

BOLO BASICS

First off, what is Bolo?

Let's let the author do the talking:

"Bolo is a 16 player graphical networked real-time multi-player tank battle game. It has elements of arcade-style shoot-em-up action, but for the serious players who play 12 hour games with 16 players working in teams indifferent networked computer clusters around an office or university campus, it becomes more of a strategy game. You have to play it to understand." --- Stuart Cheshire

How do you play Bolo?

Bolo has a large amount of options and elements to its play. Once you get a copy of the program, you should read and print out the documentation, which is much more detailed than this explanation.

Basically, you are a tank that travels around a map, which has trees, rubble, water, trees, deep water, walls, grass, swamps, and roads to deal with. Your tank has ammo (commonly called bullets or shells), mines, armor (also called shields), and the capacity to carry trees. The map is created by a player before hand.

The two most important elements on the map are pillboxes and bases. Pillboxes are originally neutral, meaning that they shoot at every tank that happens to get in its range. They shoot fast and with deadly accuracy. You can shoot the pillbox with your tank, and you can see how damaged it is by looking at it. Once the pillbox is subdued, you may run over it, which will pick it up. You may place the pillbox where you want to put it (where it is clear), if you've enough trees to build it back up.

Trees are harvested by sending your man outside your tank to forest the trees. Your man (also called a builder) can also lay mines, build roads, and build walls. Once you have placed a pillbox, it will not shoot at you, but only your enemies. Therefore, pillboxes are often used to protect your bases.

Bases are used for refueling your tank. Like pillboxes, they start out neutral, meaning that anyone can run over them, and they will belong to that player. Bases cannot be moved. You can take over a base by shooting it. Therefore, Bolo becomes exciting when you have 3 or more people fighting for control of pillboxes and bases, traveling around the map, and shooting each other. You can also form alliances with other players for team play. Again, this FAQ doesn't exist to teach you the basics of how to play the game. That's what the documentation is for.

What's the current version of Bolo?

The current version of Bolo is 0.99.2.

What's going to be in the new version of Bolo and when will it be out?

The new version should be released before Christmas, according to Mr. Cheshire, and will have bug fixes for the lag effects of the enchanted canoe and "base grab without ammo" attack. Mines may change. The gunsight will have an option that will allow it to be left on all the time. Farming mined trees should still be okay. He is also going to write code to alert you when Bolo detects a player moving too fast for the terrain, taking too much damage without dying, or firing too many shots without refuelling.

The short term plan is to get the next version out as soon as I can. That will automatically invalidate all the hacks, and while the hackers are working on new hacks I'll get the security features done. (Note: Some of these things are still in development and are subject to change.)

What kind of stuff do I need to play Bolo?

Bolo is only available for the Macintosh. Stuart Cheshire, the author, has made it very clear that he will not port Bolo to DOS or Windows machines. There's rumors of a port to X-Windows, but don't count on it anytime soon. Mac emulators for other platforms have had limited success, but none have been able to play network games. Bolo can be played on any Mac. Its preferred memory size is 1,100 K, but you can cut that down by turning off the sound effects. A color monitor is not necessary, but often useful. Unless you want to play by yourself, you need to be connected to some kind of network. You can play Bolo over an Appletalk network or over the Internet, if your machine is directly connected to the net and is running MacTCP, which is the standard way of how Macs talk over the Internet. If you're using a high-speed modem, you can play with your friend via Appletalk Remote Access. SLIP connections to the Internet are not recommended, since a direct Internet connection is so much faster, and Bolo works by forming a ring of networked Macs where one player sends the game packets to a neighbor, who sends packets to the next neighbor on the ring, and so on. Therefore, the rest of the players of the game will be waiting on your slow modem connection, which is commonly called lag. Also, note that Bolo is not a client-server system, which is a common misconception. Instead, Bolo creates a ring out of the Macs, using either DDP on AppleTalk or UDP over the Internet. When a new player joins, Bolo sends a packet to each machine in the game to figure out the delay between it and all Macs, then it adds itself into the ring in such a way as to minimize the total time around the ring. (Thanks to Peter Lewis for that final explanation.)

However, if you're totally isolated and/or have no friends, there is a small bit of hope. See the section on "Brains."

Okay, now that you know about Bolo, where can you get it?

You can find the bolo package at the usual suspect FTP sites for Mac software, such as sumex-aim.stanford.edu. Don't ask if someone can mail it to you. It's easily available. You can gopher or anon FTP it at bolo.stanford.edu, depending on Stuart's whims and the availability of his machine. As well, you can get it at bolo archive sites such as saloon.intercon.com or aurora.alaska.edu. Some of these sites also carry older versions of Bolo. For example, you can get bolo-0992.hqx by anonymous FTP at sumex-aim.stanford.edu in the directory /info-mac/game/bolo.