

# **DropZoneGuide**

**COLLABORATORS**

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## Chapter 1

# DropZoneGuide

### 1.1 DropZone Guide

DropZone Documentation ©1996 Richard Tunstall

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Disclaimer

Introduction

System requirements/Setup

How to play!

History

Level Designer and Customisation

Registration Offer! (joke! - 1999)

### 1.2 DISCLAIMER

---DISCLAIMER---

This software is provided as is and I accept no liability for any consequences, direct or indirect, resulting from it's use. Neither do I accept liability for any errors or inconsistencies in this documentation.

Richard Tunstall 1996.

### 1.3 Introducing DropZone

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"MISSION BRIEFING

-----  
It is the year 2085, and only a handful of people have survived the devastating robot wars. In a final bid for human survival the peoples of the earth unite to develop the ultimate transportation; a Tacheon propelled star cruiser, capable of overcoming relativistic limitations to fresh new star systems.

The Tacheon drive relies on bombarding very rare Ionian crystals with quarks. But all the earth's resources were used up developing a prototype and so a consignment of men is despatched to the hostile young planet of IO, Jupiter's 2nd inner most moon. It is here that the crystals are found in abundance scattered all over the surface. They are continually thrown up from the depths of the planet by the elemental forces of the three active volcanoes, first discovered way back in the 1980's.

Not long after building a moonbase in the flat bed of a large crater the first wave of aliens arrive from Jupiter to rid their moon of the human invaders.

It is your mission to protect the men and their crystals from the marauding aliens. You have been equipped with the latest pulse laser back pack system capable of carrying an extra man and becoming invisible and indestructible for short periods of time. You must safely escort each surviving man and his crystals back to the Dropzone where the landing pad of the moonbase is located. You must succeed, the future of mankind depends on you alone."

So the original C64 instructions for Dropzone prepared me for the years of struggle. And, as distant summers fled across the peaceful earth, after many losses on both sides, it began to look as though mankind would be saved. Just one final push with the best pilots, the survivors, the veterans, the cream of experience, curdled under a harsh Jovian light. To sweep the moon clean of the enemy scum with the purest, blindest of hate, nurtured through so many orbits. They were weakened, and this time they would die. They would all die.

But then, suddenly, my trusty C64 was sabotaged by the alien hordes. What could be done? Men were dying out there!

I sat down in front of my Al200 with a copy of Blitz Basic 2 with only one goal in mind; to create an interface between my computer and the moonbase on IO, to get back out there before it was too late, mankind must survive! Shortly after seeing the first flickering transmissions, planters swirling through the stormy atmosphere, my Al200 was broken too... Again I suspected THEM. But I could do nothing. I never knew the fate of our final mission.

And so I did other things. Time passed. I became content, resigned and idle.

And then one day I heard a sound. A sound that bubbled out of turbulent memories and brought me back to life: a faint whistle; a cry for help. So once again I started to build and mold. The result was DropZone.

Back in the fray, and I soon knew the scores had been evened; they had rebuilt their strength, and we were still hanging on. Strapping on my spacesuit, I felt like I was home. A hasty briefing warned me of new alien developments: they were now trying to terraform IO, changing the atmosphere

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to suit their foul needs and make it more hostile for us.

A call to arms! To defeat the alien menace and restore mankind to peace and glory. New pilots will be needed. And old stalwarts too, called out of retirement for the greatest battle yet. Humanity needs YOU!

'Alrighty! How do I play?'

## 1.4 DropZone System Requirments

To play DropZone you will need:

An Amiga with at least OS 2+  
The AGA chipset (not strictly necessary but will be used if present)  
For best speed a reasonably fast Amiga (ie. A1200+fastram or better)

To make the most of the game's output, you should plug it into your hifi; the game uses directional stereo sound effects, for example, to help you find the men in distress, and to show where the next nmeye's coming from. For the most resplendant and immersive visuals, play in the dark and let the explosions light up the back of your skull...

