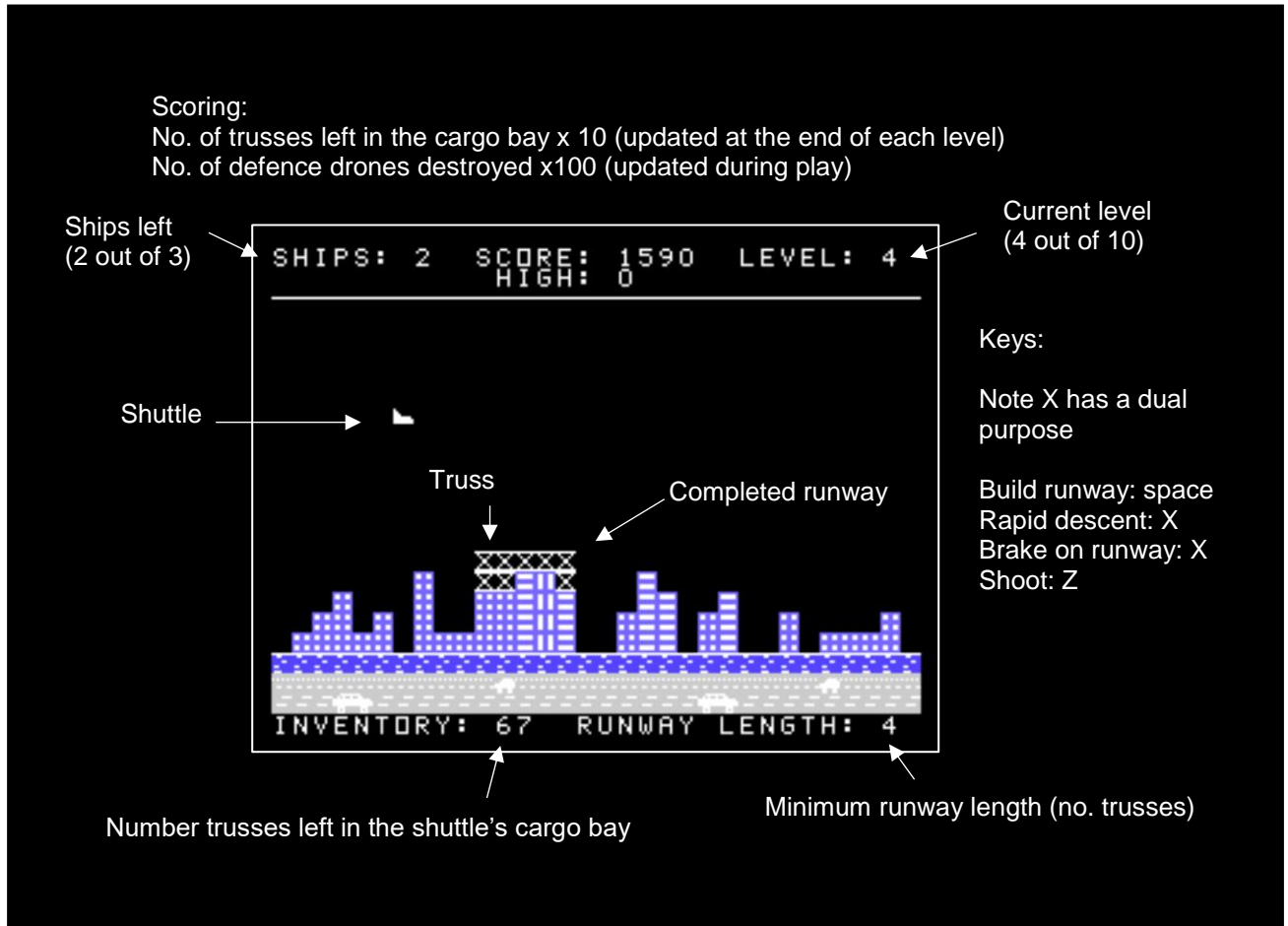


City Descender

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Background

Written in console basic for the TI99/4a computer.

A space shuttle is making an emergency return to Earth shortly after launch. In its cargo bay are undelivered sections of the International Space Station making it particularly heavy. The shuttle does not have enough energy to glide to a runway so it has to build its own on top of a city. For this it uses the space station sections slung out of its cargo bay by its robot arm.

Instructions

Once the game starts spend a little time identifying a section of the city for building a runway. An ideal section to build on will be high up and as level as possible. This allows you to save expensive space station trusses in your payload bay and so earn as many points as possible. Your points are updated at the end of each level in order to keep the game play as smooth as is possible in TI Basic.

When you are over the target section press the space bar to deposit a truss on top of a building you like. The length of the runway required to stop a shuttle is displayed in the bottom right of the

screen. It can be reassuring to build the runway a little longer than needed in case you miss some of the runway on your approach. Remember though the space shuttle's robot arm starts to overheat after slinging out 10 trusses out of its cargo bay and it needs to rest a little afterwards otherwise it starts a fire that destroys the ship. Once your ship reaches the right hand side of the screen it descends one row and reappears on the left of the screen.

The height of the runway can be any height from one truss above the highest building down to the surface but it is normally easiest to build the runway on top of the highest buildings. The shuttle's flight computer has been repurposed to assist you in this respect. It limits the height of your runway structure so the runway surface is normally one truss above the highest building. If your runway has been built quickly and you are high up in the sky you can make a rapid descent to save time by pressing X (the same key is also used for braking on the runway).

There has not been time for the city authorities to clearly establish your approach and intentions. The buildings have been evacuated to be on the safe side. In the meantime the automated city defences interpret your flight path as hostile and send up defence drones to stop you. Fortunately the shuttle has a laser fitted so you can destroy them by pressing Z. You will score points for shooting a drone as it saves your expensive space shuttle from destruction.

Once on the runway make sure you press X to brake. After braking over the length of the number of trusses indicated in the bottom right corner the shuttle comes to a stop and you progress to the next level. The required length of the runway remains the same up to level 5. After level 5 the runway length requirement increases by 2 sections each level. The last level is level 10 requiring a runway length of 14 truss sections.

The height of the city increases after each level starting from level 1. At higher levels this can make it difficult to build a continuous section of runway. This is where you have to do a little on the spot creative thinking. One option is to build multiple sections of runway and brake over each section and hope they add up to the required length. If you do not have enough sections you will descend a row once reaching the edge of the screen. You may then find yourself in danger of colliding with a building or your own runway structure. It is possible to blast away the top of your runway and land on any remaining trusses below. If there is a building in the way and you destroy that you lose points as you will be charged by the city authorities for replacing the building.