

GAMEPLAY DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Broke on Mars and with nowhere to turn, Marty takes a job with the 22:13 Initiative, a company that runs a water-mining operation on a remote asteroid. The company extracts water from fluid inclusions within the rock and then uses that water to refuel passing spaceships. They send money home to Marty's family and promise to pay for his return to Earth, with one condition: Marty must oversee the mining equipment till the company recoups their investment in him.

The core gameplay loop sees the player control Marty for one day every two weeks as he performs various mini-game tasks. When the player successfully completes a given day's tasks, Marty's debt repayment meter inches closer to full. However, there is a time mechanic incorporated into his workday. If the player fails to complete all given tasks within the day, Marty's the repayment meter will fill more slowly. Further, if the player accidentally damages the base or its equipment, Marty's debt may even be increased to account for costs to the company. All the necessary information concerning the day's tasks appears inside of Marty's helmet, which is also the player's HUD. When Marty takes the helmet off inside his quarters, the objectives, repayment meter, and calendar/clock information disappears from the HUD as well.

Because Marty's helmet is company provided, the HUD will reflect company priorities. This comes into play late in the game when suspicious events transpire to keep Marty on the base well past his estimated six-month timeframe. Lack of communication, punitive fines, and an increasingly excessive workload make clear that the company is trapping Marty. The player's unofficial task at this point will be to disregard the debt repayment meter and help Marty escape the asteroid. This will require the player to first break the connection between their helmet and the base's A.I. monitoring software. After that, they will have to use the base's mining equipment to overcome physical barriers and reach transport off the asteroid. Clues left behind by the base's previous caretaker will help the player along the way.

SCENE CONTEXT

This scene follows Marty's progress through a working day just as his time on the base is beginning to turn sour. For narrative convenience, I assume a certain order of gameplay tasks, though they could be performed in a different sequence should the player desire.

Start	<p>Marty opens his eyes in darkness. He lays unmoving on his bed for a few moments before the room lights up of its own accord. Its furnishings are sparse and either faded or rusting, depending on the material. The only colourful items in the room are a polaroid photograph of a family on Earth, which is pinned above Marty's bed, and a tall screen sunken into one wall. On the screen, a series of 8-bit animated faces and backgrounds flicker past one after the other, accompanied by text greetings for Marty.</p> <p>"Good morning, Marty." "Another day, another dollar." "Rise and shine!"</p> <p>An alarm clock blares all the while. Marty rises and collects a bottle of nutritional supplement from a hole in the wall.</p>
Decision 1A	<p>As Marty guzzles down his supplement, a mustachioed executive in an earthy green suit speaks appears on screen with the following text:</p> <p>"Here is the brief for today: you'll need to collect the harvest from Drill Two and bring it to the processor. Drill Three has run dry and needs to be moved to a new deposit. Finally, it seems that Drill Four has stalled. Find out what's wrong and get it back to working order. We have marked all the corresponding locations on your map."</p> <p>Marty should say:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) "Understood." [Go to Decision 2]2) Give me time for a smoke first." [Go to Decision 1B]
Decision 1B	<p>The screen shifts to display a white-coated doctor sitting in her office.</p>

	<p>"You know that smoking on company property carries a fine, Marty. Your health is our priority and we can't in good conscience allow you to inhale toxins."</p> <p>Marty should say:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) "Fine." [Go to Decision 2] 2) "Apply the 10 Red Dollars to my balance; it's worth a little something to brighten my mornings." [Go to Outcome 1B]
Outcome 1B	<p>Marty reaches into the desk drawer and pulls out an old-fashioned cigarette and matchbox. The harsh light produced by his match clashes with the soft fluorescence of the room. He greedily sucks in as much of the cigarette as possible before generously coughing it all back up in a puff of smoke. The virtual doctor gives no response when Marty holds out the cigarette and offers it to the screen for a drag. He puts out the cigarette.</p>
Decision 2	<p>Marty climbs into a padded gray jumpsuit and heavy work boots. As he moves to collect a bulbous glass helmet from a grooved pedestal near the door, the executive addresses him once more.</p> <p>"Wait. Before you go, you should know that our calendar indicates it is Christmas Day on Earth. We at the 22:13 Initiative respect our employees' right to religious observances. If you would like, we can accommodate a mass into your schedule today."</p> <p>Marty should say:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) "Thank God. Yes, I could use a rest." [Go to Outcome 2A] 2) "No thanks, I had enough preaching when I was back on Earth." [Go to Outcome 2B]
Outcome 2A	<p>The static image of the executive is replaced with a nearly identical one, only this time he looks somewhat contrite.</p> <p>"And you have most definitely earned one. However, with three out of four drills not finding any deposits with fluid inclusions, we will have to pipe a recorded sermon into your helmet feed. Give memory drive 214 to the computer."</p>