Only the DEMO version may be freely distributed; the complete registered version is copyright and illegal to distribute. If you give anyone a copy of the complete version then there will be no future development of the software.

The following DropZone files are required for the demo:  
(and must be present for every distribution)

```
DropZone (dir)
  DropData (dir)
    Sound (dir)
      alert1.smp
      alert2.smp
      blip.smp
      bomb.smp
      cryfade.smp
      exp2.smp
      pickup.smp
      pickup2.smp
      pulse2.smp
      robot.smp
      teleport.smp
      thrustd.smp
      Whistle2.smp
    Fonts (dir)
      DropZone (dir)
        8
      DropZone.font
  Back (dir)
    dropbackg0.cop
    dropbackg1.cop
    dropbackg2.cop
```

```
        dropbackg3.cop
        dropcon1.cop
        dropcon2.cop
        dropfl1.cop
        dropfl2.cop
        hall3.cop
    Console.iff
    DropZone.iff
    dropzone.shp
    dropzone2.shp
    DropZone32.iff
    Landscape.iff
    littlelogo.shp
    Loading2.iff
    palettel.pal
    palette2.pal
    palette3.pal
    palette4.pal
    palette5.pal
    palette6.pal
    palette7.pal
    palette8.pal
    Title.iff
    Icons (dir)
        Drawer.info
        DZ.icon.info
        DZHi.icon.info
    Docs (dir)
        DropZone.guide (this file)
        DropZone.guide.info
    Docs.info
    DropZone.B
    DropZone.B.info
    Icons.info
    ReadMeFirst
    ReadMeFirst.info
DropZone.info
```

If any of the above files are missing from your copy then please register for a complete version (register anyway!).

Note: The files ending with ".info" are optional but should be present whenever DropZone is distributed.

The software looks for it's data files from a volume called DROPZONE: If you're working from floppy disk then simply name the disk DROPZONE Ideally you'll be using a hard disk (the game doesn't need any disk access once it's loaded, but it will load much faster than from floppy) and you should place the whole archive in a directory called DROPZONE and add

```
ASSIGN DROPZONE: [path]
```

where [path] is the full path of the DROPZONE directory, to the file

```
s:startup-sequence
```

---

or

```
s:user-startup
```

or simply type it into a CLI or SHELL window before you run the game.

## 1.5 How To Play DropZone

OK, choose a topic...

Controls Overview

Cast of Characters

Scoring System

Hall of Fame/Mission Rating

Screen Display

Objective and Game Structure

Strategy and Hints

## 1.6 DropZone Controls Overview

Starting a new game, Exiting DropZone

-----

Simply press fire from any of the title screens to begin a new game. If you press 'ESC' on one of the title screens then the Hall-Of-Fame will be saved to disk (for next time) and the game will exit to DOS (Workbench or CLI, or wherever you came from).

'SPACE' moves between the various title screens.

If 'ESC' is pressed during the game that game will exit immediately to the title screens, if you achieved a highscore it -will not- be entered into the Hall-Of-Fame...

Controls

-----

DropZone can be played with either a joystick (in port 1) or keyboard controls, selected by pressing the fire-button of your choice on the title screen.

Pressing 'j' toggles between joystick and keyboard control whilst paused.

The keyboard controls are:

```
cursor keys - left, right, up and down thrusts
right ALT - fire pulse weapon
```

---



Some special control keys can be used in both joystick and keyboard modes.

Special keys:

- SPACE bar - release strata bomb.
- right AMIGA - toggle cloak.
- ESCAPE - quit current game, and return to title screens.
- ESCAPE (from title screens) - quit to DOS and save Hall-Of-Fame.
- 'p' - pause.
- 'q' (while paused) - self destruct (all lives are lost).
- 'j' (while paused) - toggle joystick and keyboard modes.

Environment

DropZone is played out over the surface of IO. To master the game you must learn the feel of your back pack because you will have both INERTIA and GRAVITY affecting your movement just as in everyday life on earth.

