

FLOP

by Jason Summers

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Overview

You are the red dot:



Your goal is to collect the required number of **rings**:



and cover up all of the **X**'s:



with **tiles**:



, ...

like so:



and then get to a **door**:



... and do this in as few moves as possible.

Pretty simple, eh?

So how do I do that?

So why should I do that?

How to play

You can move in any of the four compass directions using the arrow keys. You cannot move diagonally.

You can move freely over doors and X's, and if you move onto a ring you will automatically collect it. The number of rings you have collected and the total number you must collect are shown in the status line at the bottom of the window in the form: "Rings: (number you have)/(number you need)".

You cannot move off the screen or onto a tile.

You can move some of the tiles. If a tile has one or more handles, and you can get next to the tile on a side that has a handle, and there is an empty space on one side of the tile (the space you occupy is not empty), you can *flip* the tile into that space.

To do this, press the arrow key that would move you toward the tile. The tile will change color to indicate that this tile is being moved. Then, press the arrow key indicating the direction that you want the tile to be flipped. The tile will be moved (will "flop") onto the new location, and the handles will appear to change position accordingly.

If you change your mind after selecting a tile to flip, just attempt to flip the tile back toward you, or toward another tile. The flip will be canceled.

All of this can also be done using a mouse, but it is usually easier to use just the keyboard.

To start over on a level, just press **F5** at any time.

You can play any level you want at any time without restriction. Check out the Levels menu to see how to get to other levels.

Try to complete a level in as few moves as possible. The lowest score for each level will be saved to disk, so be prepared to enter your name for posterity when you complete a level faster than ever before. (The game must be able to write to the file flop.dat in order to save low scores.)

More on how to play

So you made a mistake but you don't want to start all over again? In your ordinary garden-variety puzzle game you'd be out of luck, but not here! Take a look at the **Moves** menu for functions that are sure to prevent endless frustration. Flop keeps track of every move you make; just press **F6** to undo your last keystroke, or keep pressing **F6** to undo multiple moves. **F7** will replay a keystroke that you have undone. Alternatively, you can press **Ctrl+Left** to undo a move and **Ctrl+Right** to redo a move. You can also jump 10 moves at a time, or jump instantly to any move. Note that if you make a move that differs from a move previously stored at that position, all succeeding moves will be removed from memory.

You can also save all the moves you have made to a file, and reload them at a later time. For example, you can save the moves that form the solution to a level. You can even reload moves and use them on a different level or at a different position. Moves saved with **Save moves** are saved starting with the first move and ending most recent move made. Moves are loaded starting at the current position, so you should usually **Restart** the level before loading moves. For experts, you can save moves starting at any position by selecting **Save moves from** or pressing **Shift+F10**. This is very useful when you are trying to lower the number of moves you used to solve a level. (For fun, you can load any file at all and it will be treated as a move list. Can *your* config.sys file solve level 4?)

A best possible (?) solution to Level 1 has been included. To see it, restart Level 1 and select Load moves. Select the file level01.mv, and the level will be solved in 43 moves. You can now press **F5** and then **F7** repeatedly to watch the solution move by move.

Our story so far...

You are the intrepid explorer Augustus Meeninglspzlsivr, and your megalomaniacal arch-enemy Lord EVELDOOER has imprisoned you in his mysterious multi-leveled dungeon where you must fight your way past seemingly impossible obstacles in your quest to save the kingdom from eternal darkness, recover the crystal of power, rescue the princess, defeat the evil minions of the black knight, and so on and on and on until you get so completely fed up with this pathetic attempt to come up with a plausible realistic scenario for what would otherwise be an almost completely entertaining video adventure game that you find yourself trying to read every last word in the help file of a meaningless puzzle game even though it's written in some font that's so ridiculously small that your eyes are beginning to hurt but you've almost finished when you finally figure out that you could have just selected Copy from the Edit menu and read the whole text in a nice big 8-point font, but by then it's too late.

Okay, I get the point. Sheesh!

Huh? Crystal of power? I don't get it.

I know all that, but I can't find the magic staff that will grant me entrance to the Dark Lord's domain!

Keep thinking about it. It'll come to you.

There is a long pause, then finally the seer looks up, looks you in the eye, and says in a solemn voice:

Have you considered seeking professional help?

