# A Field Guide

version 131007

INTRODUCTION

Space Snatchers is a game I built to develop my design and programming skills while I was still making movies. Had I not interrupted the process to continue my Hollywood career, it would have been finished in 1982 or 1983 and might have found a publisher. Instead it reached its final form in 1986, when the Apple 2 market had collapsed.

It's an early example of an action-adventure (although I didn't know it at the time), with some RPG elements (all that hard work to acquire health and food points — whew!).

The design is elaborate, but sometimes as primitive as Apple 2 "hi-res" graphics. The whole thing was done in 6502 assembly language as a labor of love, pulling every trick in the book and some that aren't. The machine you're playing it on is likely 10,000 or more times faster than the //e I used to build it, but thanks to the wonder of modern emulators, it still works (many thanks to *Apple //e forever!* and *APPLEWIN 18*). In spite of everything, I still enjoy *Space Snatchers*, and I hope you will too.

What follows isn't complete enough to be called a walkthough. It's just a rough guide to the (alien) territory. Wear your hiking shoes, keep your snake-bite kit handy, bring plenty of trail mix.
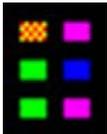
OPERATION

Space Snatchers originally appeared on two Apple 2 floppy disks (actually, both sides of a *flippy*):

- DISK 1 — PROGRAM. Boot your emulator with this disk file.

- DISK 2 — DATA. The original holds the startup configuration and should remain pristine. This is where all level data and art assets (if that's what you call them) are stored, and your savegames, which are simply snapshots of the current configuration, will overwrite everything. So — never play with the original disk file. Make a COPY and insert it when the engine so instructs.

• AND — the game is confusing enough, even when you know exactly what you're doing, so be sure to read over the printed instructions supplied with this guide.   Otherwise, you won't understand how the interface works or what diabolical challenges you're up against.
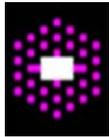
LEVELS AND THEIR NAMES:

The ship that kidnapped you is called the *Pride of Aratoon.* If you don't take action, it will transport you to a galaxy eight million light years away. That's a long trip, so shake a leg. Here's where you play:

• THE ZOO — Start

• LOWER DECK 1 — first real level

• ECOLOGY DECK 2 — the Forest

• MIDSHIP DECK 3 — Lockers & Controllers

• ENGINEERING DECK 4 — Fuel Bots

• THE RATWAYS — connections to many levels

• CREW DECK 5 — Skiff #1

• CARGO DECK 6 — Skiff #2

• BRIDGE — the Navpak

• PINK GAUNTLET — west end: to Deck 4; east end: to Deck 5

• BLUE GAUNTLET — west end: to Deck 1; east end: to Deck 6

• STEPPING STONES — west end: to Deck 5; east end: to the Bridge

• SHIP EXTERIOR

• STARFIELD 1

• REFUELING PLANET

• STARFIELD 2

GAME TASKS

Pretty simple: free yourself from the Aratooni ZOO, find an interstellar SKIFF, equip it with 99 FUEL UNITS and something called the NAVPAK, then launch into interstellar space and find your way HOME (with a necessary refueling stop on the way).

GEOMETRY

Almost all levels wrap around, so they don't have borders.   As a result, giving and understanding directions is tricky.   Look for landmarks to guide you.

NOTE: Essentially, the Aratooni ship is a gigantic maze. I love mazes, but over the years I've learned to temper my feelings with consideration for others. Some of these levels still make me scratch my head.

BEAMERS

All movement between decks (levels) is accomplished by standing on TRANSPORT platforms and pressing the T key.

- TX = (orange) interlevel transport: move to new deck (your game is saved automatically on arrival);

- TL = (blue) local transport: move within a deck (no auto-save);

THREATS TO SURVIVAL

The Aratoonies will never actually kill you outright, but if your food supply or health rating drops to zero, the results are drastic: all your hard-won gear is stripped away, and you'll be deposited back in the Zoo. In effect, you must then start over. The penalty for failure is righteous, but harsh. I wouldn't design situations like this anymore.