Firing

Pressing your chosen fire button will release a pulse of deadly plasma (mind the men on the surface!) to destroy an alien. Try it and see. (a valuable addition to your modern lifestyle, I think you'll agree)

Horizontal Thrust

Your strongest thrust from your jetpack will accelerate you across the moon's surface. At full speed you will be faster than most of the opposition but don't try to outrun a Nmeye!

Vertical Thrust

Your secondary thrust is used to adjust your position above the surface. Remember that the moon's gravity is constantly acting on you, so to hold a steady position you must keep firing bursts of your vertical thrust.

Strata Bomb Release

Pressing the space bar to release a strata bomb (if you have any left) will destroy any aliens (except men and androids) currently in view on the main display.

Cloak Activation

Activating the cloak will render you invulnerable for a short period, switch it off again when you're through the danger to save the precious power supply. You will have a chance to recharge after each attack wave.

## 1.7 DropZone Objective and Game Structure

Objective

Your mission is to protect the men on planet IO's surface from being destroyed by the invading aliens and return them one by one to the Dropzone in which the moonbase landing pad is located.

#### Game Structure

-----

You start with a consignment of eight men, 15 seconds of cloaking power, 3 lives and three Strata Bombs. You get 1 bonus life and Strata Bomb for every 10,000 point mark that you reach, and 7 seconds of cloak power for each wave.

After one million points has been achieved no more bonus lives or Strata Bombs will be awarded. (But if you are that good you shouldn't need them!).

A wave is finished by destroying all planters, spores, trailers, blunder storms and landing all the men back at the moonbase. You receive a points bonus at the end of every attack wave for the number of rescued men. You also get this for landing each man during the wave.

About every 5th wave a fresh consignment of men arrives. Prior to this round you will have to battle through a special wave such as a TRAILER INVASION. As you progress through the waves, the planters will adapt to your success, becoming even more frenzied in their attacks on the men. Occasionally there will be special level created by the game. These levels are always different and unpredictable.

If you lose a life while carrying a man he will be replaced on the surface. If you save and land all eight men then no more Android attacks will occur for the rest of that wave. BUT if you have saved less than eight men then every now and then one Android will actually invade the moonbase by descending onto the landing pad and running into the moonbase.

## 1.8 DropZone Characters

### Men

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At the start of each attack wave the 'Men Out' count will show how many men are on the surface. They slowly move towards the moonbase in the Dropzone, each carrying Ionian crystals. Whenever the alien Planters lower an Android to destroy a man, he lets out a whistle for help that echoes around the atmosphere. You can rescue men by picking them up one at a time and dropping them off on to the elevated landing pad at the moonbase for bonus points.

### Planters and Androids

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Planters are the most common alien. They are machines piloted by Androids that drift across the surface rising up over volcanoes and the moonbase. They are always on the look out for the men. When you attack, the Android lowers itself to the surface to chase the man, leaving the Planter machine to become a Nemesite

### Nemesite

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Once an Android has landed, the Planter machine becomes a Nemesite, a deadly homing missile set to crash into you at all costs. They evade your pulse laser fire until they are close enough for collision.

Anti-Matter

-----

If all the Men on IO are destroyed, the Planters and Androids fuse into gyrating Anti-Matter nodules which bounce towards you.

Spore

-----

Spores are fairly harmless until triggered off. When this occurs they release up to four individual Trailers.

Trailers

-----

Trailers are released from Spores and need a direct hit on the heads of their bodies to destroy them.

Nmeyes

-----

If you have survived an attack wave for too long the aliens send in a Nmeye as their ultimate weapon. Nmeyes watch your every move and occasionally blink. Their motion is erratic and they can move faster than you at full speed. After 100 levels, two nmeyes can be sent at once, and later even more...

