

□VIDCHEAT.TXT - How to cheat videogame coinboxes

Arcade Game Strategies

By: Count Zero Interrupt

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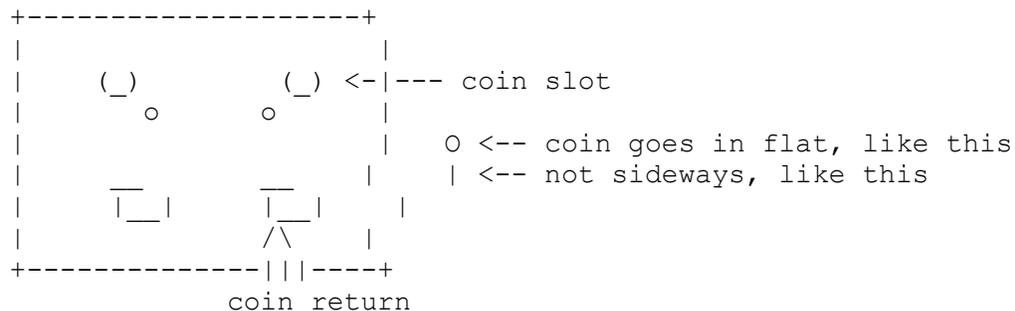
Back in my adventurous youth, I discovered a very addictive activity. This was way back in the bicentennial year of 1976, a year when some of you young rascals out there hadn't even been conceived yet (still just daddy's little squirt, as it were...), there came upon the average American household a very strange phenomenon. The television had long since put a stranglehold on the American family, and by and large, we all watched. Now, as a tyke of 11, I actually became bored with tv. After all, there were many other things that seemed more fun to me. You know, riding bikes, playing outside, teasing girls, all that nice clean fun that we look back on so fondly during our twilight years. But one day, I went over to a friend's house (his name was Guy Mason, and I knew you were just dying to know that) and he was staring at the screen of his tv, concentrating VERY hard. Now, Guy wasn't normally prone to concentrate very hard at anything. In fact, except for the occasional drool or unintelligible mumble, Guy didn't have much to concentrate on... But as I looked at the screen, I discovered something very strange. He was making a bar of light move up and down on one half of the screen, in an attempt to keep a small blip of light from getting past it. I couldn't believe it! This mindless joker was CONTROLLING the TV! I'd never seen anything like this before. I asked him what he was doing, and he said, "I'm playing this cool game I just got. It's called Pong." And thus, the revolution had become.

As the years flew rapidly by, the sophistication of these video games became more and more intriguing. In fact, the games became so popular that they began to spring up in Pinball Arcades. Except soon there were so many of the video games that soon outnumbered the pinball machines, and pinball parlors came to be called video arcades. Whatever you called them, they became a multi-million dollar business by the early 1980's.

So how did they become such successful businesses? Well, because you couldn't play these cool games for free. They actually charged you \$.25 for every game you wanted to play. Hardly seemed fair to an 11 year old with a very limited disposable income. So over the course of a summer spent in the dimly lit Golfland miniature golf course arcade in Stanton, California (located at the corner of Beach Blvd. and Lampson St., for those of you who wish to pay homage to my inspirational environment), I had come up with ways to cheat the machines, and play as many video games as I wanted.

The first method is very crude, and works only after repeated tries. I discovered this method after a frustrating game of Avalanche (a very primitive videogame circa 1977). I scored very low, and lost to my friend Randy Owens, with whose help I discovered these methods. In my anger at having lost, I gave a quick kick to the machine with my knee.

When I did my knee jerk, it hit squarely between the coin slots on the coin box on the front of the machine. Lo and behold, there were 2 credits on the machine ! Now, this method has worked for me as recently as 1987 in an arcade in Phoenix, Arizona. The types of coinboxes that work with this method are the old Atari ones with the ROUND coin slots; the ones where you put in the coins flush with the front of the machine. NOT the kind with actual SLOTS where you put in the coins perpindicular to the front of the machine. See the illustration below:



There are some fundamental problems with this method, as I'm sure you've already realized. It takes a very strong jolt to register a credit, it hurt your knee after a while, and most importantly, the arcade attendant will eventually wander around to find out why you're kicking the machine so hard, and ask you to please stop. Also, in recent years some of these machines have a tilt mechanism that resets the videogame if the coinbox is hit too hard. Be that as it may, it IS a valid method, so I had to mention it.

