

DANDY

by

John Howard Palevich

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Overview

Dandy is a 26-level dungeon adventure in which cooperation among players, rather than competition, is the key to success. You and up to three more players must get past denizens of varying danger; you lose strength each time a monster rams you, and you must constantly stock up on food and then remember to replenish your strength by consuming food units when your health deteriorates. Should you lose all strength, you wind up in limbo, but another player can revive you by shooting an arrow into a heart. You can pick up smart bombs along the way and drop them at strategic times to wipe out all monsters in the area. You also must find keys to unlock secured areas of each maze. Once you explore a level, wiping out the monsters and picking up all the money, you head for the down passage to warp to the next level.

Dandy provides hours and hours of challenging discovery. Although all movement is done with joysticks, you must also hover over the computer keyboard to rebuild your health and to drop bombs. The combination only adds to the frenzy and fun. And once you master all the levels, the game isn't over. First you can face all the levels again at higher difficulty levels, and then you can create your own dungeon levels with the maze editor that comes with the program.

Required accessories

- 40K RAM
- ATARI 810 Disk Drive
- One ATARI Joystick Controller per player

Optional accessories

- ATARI BASIC Language Cartridge
- ATARI 825 80-Column Printer or equivalent printer
- Blank formatted diskettes

Contacting the author

Users wishing to contact the author may write to him at:

Apt. F-211
175 Calvert Drive
Cupertino, CA 95014

Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Loading *Dandy* into computer memory

1. Have your computer turned OFF.
2. Turn on your disk drive.
3. When the BUSY light goes out, open the disk drive door and insert the *Dandy* diskette with the label in the lower right-hand corner nearest to you. Close the door. (Use disk drive one if you have more than one drive.)
4. Turn on your computer and your TV set. The program will load into computer memory and start automatically.

The first display screen

The first screen displays the following information:

Atari Program Exchange presents:

Dandy

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Dandy is a user extendable real time animated adventure game for a team of one to four players.

This diskette contains a sample dungeon. If you wish to use one of your own dungeons, insert it now.

If you are going to create a new dungeon, insert the blank formatted disk now.

Press space bar to begin.

Figure 1 First display screen

If this is your first time playing *Dandy*, or if you just want to explore the sample dungeon, leave the *Dandy* diskette in the disk drive. To create or explore one of your own dungeons, take the *Dandy* diskette out of disk drive one and insert your own diskette now.

When you press the SPACE BAR, *Dandy* loads Level A of the dungeon and displays the game menu.

(Note. You can find instructions on preparing your own dungeons in the "Advanced technical information" section later in this manual.)

The game menu

The game menu looks like this:

```
-----  
Letter A-Z starts game at that level  
OPTION changes degree of difficulty  
SELECT changes number of players  
START begins game  
-----  
.....  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
-----  
Mode: One Player           Easy           Level A  
-----
```

Figure 2 Game menu

The top four lines of the game menu contain a condensed version of the instructions. The middle of the screen shows a portion of the top level of the dungeon, and the bottom line shows the game options.

Letter A-Z – Selects Starting Level

Press any letter key to start the game on that dungeon level. You'd usually start on the first level of the dungeon, Level A.

OPTION KEY – Degree of difficulty

Press the OPTION key to change the difficulty of the game. There are four levels of difficulty: Trivial, Easy, Hard, and Deadly. If you're fairly good at other video games, start out on the Easy level.

SELECT KEY – Number of players, dungeon editor

Press the SELECT key to change the number of players. You may choose one to four players, depending upon the number of joysticks, controller jacks, and people you have available. Plug a joystick into a controller jack for each player.

You can also use the SELECT key to enter the Dungeon Editor or to end the game. To enter the editor, press the SELECT key repeatedly until "Mode: Dungeon Editor" displays; then press the START key. See the "Advanced technical information" section of this manual for instructions on the Dungeon Editor.

START KEY – Begin a game

Once you've selected your dungeon level, degree of difficulty, and number of players, press the START key to begin the game.

The dungeon display

When you press the START key, the screen changes from the game menu to the dungeon display:

Health 90%	Food:0	Bombs:0	Keys:0	000000
.....				
*				
*				
*				
*	1			
*	U			
*				
*				
*				
*				
.....				
Mode: One Player		Easy		Level A

Figure 3 Dungeon display

The dungeon display looks like the game menu, except that the player status display appears at the top of the screen, and your exploration team is clustered around the U.

Player status display

The player status display is divided into four lines, one for each possible player. In one- to three-player games, some of the lower lines remain blank.

Each line gives a detailed account of the corresponding players status and inventory.

Health: A player's health varies from 00% to 90% in 10% steps. A player's health starts at 90%. Hand-to-hand combat with monsters reduces a player's health, while eating health food increases it. A player with a health of 00% is sent to Limbo.

Food: a player may carry up to nine boxes of health food. Players start the game without any health food.

Bombs: a player may carry up to nine smart bombs. Players start the game without any smart bombs.