The maximum number of keys you can carry is 50. If you don't watch out, sooner or later you'll run this number down to zero, enter a door that's open, and then find yourself hopelessly trapped. ESC-CTRL-Z will "voluntarily" return you to the Zoo, and you can then start over, but that won't be much fun.

• Food is consumed by moving around.

• Health is degraded by combat.

• Early in the game, make strenuous efforts to acquire health kits and food. (Warning: your neophyte designer has learned how to create boredom and likes to prove it.)

• Each locked door costs a key to open (the locks toggle on and off). Always be on the lookout for keys — keep as many as you can carry.

 ENEMIES

The bad guys are many and varied, but all are robots. When you destroy them, they leave DEBRIS piles behind. Search the piles for translators, power packs, and so on when you need these things. Otherwise, for quiet exploration, leave the debris piles alone; robots respawn after their debris has been cleared away.

• Some enemies cannot be destroyed and must be trapped in locked rooms in order to render them harmless.
      Pro Tip: Tanks cannot be destroyed!

• Oddly, some robots can TALK: These are the QUERYBOTS. They're stationary, have a vaguely cubist appearance, and are 6 times larger than the rest of the ship's crew, whom they betray again and again whenever you hand over a few bucks ... um ... Power Cells. Their clues and services will prove vital, so learn to cultivate them.

STRATEGY & TACTICS

To repeat with emphasis: at the beginning of the game it's important to collect abundant amounts of the things you need for freedom of action:

• HEALTH KITS (hearts);

• FOOD (apples);

• KEYS (to enter and exit the many locked rooms);

• GUNS (& ammunition);

• TRANSLATORS (to get clues from the Querybots);

• POWER CELLS (money & energy for controlled robots);

The game contains many simple geometrical puzzles, and a fair number of these involve PUSH and PULL moves to reveal hidden possibilities. Be on the lookout for:

• Movable wall blocks;

• Movable TX and TL platforms;

• Movable lockers;

Eventually (but not right away) you will need CONTROLLERS to capture crew members. You'll find them on Midship Deck 3. These things are generally valuable, and they're almost essential for some purposes. Use them to:

• Get Fuel Units from the Fuel Bots;

• Distract the Aratooni swarms on Crew Deck 5 and the Bridge;

The treacherous behavior of controlled robots will go unpunished by other bad guys, unless you attempt combat. Then, watch out.

Expect to lose something like 5,000 health points in playing through to the end.   Fortify your avatar gradually over the course of the game, but don't mess with the Aratoonies themselves until you're plenty buff.

Finally: play the *metagame*. If you find youself in a situation that makes you doubt your avatar's survival, save your position (ESC-CTRL-D) while you're still in good shape, then make a copy of the DATA DISK that contains all the game's level info and your avatar's location and status.

If the dreaded Hook comes to drag you back to the Zoo, just stop playing and restart with the disk copy.

THE ZOO

You start out in a little cage. Power up with food in the refrigerator until boredom becomes intolerable, and work your way through the unlocked bulkheads to the TX. Take that to...

LOWER DECK 1

This level is very dangerous when you first arrive, because of your pathetically weak state as you exit The Zoo. Later, when you've toughened up, it will seem ridiculously cozy. Your immediate goal is to find some stuff that will increase your food & health status. Avoid hostile crew members and search for Translators, Keys, and Food. Once you've got a margin of safety, start looking for a weapon. Without it, your escape cannot succeed.

Connections to important locations can be found here, but are inaccessible until later in the game:

• You can only reach the important doorless room here via the Ratways (see below) starting from a hidden TX in the Locker Room on Midship Deck 3.