The most reliable (and time-tested) method is what I call "penny-flicking." After I got kicked out of Golfland for about the 23rd time in a week for kicking machines, I decided to try to find a new (and hopefully less painful) method to get video games for free. Being the bright and resourceful lad that I was, I went to the local library. While I was looking around, my friend Randy asked the librarian about pinball machines, and she showed him a book that would prove to be our ticket to video overload. It had the complete schematic and cutaway drawings of the typical coinbox, used in vending machines, phones, and yes indeedy....video games. Using the diagrams, we tried various ways to cheat the mechanism. I thought the obvious way would be slugs, but after many unsuccessful and time-consuming attempts to make a good slug, I gave up. I learned that foreign currency often works in the typical coin mechanisms, and since my mom is Japanese, I tried out various Japanese coins we had laying around. I found that the 100 yen piece works in about 80% of the coinboxes I tried until I ran out of 100 yen pieces. My mom wasn't too happy about that. And now with the yen so strong against the dollar, it's probably about the same price (that is \$.25) anyway. You're welcome to try other types of coins. I hear pesos are going cheap.

As a coin passes down the coin chute, I found it must set off a hair-trigger switch just before it drops into the coin box. Just above this switch is an alternate path (activated by the coin return button on the front) which diverts the coin past the switch and down the coin

return chute, where you retrieve it. So, if you can get a coin to go backwards, that is, UP the coin return chute, it will go up past the alternate path, and then go down the chute that leads to the coinbox inside the machine, and set ting off the trigger switch in the process. You will lose the coin, but gain a credit. Well, since I wasn't going to wast a perfectly good quarter to try a method I wasn't sure would work, I used pennies. And it worked.

Wht you have to do is to take the penny, push it up into the slot from underneath (in the coin return) and flick it up the slot from the bottom. This isn't as hard as it sounds, and I'll show you idfferent methods that work well for me, as well as the different kinds of coinboxes you'll encounter.

What kinds of coinboxes will this method work on? Well, I've used them on ALL of the, and WIHTOUT EXCEPTION, they all work. The only problem is that some coinboxes have little swinging doors on the coin return box to keep you from getting your fingers in there. Either go to a machine that has the door broken off or removed, or try another game. In any arcade there are ALWAYS machines that will work with this method.

The easiest kind of coinbox to penny-flick is the kind you'll find on Pac-Man machines (or Ms. Pac-Man, whatever). They are quite common, and are also found on many other machines. There are no doors on the coin return on these machines, so look for these first. The front panel of the machine seems to be punched from a single sheet of metal, so the doors are simply cutouts that are pushed back to make room for the coin return opening. You'll know what I mean when you see one. See the illustration belo w:

Side view of Pac-Man type coinbox

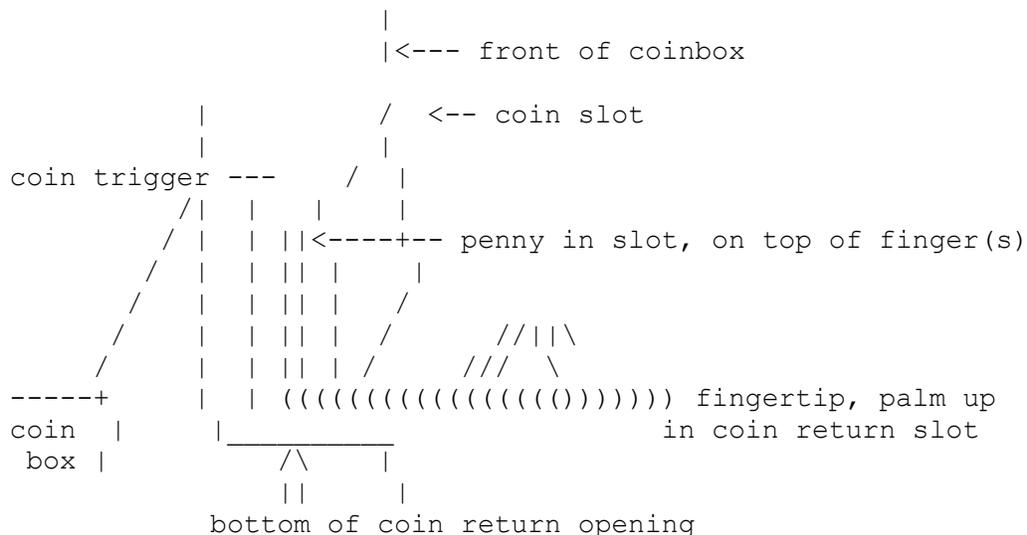


FIGURE 1

As you can see in figure 1, you put your finger(s) in the coin slot, palm up, with a penny balancing on your finger tips. I use two fingers,

