Blackout Help Index

The index lists all *Blackout* Help topics.   Context-sensitive help is available in *Blackout* by pressing the F1 key from *Blackout's* main window, or from the game configuration and sound setup dialog boxes.

To learn how to use Help, choose Using Help from the Help menu, or press F1.

How to Play

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Overview

Description and Requirements

Blackout is a game for *Microsoft Windows*.   It is a fun way of learning to use a mouse, since the better your mouse skills are, the higher your scores are likely to be.   *Blackout* should run on any computer with a functioning version of *Microsoft Windows* version 3.0 or greater.   A mouse or other pointing device is required.   Certain features of *Blackout* may only function in *Windows* version 3.1 or greater, since these features require the multimedia capabilities of *Windows* 3.1.

Blackout is fully configurable for users of all ages and skill levels, offering a variety of scoring and playability options, as well as switchable options for different game elements.   Choose the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu to access the Game Configuration dialog box.

When running under *Windows* 3.1 on a computer with the appropriate sound hardware and software drivers, *Blackout* will allow the player to setup different game sounds, by assigning .WAV files to play when different game events occur.   Choose the Sound Setup... choice from the Game menu to access the Sound Setup dialog box.

The Object of the Game

The object of *Blackout* is to find and click on all target blocks before all non-target blocks turn black.   The Playing the Game section explains the basics of the game.

In addition to finding target blocks, the playing is kept more challenging and interesting by the addition of *Bonus Blocks*, *Replay Arrows*, the *Boogeyman, Moving Targets*, and *Sequenced Targets*.   Proper use of *Bonus Blocks* and *Replay Arrows* allows much higher scores, but overuse can increase the risk of having a blackout occur, which will cut the score by 50%.   The addition of the *Boogeyman* and *Moving Targets* can make play more challenging. To learn more about these elements of *Blackout*, read the Rules of the Game section

Related Topics

Playing the Game
Rules of the Game

Playing the Game

The object of *Blackout* is to find and click on all target blocks before all non-target blocks turn black.   The following section explains how to play the game.

To "Find" a Block:

Using the mouse, move the mouse cursor so that it points inside of one of the target blocks.   Now, press the left mouse button ("click" it).   The target should turn red, and have an "X" drawn through it.   If the game's "Sound" option is turned on, you should hear the "Found Target" sound.

In addition to the target blocks, you may see some of *Blackout's* special playing elements, including *Bonus Blocks*, *Replay Arrows*, and the *Boogeyman*.   To learn more about these elements, read the Rules of the Game section.

To Start a New Game:

From the Game menu, choose New, or click on the New button.

Monitoring the Game's Status

Several aspects of the game's status are constantly displayed in the game's status line, which is at the bottom of the game window.   The status line will always have the current score and game level, and, during play, will have accurate counts of the number of target blocks remaining to be found and the number of black blocks on the screen.   In particular the target-block count is helpful when you don't know how many blocks are left to find.

One of the handiest features of the status line is the display of the percentage of colored blocks remaining.   During game play, this display appears as a "percent complete" bar which always shows the number of colored blocks left as a percentage of the original number of colored blocks.   When you are scoring bonus blocks, be sure to monitor this bar.   When it gets past 90% or so, it's time to click a replay arrow, or finish the level by clicking the remaining targets.

Related Topics

Overview
Rules of the Game

Rules of the Game

Blackout Rules:

The game is paused until you make the first mouse click.   At that point, the game will start, and the colored blocks will begin to change color and some will begin to turn black.

Target Blocks:

Each time you correctly click on a target block, your score will be increased.   Each time you click on any non-target block, that block and the eight others surrounding it will immediately turn black, as a penalty for clicking in the wrong area.   Depending on the current setting of the Scoring Parameters points may be subtracted for a wrong click.

At the completion of each level, that game will pause and you will see a dialog box with the current game score.   Clicking on the "OK" button in this box will start the next level.   At each level, the score awarded for a correct click increases.   Also, at each successive level, there are more target blocks to find.   If, at the end of a level, all "found" targets still remain on the screen, you will be awarded a bonus score equal to the total of all clicked targets or one-half of your current score, whichever is greater.

Your chances of achieving this bonus are directly related to how long you try to score bonus blocks, since missing a bonus block adjacent to a target or found target will remove that target or found target from the screen, eliminating your chance for a bonus at that level.

The level is over when no more target blocks remain to be found, or when there are no more normally-colored blocks (a "blackout").

The game is over when no more levels remain to be completed (there are 10 levels), or when a blackout occurs at any level.

Note that *Blackout's* scoring rules, playability settings, defaults, optional features, game-grid size, and game sounds can be altered by changing the game's configuration.

