

The Aleph One RPG

An online role-playing Every Man For Himself module for Marathon/Aleph One

Version 2.0.1

By Jon Irons
(jonirons@gmail.com)

Thanks to Darren Watts for extensive beta-testing and the great map included herein!

Introduction:

In my experiments with Lua/A1, the Aleph One scripting language, I wondered how far it could be pushed to change the mechanics of the classic game that we all know and love. Born from a sleepless night, because I couldn't resist programming a "little more," this "MORPG" (notice that it's not "MMORPG"!) is the first fruit of my pushings.

The concept is simple: for every net player you kill, you get a new ability -- leveling up. Each new ability is, hopefully, useful. I got a little fancy and attached certain items to the fists (explained later). This is the second version of the Aleph One RPG; the first was known as Wizards, and experienced some play, mainly as I tested it. The main bugs in that version were solved, but a lot was left undone. The rechristened version 2 (this version) is a lean, mean machine, tested until all noticable bugs were fixed and almost all wanted features were added. Version 2 (henceforth "AORPG" or Aleph One RPG) allows -- well, forces -- the selection of one of three classes, and as such, cuts down on the number of abilities learned, but increases strategy and fun.

This module is a pretty big change from the normal Marathon experience, and some people already think that it's stupid. I can understand this. But for those who want to experience something new, this is a fun way to change Marathon around, and hopefully to make it a different game.

The beauty of this module is just that: it is essentially a plug-in that requires only a physics file and a Lua script (although I included a map and an MML script for other reasons). The host is the only one who needs the essential files, since hosts transmit scripts and physics to joiners, so a game is simple to host and to set up. The map is included so that there is a good arena without weapons already lying around (so that you actually need to level up). The map was made by W'rknacacnter (Darren Watts) and is called "Level Name, Bitch." It's a beautifully-desinged map, and I am very pleased to offer it as the first official AORPG netmap. Mapmaking based on AORPG gameplay is encouraged! I do not suggest playing on normal maps unless weapons and items are taken away.

This collection of files is really more of a framework than an actual game. Of course you can play it, and have a blast with it, but the options presented by AORPG are nigh unlimited. I hope. If you have a good use for such a module/framework, feel free to use it in your scenario, netmap, or whatever. My code is 100% GPL (license included in the file). As you play, enjoy the game, but also think of how to make it better.

Use:

Unfortunately, some features in AORPG Version 2 are only compatible with builds after the May 30, 2005 nightly build. So don't use AORPG with the present Stable release, the January 18, 2005 release. If one were to remove homing and the better_random() parts from the script, I think that the AORPG would work on Jan. 18, but a new release is coming soon, so I'd relax with a 5/30+ nightly build.

The host should use the included AORPG Physics as his physics file (selected in the Environment preferences) and should gather a game, enabling the AORPG_v2.0.1.lua script. The included map is recommended until I can get some more RPG maps. Also, if you are a Mac user and you're having trouble selecting the physics file, use the Macintosh Aleph One file type tools to change the file type to a Marathon Infinity physics file.

Classes:

The three classes are Wizard, Fighter, and Thief. Classes are based on player color. The first three colors, Slate, Red, and Violet, are the Wizard, Fighter, and Thief class, respectively. The next three colors (Yellow, White, Orange) repeat this pattern, and the last two colors (Blue and Green) randomly select class.

Wizard

The Wizard is probably the easiest class to use. All of the Wizard's attacks are ranged, and one of them ... well, you'll see. He's best in open areas where he can see other players coming. Because all he has to do is shoot. :)

Level 1: Sonic Boom

After killing another player with the "Ball" (the generic, classless weapon), you get this. Unfortunately, it's rather boring -- the "Ball," but stronger. However, this unlimited, ranged attack is the main weapon of the Wizard.

Level 2: Searing Fist

This weapon is far more powerful than the Sonic Boom. The downside is that the projectiles are slow and large; they are easy to dodge and they blind you. It also has a limited number of uses. However, because you may use it at the same time as the Sonic Boom, it becomes a formidable weapon. The Sonic Boom moves faster, so a player has to deal with projectiles moving at two different speeds; this is often enough to flush them right into the more damaging attack.

Level 3: Malice

Perhaps the most powerful of the Wizard's weapons, Malice is a true seeking weapon. Yes. At the time of this writing, seeking weapons in net play have just become possible. And this weapon's mid-power projectiles will make life hard for anyone, since they are at just the right speed to stay on a player's tail, yet follow him accurately. The trick is that you must "lock on" to your target first by hitting him with the secondary trigger's fire. Then the primary shots will follow that target. The advantage of this system is that a player may select his targets, rather than hope that the nearest player is the one whom he wants to die. An interesting

strategy in something like team play would be to lock onto a team mate, let him get a slight start, and shoot after him. While the orbs follow him, stand on a ledge and let him get amongst the enemy. Then, lock onto the other players at will and let your friend occupy them while they get roasted.

Special Ability: Reflect

Since the Wizard is a class dealing in magical energy, his special ability is Reflect. It is similar to the Thief's Evasion ability, but instead of simply nullifying the damage dealt to the Wizard, it redirects half of the damage to the attacking player. There is the usual 1% chance of this happening at level zero, and the chance increases by three percent per level until level 11, when the chance reaches 33%.