Creating your own levels

It's true—you too can design levels for use with Flop. No additional software required!

Levels 1–20 are reserved and cannot be changed, but levels 21–100 are yours to do with as you wish. You can edit levels as follows:

- Select **Level|Editor** to start the editor, or just press **F12**.
- Select the location that you want to change by moving the highlighted square around with the arrow keys, or by clicking on that location with the mouse. To change an item at that location:
 - Press **space** to create or remove a tile.
 - Press **x** to create an X, **r** for a ring, **d** for a door.
 - Press **s** to make this location the starting location.
 - Press **h** to change all the handles on a tile, or **j**, **k**, **i**, **m** to change individual handles.
 - To erase an item, press the key corresponding to that item (press **r** to erase a ring, etc.), or press **backspace** to clear everything at that location.
 - You can also select all of these functions from **Edit|Items**, but that's just a waste of time.
- Using commands in the **Edit** menu, you can modify the number of rings required to complete the level, the name of the level, and the congratulatory message that the player is shown upon completing the level.
- There are also functions that clear the entire level (**Clear level**), move the entire level relative to the screen (**Shift**), and draw tiles at random (**Random tiles**).
- You can still use the functions that go to other levels. Use **Reload current** to get back what you started with.
- When you save the level, you will get a chance to choose the position to save it.
- Select **File|Done editing** or press **F12** to stop editing. Make sure you first save anything you want to save. You can then play your level and test it out.

More on editing

You must save a level to one of the 100 positions before you can play it. WARNING: It is very easy to lose a completed level by later saving another level to the same position, so be careful when you save to a different position.

To save levels more permanently, and to allow for transporting levels from one Flop program to another, the commands **Edit|Import** and **Level|Export** are provided.

Export saves a level to a text file. You can then put this text file someplace safe, or share it with your friends, post it to bulletin boards or ftp sites, etc. You can export more than one level to the same file; levels will be appended to existing files. There is no way to delete or rearrange levels in these files from within Flop, but this can easily be done with a text file editor such as Notepad.

Use **Import** to load levels from text files that were created with **Export**. **Import** is only allowed while you are in edit mode, ensuring that you must save the level before you can play it.

Exported levels are stored as ordinary text files. 15 lines are used for each level, with the first line of each level indicated by a '>' character in column 1. Anything after the 15th line and before the '>' is ignored, and can be used for comments. Anyone who wants to know the exact form used could probably decipher it in a few minutes, so I won't describe it in more detail.

Best scores and players' names are not stored in these text files.

A few extra levels have been included, starting at position 90. No promises are made about them, except that they are all solvable (as are the main 20 levels).

Diagnostics

There are a few error and warning messages:

Out of move memory

There is only room to store 9999 keystrokes. If you try to move more than this, you will get this message and have to **Restart** or **Undo** some moves. (I don't think it's possible to design a level that requires more than 9999 moves to solve, but I could be wrong.)

Lose changes made to this level?

This warning occurs when you are editing and have requested a function that Flop thinks will overwrite your current level, and you have not yet saved your current level. If you want to do that function anyway, select OK, otherwise select Cancel to continue editing your level.

You cannot change the first 20 levels

You have attempted to save a level to one of the first 20 positions, which is not allowed. Choose another position.

No such level

You typed in a level number that is not between 1 and 100.

File error: xxxx

These errors should be rare; typically it means that flop.dat or whatever file you are reading or writing is missing, corrupt, or read-only.

Internal error: xxxx

An internal error usually indicates a bug in the program. Just ignore it, or try to contact the author if it is a serious problem.

Program information

This is Flop version 1.00. It was released in July 1995, and is the first version of this program to be released.

Flop was written in C for the Microsoft Windows operating system. It was compiled with Borland C++ 4.0, and should work on just about any computer running Windows version 3.1 or higher.

