

Basics of Play

There are some surprises in Poing!, beyond the basics of ball, bumpers, and targets. This chapter describes the game more fully.

Scoring

Scoring is simple: You get ten points every time you hit a target. You also get bonus points when you complete a level with time left over: one point for every remaining tenth of a second.

Your score is displayed as you play. On slower machines, the score display is not updated when you hit a target, because that would interfere with the smooth motion of the ball. But you still get ten points for each target you hit, and your total will be displayed correctly when you have completed the level.

Different Levels

Each level of the game is different, and each level is usually more difficult to complete than the previous ones. Levels can differ in the time limit, the number of targets to hit, the number of traps, whether the bumpers are flippers, whether there is an initial pattern of bumpers, and in the decor. Each of these is explained below.

Time Limit

Each level has a time limit. There is a digital clock on the scoreboard, which will show the amount of time you have left. If the clock reaches zero, you are out of time and the game is over. To advance to the next level, you must hit all the targets before time runs out. You get bonus points for time left over, so try to be quick!

Five seconds before time runs out, the game will say “Uh-oh!” by way of warning.

Targets

There is always exactly one target for you to hit. If you hit it, it will disappear and a new one will appear somewhere else at random. Each level has a certain number of targets you must hit before time runs out. Each target is worth 10 points. The scoreboard will show you how many targets you have left to hit.

Traps

Traps are like flypaper. If the ball hits one, the trap will grab and hold the ball for two seconds, then release it. The only penalty is the loss of time.

Flippers

Some levels have “flippers.” This means that every time the ball hits a bumper, the bumper will change: from a / to a \, or vice-versa. Flippers make it much more difficult to predict the ball’s motion.

Decor

Just for fun, the artwork will change every few levels. Each different decor has its own name, which is listed (in bold face) along with the other characteristics of a level, just before the level starts. One decor, called “Concentration,” is special because its / and \ bumpers look identical, making it harder to predict what the ball will do unless you can remember which bumpers are which.

Patterns

Most levels start out with no bumpers, but some levels have a pre-set pattern of bumpers already in place when the level starts. A pattern makes the level more difficult because the more bumpers there are, the harder it is to make the ball go where you want. Each pattern has a name, which is listed in quotes under the decor name, just before the level starts.

The pattern named “Drawn and Quartered” does not appear in the sequence of levels, because it’s too difficult. You can try it out in “Design a Level” practice play, if you’re feeling masochistic. See the next chapter (“Practice”) for details.