

Welcome to Spheres! The about screen can be scrolled through using the Forward and Back buttons below. It is split into: Purchase Information, Basic Instructions, Stages 2-5 & Advanced Instructions.

Purchase Information

Spheres is not public domain. I have put a huge amount of effort into creating a professional-quality game, but have decided that the hassle of trying to get it sold commercially at an obscene price is not worth it. Instead I'm trusting your honesty. You may decide if you like it over a period of five days, but after that if you keep it you must pay the Shareware fee:

British £10 or US \$15. (If in US dollars please try not to send cheques; they're not cheap to cash - unlike cash. Pounds sterling would be best of course...)

So what's in it for you? Firstly, that wonderful feeling of moral self worth. Secondly, if I get some response then this won't be the last brilliant game I produce. Thirdly, you get some goodies for your money!:

1. A registration code, which will unlock levels 3-10 on stage 4 and 2-10 on stage 5.
2. The passwords to all stages + hints on any level if you ask...
3. A whole new set of levels. Yup 50 new levels to play, available soon.
4. A functioning two player stage, if anyone wants it.
5. Spheres II. Once I've written it :-) every registered owner will get a free copy.
6. Plus any bug-fixes/improvements to Spheres 1.0

How to contact me: Email me anytime at:

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OR jwolf@corpus-0.ccc.ox.ac.uk the first is better

Send snail mail + those wads of cash to Jonathan Wolf, 27 Court Lane, Dulwich, London, SE21 7DH, ENGLAND. Please give me your name or I can't give you a registration code!

Boring Stuff: You are free to give copies to friends, enemies, etc provided no changes are made to it. It may be left on Bulletin Boards, etc or as part of mail packages provided no charge is made for it other than the costs of copying, postage, and packing.

Basic Instructions - Stage 1 'Qualifying'

Spheres is split into five stages, each with ten levels. Each stage is different - the differences are explained later. In each, however, you must use a variety of pieces to guide spheres through the arena.

When you first load Spheres you find yourself at the Game choice screen. Here you can choose which stage to start on, or resume one of the five saved games at the bottom. The two player option does not work yet, as I'm not sure if anyone wants it. Click on Stage 1 to start.

You then see the piece choice screen with four rectangles. These display how many of each piece you will be able to place if you select that rectangle. One of the arts of Spheres is selecting the right combination of bends and straights to pass the level. Click on one of the buttons, and the game will start:

The aim of stage one is to fill the holes with the spheres. There are always ten spheres, which roll one at a time out of the producer (the C shaped thing in the top left). Spheres will quite happily roll along the arena, which is a 10 X 8 grid. However, if they hit the edges of the arena, a wall, or another sphere they will blow up and the round will end. Your job is to place pieces so that the spheres fall in the holes, filling them up, without letting any spheres destruct.

Placing pieces is easy. On the bottom right of the screen you will see four pieces with the numbers 1 to 4 next to them - this is the piece stack. They are the next four pieces you will place in order of how they will appear. Click in the arena and the piece with a 1 next to it will be placed. If you don't want that piece click in a corner somewhere or in the trash can. Use corner pieces to direct the spheres from hole to hole, and that's it you've done it. (Hint: you only need two pieces to complete level 1).

Once all the holes are filled, you have a twenty second bonus period. If you can prevent any balls from dying in that period you will gain a bonus score, if not never mind. If you have succeeded you go on to the next level, if not you try again until your power points run out.

Stages 2-5

Though similar to stage 1, each stage has its own twist, and they get progressively harder:

Stage 2 'Swamp': Still a 10 by 8 grid, but this time with water! Spheres don't float, so water spells instant death. However, you do have bridges to cross the water. A stone bridge to cross a single square of water or a suspension bridge to cross three squares of water. But beware! The number of squares is exact. Nothing spans 2 squares for example. To place a suspension bridge, click on the water next to one bank and then the water next to the other bank; a suspension bridge will build out filling both the clicked on squares and the one inbetween. Of course they have to be in a straight line...

Stage 3 'Labyrinth': Now the rules have changed. The arena is a huge 20 by 16, scrolling around you. Furthermore, you no longer have to fill any holes. Instead you have to collect all the tokens by having a sphere roll over them.

Stage 4 'Portals': Similar to the Labyrinth in appearance, and aims, the strategy however is completely different. This is because of the introduction of gatesensors and portcullisses. Rolling through a gatesensor one way opens a portculliss - rolling the other way closes the same portcullis. This makes collecting all the tokens considerably more challenging.

Stage 5 'Inner Defences': Having breached each of the challenges in turn, you have reached the inner defences. Here the rules are decisively different. Spheres may be destroyed with impunity - but remember you only have ten. Somehow you must detonate the nuke to clear the level and reach the next one. However, auto-firing lasers and TNT as well as all the standard tricks stand in your way. The lasers fire whenever a ball is one square in front, yet they also destroy the square two in front. They can be destroyed from behind however. TNT is detonated merely by rolling into it (or blowing it up). And nukes are Sphere-sensitive. Complete all this and you are truly a Master of Spheres.

Advanced Instructions

Pretty much everything should be self-evident. However some things should be explained a bit more thoroughly perhaps...

The five command buttons on the left are obvious. The game can be made to go faster by pressing the 'Faster' button and reduced back to its normal speed with 'Slower'. These can be used particularly when everything is set up, and you just want to get things done. They exactly speed up time, and have no positive or negative effect. The trash can can be used to jettison the next piece you would place. However, advanced players will note that it is quicker still to get rid of pieces by clicking repeatedly in a square pattern somewhere out of the way. Pause loses you one power point, so use it sparingly.

The faster and slower buttons can be duplicated by pressing '>' and '<', 'p' for pause and cmd-A for abort. No key for trash - it would make it too easy!

Command+Q will quit from just about anywhere.

On the right hand side: the displays are obvious. The middle window is how many pieces are left to be fed into the piece stack and from there to the arena.

The debriefing screen, like all other screens has one hidden feature. You can use the digits 1 through 6 instead of clicking under one of the six holes, with the numbers starting on the left.

This works just about everywhere.

The scoring is slightly bizaare. Basically it's one point per hole filled / token collected, plus ten if you finish the level. There's a bonus ten for getting the time bonus. Losing a level also costs points - approximately equal to the number of holes / tokens available.

As for hints, here are a few:

Once a hole has been filled, the straight piece is not locked - you can change it.

All the balls need not go in a long line. Some can go one way and others another. This is essential to the later levels.

Watch out for grayed out pieces - they're locked and cannot be moved.

Remember holes need not be filled from stage 3 up - but they can slow a line of balls down - however you only have ten so take care.

Finally, if you're really stuck on a level then I'm willing to help...

Hope you have fun

Jonathan Wolf

London

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Thanks to all my beta-testers:

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And anyone else I've heinously forgotten... It was fun.