAIN (or G) - Repeats the last command you entered.

WAIT (or Z) - Causes time to pass (one game turn).

EXITS (or XITS) - Print all available exits from your current location.

PUSH (something) TO THE (direction) - Pushing something in a compass direction may prove useful under certain circumstances. Example: PUSH WAGON NW.

VERBOSE - The VERBOSE command tells the game to print a complete description of each location, and the objects in it, every time you enter a location, even if you've been there before. The game will begin in VERBOSE mode.

BRIEF - This command tells the game to print a long description of each location only the first time you enter it. On subsequent visits, only the name of the location and any objects present will be described.

SUPERBRIEF - This command tells the game to display only the name of a place you have entered, even if you have never been there before. You may still get a full description of your location and the objects there by typing LOOK.

QUIT - This lets you stop. If you want to save your position before quitting, you must use the SAVE command.

SAVE - This saves a "snapshot" of your current position. You can return to a saved position in the future using the RESTORE command.

RESTORE - This restores a previously saved position.

RESTART - This stops the story and starts it over from the beginning.

SCRIPT - This command tells the game to start saving a transcript of the gameplay to a text file. Use UNSCRIPT to stop saving a transcript.