	<p>Marty stands in place, blinks a few times, then locates the drive in a desk drawer. He pulls it out and places it in the same hole where he received his supplements. With a whoosh, it's sucked into the wall. The helmet and the screen each give a pulse of light to indicate a successful upload.</p>
Outcome 2B	<p>The executive character gives no visible reaction.</p> <p>"Okay. Time to get to work then."</p> <p>[Go to Decision 3]</p>
Decision 3	<p>Marty removes the helmet from its pedestal and locks it onto his head. The helmet itself lights up as the screen shut off, while the door to the room slides open. It leads out onto the asteroid's rocky exterior, where a shiny palladium truck sits raised atop six gigantic tires. Marty climbs inside.</p> <p>(The player will see several different pieces of information on their HUD here. A red coin bearing the planetary image of Mars in the top left corner has the numbers 3700/6000 displayed next to it. In the opposite corner, the screen reads Month 5, Week 1, 06:10. The hour portion of the clock ticks forward slowly, about a minute every ten real-time seconds. There is also a periodic reminder that Marty should be back inside the base by 23:00. That is when the next spaceship is set to refuel; company safety policy dictates that the caretaker should not be outside in case of crashes.)</p> <p>Marty should go to Drill:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Two [Go to Harvest] 2) Three [Go to Drill Movement] 3) Four [Go to Drill Restart]
Harvest	<p>Drill Two is the size of a small house; it bores straight down into the ground and is anchored in place by a metal support frame on the surface. Attached to this frame is a computer terminal and a vault for extracted materials. The Drill vibrates healthily as Marty backs the truck in next to the vault.</p> <p>[Go to Harvest Game]</p>

Harvest Game	<p>In this simple mini-game, the player uses the action button on the vault to transfer its contents into their truck. Then, they will drive to a processor near the main base and press the action button again to process the fluid inclusions into usable water. The processor connects directly to the landing and refueling pad, which sits surrounded by high safety barriers on elevated ground above the base.</p> <p>A successful harvest comes with its own 8-bit reward sound as well, a descending musical scale to indicate the decrease in the truck's load.</p> <p>IF THE PLAYER CHOSE OUTCOME 2B:</p> <p>From within his helmet, Marty can hear a reading from Philippians:</p> <p>"Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you..."</p> <p>Marty should go to Drill:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Three [Go to Drill Movement] 2) Four [Go to Drill Restart]
Drill Movement	<p>Drill Four stands as still as any other part of the asteroid's surface.</p> <p>[Go to Movement Game]</p>
Movement Game	<p>The player must press their action button near the computer terminal attached to Drill Four. Once that's done, the drill will retract into the metal frame, and the player can hitch the entire thing to the truck. After that, the map shifts into a wider view analogous to an overworld map, with the player controlling the movement of the truck and the Drill trailing behind like a party member. The goal is to get the drill to the next deposit. However, there are some pathways the truck can enter that are too narrow for the Drill. Elsewhere, there may be timed obstacles that the player will have to bypass incrementally to ensure neither the Drill nor the truck is hit.</p> <p>If the player hits too many obstacles, they may be charged by the company for equipment damage. Once the Drill is deposited and restarted, the 8-bit noise</p>