- Once inside the doorless room with lockers that dispense guns, keys, and food, find a beamer you can GRAB and move (G + arrow):
    - > TX in west position → Blue Gauntlet (and on to Cargo Deck 6 and Skiff #2);
    - > TX in middle position → Midship Deck 3 inside a doorless room shaped like an "L."
    - > TX in east position → the tiny doorless room with a tank;

- Don't use the east TX — it's a trick! There's a health powerup locker in here, but the tank is a hassle. If you find yourself here, grab and move the upper locker out of the way to uncover an escape TX → Ratways. Follow the trail and TX → an obscure corner of Engineering Deck 4.

ECOLOGY DECK 2

This is an almost impenetrable Forest with many secrets and opportunities, most of them hidden away in locations that are difficult to reach:

- Use the Fruit Orchard to bulk up on food.

- Take a boat (press T) to the island and uncover a health-dispensing locker.

- GRAB and move one of the TX beamers into either of the Wild Creature Cages to enter the Ratways.

- Dock your boat in a room where a useful TX is hidden under two lockers. Use it to enter another section of the Ratways, this one with a boat of its own.

MIDSHIP DECK 3

Important resources are available here to aid the escape of a puny Earthling. Start by checking out the Locker Room:

- Most of the lockers are empty, but a few dispense keys, food, and translators.

- Five of the lockers can be moved to reveal TXs, one in the northeast section, another in the west.

- Move a locker to the extreme northeast corner and search it (press S). Hey — now you've got an endless supply of health kits. Notice that you must walk around a bit before any locker will re-fill. Notice how tedious multiple searches are. Oh well.

- Four of the lockers can be used to trap the unkillable Tank Bots. Build a couple of walls toward the western edge of the room, lure them inside, close the trap. This works, but easier said than done.

- West Locker Room TX → Ratways, and from there to Fuel Bots on Engineering deck 4.

- Northeast Locker Room TX → Ratways, and from there inside the doorless L-shaped room on this deck, the first steps along your path to one of the Interstellar Skiffs.

- Track down the Controller Bots here. Search them (S + direction key) to acquire CONTROLLERS. This is hard work, since they're constantly shooting at you and won't stay nearby for very long. Keep at it; you need these things.

ENGINEERING DECK 4

You can reach the Fuel Pump querybot in the Ratways from here:

- PUSH the movable TX up into the small room near the Fuel Querybots and use it. Restarting the fuel pumps costs $50. ($50 == 50 Power Cells — that's what passes for money onboard this vessel.)

- Once you get into the doorless Fuel Bay, you need to search the Fuel Bots to acquire the 99 Fuel Units you need to power up a Skiff. This

is maddening hard work, made easier if you can control one of the Bots (C + direction key; C again to revert).

CREW DECK 5

This is where you'll find Skiff #1 guarded by a horde of Aratooni crew members:

• Eastside TX near spacesuits ➔ return to Ratways south of rectangular path.

• Beware the Aratoonies here — I hadn't thought of boss monsters when I conceived this creeky old game, but the Aratoonies taken together amount to one. Like ants, they will attempt to swarm you. If you get trapped, they can drain all your health and send you back to The Zoo in no time.

• Big hint: cozy up to an Aratooni and use a Controller on him (C + direction key). Then move him far off into a corner to draw his curious buddies away from your path. Once the coast is clear, cancel control and make a run for the Skiff Hangar.
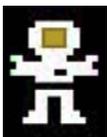
CARGO DECK 6

This level holds Skiff #2 — either ship will work for your escape; you don't need both.

• Smaller TX near space suit dock ➔ enter Ratways!

• Don space suit (T) and move to south wall of deck near cargo boxes. One of the unmarked wall tiles there can be PULLed outward. Now you have access to Skiff #2.

• But first you have to move the cargo boxes around to get to the Hangar entrance.

- Move the TX under the cargo crates into the Hangar, then control one of the Aratooni crew members and make him PUSH and PULL the thing into position in the Skiff.

THE BRIDGE

A central location you must traverse to obtain the Navpak:

- Hidden TX in northwest corner → enter Ratways at isolated secret TX near boat.

- TX in southeast corner → enter east side of Stepping Stone Gauntlet.

