

Ackeron: Dark Sun

An Epic Role Playing Adventure

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Forward

Trained and launched into space from earth, you lay suspended in a cryogenic stasis chamber on board the starship Diplomacy. Ion drives steadily accelerate you toward distant stars in search of advanced civilizations. The search for the technology to save Earth's dying sun has begun. Decades after launch, onboard computers detect signs of advanced life forms and begin deceleration. Diplomacy enters high orbit of a class 7 planet and commences low-level sensor sweeps. Preliminary readings indicate atmospheric conditions similar to that of Earth. Diplomacy's propulsion systems and sensor scans are detected and beams of energy originating from the planet strike the craft. Emergency cryogenic unfreezing and crash landing procedures are initiated as Diplomacy's orbit begins to decay. Darkness....

1 Introduction

A distant planet in a distant solar system awaits your arrival. Welcome to Ackeron: Dark Sun, another compelling role-playing world for PalmOS™ by Gasgorf Software.

2 Getting Started

These are the basic steps you have to take before playing Ackeron: Dark Sun.

2.1 Installation

The following four files need to be synced onto your Palm Pilot before entering Ackeron. The first is called 'ackeron.prc', the second is called 'ak_data.prc', the third is called 'ak_pict.prc' and the fourth is ak_ui.prc. Sync the files onto your Pilot using the normal Pilot installation utilities, and then you are ready to play.

2.2 Registered and Unregistered version

Your exploration will be limited to the first wilderness area if you are playing with the unregistered version of the game. For information on registering, click the **Menu** silk-screen button, then click the 'Register' button.

2.3 Saving and Loading

You can save your game at any time by using the **Save Game...** command after pressing the pilot's menu button. There can be at most five different saved games at any one time.

You can load a previously saved game at any time by using the **Load Game...** command from the pilot's menu button.

When you synchronize your Pilot, your saved games will be backed up into a file called 'AckeronSaves.PDB' in your Pilot backup folder. If your pilot ever loses its memory, simply install the 'AckeronSaves.PDB' file back into your Pilot.

2.4 Quitting the Game

Ackeron uses the Pilot's hardware buttons for game control. In order to quit, you must tap the *Applications* silk screen button and launch another application. Once you've pressed the *Applications* button, the hardware buttons will regain their normal functions. Ackeron's autosave feature will save your game (unless you are in combat or a conversation), so you might like to save your game before changing to another application!

3 Interacting With the World

Ackeron has some simple controls you will need to learn.

Moving

You can move around Ackeron using four of the Pilot's hardware buttons or by tapping on the screen. The up and down buttons will move you north (up) and south (down). The *Address Book* button will move you left (west) and the *To Do* button will move you right (east). Hold the pen on the screen and your player will continually try to walk towards the location you are selecting. Some terrain is passable and some isn't. There are also many places you can't explore till you have completed some quest or spoken to the right people. Don't get frustrated.

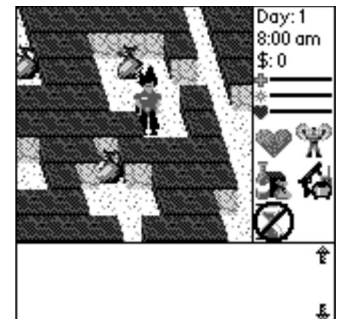


Figure 1 : Explore Screen

3.1 Character Information

You explore the planet of Ackeron through the eyes and actions of a lone hero. At the beginning of the game, your hero will be weak, lost, and confused. However, as the game progresses, you will have many chances to improve your character, molding him or her into one of many different personalities, such as that of a centurion, a psionic master, a smuggler, or a technology wizard.



Stats



Psi



Commodities



Items



Unpause/Pause

3.1.1 Statistics

There are eight primary statistics, each of which you will be able to improve over the course of the game. Almost all of this improvement will come from training at guild facilities, but equipment will also modify the statistics. You can view your character's statistics by pressing the *Stats* button (the button with a heart on it in Figure 1). You can also get to this screen by pressing the *Notepad* hardware button.