If a blackout occurs, the score is lowered by 50%.

If a player achieves one of the 10-highest *Blackout* scores, the high scores dialog box is automatically invoked, allowing the player to enter their initials.   The high-score table is then updated with the player's initials and score.   To enter your initials, either type them in the box provided or click on your initials from another high-score entry.   Press the enter key or click the "Ok" button when you have completed viewing the high scores dialog box.

Bonus Blocks:

While playing the game, there will occasionally be "Bonus Blocks" which will appear momentarily.   Each bonus block is a light-gray block with yellow circles.   The number of circles in the block will indicate the level of bonus to be awarded if the block is clicked on before it disappears.   The two-circle block is worth twice as many points as a regular target block.   The three-circle block is worth three times as much, and so on.   There are two-circle through five-circle blocks available, and clicking on them can greatly enhance your score - but be careful!   Spending time finding the bonus blocks may cause you to be unable to complete the level, and result in a Blackout, which definitely won't help your score.

You can enable and disable bonus blocks by choosing the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu, and turning off the Bonus Blocks option in the Options section of the Game Configuration dialog

box.

Clicking on a bonus block will turn that block's circles blue.   Don't click on a bonus block that has already been clicked - that's the same as clicking on one of the colored   blocks.

The Replay Arrow:

Another element of *Blackout* is the "Replay Arrow".   The replay arrow is a black block with two colored arrowheads pointing in the direction of the arrow's movement.   The replay arrow will appear at random times.   It always moves from one edge of the playing surface to the opposite edge, and usually moves quite rapidly.   If you can successfully click the replay arrow, all black blocks on the playing surface will be returned to the normal, colored state.   This will allow you to get a second chance to complete a level, or to continue to play the bonus blocks at a level.

You can enable and disable replay arrows by choosing the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu, and turning off the Bonus Blocks option in the Options section of the Game Configuration dialog box.

Normally, replay arrows "bounce" off of a target block, and their direction is reversed.   If you don't want arrows to bounce, you can turn this behavior off by choosing the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu, and turning off the Bouncing Arrows option in the Options section of the Game Configuration dialog box.   *Note that, under certain conditions, a bouncing arrow can be "trapped" on screen, increasing your chances of clicking on it.*

Be very careful with replay arrows, since a "near miss" (within one block of the arrow's real location), will be counted as a miss, and you will "kill" the arrow.   Only click on it when you have a clear shot, or when you are desperate for time.

The Boogeyman:

The "Boogeyman" is a black block with a red-eyed face.   If this block appears, you will be unable to score until you successfully click on it.   As the boogeyman moves around on the playing surface, it will occasionally restore a target block from a "found" state to an "unfound" state, causing the target to reappear.   Since the speed of the boogeyman's movement can make it very difficult to click on, there is no penalty associated with a "miss" when you try to click on the boogeyman - wild, uncontrolled clicking may be the only way you can get it! You cannot score any targets or bonus blocks when a boogeyman is present, and there will be no replay arrows during the time a boogeyman is on the screen.   Blocks will continue to turn black, however, so you should get the boogeyman as soon as possible after it appears.

You can enable and disable boogeymen by choosing the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu, and turning off the Boogeymen option in the Options section of the Game Configuration dialog box.

Moving Targets:

Moving targets are an optional element of *Blackout*.   You can turn this element on and off by activating the game configuration dialog box from the Game/Configure Game... menu choice.   When moving targets are enabled, the target blocks will occasionally shift their positions.   This makes them more difficult to click, and occasionally results in mistaken clicks, when a target moves out from under the mouse cursor, just as the player "clicks" on it.

You can enable and disable moving targets by choosing the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu, and turning off the Moving Targets option in the Options section of the Game Configuration dialog box.

Sequenced Targets:

Sequenced targets are another optional element of *Blackout*.   You can turn this element on and off by activating the Game Configuration dialog box from the Game/Configure Game... menu choice.   When sequenced targets are enabled, only a *single target* on the playing surface at any one time may be clicked.   This target is visually marked with a yellow background.   Clicking on any target except the yellow target will result in a mistaken click.   A mistaken click near the next target in sequence may "kill" the target, and *Blackout* will randomly select another target on the game grid and turn it yellow.

You can enable and disable sequenced targets by choosing the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu, and turning off the Sequenced Play option in the Options section of the Game Configuration dialog box.

Draggable Targets:

Draggable targets are an advanced element of *Blackout*.   When draggable targets are enabled, you can use the *right* mouse button (not the left one) to drag unclicked targets around the screen.   If bouncing arrows are enabled, you can use this feature to set an "arrow trap" by dragging targets to either side of a replay arrow.   This will "trap" the replay arrow and allow you to click it more easily.   This technique works best when you trap the arrow in a single block, so that it is unable to move at all.