This version of Flop is freeware. That means you can use it forever without paying any money, but you cannot modify the program. Please give copies to all your friends, and your enemies, and post it to bulletin boards, etc., as much as possible. Just be sure to include all of the following unmodified files:

FLOP	EXE	132399	07-23-95	1:00a	The main program
FLOP	DAT	25600	07-23-95	1:00a	The game levels and best scores
FLOP	HLP	28602	07-23-95	1:00a	This Windows Help file
FLOP	TXT	1352	07-23-95	1:00a	This help page in text form
LEVEL01	MV	87	07-23-95	1:00a	Solution to level 1

The file flop.dat will be modified whenever a level is edited or when a new low score is achieved for a level, so try to distribute an original copy. If you archive these files, the name flop10.zip (or .zoo, .lzh, etc.) is suggested. If you wish, you may distribute one or more level files in text form (*.lev files) along with the program.

To install: Make a directory and put the above files into it. Inform your favorite shell program of Flop's existence.

To uninstall: Delete the files in that directory and remove it. Flop does not create or alter any other files.

Comments, suggestions, and reports of serious bugs are welcome. Direct all correspondence via e-mail to CIS:102214,155.

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Programming and game design by Jason Summers
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Handles are the black lines along some of the edges of some of the tiles:



You can often use handles to move these tiles.

To move your player, point to the location you want to move to and press the left mouse button. The player will move toward that location until it runs into a tile. If it is possible to move both horizontally and vertically toward the mouse position, vertical movement will be favored.

To flip a tile, click on the tile you want to flip (which must be in an adjacent location), and then click on the location you want to flip it into.

Your score is based on the number of moves you make. A *move* is considered to be any time you move to a new square. Flipping a tile does not count as a move.

For convenience when undo-ing and replaying moves, the game also counts *keystrokes*. A keystroke is any valid press of an arrow key (or the equivalent move with the mouse), so a move counts as one keystroke and a flip counts as two keystrokes. You should not be concerned with how many keystrokes it takes to complete a level; you should only worry about moves.

On the status line, the number of moves is shown first, then in parentheses the number of keystrokes.

Occasionally the game uses the word “move” when it really means keystroke. Sorry.

Level	
Next level	Takes you to the next level.
Previous level	Takes you to the previous level.
Go to level...	Lets you type in the level you want to play.
Reload current	Reloads the current level. Use when editing, or to clear the currently stored moves.
Editor (Done editing) Invokes the level editor. (Ends the editor and reloads the current level.)	
Reset score...	Lets you get rid of a previously saved best score and player name for the current level.
Export...	Saves a level as a text file. Level must have been previously saved. Does not save the current state of the game or the unsaved changes on a level currently being edited (see More on editing).
Exit	Ends Flop.

Moves	
Undo	Takes back the last keystroke played. Can be used over and over. Note that this can take a few seconds if many moves have been played, because the computer must replay the whole game up to that point (in its memory) every time you Undo a move.
Redo	Replays a keystroke that was undone. Can also be used after restarting a level to replay that level move by move.
Undo x10	Takes back ten keystrokes.
Redo x10	Replays ten keystrokes.
Restart	Takes back all keystrokes. Lets you start over on the current level.
Play all	Replays all stored keystrokes.
Go to move...	Lets you enter a keystroke to go immediately to.
Fast replay	With Fast replay off, replayed moves are shown in their entirety (though very quickly). When the Fast replay option is on, the game will immediately jump to the specified position.
Load moves...	Loads and plays keystrokes saved in a file.
Save moves...	Saves keystrokes to a file, starting at the beginning and ending at the current game position.
Save moves from...	Saves keystrokes to a file, starting at a position you choose and ending at the current game position.

Edit	(This menu appears while editing.)
Name...	Lets you change the name of the level you are editing.
Message...	Lets you change the congratulatory message that is printed when the player completes this level.
Rings needed...	Lets you specify the number of rings which must be collected in order to complete this level.
Clear level	Clears the entire level.
Random tiles...	Draws tiles and handles at random; objects other than tiles are not affected. This is a fast way to create levels. Enter your desired chance of any potential tile or handle being drawn, or choose Cancel to keep the current tiles/handles.
Shift	Shifts all the objects on the level one space in any direction.
Import...	Reads a level saved as a text file (see More on editing).
Items	Lets you change the object at the currently selected position. But it is easier to use the keyboard directly (see Editing levels).
Save...	Saves the current level to one of the positions 21-100.

Help	
Contents	Invokes this help system.
About...	Displays some brief program information.

