Marble Drop Contents

Welcome to Marble Drop, the intriguing and challenging new puzzle game from Maxis. This Help Menu was designed to introduce you to the basic rules and components of the puzzles as well as answering any questions you may have concerning gameplay or puzzle functions. We have tried to give you a good mix of puzzles in this demo, and we   hope you enjoy playing them. Thanks and Have Fun!

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What Is Marble Drop?

Marble Drop is a unique puzzle strategy game that challenges players to explore the workings of different mechanical puzzles. Players drop different colored marbles in each puzzle machine and try to figure out how best to get the right colored marbles to their correct destination. The difficulty level of the puzzles ranges from "cakewalk" to "pretty darn tough". Needless to say, the puzzles can get quite challenging with the addition of various components like springs, cannons, lifts and freezers. Once you are comfortable with the puzzles, solving them will become easier and your scores will be higher. Just remember to take a break once in a while!

Marble Drop Components

Brake

Buzz Saw

Cannon

Diverter

Exit Bins

Exit Track

Freezer

Heater

Lift

Marbles

Marble Reservoir

Pendulum

Purchase Marble Button

Reset Puzzle Button

Score box

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Start Funnel

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Track Variants Trigger

Warning Light

—

Pick A Puzzle

Begin by opening a new puzzle under the Game Menu. You may select a different puzzle under Select Puzzle or start solving the default puzzle, Arthur, which will come up automatically when launching the game. You may also start a new game by pressing your F2 key.

This demo will include five puzzles for your enjoyment, all of which are named after hurricanes of the National Weather Service. Go ahead and choose from the selection of puzzles below, which are listed in order of difficulty from easiest to hardest.

ARTHUR

FRANCES

HORTENSE

JOSEPHINE

JUAN

ARTHUR

This is the beginning puzzle in the Marble Drop demo and one that we thought would introduce you to the rules and strategies that are important, especially as you progress to the tougher puzzles. Arthur will introduce you to [Brakes](#), [Lifts](#), and [Diverters](#). We recommend starting with Arthur or else you may lose your marbles (literally).

FRANCES

Meet Frances, the next puzzle on the difficulty scale. Frances is an exciting puzzle which features many new elements. Check out the marbles as it completes the loop de loops. If you notice that one, or possibly several, marbles get stuck in an infinite loop where they continuously make the same loop, don't worry, we designed it that way.

HORTENSE

This puzzle will really make you think about strategy. Try to find a pattern in the way the marbles get diverted by the targets. Spend some time with Hortense for best results. Also, try increasing the speed on this puzzle. It's neat to see it work fast.

JOSEPHINE

Josephine will introduce you to some new componnets like cannons and trigger diverters. The cannon is a fun device, but can be frustrating when it is "loaded", which causes incoming marbles to be lost. You will also get your first taste of the crossbow springs in this puzzle.

JUAN

This is the toughest puzzle in the demo, and if you can solve it, you are a Marble Drop wizard! There are several things to be aware of. When a marble passes through a heater, it will become hot and change color, and if it passes through a second time, it will "melt" (be destroyed). When a marble passes through a freezer, it will become cold and will "shatter" if it passes through a second time. When a marble passes first through a heater, it will become hot. If the same marble then goes through a freezer it will return to normal color. The same for the reverse sequence; freezer —> heater. This puzzle is quite challenging, so be prepared to spend some time on it.

See [Scoring](#) and [Strategy and Tips](#) sections for scoring help and pointers.

Ready To Play?

We'll be honest. You will be using your brain more than your brawn as you play Marble Drop. It's a thinking person's strategy game. So just relax and explore the workings of each puzzle. Begin by selecting a marble with your mouse pointer (be sure to hold down the button as you drag the marble) and dropping it into one of the start funnels at the top. Of course, you will want to select a marble whose color matches the first exit slot (the last slot on the left on each set of bins). All of your successive moves should depend on which bin needs to be filled next.

You may put as many marbles into the puzzle as you desire, until the warning light is activated. This usually occurs after 8 marbles or so depending on the puzzle. Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to get the correct marbles into the proper exit bins, while losing as few as possible, thus earning a higher score.

Losing Marbles

During game play, marbles may be lost or destroyed a number of ways. Check under the [PuzzleComponents](#) section to find which parts of the puzzle could cause trouble. You will probably learn quickly that if the wrong colored marble falls into the incorrect exit bin, it will be destroyed. When one or more sets of exit bins are filled, a buzz saw will pop up which will destroy any additional marbles that try to enter. Marbles can be lost as well. If the cannon is pointing upward off the track and a marble tries to enter the cannon barrel, the marble will drop off the table and disappear. Probably the biggest loss of marbles happens when you overload the puzzle with too many marbles and ignore the warning light which activates. If you choose to keep adding marbles, all marbles, including those in exit bins, will be destroyed.