You can enable and disable draggable targets by choosing the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu, and turning off the Drag Targets option in the Options section of the Game Configuration dialog box.

Note that use of this technique can tempt you to waste a lot of playing time trying to trap an arrow instead of just clicking it, or continuing to play.   Use this technique carefully, or it can actually lower your scores by causing you to have more blackouts.   The technique is mainly useful for trapping an arrow early in an advanced level, so that you can guarantee that you'll have enough time to click all the level's arrows and receive the bonus points.
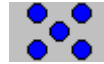
Related Topics

Playing the Game
Strategy and Hints
Game Configuration dialog box
Game Options

When you click a target, it is marked as found, like this one:

When you click a bonus block, it is marked as found, like this one:

When you click a replay arrow, all black blocks are returned to their normal, colored state, extending your time on the current playing level.

When you click a boogeyman, it disappears, and play returns to normal.

When you click the sequenced target, it is marked as found, like this one:

Strategy and Hints

This section contains helpful hints for playing *Blackout* successfully.

- Use the mouse to click the target blocks as smoothly as possible.   "Jerky" mouse motions will result in mistaken clicks and lost bonus opportunities.

- Discipline yourself to locate and click all target blocks in a given area of the game surface before moving to a new area.   This results in less mouse movement and faster play, as well as preventing mistaken mouse-clicks.

- Establish a pattern of motion for locating target blocks.   Move from upper left to lower right, for example, or in an up-and-down vertical "sweeping" pattern.   Be consistent in your strategy, and your speed will increase.

- Use the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu to establish a default starting speed and level appropriate for your level of skill.   This prevents having to set the level and speed manually at the start of each game, and also keeps a skilled player from having to play through levels that are too easy.

- Play at the fastest game-setting you can play effectively.   Your scores are multiplied by the speed at which you are playing (Slow=1, Medium=2, Fast=3), so you can score much higher points at the faster play settings.

- Learn how to effectively use Bonus Blocks!   They can greatly increase your scores, since they are worth multiples of the current level's normal target block score.   Just remember that you must finish each level without a Blackout , so that play can continue, so spending too much time on Bonus Blocks can backfire!

- The Replay Arrow can be used with dramatic results, since successfully clicking on it erases all of the current level's black blocks.   This means you will have more time to finish the level, or to continue to score the bonus blocks at that level.   But be careful not to wildly click around the area where a replay arrow is, since missing it means you are lowering your score and increasing the number of black blocks.   You can also "kill" the replay arrow with a "near miss", so you should only click on it when you have a clear shot, or when you are desperate for time.

- Since there may be times when the playing surface just seems to get ahead of you, and there may be no way to get all of the target blocks in time, it is possible to "live to fight another day" by deliberately clicking on non-target blocks which are close to groups of target ones.   This has the effect of "sacrificing" your ability to score on the target blocks (and your chances for a bonus score), in return for avoiding a Blackout, so that at least you can move to the next level.

  Note that the advisability of using this technique depends on the Scoring Parameters settings, since there may be too stiff of a point penalty for deliberately causing black blocks for this technique to be of any use.

- Use draggable targets to set "arrow traps" to guarantee yourself plenty of time to click all the targets of an advanced level, thus assuring yourself of the level's bonus points.

Related Topics

Playing the Game
Rules of the Game
Scoring Parameters

Game Menu Commands

New

Starts a new game of *Blackout*.   You can start a new game at any time, even in the middle of a game.   You can also start a new game by clicking on the New button.

Pause

Pauses the game and stops all color changing.   You can pause a game at any time.   Choosing Game Pause again will toggle the paused game back to active.   Another way to reactivate a paused game is to simply click on a target block.   You can also toggle the pause-mode on and off by clicking on the Pause button.

High Scores...

Displays a dialog box showing the 10 highest scorers' initials and their scores.   Press the "OK" button in the dialog box to continue.   This dialog box is also used to collect the player's initials when the player achieves a score in the 10 highest.   You can choose this item at any time, even in the middle of a game.

Score...

Displays a dialog box showing the current game score and level.   Press the "OK" button to continue.   You can choose this item at any time, even in the middle of a game.

Configure Game...

Displays a dialog box containing all of the game playing parameters.   It is possible to reconfigure the game's scoring rules, playing behavior, default startup level and speed, and game grid-size from this dialog box.   You can choose this item at any time, even in the middle of a game.

For more information on game parameters and how to set them up, see the Game Configuration dialog box topic.

Sound Setup...