Keys: a player may carry up to nine door keys. Players start the game without any door keys.

Score: Each player has a six-digit score on the right end of the status line. This score starts at zero and increases as players gather treasure and kill monsters.

Dungeon viewer

While you're playing *Dandy* the middle portion of the screen displays your team and the section of the dungeon it's currently exploring. Each dungeon level is about three screens wide and three screens tall. *Dandy* always shows the portion of the dungeon around your group's average position, so make sure you stick together! If one of your group members moves off the screen, nothing evil happens — the off-screen member simply can't fire (or see where he's going), until he rejoins the main group.

Controlling your player

Each player is represented on the screen by a little figure wearing a number. Player one's figure wears a "1", player two's figure a "2", and so on.

Moving — joystick

Hold your joystick with the red button in the upper left corner. Move your player by pushing your joystick in the desired direction. Players can move in all eight directions (including diagonals).

Shooting — red joystick button + joystick

Each player is armed with a bow and an unlimited number of arrows. Use these arrows to kill the denizens of the dungeon. To shoot an arrow, press the joystick button and push the stick in the direction you want to shoot. Your player stands still as long as you have the button down. Once your arrow hits something or flies off the screen, you may fire another arrow. Arrows affect monsters, spawners, and smart bombs, but they have no effect upon other players.

Picking up objects — joystick

Some of the objects in the dungeon are worth picking up. Just move your player over them. You can pick up and carry up to nine boxes of health food, nine smart bombs, nine door keys, and an unlimited amount of treasure.

Eating health food – number key

To eat a box of health food that you've picked up, type your player's number on the keyboard — (for example, player three would type 3 to eat some health food).

Using a smart bomb – SHIFT + number key

To use a smart bomb that you've picked up, hold down the SHIFT key and type your player's number on the keyboard (for example, player three would type SHIFT + 3 to use a smart bomb).

Pausing the game – SPACE BAR

To pause the game action, press the SPACE BAR. To resume playing, press the SPACE BAR again.

Quitting the game – OPTION or SELECT or START

To quit your current game and return to the Game Menu, press any one of the following keys: OPTION, SELECT, or START. *Dandy* reads Level A and returns you to the game menu.

What's in a Dungeon?

You encounter sixteen things (besides other players and their arrows!) in the dungeon. Here's a list of the name, the text character, and a description of the properties of each one. (You only use the text characters if you're going to create your own dungeon later. See the "Advanced technical information" section later in this manual.)

Empty space – “ ”

Most of each dungeon level is made up of empty space, which players, monsters, and arrows can move through.

Wall – “*”

Nothing can move through a wall. Arrows are stopped by walls.

Door – “o”

Nothing can move through a door without a door key. Doors are basically removable walls.

Up passage – “u”

Players warp into a level around the up passage. Otherwise, an up passage acts just like a wall.

Down passage – “d”

Players travel to the next level by stepping onto the down passage. When players step onto the down passage, their status lines read “—Player-is-in-Warp—” and they disappear. When all the players on a level have warped, *Dandy* moves the party to the next level.

Door key – “k”

Players pick up door keys and use them to open doors. Use a single door key to open all the contiguous doors in all eight directions. To use a door key, move your player into a door. The door disappears and the number of keys in your possession decreases by one. If you don't have any keys, you can't move into the door.

Health food – “+”

Pick up health food and eat it to increase your health. (A package of health food raises your health to 90%.) Eating health food when your health is already at 90% has no effect.

Treasure – “\$”

Pick up treasure to increase your score. Each treasure is worth 100 points.

Smart bomb – “s”

Smart bombs are magic. When you explode one, it kills all the monsters on the screen. This makes smart bombs extremely useful for clearing out nests of spawners, for example. It doesn't take much skill to use one, though, so you only get one tenth the number of points awarded for killing all the monsters by bow and arrow. Smart bombs also explode when arrows strike them.

Small, medium, and large monsters – “1”, “2”, and “3”

Small, medium, and large monsters inhabit the dungeon levels. They like to eat explorers, which makes them a nuisance. Fortunately, a volley of arrows cuts them down to size — literally. When he’s shot, a monster slims down to the next smaller size — large ones turn into medium ones, medium ones turn into small ones, and small ones disappear. You earn ten points each time you hit a monster.

If you’re careless, unlucky, or overwhelmed, a monster might get through your defenses. When a monster reaches you, it reduces your health. Small monsters leach 10% of your health, medium monsters steal 20%, and large monsters gulp 30%. If your health is ever reduced to 00% or below, your player instantly goes to Limbo.

Heart – “h”

Once you’re in Limbo, your only hope is to have a friend return you to the material world of the dungeon by shooting a heart. Returning players keep all their possessions, but, weakened by their ordeal, they start out with a health of only 50%. Shooting a heart returns the player who has been in Limbo the longest time (first in, first out). If nobody is in Limbo when you shoot the heart, then it retrieves the next best thing — a large monster!