Buying Marbles

When starting a new game, you are given seven of each colored marble. As you progress to the more difficult puzzles, you may find it necessary to buy additional marbles. To purchase marbles, click on the Purchase Marble Button, designated by a "+" symbol located next to the reservoir whose color you would like to purchase. The color of the "+" will match the color of marbles in the reservoir. You will be "charged" (points deducted from your score) for each marble you purchase:

Colored Marbles- These cost 500 points each for all colors except silver and black.

Silver Marbles- Silver marbles are valuable because they can be purchased for 100 points and, as such, are perfect "sacrifice" marbles. There will be instances when in order to get a particular marble into the correct bin, a trigger will need to be tripped or a diverter will need to be changed - a silver marble is perfect for these tasks. Silver Marbles will be destroyed if and when they fall into an exit bin. You need at least 100 points in the bank to buy one.

Black Marbles- Black marbles are the most valuable and also the most expensive at 1500 points. Black marbles are considered a "wild card". No matter what color exit bin they fall into, they will change to that color. Example: if a black marble falls into a yellow exit bin, it will turn yellow and points will be awarded as normal. You cannot purchase Black marbles until you have at least 1500 points.

Puzzle Speed

Marble Drop puzzles default to a medium speed setting. The speed of the puzzle can be altered to work slower or faster. Look to the lower right corner of the puzzle for the Speed Control. Simply click on the speed control needle and drag left for slower and right for faster. The setting you choose will stay active through all successive games, until it is changed again.

What's The Point?

Above all, the most important objective is to JUST HAVE FUN. However, the actual goal of the game is to solve the puzzle by filling all of the exit bins with the correct colored marbles. And, as we explained before, this can be easy or it can be hard depending on the puzzle. Solving puzzles successfully may require some time and concentration, but it can be done. And remember, there is no "right" way to solve the puzzles. Be creative.

See Also Strategy and Tips

Scoring

Scoring for Marble Drop is quite basic. Points are earned as follows: Each time a component is used by a marble you earn a various number of points depending on what the component is. For example,   passing through a diverter yields 50 points, marbles that get transported award 100 points. You will be awarded 500 points for every marble that makes it into the correct exit bin. When the puzzle has been completed, there will be a large point bonus awarded that is dependent on how many marbles were used to solve the puzzle. This bonus will be between 100 and 5000 points.

The "Score Summary" page, which appears automatically when a puzzle is completed gives scores in the following categories: Not available on Demo Version.

<u>None of the items below are included on this demo.</u>

Beginning Score

When first starting a game, you will usually star with a score of "0", unless you are working your way through several puzzles in which case your score will be cumulative amount of all the puzzles completed to that point.

Components Used

This is the number of components you actually used to solve the puzzle.

Points Scored

This is the total amount of points you earned for completing the puzzle. Points are earned for solving puzzle, utilizing components and using marbles efficiently.

Of Marbles Purchased

The game begins with seven marbles of each color. Once these are used up you may "buy" marbles in order to complete the puzzle. This number indicates the number of marbles you needed to buy to complete the puzzle.

Cost Of Marbles

This is the total points it cost to purchase marbles necessary to complete the puzzle. Marbles have different prices:

Colored Marbles: 500 points

Black Marbles: 1500 points

Silver Marbles: 100 points

Efficiency Bonus

The efficiency bonus added to your score which is based on how many marbles you used to complete the puzzle. I.e. the fewer the marbles used, the higher the bonus.

Ending Score

This is the final score you have received, including any additions and subtractions described above.

Of Marbles Lost

The total number of marbles which were "wasted", "lost" or otherwise "destroyed" in order to solve the puzzle successfully.

Of Marbles Gained

If for some reason you were good enough to gain marbles during the game, that total will be listed here, otherwise you will see a zero.

Strategy and Tips

There are certain "tricks of the trade" that you will learn about as you progress through the puzzles that will enable you to achieve higher scores and use fewer marbles. We can help you by giving you a few pointers ahead of time:

1. PATIENCE: Take your time and be patient! Watch where the marbles are going and which tracks are open to new marbles. This will help determine which marbles to select to drop into funnel.
2. SILVER MARBLES: If you need to use a "sacrifice" marble to trip a switch, change a diverter, be destroyed or get caught in an infinite loop, consider purchasing a Silver Marble. Silver marbles only cost 100 points. It's better to lose a cheap silver marble rather than risk destroying a colored marble which will set you back 500 points or even a black marble which will set you back 1500 big ones.
3. FOLLOW THE PATH: Take some time to map out the route the marble will take before dropping it in start funnel. See exactly where the marble will go once dropped by tracing the track all the way to exit bin. It's time consuming, but it will pay off in higher scores and fewer wasted marbles.
4. TIMING: Try timing your marbles for better results. Sometimes a puzzle cannot be solved without losing marbles unless you time the release of the marble just right. Dropping a second marble into the puzzle while the first is still going through may be the only way to complete the puzzle with minimum losses and maximum points.
5. BLACK MARBLES: This is more of a quasi-strategy and should only be used as a last resort. If for some reason you can't seem to figure out a puzzle and are losing too many marbles, purchase a few "chameleons" (Black marbles) and drop those in. Remember? These are the powerful marbles which change color to match the exit bin. Expensive? Yes, but definitely worth it!
6. BE EFFICIENT: Don't waste time and points using inapplicable colors to solve the puzzle. Example: if the Puzzle only requires red, blue and yellow marbles, don't drop purple marbles into the puzzle because they will be destroyed and you will lose points.

Game Menu Commands

New Game (F2) - Select this to start new game.

Load Game (F11) - Load a previously saved game

(Not available in Demo version)

Save Game (F12) - Save a game

(Not available in Demo version)

Reset Puzzle - Selecting this choice will result in all marbles in play being destroyed although the current score will be maintained.

Restart Puzzle - Choose this to clear the puzzle and the score. Blank slate.

Demo Mode (Auto Pilot) - The computer will show you how to play!

Select Puzzle - Highlight this to select among all 5 puzzles.

Pause / Resume Game (F3) - Interrupt and continue play.

Exit - Exit Marble Drop.

Keyboard Commands

In order to simplify using some of the commands that will be used frequently, we have provided a number of function hotkeys:

F1 = On Line Help

F2 = New Game

F3 = Pause / Resume Game

F4 = Toggle Full Screen / Window

F11 = Load Game

F12 = Save Game

Option Menu Commands

Full Screen Mode (F4) = Toggle between full screen and normal window.

(Not available in Demo version)

Sounds (Ctrl+S) = Turn Game Sounds on and off.

Resolution = This Demo will only work in 640 X 480 resolution.

The final release of Marble Drop will have multiple resolution choices.

Help Menu Commands

Marble Drop Help Topics

Access our online Help manual if you have any questions or problems with

Marble Drop. We have tried to cover all the basics of the game: getting started, playing, scoring, strategy, rules, components and objectives. We are sorry if something got left out or forgotten, and we will do our best to correct them on the final version of

Marble Drop.

About Marble Drop

If you are interested in finding out who was responsible for this fine game, check out this section. Also, if you have any comments or suggestions regarding the Marble Drop Demo or this Help File, please contact us. We encourage and welcome your input.

To reach us: CLICK HERE {button Maxis South,JI(`marble.HLP',`Contacting_Us')}

Contacting Us:

Maxis South
Attn: Marble Drop QA
8303 Mopac Expressway
Suite #B-230
Austin, Texas 78759
Fax: (512) 343-2231

The Folks Who Made This Great Product

THE   MAXIS SOUTH TEAM

Executive Producer
  Kevin Gliner

Producer
  Lisa Acton

Programming
  John Taylor

Quality Assurance Lead
  Darin Henley

Quality Assurance Team
  Alex Nedleman
  Kelly Kerr
  Cynthia Engstrom
  Peter Saylor

Help File Documentation
  Alex Nedleman

Artists
  Paul Effinger
  Larry Vela

Design
  Kevin Gliner
  Monty Kerr

Sound Production
Music & Sound Effects
  Ridgeway Sound/Matt Ridgeway

Special Thanks
  Michael Sandige
  Paula Sandige
  Mark L. Barrett
  Keith Johnson
  Rob Rosenhouse
  Joy Carchidi
  Shea Love
  Michael Kelley
  David Stafford
  Jim Mischel

THE   MAXIS TEAM

Producer
John Csicsery

Product Manager
John Koller

Quality Assurance Lead
Myka G. Macaraeg

Quality Assurance Team

Cathy Castro	Delos Mace
Keith Meyer	Ira Katz
Joe Longworth	David Abrams
Peter Saylor	Tim Moore
Marc Meyer	Russell Johnson
Owen Nelson	Shannon Gray
Michael Gilmartin	Fred Cooley
John Ylinen	Mike Chan
Scott Shicoff	Zir-Paul Macaraeg
Joe Ellis	

Art Director
Sharon Barr

Install Program
Anthony Hobbs

Special Thanks
Joe Scirica
Alan Barton
Ashley Csicsery
Felicia Csicsery
Tom Forge

Marble Tower

The marble tower is the tall vertical structure on the left hand side of the screen which   holds the various colored marbles. It also serves to recycle the marbles by reclaiming them through the Sorting Tube after a puzzle has been completed.