Displays a dialog box containing sound setup parameters.   This menu choice allows you to assign any of the eight *Blackout* sound events to either an internally-generated sound effect, or to a multimedia .WAV file.   If you have sound-making hardware installed on your computer, and have installed the appropriate *Windows* drivers for this hardware, you can use the Sound Configuration dialog box to assign any of the supplied .WAV files to any *Blackout* sound, or you can assign your own .WAV files to any of these sounds.

In addition to .WAV files, *Blackout* has eight internally-generated sound effects, one for each *Blackout* sound.   If you have set the sound setup dialog box to play an internally-generated sound, the sound will either be played through your computer's speaker, or through the standard *Windows* sound device. Certain *Windows* setups replace the speaker device with a driver which allows attached sound hardware to provide synthesized sounds.   With the appropriate sound driver and hardware, *Blackout* will provide a list of different sound-types, which you can assign to each of the internally-generated sound effects.   For more information about where to get such a driver, see the Credits and other information topic

For more information about the use of this dialog box, refer to the Sound Setup dialog box topic.

Exit

Immediately stops the current game and closes the *Blackout* application.   You can choose this item at any time, even in the middle of a game.

Options Menu Commands

Level

Displays a second-level menu with 10 choices.   Each of the 10 choices displays a successively more difficult level.   You can immediately move to any level by choosing the desired level from this menu.   The level can be changed at any time, even in the middle of a game.   The current level will appear on the level menu with a checkmark to its left.

Sound

Choosing this item toggles game sounds on or off.   If game sounds are currently ON, a checkmark will appear to the left of the Sound menu choice.   Otherwise, no checkmark will appear.   Turning sound OFF disables all game sounds made by *Blackout*.   You can choose this item at any time, even in the middle of a game.

Speed

Displays a second-level menu with 3 choices - Slow, Medium and Fast.   The game speed determines how fast colored blocks will change colors, and has a dramatic effect on how quickly the colored blocks will black out.   The fastest speed is the most difficult.   You should also note that the faster the speed settings, the more points you can score (and lose), since *Blackout* multiplies each score-change by the speed-level (Slow=1, Medium=2, and Fast=3).

Display toolbar

This setting toggles the display of the toolbar on and off.   The toolbar contains several command buttons which can be clicked with your mouse to operate *Blackout* more quickly and easily.   If you disable display of the toolbar, you can display it again, by choosing this choice from the menu.

Display status line

This setting toggles the display of the status line on and off.   The status line maintains a constantly-updated display of *Blackout's* playing status, including the score, the current black-block count, the current target-count, the playing level, and a percent-complete indicator for the current level.   Watching the status line during display can help you to keep up with game play, and achieve higher scores.

Color Options

Displays a second-level menu which allows you to choose the color-settings for *Blackout's* playing grid. The three choices are:

16 Pure Colors	This setting causes *Blackout* to use only the 16 standard *Windows* colors.
Random Dithered Colors	This setting causes *Blackout* to use random colors, which may appear "dithered" on your screen, depending on your *Windows* display driver. For 8-bit display drivers, this setting and the one above it reduce system overhead during *Blackout* play, and may reduce the number of screen redraws necessary.
Random Pure Colors	This setting is only available when you are playing *Blackout* with an 8-bit or higher display driver. *Blackout* will use a spectrum of 256 pure colors from which to choose a color for each colored block on the playing grid. Note that use of this setting may increase *Blackout*'s system overhead, and, for palette-based

display drivers, may increase the number of screen redraws when switching away from and back to *Blackout.*

3D Effect

Toggles *Blackout's* display between the normal appearance, and a special 3D appearance, where the playing surface appears to be formed from three-dimensional blocks.   By default, *Blackout*'s 3D effect causes blocks to appear as "raised" blocks.   The 3D effect can be controlled by special settings in *Blackout's* initialization settings, however.   Documentation for these settings is available to registered users from the Help menu's Advanced Topics choice, which is added to the help menu when you enter your registration number.

Note that the 3D effect can significantly slow down screen-redraws, especially when used on slower computers or on computers without accelerated graphics controllers.

Toolbar Buttons

Pause

Clicking this button toggles the game's pause state.   If the game is "playing", this button will appear normal, and clicking it will pause the game.   If the game is "paused", this button will appear to be pressed, and clicking it will start the game again.   When you start a new game, minimize *Blackout*, or switch away from *Blackout* to another program, this button will always be "pressed" for you.

This button is equivalent to choosing the Pause choice from the Game menu.

New

Clicking on this button starts a new game.   If a game is currently in progress, *Blackout* will display a dialog box asking permission to end the game.   If the game is paused, or if you answer "Yes" to the dialog box asking if you want to end the current game, a new game is initialized. You may see the high scores dialog box before the new game is started, if the score of the previous game was high enough to qualify.   This button is equivalent to choosing the New choice from the Game menu

Sound

Clicking on this button toggles *Blackout's* sound setting.   When the button appears pressed, *Blackout* will make the normally-assigned game sounds.   When the button appears normal, *Blackout* will play silently.   This button is equivalent to choosing the Sound choice from the Option menu.