- Strength (Str)

A measure of your character's physical strength. It has many benefits. It increases crushing damage in hand-to-hand combat. It allows you to use heavier weapons and armor. It increases your hitpoints. And it will also help if you ever need to move something heavy or crash through a door.

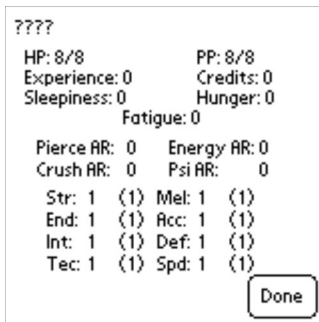


Figure 2 : Character Screen

- Intelligence (Int)

Your character's mental ability. As intelligence improves your character will gain psionic points, have access to more powerful psionics, cast psionics more quickly, have psionics resisted less frequently, and be better able to put two and two together.

- Melee (Mel)

Determines how well your character knows how to attack in hand to hand combat. A high melee will allow you to score hits more often when fighting in close quarters, with a non-ranged weapon.

- Accuracy (Acc)

Determines how well your character knows how to attack in ranged combat. A high accuracy will allow you to score hits more often when using ranged weapons and may help you perform a skill such as picking locks.

- Defense (Def)

Determines how well your character can avoid getting hit in combat. A high defense will let you dance between your opponents' clumsy attacks. This skill represents your ability to avoid both melee and ranged attacks.

- Speed (Spd)

Speed and quickness. A high agility will allow your character to act more often in combat.

- Endurance (End)

Your character's durability. As endurance increases your character will gain hitpoints, recover fatigue more quickly in combat, and will be more likely to survive the many shocks and stresses found in Ackeron.

- Technology (Tec)

Your character's ability to use items. Some items require a minimum technology rating before they can be used or equipped.

- Armor(Piercing AR, Crushing AR, Energy AR, Psi AR)

There are four different types of damage, piercing, energy, crushing, and Psi. These armor statistics are indicators of how well your character resists each of the different forms of damage. High values in these statistics will come almost exclusively from wearing different types of armor.

Look at the character screen picture above. The numbers next to the statistic names are your character's base attributes. The numbers in parentheses are your character's current statistics after item, fatigue, and psionic modifiers.

3.1.2 Hunger, Sleep and Fatigue

Exploring a new planet is hard work; if you aren't careful your character will get tired, fatigued, sleepy, hungry, and in a lot of trouble.

Strong physical exertion (like combat) will fatigue your character, lowering the effectiveness of all statistics. When tired enough, the mightiest warrior will fight like an inexperienced child. Fatigue goes from 0 all the way up to 100. If you ever get to 100, your character passes out and will almost surely die. Ackeron is a dangerous place; be careful!

Sleep Deprivation and Hunger are directly related to fatigue. They are both added directly to your fatigue and no amount of casual resting will cure their effects. In order to cure Sleep Deprivation you need to spend a night in the inn. Only eating can cure Hunger.

As an example, if your character has 20 Sleep Deprivation, 20 Hunger, and 20 points of Fatigue (perhaps from fighting in a combat) their effective fatigue will be 60, more than half way to total exhaustion.

Regular fatigue (not Hunger or Sleep Deprivation related) will be recovered relatively quickly as your character walks around, one point of fatigue for every minute or two (based on your endurance).

3.1.3 Experience

As your character explores he or she will gain experience from fighting, completing quests, and finding treasures. You will be able to spend these at guilds to increase statistics and learn psionics.

3.1.4 Credits

Credits are Ackeron's form of money and can be used at virtually every point in the game to perform tasks such as buying items, food, lodging, goods, or to pay for training expenses.