Marble Reservoir

Connected to the Marble Tower are eight individual reservoirs, each of which initially holds seven marbles of a certain color. This is where you select the marbles that are dropped into the puzzle. The trays which normally hold black and silver marbles should appear empty until you purchase those marbles.

Start Funnel

At the top of every puzzle will be one or more funnels, which is where the marble is dropped to start the game. Marbles released in other areas of puzzle will be put back in reservoir.

Warning Light

At the top of the Marble Tower there is a warning light, which will warn you when you have too many marbles in the puzzle at the same time. When approximately 8 marbles have been dropped into the puzzle, the light will flash "red" and an audible buzzing sound will be heard. At that point you should wait until the marbles finish getting through the puzzle before proceeding ahead. If you choose not to heed the warning, all the marbles will be destroyed and game will need to be restarted.

Score Box

The Score Box is located just above the Marble Tower and displays the current game and/or puzzle score. Red digits means you have a negative score.

Marbles

These are the main game pieces. There are 8 different marble colors: Red, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Purple, Silver and Black. Silver and Black marbles have special properties as described in the [How To Play Marble Drop](#) section.

Speed Control

This is the mechanism you may use to control how fast or slow the game components move. It's located in the lower right corner of screen. The default is medium speed and can be adjusted faster or slower.

Reset Puzzle Button

Near the bottom of the Marble Tower you will see a red button. This is the reset puzzle button. Clicking on this will reset the game by destroying the marbles currently in the puzzle, while retaining accumulated score.

Purchase Marble Button

The purchase marble button is located just to the left of the marble reservoir on the tower itself. The button will be designated with a colored "+" symbol. Clicking on the "+" will dispense the marble AND deduct the cost from your total points.

Sorting Tube

The Sorting Tube is the portion of the Marble Tower that receives the marbles from the exit track after the puzzle has been completed. The recycled marbles then make their way up the marble tower to their correct reservoirs.

Exit Track

The Exit Track takes the marbles from the Exit Bins into the Sorting Tube for re-distribution into the Marble Tower reservoirs.

Exit Bins

This is the ultimate destination of the marbles as they make their way through each puzzle. The Exit Bins hold only one marble at a time and the marble must match the color of the bin.

Buzz Saw

Caution, this is one of the puzzle elements which likes to destroy YOUR marbles. The Buzz Saw is activated when a particular set of exit bins is full and cannot accept any more marbles. If more marbles try to enter the exit bins, they will be destroyed by the Buzz Saw.

Track Variants

**These are not really components, but several different track styles that make the puzzles more interesting.
These include spirals, corkscrews, gutter-style tracks, pipes (enclosed track), jumps and drops.**

Diverter

Diverters allow marbles to change tracks. There can be either 2 or 3 branches which direct the marbles horizontally or vertically. Each time the marble passes through a diverter, the direction of the diverter will change. So, the next time a marble passes through it will go a different way.

Brake

 A brake is a component used to slow a marble down. It appears as a vertical pipe with several pairs of metal "wings" which slow the speed of the marble as it passes through. Check out the cool sound effects, too.

Lift

A lift is a device that moves a marble vertically in a puzzle. It resembles a conveyer belt with scoops that pick up and relocate marbles to a different track. Puzzles can have more than one lift.

Target

A target is an obstacle found in a marble's path. When a marble collides with a target, the marble bounces off in the opposite direction. Targets are deactivated once they are struck.

Pendulum

Also called a swingbar. The pendulum is the device which carries a marble over gaps in the track. Once the marble is carried over, the pendulum will remain in position waiting for another marble.

Spring

A Spring appears as an archaic loaded crossbow. If a marble lands on a spring, it will be launched to a receiving basket located elsewhere in the puzzle.

Trigger

Triggers are devices lying on the track that carry electric impulses to other components when activated by a marble rolling over them. The incoming impulse will change how the component functions, i.e. a diverter will switch paths, or a blocker will fall down.

Cannon

An unusual feature indeed! A cannon fires a marble like a cannonball into a receiving basket located elsewhere in puzzle. The marble will roll into the cannon barrel, which will then be tilted upward until another marble hits the trigger (usually located on a different track), which will cause the cannon to fire.

Heater

A heater is a jet of flame a marble can roll through. The first time a marble rolls through a heater, it will become "hot" and turn a copper color. If the marble rolls through a heater a second time, it is destroyed.

Freezer

The opposite of heater, of course. A freezer appears as a glass dome which emits an icy mist. A marble that rolls through a freezer will become "cold" and change color. The second time through a freezer and the marble will "shatter" and be destroyed.

Teleporter

There are 2 types of teleporters: senders and receivers. A sending teleporter will send marbles to a receiving teleporter. Sending teleporters's lights are white, non-active receiving teleporters's lights are off and the active teleporter's lights are yellow. Only one teleporter is active to receive at a time.