Slow

Clicking on this button switches the current game speed to slow.   This button is equivalent to choosing the Slow choice from the Option menu's Speed menu.

Medium

Clicking on this button switches the current game speed to medium.   This button is equivalent to choosing the Medium choice from the Option menu's Speed menu.

Fast

Clicking on this button switches the current game speed to fast.   This button is equivalent to choosing the Fast choice from the Option menu's Speed menu.

Help

Clicking on this button displays *Blackout's* on-line help system index.   This button is equivalent to choosing the Index choice from the Help menu.   Context-sensitive help is always available in *Blackout* by pressing the F1 key at any time.

Configuring Blackout

This section contains information about configuring *Blackout*.   Game-playing parameters are set by selecting the Configure Game... choice from the Game menu, and filling out the Game Configuration dialog box that is displayed. Sound setup parameters are changed by selecting the Sound Setup... choice from the Game menu, and filling out the Sound Setup dialog box that is displayed.

The Game Configuration dialog box

The game configuration dialog box can be used to change *Blackout's* scoring rules, playing behavior, default values, and game size. The dialog box is divided into five sections, each containing parameters for a general aspect of the game's behavior, and five push buttons for controlling the operation of the dialog box:

Scoring Parameters: Specify new values for the 3 different scoring rules and the target counts for playing level one and the increment for each subsequent playing level.

Playability Parameters: Specify new values for the 4 different playability settings.

New Game Defaults: Specify the new-game defaults for playing level and playing speed.

Options: Switch any of the game options on or off.

Game Size: Specify new values for the game size - allows you to change the number of rows and/or columns used for the game-grid.   The row and column values in the Game Size section control how many rows and columns of blocks *Blackout* displays in the game grid.   Permissible values are from 5 to 50 rows and from 5 to 75 columns.

Smaller game sizes are often combined with changes to the Playability Parameters above (especially to decrease the probability for a black block in order to slow game play), to make *Blackout* easier for small children and novice mouse users.

If you change the Game Size settings and click the "Apply" or the "Save As Default" button, the current game will be ended and a new game started when you click the "Close" button.

After you have finished entering configuration values, you can press one of the five buttons at the bottom of the dialog box to tell *Blackout* what to do with your values. The five buttons do the following:

Save As Default   Tells *Blackout* to save all current parameters in the dialog box to disk, to be used for new games.   This choice also applies any changes to any current game in progress.

Apply Changes   Tells *Blackout* to return to the current game, using all parameters in the dialog box as the current playing parameters, without saving the parameters to disk.   Use this button to test parameter changes without saving them permanently.

Current Defaults   Tells *Blackout* to restore the current default parameters from disk, replacing any parameters shown in the dialog box with the saved values. This also applies the saved defaults to any current game in progress.

Original Defaults   Tells *Blackout* to restore the original parameters as shipped from **Zarkware**, replacing any parameters shown in the dialog box with the original values.   This also applies the original defaults to any current game in progress.

Close   Tells *Blackout* to close the Game Configuration dialog box.   Unless you have pressed one of the other four buttons described above, pressing the Close button will have no effect on either the saved parameters or

the current playing parameters.   You may press the Close button to cancel any changes you were making, if you change your mind before you have pressed one of the other buttons.

Scoring Parameters

This section explains how the values of the scoring parameters are used by *Blackout* to compute scoring during game play.   The values of the scoring parameters can be changed by choosing Configure Game... from the <u>Game</u> menu and modifying the values in the *Scoring/Target Count* section of the game configuration dialog box.

Blackout modifies the current game score when any one of three different events happens:

- The player correctly locates and clicks on a target block

- The player incorrectly clicks on a block that is not playable, such as a found target, found bonus block, or a target that is not the next target in sequence, when sequenced play is enabled

- A block randomly turns black

The score is *increased* whenever the first event happens, and *decreased* whenever either of the other two happens.   Each of these events has two scoring parameters.

The first parameter is the point change for the event during play at level-one.   The second is the amount to *increment* the first value at each subsequent level of play.   For example, if the parameters for an event of the first type (correctly finding a target block) are set to 10 and 5, the score change for that event would be computed as follows, if the current playing level was three:

To the current score, add 10 (the value for *level-one* play) plus 2 times 5 (the number of levels above level one times the *increment* value).   Since 10 + (2 x 5) = 20, the score would be increased by 20 points.