Blunder Storms

-----

These storms are a silent but deadly environmental hazard of IO. They slowly float in the upper atmosphere over the planet's surface sometimes retaining molecular acid, or they will occasionally rumble and release an intense bolt of proton lightning. If lightning strikes a man, he will be catapulted into the Ionian atmosphere but he is well protected by his blue survival suit and should still survive. Should an android be struck, its brain circuits will be instantly fried and it will be destroyed as it crashes back to the surface. If a nmeye is chasing you, it is occasionally possible to lead it under a storm where, if struck by lightning, it can be disabled for ten valuable seconds before it burns out and the aliens send out another to hunt you down.

## 1.9 DropZone Score System

Men 100-500 for rescuing during wave

Men 100-500 for each man surviving the wave

Men 0 if destroyed

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Men 500 bonus if snatched in mid-air!

Android 50 if shot while descending with planter

Android 50 if shot whilst chasing a man

Android 500 if shot while falling from a destroyed planter

Planters 250 Spores 750

Nemesites 150 Trailers 250

Anti-Matter 150 Nmeyes 100

Blunder Storms 250 Loss of Life 10

By reaching certain scores,  
bonus  
lives or strata bombs can be gained.  
Your score contributes to a mission rating; the best reach the  
Hall of Fame

## 1.10 DropZone Hall of Fame

Hall of Fame  
-----

If at the end of the mission you have gained a sufficiently high score you will be asked to enter your initials into the DropZone Hall of Fame, signifying that you are one of the top ten heroes to attempt a DropZone mission.

The Hall of Fame will only be saved to disk when you exit the game by pressing 'ESC' from one of the title screens.

If you wish to clear the Hall of Fame, delete the following file:

DropZone:Dropdata/fame.bin

A new version reset to the defaults will be created when you next play.

Mission Rating  
-----

Depending on your performance you will be awarded one of 10 ranks. A beginner might not achieve the 10,000 mark and will not receive a rank. An average score might get you Moon Cadet status. But for the mission to be considered a total success you must achieve the rank of MEGASTAR. This is universally regarded as the ultimate galactic distinction possible and will be awarded to supreme warriors who fight off the aliens to score 1,000,000 points or more.

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## 1.11 DropZone Screen Display

### The Screen

The main (top) part of the screen shows the exact realtime side view of the zone over which you are cruising.

The secondary (lower) part of the screen shows your instrumentation and status displays.

### Instruments

Man Counts - These show how many men are currently on the planet's surface and how many have actually been safely returned to the moonbase.

Attack Indicator - This is an arrow that is displayed the instant an Android attack begins on one of the men still on the surface or the moonbase itself. It shows the direction and shortest route to the last attack detected.

Cloak Status - This shows the amount of time left before the cloak generator runs out of power. A warning signal is sounded about three seconds beforehand.

Spare Lives - This shows up to three of the remaining lives

Strata Bombs - This shows up to three of the remaining Strata Bombs.

Score - Your accumulated points score, calculated according to the

scoring system

. With a high enough score you might achieve a rank or

enter the DropZone

Hall of Fame

.

SCANNER - This is the most important information area. It shows what is happening elsewhere on the entire planet's surface and covers six times the area shown on the main screen. Each member of the DropZone cast has a distinct colour. The landing pad is detected as a series of bright white dots at surface level.

## 1.12 Veteran's Advice...

### Hints From The Old Warhorse's Mouth

(some apply only to the  
full version  
)

Learn to use the scanner! (without losing sight of your main display)

Be careful about shooting at ground level if there are men around. If all the

men die then the Planters and Androids will fuse into deadly Antimatter.

If a planter is releasing it's android to attack a man, it's your job to rush to the rescue. If all the men are lost then things get very hectic and you'll have to sit tight and wait for the next consignment of men (every few attack waves). One method is to save the men first, then try to clear the rest of the attack wave.

Spores are MOSTLY HARMLESS until you shoot them so leave them till last, or try to get them all together with Strata Bombs which will help to clean up the trailers too.

It is useful to save up Strata Bombs for the more difficult waves where small groups of planters repeatedly teleport into the zone.