my index finger and middle finger, to flick the penny. Do whatever is more comfortable. In the Pac-Man type machines, there are usually 2-3 slots you can feel. Use your fingertips to carefully roll a penny into the slot. I do this by putting the penny flat on the tip of my middle finger, and by using the ledge of the top of the coin return slot, roll the penny until it's vertical in the slot in the middle. The slot in the back works, but not as well as the middle slot or the front slot. The middle one is also the easiest to get the penny into. Now that you have the penny in the middle slot, just flick your finger(s) and shoot that penny up the slot. It has to go up about 3-5 inches, so give it as strong a flick as you can. If you have thick fingers, this may prove difficult. Not a whole lot I can do about that. I find it tougher to do now at 25 than I did when I was a skinny runt at 11, but I can still do it quite easily. Usually just by flicking upward, I can generate enough velocity to propel the penny up the coin return chute and get a credit. But especially your first several tries, you'll find the coin doesn't go up far enough, and just lands back on your fingertips. You'll just have to flick harder. You might try wedging the penny against the sides of the slot, and by squeezing it until the pressure causes it to squirt up the chute (kind of like squeezing a bar of soap hard enough until it shoots out of your hand). This technique works for me when my fingers get tired. Another way is to press your finger(s) against the back wall of the coin return slot with the penny in the slot, of course, and build upward pressure, while still keeping your fingers pressed against the back wall of the coin return. Then by releasing the pressure against the back wall quickly, your fingers will snap up, shooting the penny. Don't give up. It took me a whole afternoon of solid flicking before I perfected it.

I've found that nickels work much better than pennies, by the way. It's just a matter of whether or not you want to risk losing pennies or nickels. Because while this method works, it doesn't work every time. A lot of times the penny will squirt up the chute, and fall back into the coinbox inside the machine without registering a credit. The problem is that a penny isn't wide enough to set off the trigger switch every time. So I sometimes lose 3-4 pennies to get a credit. Still not a bad deal. With practice you'll get better. Nickels work almost every single time. I can't remember the last time I tried a nickel that didn't work. So get a roll of pennies, and hit the arcade!

I would practice on the Pac-Man type coinboxes first, since they're the easiest. Get to learn how each coin return slot feels, and feel how many slots there are. The middle slots generally work the best. What you will soon find is that even though some coin returns don't have little doors on them, the tab in the opening is bent down so far you can't get your fingers into them to feel the slots and get your penny in there. The simple solution is to bend the coin return tab up far enough so you can feel the slots. The metal is strong, so I suggest using a strong lever to bend it up. I use a piece of steel rod the size and shape of a pencil. Just a quick motion should bend up the coin return opening large enough for you to feel the slots. This doesn't even damage the machine, it just makes the coin return opening a bit bigger, and the arcade attendant won't even notice it. Just make sure you do this on a machine that isn't in direct line of sight of the arcade

attendant, or he'll ask wh at you're doing. A method I've used in crowded arcades is to get 2 or 3 friend to surround the machine, while I flick the pennies and get all of us credits. No one is the wiser...

You will find that other types of coinboxes have slots going the other way, that is, perpindicular to the front of the machine. They work EXACTLY the same way. Just put the penny in the slot(s) and flick it up there, dude. As long as the coin return doesn't have a door, or the tab isn't bent down too far, you're all set.

That's all there is to it. The toughest part of the whole process is to practice. Find a machine that fits the criteria (ie coin return slot with no door, and big enough to get your fingers into) that's in the back of the arcade, or out of sight of the attendant. I wouldn't worry too much about other people. They usually think you're just trying to get a quarter back out of the coin return. And even if they ask you what you're doing, they are usually sympthetic and may give you a few pennies to rack u p some games for them after you're done. So keep practicing, and once you've rung up your first credit with a penny/nickel, you'll know how it's done, and will be able to duplicate the feat much easier. It's hard to describe the physical motion of the flick without actually showing it to you, so you'll have to learn as you go. Use your fingers and your wrist in combination to get the most powerful flick.

I hope that this helps you out the next time you're strapped for quarters and you have that videogame jones. If you've any questions on how this works, feel free to leave me email on Just Say Yes bbs (415) 922-2008 in San Francisco. I'll be around somewhere.

Adios, Amigos....

Count Zero Interrupt  
jmg  
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