- The Navpak is hidden in the northern section. PUSH and PULL it south and plug it into the ship's computer in order to update its database. Only then will it be ready to guide a Skiff through the stars.

THE GAUNTLETS

These three linear levels connect the main decks to the upper reaches of the *Pride of Aratoon*:

- The Pink Gauntlet is a passageway between Engineering Deck 4 and Crew Deck 5, leading to Skiff #1.

- The Blue Gauntlet is a passageway between Lower Deck 1 and Cargo Deck 6, leading to Skiff #2.

- The Stepping Stone Gauntlet is a passageway between a hidden TX on Crew Deck 5 and the Bridge. The best way to reveal the TX is to control an Aratooni crew member and make him GRAB and PULL the bulkhead southeast of the Big Aratooni Captain out of the way. In the middle section, wait for stones to randomly move close by, then step across. This tactic requires the patience of Job.

SECRET PASSAGES

Exploring the *Pride of Aratoon* depends on discovering and making use of the hidden connections between levels:

On Ecology Deck 2 — the Forest:

- When you arrive from Lower Deck 1 note that the Forest TX can be moved. You can exit to the central TX in Midship Deck 3 through a second (unmovable) Forest TX.

- Secret TX hidden behind 2 lockers (GRAB both) off the lake (arrive by boat) → enter Ratways east of Sea Serpents; you can take a boat from here!

- Secret TX in north cage past lockers operates when TX tile is moved onto blue placeholder tile → enter Ratways in middle of rectangular path with querybot on east side.

- Secret TX in south cage past lockers operates when TX tile is moved onto blue placeholder tile → enter Ratways near green water access at eastmost TX of string of 3 TXs.

On Midship Deck 3 — the Locker Room level:

- West TX of Beamer pair → enter middle of 3 TX on Lower Deck 1;

- East TX of Beamer pair → enter lakeside TX on Forest Level;

- Hidden TX in northeast corner of Locker Room → enter Ratways west of Querybot who says, "You're in the Ratways." (Use east TX there to enter blocked L-shaped room back on Midship Deck 3.)

- Hidden TX on west side of Locker Room → enter Ratways TX northeast of the "search fuel bots" Querybot pair. Take path to emerge within reach of the little Fuel Bots on Engineering Deck 4.

THE RATWAYS

These narrow passages form a transition level with a complex web of connections, many hidden, to other levels:

- The path between the lockers on Midship Deck 3 and the little Fuel Bots on Engineering Deck 4 runs through here.

- You can reach the Controller Bots on Midship Deck 3 from here.

- You can reach the blocked room on Midship Deck 3 from here.

- You can reach the Bridge from here.

Here are the Ratways TXs and where they take you:

- Isolated TX — exit boat, PUSH block out of the way → enter northwest corner of the Bridge!

- TX west of Sea Serpents → Locker Room TL on Midship Deck 3.

- TX west of location-noting Querybot → enter Locker Room on Midship Deck 3 at TX hidden in northeast.

- TX east of location-noting Querybot → enter Midship Deck 3 at light blue placeholder in L-shaped room. (Use TXs here to further your quest for Skiff #2.)

- TX west and north of "search Fuel Bots" Querybot pair → enter Fusion Reactor section of Engineering Deck 4 with access to the Fuel Bots!

- TX east and north of "search Fuel Bots" Querybot pair → enter Locker Room of Midship Deck 3 at TX hidden on west side.

- TX within rectangular path: (Querybot eastward sells health powerup) → enter Ecology Deck 2 in north TX cage (returning requires moving Forest TX tile into position).

- TX west and south from rectangular path → enter Controller Pen on Midship Deck #3.

- TX south from rectangular path → enter near Skiff #1 on Crew Deck 5 and northeast of the milling crew itself. Spacesuits are available here.

- TX on east end of path with 3 TXs → enter Forest in south TX cage (returning requires moving forest TX tile into position).