Fighter

The Fighter is a more advanced class. Most of his attacks are melee attacks, and they are all quite powerful. At one time, the Fighter was by far the most powerful class. Hopefully, it's a little more balanced now.

Level 1: Big Punch

Aside from the Pokemon-esque name of this attack, it provides around twice the damage of the original Marathon punch. This attack is easy enough to use, and there are no special strategies for it. It has unlimited uses, of course.

Level 2: Energetic Punch

This punch is so energetic that it shoots energy from the fighter's fist at amazing speed. The impact from this weapon is enough to send players into the air, so that you can wait for him to come back down and punch him hard. There are only a few shots, though, so it's best used in face-offs against Wizards or against charging Thieves, to knock them back a few steps.

Level 3: Jump Punch

Rounding out the "Punch" motif is the pride and joy of all Fighter fans (about three exist at the moment): the Jump Punch. This attack takes projectiles to a new level by turning the Fighter **into** the projectile, sending him forward, and if the player aims right, in an arc. The secondary trigger of the attack is the same punch as the Big Punch -- but the player is now going faster than most projectiles, adding damage to the punch. This attack makes people reluctant to stand anywhere in the Fighter's line of sight, and for good reason. It takes some skill to use effectively, but at worst its use is to make the Fighter the most mobile class in the game.

Special Ability: Deathblow

The Fighter, an offensive class, was granted an equally offensive special ability, the deathblow. At level zero there is a one percent chance of dealing double damage to an opponent, and from there the likelihood of the deathblow's occurrence increases by 2% per level, with a maximum rate of twenty percent at level ten. The deathblow actually deals damage twice, so a Thief evading the attack may still be hit by the second attack, for example.

Thief

The Thief can be extremely difficult to use. He has a limited melee attack and no long-range attacks. However, the Thief is the ideal character for people who like to think creatively to destroy their opponents. And there's nothing cooler than killing a player who didn't know that anyone was there. Because the Thief relies mostly on sneakiness, he is best in games with more than two players, so that he can pick off players occupied in other battles. Cheap? You bet. But come on, he's a THIEF!

Level 1: Backstab

This is the Thief's only truly offensive ability. It has an unlimited number of uses, but its use has other limits. If the attack does not hit a player in his back, it does very little damage. But if it does hit a player in the back, he dies immediately, no matter how much health he has. It's the Great Equalizer of attacks. While it seems cheap, and a good thief looks like Jack the Ripper on the battlefield, most do not realize that a player with his face turned to you is very hard to kill.

Level 2: Trap

Yet another generic, nondescript name. Yet the Trap is useful, and is indeed a very strategic weapon. It leaves a harmful cloud floating in the air. The cloud itself isn't too damaging, but en masse, they are deadly. The cloud is perfect for rearranging the dynamics of a map; a Thief may fortify rooms, block avenues of escape, and rig complex traps that make following a Thief a regrettable experience. It is in this way that a Thief may control where other players can and can't go without personal harm.

Level 3: Swap

What would a Thief be without the ability to take stuff away from people? Unfortunately, outright theft would be terribly unbalancing to the game; a thief could steal everyone's abilities and leave them defenseless. So, instead, a Thief has the ability to Swap this ability with the level one ability of another class, who may in turn try to get their ability back, or may go after another player's ability. Not only does this attack diversify the Thief's abilities, it allows for a very frustrating tactic: taking a level one ability away from an opponent while he tries to kill you with it. A quick Thief may do this, leave the opponent scrambling to change to another attack or get his attack back, and give the other player a quick slice to the spine. Swap's uses are incredibly varied.

Special Ability: Evasion

Because the Thief is at a disadvantage in direct combat, he was granted the ability to gain evasion, a chance of nullifying the damage done by attacks. The Thief has a small chance of evading attacks at level 0, and from there his abilities grow until level 14, when evasion hits 45%.

Items:

Every 45 seconds, each player gets a class-specific item for stored use. There is a

notification message when the item becomes available. To use an item , a player must switch to fists, stand relatively still, and fire. It's that simple. Items do not stack, so you can't horde health potions and the like. But the advantage of this system is that you can save an item for use when you need it, like after dying.

Wizard: "Vision" powerup (Infravision) -- For use against those damned Thieves

Fighter: "Health Potion" (1x health powerup) -- Because he's that sick

Thief: "Invisibility Potion" -- Because a good Thief is neither heard nor seen.

Table:

Class	Colors	Item	Levels			Special
			1	2	3	
Wizard	Slate	Vision	Sonic Boom	Searing Fist	Malice	Reflect 3%/lvl, 33% max
	Yellow					
Fighter	Red	Health Potion	Big Punch	Energetic Punch	Jump Punch	Deathblow 2%/lvl, 20% max
	White					
Thief	Violet	Invisibility Potion	Backstab	Trap	Swap	Evasion 5%/lvl, 45% max
	Orange					

Changes:

2.0.1: Added documentation of Wizard and Fighter special abilities, created PDF version of Readme, Balanced Fighter class (made Fighter weaker :), made Thief faster, fixed the Wizard's "Reflect" special ability, included new special map, and other changes.

2.0.0: First release with Classes