	<p>that plays is less a melody than a series of blasts meant to imitate the Drill's repeated contact with the surface.</p> <p>IF THE PLAYER CHOSE OUTCOME 2B:</p> <p>"... Be blameless, pure, and innocent children of God surrounded by people who are crooked and corrupt..."</p> <p>Marty should go to Drill: 1) Four [Go to Drill Restart]</p>
Drill Restart	<p>Marty clambers out of the truck to inspect the red error message flashing on the computer display.</p> <p>"UNKNOWN MATERIAL ENCOUNTERED. DRILL LOCKED FOR SAFETY. INSPECT DRILL BEFORE UNLOCKING."</p> <p>Shimmying down into the hole made by the Drill, Marty finds a small barrel-shaped robot attempting to scurry up the steep slope to the surface on four stubby legs. Its simple metal body has been oil-painted to show two black wings atop writhing flames, while its face depicts two ram-like horns above glowing yellow eyes. The machine has a scrape mark where it made glancing contact with the drill.</p> <p>(The player must press their primary action button to grab the machine and climb out of the hole with it, then use the button again to put it into the truck. Afterwards, they must interact with the computer terminal, where they are met with the following message.)</p> <p>"ERROR. UNKNOWN MATERIAL STILL PRESENT ACCORDING TO SENSORS. MANUAL RESTART REQUIRED."</p> <p>[Go to Unlocking Game]</p>
Restart Game	<p>This game replaces the player's normal display with one exclusive to the mini-game. It depicts several green objects against a black background. There is a key on one end and a lock on the other, with several bars of varying length and width cluttering the space between them. The player must move the bars to clear a path for the key to reach the lock, though moving one bar may block movement for another one. Further,</p>

	<p>the player's number of moves here is tracked; if the player makes many more moves than required, they will find that the clock has advanced several hours upon completion. This would prevent them from completing all three tasks within the day.</p> <p>Once the Drill is successfully unlocked, a brief 8-bit "power up" melody plays inside Marty's helmet. The frame vibrates as the Drill begins to work once more.</p> <p>IF THE PLAYER CHOSE OUTCOME 2B</p> <p>"... for you will shine like a star in a world full of crooked people."</p> <p>[Go to Decision 4]</p>
Decision 4	<p>Marty returns to the base. When he removes his helmet, his hair is sweaty and dishevelled; as the room lights up again, the player can see he moves slowly. The creature he found at Drill Two runs into the room beside him and settles on the ground next to the armchair.</p> <p>The screen is on again, but this time it doesn't show one of the surveillance software's usual characters. Instead, there is grainy, live footage of suited man who wears a synthetic yellow poppy on his lapel. Marty jumps in surprise when he sees this.</p> <p>"Marty! It's good to see you're well. I'd say Merry Christmas, but it seems that none of us will be having one this year. Some ships have recently gone missing the asteroid belt. Nobody's sure why, but there are rumours here that one of the private security fleets has turned pirate. You might not see any traffic down there for a while after today."</p> <p>Marty should say:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) "So... what does that mean?" [Outcome 4A] 2) "So get me out of here!" [Outcome 4B]
Outcome 4A	<p>The man fidgets a little before replying.</p> <p>"Well, we're not likely to turn a profit if no ships use our depots to refuel. That means we won't be able to pay your way home for a while yet. But hang in there son! There's enough supplement there to last</p>

	<p>you a lifetime; I'll be sure to contact you once traffic resumes."</p> <p>[Go to Results Debrief/Endings]</p>
Outcome 4B	<p>The man bristles at this.</p> <p>"I've done a lot for you son, and I'd hoped you'd be more understanding. We can't risk sending someone to get you when danger could be around every corner! Just stay put for now, you have enough food to last a lifetime; no pirate with any sense would land on an asteroid so close to Mars, but they could capture a passing ship."</p> <p>[Go to Endings/Results Debrief]</p>
Endings/ Results Debrief	<p>(The information shown earlier on the HUD will update and appear on the virtual screen. Whereas before the company earnings would climb about 740 Red Dollars after each working day, this time it climbs more slowly, about 200-300 Red Dollars depending on whether Marty was able to complete all his tasks. Further, if the player chose Outcome 1B, 10 Red Dollars are added to the 6000 total needed to repay the company. If the player ran the drill into too many obstacles, their debt is increased by an additional 150 Red Dollars.)</p> <p>After remaining there for a few seconds, the information disappears. Marty climbs into bed and the room fades to black.</p>