- TX in middle of path with 3 TXs (west of Fuel Querybot pair) → enter Cargo Deck 6 in left TX, with access only to space suits.

- TX on west end of path with 3 TXs → enter Midship Deck 3 Controller Pen on left side.

- TX leading to Fuel Pump Querybot → enter Engineering Deck 4 in little room east of Fuel Querybots.

SHIP EXTERIOR

When you launch the Skiff, you'll emerge from a gigantic interstellar vessel — the Aratooni Mother Ship — and find yourself facing a ferocious squadron of small Aratooni fighters:

- If you get low on Fuel, work your way around to the northwest corner of the Mother Ship and PULL an unmarked chunk of the hull away to reveal a small Locker that dispenses power juice.

- To continue your escape, look for a large spiral galaxy. Use the smaller satellite galaxy as a stepping stone to the Black Hole inside. Press T to exit...
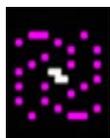
STARFIELD 1

Starfields are just regular levels. Advancing through them involves TX beamers, but the ones here look like little planets:

- Look for a modest Solar System with a small orange Mars-like planet. Maneuver the Skiff on top of the planet — when the Skiff disappears, press T to exit the Starfield...

REFUELING PLANET

When you depart the Aratooni Mother Ship you only carry enough fuel to get halfway home. Who knew?

- Exit Starfield 1 and discover you've landed on a desert planet; specifically, on one of two islands surrounded by an ocean. You can't take off without topping up your Fuel supply. Unfortunately, the Fuel Bay is on the other island, and you need a boat.

- The boats seem inaccessible, but it's only a puzzle. Near the eastern edge of the island are three boulders arranged in a north-south arc. Immediately to the west are a couple of cactus-like plants whose branches can be PUSHED and PULLED to open a path.

- Cruise to the other island, search the Fuel Bots, and return to the Skiff. Now you can resume your journey...

STARFIELD 2

Fewer galactic clouds and distant stars here, and several prominent solar systems instead. They all look vaguely familiar — a star surrounded by little planets — but only one is our Sun and its companions:

- Look for a modest star with planets that could pass for Saturn, Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune, etc., — but especially EARTH. Of all the systems, only the Sun itself has a unique little BLUE & WHITE BLOB that looks a little like our Home Planet.

- Maneuver onto Earth, observe your Skiff disappearing as it enters the atmosphere, and press T...

- If you'e unlucky, you'll "bounce off Earth's magnetic field" and be flung far across the Starfield. This might happen several times.

- The only thing to do is try and try again. Sooner or later you'll land safely.

- A cinematic sequence reveals the circumstances of your arrival. Welcome home!

SPACE SNATCHER CHEATS:

You may be interested in trying out the game, but want help. Here are some important variables:

NOWLEVEL   = $601A (your current whereabouts)

GUN   = $6020 (ammunition — max = 99)

PASSKEY   = $6021 (keys — max = 50)

PCELL   = $6022 (money, low byte — max = 99)
PCELH   = $6023 (money, high byte — max = 99)

FOODL   = $6024 (food supply, low byte — max = 99)
FOODH   = $6025 (food supply, high byte — max = 99)

TRANS   = $6026 (translators — max = 50)

ROBCON   = $6027 (controllers — max = 10)

NAVPAK   = $6028 (do you have this uniquely important item?)

FUEL   = $6029 (fuel — max = 99)

GUNSIZE   = $602C (do you have the powerup?)

PLAYHITL   = $EE06 (health, low byte — max = 99)
PLAYHITH   = $EE07 (health, high byte — max = 99)

Plugging numbers into the above hex addresses with an Apple 2 emulator will allow you to adjust your health, food, and equipment settings.

(NOTE: If you're playing with *APPLEWIN*, click on the magnifying glass to enter DEBUG mode, then input new values, like this:

```
ME [address as given above] [byte]<return>
ME [address] [low byte] [high byte]<return>
Example:  ME 6021 50
Example:  ME 6024 99 99
```

Have fun figuring it all out.