3.2 Items and Inventory

You will find many types of items in Ackeron and you will need them all. There are weapons (both ranged and hand to hand), armor (helmets, deflector fields, and body armor), items that use psionics, and quest items (some common and some rare - you won't be able to drop the rare ones). You can examine your character's inventory by clicking the *Items* button (the button with the gun and helmet on it in Figure 1).

By clicking on any item in your inventory, you might be able to use it, equip it, drop it, examine it, or any combination depending upon its type. Useable items have limited numbers of charges, so be sure you really want to expend a charge before clicking use. Further, some useable items only have combat effects; you won't be able to use them unless you are fighting someone of something.

You can also rearrange the order that items appear in your character's inventory by selecting an item and using the up and down arrows (on the bottom left of the screen) to move it around.

Characters will be able to wear one suit of armor, one helmet, one field, and wield one hand to hand weapon and one ranged weapon.



Item Name	Equip?
Mountain Equipment	-
×1 Med Patch	-
Psi Field	N
×3 Psi Stick	-
Knife	Y
Log Book	-

At the bottom of the screen, there are four buttons: Use, Info, Drop, and Done. To the left of these buttons are up and down arrow icons.

Figure 3 : Inventory

3.3 Goods

Each village on Ackeron has a commodity center where you can buy one type of good, and sell every other type of good. There are five main types of commodities, cloth, fuel, minerals, gems, and metal. Prices will fluctuate slowly throughout the game, but if you are observant (and willing to pay for the occasional commodity report) this should be a great source of income and experience. Occasionally, a village will demand a specific type of commodity that they are willing to pay dearly for so keep your eyes open. You can always see the goods you are currently carrying, and the maximum goods you can possibly carry by clicking the *Commodities* button (The bottle, bag and box button from Figure 1).

3.3.1 Cargo Lifters

Most people on Ackeron use cargo lifters to carry goods between cities more efficiently. Without one, you can only move one commodity at a time – this really isn't worth your time. Don't worry though, throughout the game you will have several opportunities to get bigger Cargo Lifters. Take them.

3.4 Psionics

Though psionics may not be a top priority for some players, those who do specialize in them can become very powerful indeed. But even if you can't learn the most powerful psionics, all characters, even centurions, can benefit from learning the basics. Don't neglect them if at all possible!

You can examine your character's psionics by clicking on the *Psi* button (the button with the person surrounded by flames in Figure 1).

By clicking on any psionic in the list you may be able to cast it or get information on it. All psionics cost psionic points to use, most give you fatigue, and some can only be cast in combat. If your character is short on psionic points, is tired, or isn't in combat, they may not have the option to using all their powers. You can also rearrange the order that psionics appear in your character's list by selecting a psionic and using the up and down arrows to move it around just as you can in the inventory screen.

Finally, some psi talents have 'extended' duration. The effects of these will last for many hours.

3.5 Combat

Fighting is an unfortunate fact of life (and death) in Ackeron. Each fight is a one on one contest between your hero and an opponent. Your character and your opponent act based on their orders, statistics and fatigue.

By pressing the 'Go/Stop' button (the hour-glass in figure 4) you can pause the fight at any time. This will give you a break to examine your hero's condition and change orders. Use the *Orders* popup menu to select a main order class. Then use the other menus beside it to make the details of your orders more specific. You can use items and psionics by clicking on the same icons as you would in the explore screen. However, in combat things don't happen instantly, your opponent may get a few actions ahead of you!

You can view your character's statistics at any time by clicking on the *Character* icon. You can let the computer fight for you by clicking on the *Auto Combat* button (the little computer). You can change the combat speed by using the up and down hardware buttons (up makes combat slower, down makes it faster).