The other two sets of scoring parameters work exactly as described above, except that the score is decreased instead of increased.   If the score would fall below 0 as a result of the calculation, it is simply set to 0.

The values used in the *Scoring Parameters* section of the game configuration dialog box must be positive integers in the range of 1 to 100.

The fourth set of parameters in this section control the number of targets displayed by *Blackout* at level-one play and at each subsequent level.   These parameters work exactly as described above for the scoring parameters, except that they control the number of targets displayed, rather than a score change. *Blackout* will adjust the number of targets specified by these parameters so that never more than 50% of the total number of blocks displayed on the playing surface are targets.

Playability Parameters

This section explains how the values of the playability parameters are used by *Blackout* to compute scoring during game play. The values of these parameters can be changed by choosing Configure Game... from the <u>Game</u> menu and modifying the values in the *Frequencies (Playability)* section of the game configuration dialog box.

During play, *Blackout* randomly picks blocks on the playing surface and modifies their colors and properties, perhaps just changing a block's color , but possibly changing the block to a black block, or to a Bonus Block, Replay Arrow, or Boogeyman. *Blackout's* decision to change a block is made on the basis of *random probability.* Four of the possible kinds of block changes (to a **Bonus Block**, a **Boogeyman**, a **Replay Arrow**, or a simple **black block**), depend on *playability parameters* which specify the probability that a block will change.

The *Playability* section of the game configuration dialog box allows you to modify probabilities for these four changes.

Since the values in the *Game Play Parameters* section represent probabilities, they are divided into 1 and compared to a random number between 0 and 1, generated during each *Blackout* game cycle (during play, a game cycle occurs once every millisecond, or as often as your computer can carry out a game cycle, if it cannot complete a game cycle in one millisecond). If the random number is greater than the probability, then a change is made.

For example, if you set the value of the Replay Arrow parameter to 500, there would be one chance in 500 for a Replay Arrow in any given game cycle. If the random number computed during the current game cycle was less than 1/500, then a replay arrow would be generated.

As another example, if you set the value of the "Black Blocks" playability parameter to 10, there would be one chance in 10 for a block to turn black in any given game cycle. If the random number computed during the current game cycle was less than 1/10, then a block would be turned black.

The playability parameters must all be positive integers in the range 1 to 9999.

New Game Defaults

This section explains how the default playing level and speed can be set, so that each time you start a new game in *Blackout*, your preferred playing level and speed are automatically chosen. The new game defaults can be set by choosing Configure Game... from the Game menu and selecting the desired startup playing level and speed from the scrolling combo-boxes in the *Defaults* section of the game configuration dialog box.

There are 10 levels of play available in *Blackout*, numbered 1 through 10, and three playing speeds - Slow, Medium, and Fast. The difficulty of play increases at higher levels and speeds and decreases at lower levels and speeds.

When the game configuration dialog box is displayed, the current default starting level and speed will be displayed in the combo-boxes in the Defaults section of the game. Note that *these are not necessarily the same* as the current playing level and speed - when you change these values, you are changing the Startup Defaults, *not* the current values. If you want to change the current playing level or speed, you should use the Level and/or Speed choices from the Options menu.

Options

This section explains *Blackout's* game options.   These options can be turned on and off by choosing Configure Game... from the Game menu and clicking on the checkmark boxes in *Options* section of the Game Configuration dialog box.

There are a number of game options in *Blackout*.   Each one can either be **On** or **Off**.   The options and their effects are:

Bonus Blocks
When set **On**, this option results in bonus blocks appearing with whatever probability is set for bonus blocks in the Playability section. When set to **Off**, no bonus blocks will appear.

Boogeymen
When set **On**, this option results in boogeymen appearing with whatever probability is set for boogeymen in the Playability section.   When set to **Off**, no boogeymen will appear.

Replay Arrows
When set **On**, this option results in replay arrows appearing with whatever probability is set for replay arrows in the Playability section. When set to **Off**, no replay arrows will appear.

Bouncing Arrows
When set **On**, any replay arrow on the screen will reverse its direction when it collides with a target block.   Setting this option to **On** allows targets to be "trapped" on screen between two target blocks.   If an arrow *originates* in a block occupied by a target, it simply passes through the target.   When set to **Off**, replay arrows pass through all targets they encounter.

Moving Targets
When set to **On**, target blocks will move across the screen, bouncing off of the edges of the playing surface in random directions.   When set to **Off**, target blocks always stay in the same place, unless dragged to a different location.

Sequenced Play
When set to **On**, one target block on the screen is turned yellow, and in order to play the game, the player must click on the yellow target. Clicking on other targets will result in those targets being blacked out. When the yellow target is either clicked or destroyed, another target is chosen and turned yellow.   When set to **Off**, all targets are considered playable at any time.

