ISLANDS

COMMODORE 64 / VIC-20

GAMEPLAY MANUAL

COMMODORE 64



VIC-20



Aleksi Eeben | 2022-2026

Introduction

Welcome to Islands, a medieval fantasy roguelike for Game Boy, Commodore 64 and VIC-20. A small island. A surprisingly deep adventure.

You begin at your hut on a lively island. It's a bright day! Seek equipment in the shops and be nice to the wildlife. Visit Lady Lara, the noble ruler of the queendom, and perhaps play a game of Three Dice at the inn. Then find the dungeon entrance to begin your actual quest.

Many dungeon levels lie ahead - or rather, below. Recover the Ankh and bring it back to Lady Lara - alive. There is a twist.

Fight, trade, fish, forage and discover the shuffled identities of mysterious magical items. Your abilities grow through your actions. Rest at an inn to preserve your progress through a mysterious dream. Dream codes are interchangeable between platforms.

Islands began as a Game Boy project in 2022. When it was abandoned, it already had generators for dungeons and indoor locations, along with all the tile graphics. Modern programming techniques rescued the project in 2026, turning that unfinished foundation into a complete adventure across three classic machines. The sound effects for all three platforms were crafted by old, trembling hands. To complete the experience, a seasoned, partly deaf human composer created a six-minute, two-channel soundtrack for the Commodore 64 version.

The entire game and its seemingly infinite universe - procedurally generated anew for every adventure - fit on an unbanked 32 KB Game Boy cartridge, with single-load versions for the C64 and VIC-20.

On the Commodore 64 Ultimate, Turbo Boost automatically kicks in during island, dungeon and indoor location generation. To use this feature, select C64U Turbo Registers in the Ultimate settings or apply the included configuration file. A stock Commodore 64 takes about 10-15 seconds to generate a level map.

Islands was released at Zoo Party 2026, with the Commodore 64 version entered in the Game Dev competition. Created by Aleksi Eeben in 2022-2026. Some rights reserved.

Creating Your Adventurer

Choose your character's appearance and enter a four-letter name. Random names and appearances are also available. Different character types have their own strengths, weaknesses and starting equipment.

Your attributes and possessions are partly determined by chance. You may reroll them once before setting off. There are no conventional experience levels: your abilities improve gradually as you use them.

Controls

Movement keys

Q W E
A D
Z S X

W / A / S / D	North / West / South / East
Q / E / Z / X	Northwest / Northeast / Southwest / Southeast
O	Perform the context-sensitive action shown on screen
P	Fire or throw a suitable weapon
RETURN	Open inventory
SPACE	Open equipment and character options

O takes items, climbs stairs, enters buildings, talks, drinks, fishes or searches when appropriate. Otherwise O lets you Look; choose one of the eight direction keys. Press P and then a direction key to fire or throw immediately.

Moving, attacking and waiting

Each step gives nearby creatures an opportunity to act. Walk into an enemy to attack it. To wait, do nothing: after approximately three seconds, creatures get a turn. Inventory browsing, conversations and choosing a direction pause this timer.

Understanding the Screen

The main display shows the area surrounding your adventurer. Mountains, forests, walls and other obstacles may obstruct your view. Explore to see more of the world.

The status display shows your name, condition, attributes, equipment, ammunition and possessions. Graphical bars show your health and abilities; small symbols represent equipment and items. Available actions appear at the bottom of the screen.

Inventory and Equipment

Your backpack can carry up to ten items. Examine your inventory to select possessions to use, equip or drop. Equipment symbols indicate which weapons, armor and protective items you are currently using.

Better equipment may automatically replace inferior equipment, without unnecessarily replacing a ranged weapon with a melee one. You can also change or unequip items yourself. When nothing is equipped, the character options can select the best available equipment.

Combat

Combat takes place directly on the exploration map. Walk into a hostile creature to attack it, including from a diagonal direction. Strength, equipment and the creature's defenses influence the result. Hostile creatures may retaliate after your action.

Ranged attacks work in all eight directions. Bows, slings and thrown weapons can strike from a distance. Ammunition is scarce and consumed when fired; thrown weapons can often be recovered near where they land.

Potions, scrolls and wands can restore health, attack creatures or affect the landscape. Directional wands release their magic as soon as you choose a direction. Some spells can dig through obstacles, and changes to terrain may remain when you return. Wands can break after use; Intelligence improves your chances.

If your health runs out, you return to your previous inn checkpoint, losing progress since your last Dream. Rest before risky expeditions.

Exploring the World

Discover forests, mountains, lakes, coastlines, buildings, castles and winding dungeons. Searching rocks may reveal sling ammunition; forests and bushes may conceal food. Fishing near suitable water requires both skill and luck.

Dungeons extend through multiple floors connected by stairways. Remember the route home. Opening a chest scatters its treasure onto surrounding ground, so make sure your backpack has room.

You can move certain tables by walking into them: you step into their space and pull the table behind you.

Shops and Trading

Shops display merchandise on the floor. Pick up goods you wish to buy, then talk to the shopkeeper to settle your bill. Unwanted merchandise can be returned before payment.

You can offer your own goods for sale by dropping them in the shop. Charisma affects prices, offers and inn fees.

Leaving with unpaid goods is theft. An angry shopkeeper may pursue you, and stealing or fighting harms your Charisma. Shopkeepers remember poor treatment.

Inns and Dreams

Inns offer recovery for a fee. Sleeping restores health and produces a Dream: a sequence of letters representing your adventurer's progress. Write the letters down carefully! Enter your Dream when starting another session to restore your character, possessions and discoveries.

The outside world may change while you sleep; loose objects and creatures need not remain where you left them. You also have to travel for a while before sleeping again.

Games of Chance

Some inns offer a game with three dice. The first die is revealed before you choose your stake. The second die is rolled, then you may double your bet before the third die is thrown.

Pairs return your stake. Straights and triples win more; three sixes pay six times your final stake. Recognizing a promising first roll can help.

Your Attributes

Strength affects physical power and close combat. Dexterity governs agility, accuracy and ranged weapons. Intelligence helps with magic and tasks requiring judgment. Charisma influences your reputation and dealings with others.

There are no experience points or character levels. Your abilities improve through use as your adventures continue.

Magical Discoveries

Potions, scrolls and wands have mysterious identities. Their appearances and effects are randomized for each new adventurer, so a familiar-looking potion may do something completely different in another game.

Once identified, a magical object's identity remains known to your character, even on another island. Experiment carefully; knowledge is valuable.

Lady Lara and the Ankh

Somewhere on your island stands Lady Lara's castle. Visit her to learn about your first quest: recovering a sacred Ankh from deep within a dungeon.

Bring the Ankh back to Lady Lara to earn an extraordinary reward. New islands and greater challenges await beyond the first adventure.

Advice for Adventurers

Visit an inn before heading underground. Carry a useful mix of equipment and magic. Watch your health, conserve ammunition, and remember where you found stairs.

Use diagonal movement to your advantage. Search the wilderness when supplies are scarce. Treat shopkeepers fairly, unless you enjoy being chased. Above all, write down each Dream you want to keep.

May your dreams lead you to new Islands!