BLOXS

Rule of the Game

You get points for every settled piece. How much get depends on the playing level, i.e., on how fast the pieces move down. If you force a piece down within less than five seconds, you can get up to 12 extra points. At Level 0, you have 30 seconds before the piece moves down one line, but you get only 3 points per piece placed at the bottom. At Level 1, the piece moves every second and at Level 9, it moves over the whole field in one second. At this speed you get 25 points (plus extra points, see above) per piece.

All pieces start at the top of the playing field - same place, same orientation.

The game has a clock. You can hear it ticking, if you have switched Sound to On. At each tick, the piece moves down one line. How fast the clock ticks depends on the level; the higher the level, the faster the clock. The level number goes from one to ten. The game normally starts on Level 5. At Level 1, the piece moves down one line in a second. On Level 9, it crosses the whole playing field in one second.

If the piece can't be moved at the tick, it will be settled and you get some points for it. Afterwards, you get a new piece. If this isn't possible, the game is finished. In this case, your score is compared to the tenth best player. If your score is better, you are asked for your name. If you are already in the Hall of Fame and your score is better than before, you score is updated. Otherwise you are added.

Independentnn of the clock tick you can move the piece. You can use the numeric keyboard for that purppose.

You have four actions (i.e., keystrokes) per line. Any more keystrokes are ignored. Unsuccessful keystrokes count. The ability to turn a piece depends on the target position, not on the possibility to turn it physically into the desired position. So you can turn a stick out of a hole, for example.

If you release a piece with Key 4, it will not be settled immediately. This will be deferred up to the next beat. You can move the piece in the short time interval between the release and the next beat.

Key 5 triggers the next tick. You will find this useful on Level 0.

At the tick, the following actions occur:

Lines which are filled will be removed immediately. All lines above the filled line will be moved down one line. You do not get any points for that, but this is the only way you can get space for new pieces. For every ten lines you get removed, your level is

incremented, when starting at Level 1. If you start at a level greater than one, you have that many (ten times the level) lines good before the level get incremented. The automatic level increase stops at Level 9. You can reach Level 10 only with Key 6 or the scroll bar in the control box.

If you want to play fast, you can increase your level by using Key 6. If you use the scroll bar in the control box of the game to lower the level, your current game is terminated and your score is thrown away. This means you can't lower your level within a game. Actually, this is not completely true. If BLOXS cannot move the piece at the intended speed, it decrements the level and freezes it. A frozen level will not be incremented, neither automatically nor manually. Because BLOXS is not a very large game, there is plenty of space to run other Windows applications concurrently. As long as these other applications don't slow down BLOXS, this isn't a problem. BLOXS doesn't try to monopolize the machine. Instead it detects a slowdown and answers with lowering and freezing the level. So you can cheat by dragging around and holding a window to get time, but this will have the effect that you can't get to a higher level anymore. This is visible in the Hall of Fame.

Key 1 is used to switch the Preview Box on and off. If the Preview Box is shown, you get the points of the next lower level.

Key 2 is a bit experimental. It parks the current piece and gives you a new one, which shows up at the usual place at the top of the playing field and starts to move. After this piece is settled, the parked piece starts to move again. You can park more than one piece, if you like. The reactivation policy is LRP (least recently parked). If a full line is removed, the parked pieces above this line will be moved, the pieced below won't. If a parked piece is removed partially as result of a full line removal, it cannot be reactivated anymore.

Operation

There is one main application window for the playing field. All other windows are modeless dialog boxes. You can open and close the dialog boxes at any time. The only required window is the main (playing field) window.

You can resize the playing field as you wish. The game starts with a field which uses the whole screen (without the icon area). The other windows are placed to the right of the playing field. You can resize the playing field and you can move around (and close) the dialog boxes. If you like the layout, you can save it using the menu entry Store Desktop. This saves your window layout into WIN.INI.

The menu entries SOUND and GRID aren't stored into WIN.INI. If you want to protect your earts, you may use the -g-flag.

Please don't the Attract Mode of BLOXS confuse you. What do you have to do to switch BLOXS into this mode? Nothing particular. Just start BLOXS and then start another Windows application, i.e., switch to the MSDOS window and start CLOCK, for example. Suddenly BLOXS starts to play for itself. It does that as long as it isn't the active application. If you go back to BLOXS (by clicking into the playing field, for example), it will show its normal behavior again.

If your computer is too slow for BLOXS, you will not be able to play at higher levels.

How to Become a Professional BLOXS Player

The following is the result of looking over the shoulders of some of our better players.

It takes only a few minutes to learn the game, but it takes months to get the feeling and play it well. But don't play it too much: if you start to dream about colorful pieces, all turning counter clockwise, perhaps you should try something else.

Play with borders around the pieces and without the grid on the playing field (default). Learn to use the lookahead box; you will need it on higher levels. Try different positions of the lookahead box; some people prefer it at the top, others at the bottom.

If the standard window layout doesn't give you quadratic pieces (it should), adjust the play field and use Store Desktop.

Don't give up too early and ENJOY!