Drag Targets
When set **On**, you may drag targets, by clicking on them with the *right* mouse button (not the left one), and dragging them to a new location. You can do this in order to set "arrow traps" when you are using bouncing arrows.   In order for this technique to work, you must set moving targets off, so that your arrow traps will remain "set".   When set to **Off**, dragging targets is not permitted.

The Sound Setup dialog box

The sound setup dialog box can be used to change *Blackout's* sound assignments.   Using this dialog box, you can assign any of *Blackout's* eight sound events to either an internally-generated sound-effect, or to a multimedia .WAV file.   *Blackout* comes with a collection of .WAV files for you to experiment with, and if you have your own .WAV files, you can use them as well.   Some of the .WAV files supplied with *Blackout* were developed by Data Assist, Inc., and are used with their permission.   You can contact Data Assist by looking in the Credits section for their address and phone number.

Note that you should not specify .WAV files unless you have the appropriate sound hardware and software-drivers installed to allow their use.   *Blackout* will not correctly play .WAV files without the correct hardware and *Windows* software drivers.   The .WAV file driver for the PC speaker will work with *Blackout*, but since it may stop the computer's operation while the sound is played, you may prefer using *Blackout's* internal sound-effects rather than the PC-speaker .WAV driver.

Blackout's sound events are:

Got Replay Arrow   This sound is made whenever a replay arrow is successfully clicked.

Got Bonus Block   This sound is made whenever a bonus block is successfully clicked.

Got Target   This sound is made whenever a target block is successfully clicked.

Missed Target   This sound is made whenever a mouse click is detected over a block that is not a target, bonus block, arrow or boogeyman block.

Got Bonus Points   This sound is made at the end of a playing level when all target blocks were found, clicked, and are still visible on the playing surface as "found targets".   Bonus points are awarded for this accomplishment.

Got Boogeyman   This sound is made whenever a boogeyman is successfully clicked.

Level Over (no bonus)   This sound is made at the end of a playing level when no bonus points are awarded.

Blackout!   This sound is made whenever a blackout has occurred.

The sound setup dialog box can be used to change what is heard when a sound event occurs...The dialog box is divided into three sections:

Sound Event to Edit   This section contains a list box which allows the user to select an event to edit.   Clicking a selection shows the assigned sound type and sound source in the other two sections.   Double-clicking a selection plays the currently-assigned sound for that selection.

Sound Type for Event   This section contains two radio buttons which allow the user to choose whether the event selection in the Sound Event list box will be played from an internal sound-effect (the "Speaker/Sound Device option"), or from a .WAV file (the "Wave File (*.WAV)" option)

Source of Sound   This section's contents change, depending on which option is selected form the Sound Type radio buttons.

            If the "Speaker/Sound Device" option is selected, this section will display a list box containing a list of possible sound "voices" that can be used to play the internal sound-effect.   If you have the standard sound drivers

installed, the PC Speaker will be used to play these sounds, and the only choice in this box will be the speaker "Beep" sound.   If you have special sound drivers (see the Credits section for more information) installed for a synthesizer card, you may see a list of different "voices" in this list box. Single-clicking a voice-name in the list box will enable the "Apply" button so that you may change the selected event's setting to that voice. Double-clicking a voice-name in the list box will play the current event's sound-effect using that voice.

If the "Wave File (*.WAV)" option is selected, this section will contain directory and file list boxes, and you can use them like a standard "file open" dialog box to select a wave file for the event selected in the Sound Event list box.   Single-clicking a file in the file list box will enable the "Apply" button so that you may change the selected event's setting to the selected file.   Double-clicking a file in the file list box will play that file.

There are three buttons in the sound setup dialog box

Play   Tells *Blackout* to play the sound for the currently selected event, using the current settings in the dialog box.   This button can be used to test new settings without saving the settings for use.

Apply   Tells *Blackout* to save the change you have made to a sound event for current and future use.   If you have not changed any settings for the current event, this button is disabled.

Close   Immediately closes the sound setup dialog box and returns to *Blackout*.

Entering your Registration Number

Unregistered copies of *Blackout* display a "pester screen" dialog box, reminding users to register the software, whenever a new game or playing level is started.   When you register *Blackout*, you will receive a registration number that can be used to eliminate this "pester screen" and provide uninterrupted game play. This section describes how to enter the registration number into *Blackout*.

To enter your registration number, perform the following steps:

1)   After correctly installing *Blackout* on your system, start the game.

2)   Choose the "About..." choice from *Blackout's* Help menu.

3)   *Blackout* will display a "Blackout Registration" box.   Just type your number into the space provided and use the mouse to press the "OK" button.   That's all there is to it.   As long as you entered your number correctly,   *Blackout* will no longer display the "pester screen", and the "Unregistered Copy" message in the "About" dialog box will no longer appear.