Small, medium, and large spawners – “a”, “b”, and “c”

Spawners give birth to large, medium, or small monsters, depending on their size. Small spawners spawn small monsters, and so forth. Shooting a large spawner creates a medium spawner, and so on. Each time you shoot a spawner, you earn 200 points.

What’s at the bottom of a dungeon?

When your group finally makes it to the bottom-most level (level Z), you’ll have lots of unguarded treasure, food, smart bombs, and the like. Warping down from level Z brings your group back to level Z, so you can grab all that loot a second time. You can repeat this process any number of times.

Advanced technical information

Is there life after level Z?

So you've gotten your whole group from A to Z in *Deadly*? So the large monsters run AWAY from you? So the spawners keep silent when you walk by? What in the name of the Heart of Gold do you do now? Quit playing *Dandy* and move onto something else, like "Bloody-Bumpers, the game of Parking Lot Death"?

Wrong-o, health-food-breath!

You use your accumulated knowledge, wisdom, and lore to design your own dungeon!

"But how do I do THAT?" you cry?

I'm glad you asked that. It just so happens that I was about to tell you. Read on:

A dungeon excavator's guide

All you need to become a big time dungeon designer is *Dandy*, a single joystick, a blank formatted diskette, and an active imagination. And in a pinch, you can substitute perseverance for imagination. . . .

Boot up *Dandy* as far as the copyright screen. Then, remove the *Dandy* diskette from the drive and substitute your own blank formatted diskette. Press the SPACE BAR to get the game menu. Press the SELECT key until the dungeon editor displays and press the START key.

Writing a level to the diskette – “W”

When you've finished your level, press the “W” key to write it to the diskette as the current level.

Reading a level from the diskette – “R”

When you want to read in a level from the diskette, press the “R” key. If the current level doesn't exist, *Dandy* creates a blank level (just an up passage and a down passage) for you to edit.

Exiting the editor – “Q”, OPTION, SELECT, or START

Type the letter “Q” to quit from the editor back to the game menu. You can also press the OPTION, SELECT, or START keys to get back to the main menu.

Printing Hard Copy

Included on the *Dandy* diskette is a BASIC program called PRINTLEV.BAS. You can execute this program to print dungeon levels on your 60-column or wider printer.

Insert one master diskette in the disk drive and the BASIC cartridge in the cartridge slot of the computer console. Load DOS into computer memory. Remove the master diskette from the disk drive and insert the *Dandy* diskette. When the READY prompt displays, type RUN “D:PRINTLEV.BAS”

The following message displays:

```
Dandy Level Printer v. 1.0
Where should the output go?
(RETURN to use the printer)
?_
```

Press the RETURN key. The program displays this message:

```
Looking for dungeon levels.
(number) FREE SECTORS
Levels on this disk:
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ
Level (* for all, RETURN to quit)___
```

Type the letter of the screen you want to print, and press the RETURN key. If you want the program to print all the screens, type an asterisk (*) and press the RETURN key.

Suppose you select Level D. The following message displays:

Reading in level D.
Press RETURN to print.

Make sure your printer (and your interface module if you're using one) is turned on, and in the ONLINE mode. Press the RETURN key and the printer begins immediately.

LEVEL. * File Format

A dungeon level consists of 30 lines of 60 squares each. Each character can be any one of sixteen items, so each byte of data in the file can represent two dungeon squares. The low four bits come from the square with the lesser X address, the high four bits from the square with the greater X address. The encoding scheme follows the order in which the items are listed in the dungeon editor — empty spaces are 0000, walls are 0001, etc., up to large spawners, which are 1111.

How *Dandy* came to be

I wrote an early version of *Dandy* for my B.S. thesis in Computer Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The original idea was to have one person sit at the console of a mini-computer and control the dungeon, while the four explorers sat around the ATARI Computer. The ATARI was going to be the I/O controller for the larger computer, handling the graphics and joystick polling for the much more powerful mini.

The original idea had all sorts of fantastic bells and whistles tacked onto it — I was going to have five or so kinds of monsters, hand-to-hand combat, a variety of magic weapons, stairs, and so forth. Unfortunately, I had to get the whole project written in three months, while still going to classes, and occasionally sleeping.

It became clear that I couldn't possibly implement the whole game in the time available, so I cut it down to the bare minimum — putting most of the code on the ATARI Computer, with the minicomputer acting as a level server. I think it's still a neat game — with the teamwork aspect and the user's option to add new levels being the neatest parts.

The result was a game that I eventually polished up, added to, and adjusted into *Dandy*. Special thanks to Joel Gluck, for his many thoughtful suggestions, and to other students in my dormitory of New House II, for dedicated and enthusiastic play-testing.

Dandy was written on an ATARI 800 Home Computer with an AXLON RAMPOWER 128K card, the Synapse Software "Synassembler", and an ATARI 810 Disk Drive. Total time to assemble 8K of object code (from 350 sectors of source) was 39 seconds.

Oh yeah, I got an "A" on my thesis.