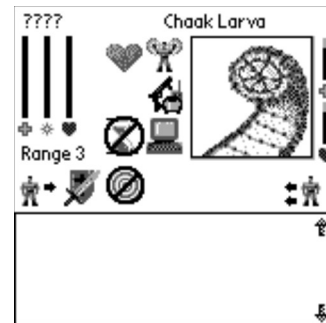


Figure 4 : Combat

Note all the status bars. The ones on the left show your HP, Psi Points, and Fatigue (from left to right). The ones on your right are blurred a bit, but give you an idea of your opponent's condition.

When someone hits during combat, a message will announce the amount of damage. At the end of the message will be a number in parenthesis. That number tells you how many points of damage were absorbed by armor. A wise adventurer would use this information to figure out the strengths and weaknesses of Ackeron's various inhabitants.

3.5.1 Orders

Here are the things you can do during a combat.

-  Run
-  Back Up
-  Rest
-  Stand
-  Advance
-  Charge

3.5.1.1 Run

If things are looking bad, run! If you can increase the combat range to 10 you will escape! But beware, running can fatigue you quickly, and your opponent will almost certainly get in some unanswered attacks! The run order will increase range by 2-4.

3.5.1.2 Backup, Attack, or Advance

The three basic attack orders (the single arrow icons and the gun icon). These combine an attack (if you are in range) with the ability to move a bit. The move comes before the attack, so if you are just out of range this will allow you to step forward and then fire! You have a couple of options when you attack.



Defensive



Balanced



Offensive

- Stance (the sword and shield icon)

Allows you to decide how aggressively you want to attack. When you are aggressive (sword only), you hit more often, and attack more often, but you also leave yourself open to enemy blows. When you defend (shield only) the effects are opposite. A balance (sword and shield) gives you unmodified attacks.

- Target

You can decide to go for critical hits or not. Critical hits bypass your opponent's armor, causing potentially grievous wounds. When you select the target modifier, your chance for critical hits is more than doubled, but your chance to hit is reduced.



Targeted



Untargeted

3.5.1.3 Rest

Sometimes you will get too tired to fight effectively; it might make sense to catch a quick breather. If your opponent is in good fighting shape this may be counter-productive, as getting hit will fatigue you almost as much as attacking.

3.5.1.4 Psi

The time it takes to cast a psionic varies (more advanced psionics generally take longer to use) and is modified by the caster's intelligence. Using extended length psi abilities in combat will give your opponent a lot of time for unanswered attacks, be careful!

3.5.1.5 Use

Just like Psi in combat, carefully consider using extended use time items in combat!

3.5.2 Victory

To win the opponent must either run away, be killed, or pass out from exhaustion.

3.6 Other Things

As you explore Ackeron you will find many strange and wonderful things. The following sections will help prepare you for dealing with them.

3.6.1 Arenas

Some of the villages you'll encounter will have their own arena facilities where anyone can come and challenge opponents for credits and experience. You will have individual rankings for each arena according to your win/loss records at that arena. It generally takes 10 more wins than losses to advance to

the next level or arena “rank”. Once you do advance, however, don’t become complacent. It is possible to lose your ranking if your win/loss ratio isn’t kept up.

Everytime you enter the arena, you will have the option of facing creatures that are of the same rank as you, or ones that are more advanced. Once this is decided, a random drawing will occur to determine how many opponents you will face (between 1 and 4). You will have the option of declining the fight, but with all the paper work involed, you’ll still lose three hours of your precious time.

3.6.2 Hostels

Each village you encounter will have at least one hostel where you can always find the inns, taverns, and doctors.

3.6.2.1 Inns

It’s a good idea to get some sleep every night, so you should always know where the nearest inn is located. Depending on the players’ needs, renting a room at the inn gives you three options. You can either sleep for 4 hours, until morning (wake up at 8 – 9 am), or until you are fully rested (recover all sleep deprivation points). Ideally, your character should sleep about eight hours a day (enough to recover a days worth of sleep deprivation). Don’t be alarmed if you wake up with some fatigue; just go get some breakfast and you will be ready for the day.