4)   Please note that if you delete the "BLACKOUT.INI" file in your *Windows* directory, you will need to go through the registration process again in order to eliminate the "pester screen" feature in unregistered copies of *Blackout*.   Save your registration number, so that you can re-do the registration process, if necessary.

How to Play

This section can take you to topics which describe how to play *Blackout*.

Commands

This section contains information about the menu commands in *Blackout*.

Game Menu Commands
Options Menu Commands

Credits and additional information

This section contains information about others who have helped with *Blackout*, or who make products or services which can help you to enjoy playing *Blackout* more..

Some of the .WAV files included with *Blackout* were produced by Data Assist, Inc., using their fine shareware product *WavePool*, which allows programmatic generation of .WAV files.   If you need to produce such files, or if you need to hire someone to produce them for you, contact Data Assist at the following address:

Data Assist, Inc.
P.O. Box 26114
Columbus, OH   43226

Phone: (614) 888-8088

I gratefully acknowledge Data Assist's kind permission to include the .WAV files which are part of their *WavePool* shareware package with *Blackout*.

If you have a synthesizer card in your computer, and you install the appropriate sound driver, *Blackout* will allow you to assign any of its eight internally-generated sounds to one of the different "voices" of your synthesizer card.   One company which makes software that allows *Blackout* to do this is Future Trends, Inc.   You can contact Future Trends about their *SoundFX* software at this address:

Future Trends Software, Inc.
1508 Osprey Drive, Suite 103
Desoto, TX   75115

Phone: (214) 224-3288

How to Register

This section contains information about how to register *Blackout*.

Blackout is Shareware!   Shareware is software you can use before you decide to buy it.   If you try *Blackout* and like it, please show your support by registering today.   The cost is only $15 and *registering will get you a registration number that will eliminate the pester screen at the start of each new game*, for this and all future versions of *Blackout* you may use.

In addition, your registration will include instructions on how to get two extra toolbar buttons that will make playing *Blackout* more fun. You will also receive instructions for BLACKOUT.INI file settings which allow you to completely change the appearance of the 3D effects and other display features.

To register *Blackout*, please send a check or money order for $15 to:

Zarkware
2243 E. Thompson
Springfield, MO   65804

(For orders from outside the United States, include an extra $2.00 for shipping and handling.)

For questions or comments about *Blackout*, or to get technical support, contact Patrick L. Mills at the above address, or send Email to Compuserve ID 71211,1250.

To print an order form for *Blackout*, just click on the words order form in this sentence, and choose Print Topic from the help system's File menu.

Blackout Order Form

To order *Blackout*, just pick Print Topic from the File menu above.   Fill out the form and mail it with a check or money-order for $15 made out to *Zarkware* to:

<div align="center">

Zarkware
2243 E. Thompson
Springfield, MO   65804

</div>

For orders *outside the United States*, please add $2 for shipping and handling.   Please allow three weeks for delivery.

Your Name: _____

Your Address (for mail delivery):   _____

_____

_____

_____

Your Phone Number: _____

Version of Blackout you are using: _____

Where did you get your copy of *Blackout?*   _____

What size disk do you prefer? (3 1/2 or 5 1/2):   _____

Advanced Help Topics for Registered Users

Adding Additional Buttons

To add the additional toolbar buttons, you must first use the About option from the Help menu and view *Blackout's* About dialog box.   Immediately after clicking the "Ok" button in the About dialog box, hold down the Ctrl and Shift keys, and click the *right* (not the left) mouse button somewhere on the game's playing grid.   You should see the additional toolbar buttons appear.

The buttons do the following:

Replay Arrow   Force a replay arrow to appear
Boogeyman   Force a boogeyman to disappear

These buttons can be used to prolong levels and allow higher scoring.

Additional INI file Settings

The following INI file settings can be placed in the BLACKOUT.INI file to allow customization of the game's appearance and 3D effects:

DrawWidth=x   (Default=1)   Width of black lines between blocks
3DBorderWidth=x   (Default=1)   Width of the 3D border
3DShadowColor=x   (Default=8)   3D shadow color (0-16 valid)
3DLightColor=x   (Default=15)   3D light color (0-16 valid)

With the 3D settings, you can make the 3D effect look like raised tiles (by using a light color of 15 and a shadow color of 7), or you could create a depressed-tile appearance by using a light color of 7 and a shadow color of 8. Mix and match the shadow and light colors and 3D border widths for a number of different 3D effects.   The best light and shadow colors are:

0   Black
7   Light gray
8   Dark gray
15   White

Thanks for registering Blackout 3.0.   We appreciate your support!