If a Nmeye is dispatched to destroy you (you should have finished the wave sooner) then be prepared for a jousting duel. Find space away from planters and other aliens and make full use of your scanner to monitor the Nmeye's approach. Remember; you can't outrun a Nmeye at full speed, but you are more manouvreable, so if it's hot on your tail (and you can't shake it!) fly in circles, shooting as it spins past.

Try making a dummy move upwards as you flee from a close Nmeye, then make use of the gravity by thrusting down towards the surface and doubling back behind the Nmeye. This will give you some space as it overshoots.

A cool trick to try when chased by a nmeye is to lure it under a blunder storm where, if struck by a blast of proton lightning, its brain circuits can be fried and it will crash to the surface, disabled, buying you some valuable time to complete the attack wave.

Another nice trick is to wait until the men are catapulted into the air by a blunder storm, and try to catch them as they fall.

There is a special editor screen hidden in the game which gives you control over some of the global parameters such as gravity/thrust strength and elasticity. There is also a secret cheat mode with many options for experimentation. If the cheat mode has been activated, no hiscore will be recorded, so that the Hall-O-Fame remains genuine.

Press 'r' when the cheat mode is active to make the level generator more excitable. '[' quickly moves to the next level.

Try holding down SPACE before the first loading screen is displayed to switch on the SCARECROW MODE. Or 'o' for ORIGINAL DROPZONE MODE.

## 1.13 Designing your own backgrounds

Using the CDesign editor, supplied with the complete registered version,

you can design your own background graphics or edit the 70 or so supplied backgrounds.

---

Background filenames should have the format:

```
DROPBACKGn.COP
```

where 'n' is any number apart from 0, and should be located in the directory:

```
DROPZONE:DROPDATA/BACK/
```

The number of backgrounds may be changed, but make sure that there are no gaps in the file numbering. Number 0 is used when Antimatter occurs.

Also in this directory, you will find a dictionary file:

```
NAMES.ASC
```

This is a standard ASCII file and may be edited in any text editor. It is used to generate the names of random levels.

In the directory

```
DROPZONE:DROPDATA/SOUND/
```

you may place any sound module in MED format to be played (probably in slow motion... ho hum) while loading and throughout the titles.

## 1.14 DropZone History (abridged)

Origins

DropZone is obviously based on the old Defender arcade games, with one or two twists, tweeks and, in my view, improvements.

This version is specifically inspired by my memories of Archer Maclean's masterpiece for the C64. I'm assuming it's a fairly faithful representation (although I can't check; my C64 was buried years ago), I wrote it because I wanted to play DropZone on my Amiga. And here it is, as large as life, and twice as big.

My version was written with the help of Blitz Basic 2, a beautiful language from Acid Software (despite its bugs, despite the fact that I can't get the debugger to function properly, despite the clumsy, error-prone editor, and despite the mess and inconsistency of the manuals/docs it is a stunningly worthy package). Buy it. Use it.

Thanks must go to:

Archer Maclean (not only for Dropzone, but IK+ and Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker too)

The team behind Blitz Basic 2.

Reflective Images library.

Peter, for playing it.

Clare, for her mystical song of invulnerability.

---

...And You (you know who you are).

## 1.15 DropZone Registration

Once upon a time I was going to distribute a demo version of DropZone, and make ↵  
the  
full version shareware for a paltry (or poultry?) fee. Now i can't be bothered, so ↵  
you  
should find this is the full version 1.0 of the game. Hope you find some enjoyment ↵  
in  
it...

On the offchance that you're so overwhelmed with gratitude, I'd welcome any small ↵  
change,  
gifts or whatever you feel like sending me. Whatever, let me know your thoughts on ↵  
the  
game if you can find my email address...

[currently (as of 7/5/99) richard@arctorb.freeseve.co.uk]

Note that I'm writing this in 1999, everything else (including the rest of this ↵  
guide)  
was done back in the day, years ago. In the interval I've added to the dictionary ↵  
file  
(about twice) and allowed friends to throw in a few words too...

Cheerio,

Richard.

---