3.6.2.2 Taverns

Taverns are an integral part of the Ackeron world. Not only do they supply you with inexpensive food, but you can also buy commodity reports, and talk to tavern patrons.

The basic commodity report is free, and lists which particular good each city sells. This report may seem trivial, but if you give the bartender a little something extra, he may just tell you what some of the villages are currently demanding. That could definitely pay off in the long run.

Talking to the patrons of the tavern is necessary if you ever plan to learn anything about Ackeron, or about how you might be able to save the Earth. Be sure to talk to everyone you can at every city you explore!

3.6.2.3 Doctors

Each hostel will also house a doctor that you can hire to heal all your wounds.

3.6.3 Marketplace

As one might expect, you’ll be able to purchase many things in the many marketplaces found around Ackeron. Each marketplace will have a weapons shop that sells melee/ranged weapons, shields, helmets, and armor, and an item shop that offers things such as med patch’s, rations, and stim hypo’s. The particular inventory of each store changes every so often, so if you don’t like what you see one day, try coming back the next morning.

3.6.4 Guilds

Guilds contain the facilities where you can spend experience and credits to improve character statistics, learn psionics, and buy unique guild items. Don’t get too excited; before you gain access to all of this, you need to join the guild, which isn’t always easy.

To start you off, the Mercenary guild is in the second village, a little south west of your starting position. Entrance can be bought with a simple fee, and any character can join to do simple training and learn a couple of psionic skills.

Throughout the remainder of Ackeron you will uncover other guilds and face the question of which one to join. Do not take this decision lightly! Each guild specializes in a very unique area of the game and choosing a guild will severely affect the development of your character. Furthermore...it's permanent. Once you join one you can't ever, with the exception of the Mercenary guild (all players should join this guild as soon as possible), leave and join another; choose carefully!

3.6.5 Jobs

You may want to consider working if you ever run low on money. Not all jobs are easy to come by, and most, if you can find them, will leave you very fatigued. Plan on getting some rest when the job is done. You could also make money in the arena, by completing quests, or by exploring, but jobs are probably the safest. The only place that you'll be able to consistently find regular employment is at the marketplace, and at the inn.

3.6.6 Messages and Choices

Throughout the game, your character will be forced to gather information and make decisions. Read the messages closely and make your choices carefully, for they will both have large effects on your chances for survival in Ackeron.

When presented with a choice, pressing the *Memo Pad* Button will always select the bottom most (or right most depending on the type of message) response choice, the *Note Pad* corresponds to the next up (next left), the *address book* next up (next left), and the *Calendar* the furthest up (next left).

3.6.7 Basic Hints

- Early in the game, while you are still in the first village, go to the tavern and talk to the Weapon's Master. Listen to what he has to say and shell out some credits and experience to train your pitiful stats to two. This will help you tremendously in your fist quest.
- Don't be afraid to spend credits on good equipment. Sturdy weapons and armor are crucial to EVERY character's survival.
- Always try and equip one body armor, one field, one helmet, one hand to hand weapon, and one ranged weapon at all times. Other items that regenerate hunger, psi points, and hit points are also very useful.
- Experiment with the user interface. Almost every command in the game can be performed by pressing an onscreen button or by using the hardware buttons.
- Combat is lethal, so don't be afraid to run from a fight (he who runs away lives to fight another day - or something like that).
- You will be in good shape if your offense is higher than your opponent's defense and your defense is higher than their offense. Try to figure out which opponents are good at attacking and which are good at defending and choose a combat order that will capitalize on this.
- Always try and talk to as many people as you can. Most will have important clues to the next step in the game.
- There are many things to do in Ackeron, but you don't need to do them all to win the game. If you enjoy fighting, spend your time at an Arena or in the wilderness. If you enjoy trading, concentrate on finding good trade routes and take on the role of 'merchant'.
- Make sure you are rested before getting into any serious fights; 20 points of fatigue can mean the difference between life and death.

