

LEARNING MADE EASY



Minecraft® Basics

for
dummies®
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Learn how to
play Minecraft

Become a survival
expert

Advance your
worlds

Jesse Stay
Joseph Stay
Alexander Stay



Minecraft[®] Basics

by Jesse Stay, Joseph Stay,
and Alexander Stay

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

Minecraft® Basics For Dummies®

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Introduction

If you enjoy games about building, survival, engineering, or adventuring, the game of Minecraft is for you. Having attracted more than 141 million monthly active players (and selling 238 million copies at the time we wrote this book), it is the most-often-downloaded game on the Internet — and it's the most widely used metaverse (an online, immersive and simulated digital world, played by real humans) ever created. Minecraft is a loose-ended yet adventurous sandbox game that becomes whatever you make of it.

As a family of two divorced coparents and seven kids, we all quickly became aware of the influence that Minecraft has on families — together or apart. When the kids would invite their friends over, and after all of them were engrossed in using a tablet or a Kindle device, they would explore and play and sometimes nag each other in the game. “Dad, Alex just blew up my house!” is a common phrase in our household.

Perhaps, in your own family structure or with the kids in your life, you've seen a similar situation, wondering what in the world these kids are talking about and whether you should be concerned. Or perhaps you're one of the children who is playing and you want to better understand how to build the largest village or automate your entire world by using farms, iron golems, or even redstone contraptions and circuitry. This benefit has led to most of the older children in our family developing an interest in, and even competing in, FIRST Robotics League, where they build real-life robots in high school.

Minecraft is all about gathering resources and building structures while facing monsters. The world of Minecraft

is composed of cubic blocks, which you can break and replace to build houses and craft items — that's all there is to it. The game has evolved to become so balanced and complex that it has attracted hundreds of millions of satisfied fans. While skimming or scouring *Minecraft Basics For Dummies*, you can apply every bit of Minecraft information you need to start playing the game to your liking.

About This Book

We wrote this book as a family. Jesse is the dad; Joseph is the 17-year-old in college a year early, some of that due to his experience playing Minecraft as a kid; and (in the position held by Joseph in the previous edition of this book, *Minecraft For Dummies*) his 11-year-old younger brother, Alex, with icons labeled throughout this book from his perspective. And Thomas, the now 20-year-old, wrote most of the previous edition of this book! This book was a family project, and our hope is that other families and family-type units can benefit from this book, just as we have.

This book, in a sense, operates much like Minecraft does: After you have the basic ingredients, you can take your game wherever you want. Skip to The End. Advance to the Nether. Just pick a chapter and start reading.

Take this book and share it with a close friend. Let your parents read it. Let your children or the kids in your life read it. Share it with a school classroom. Invite us to join you. (Just email minecraft@staynalive.com and we'll give it our best!) Minecraft, whether it's played with friends or the mobs in your own single-player virtual world, is truly a social experience and is best played with people you know. We hope that you can share the knowledge in this book with the same people you play with in the game.

Foolish Assumptions

Minecraft continually releases new updates and features — this book is accurate to Minecraft version 1.18. Because later Minecraft updates are unlikely to change the primary game mechanics, this book encompasses most of Minecraft’s main features. Check out our *Minecraft For Dummies* YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/minecraftdummiesbook, where we’ll address any future updates to Minecraft, or the Minecraft Wiki at <http://Minecraft.gamepedia.com>, if you ever have questions not addressed in this book.

Rather than try to consider every single type of reader who might pick up this book, we’ve made certain assumptions about you, the reader:

- » You have a computer or mobile device (or, optionally, your favorite gaming console), and you know how to use it.
- » You know what a web browser is, and you can surf the web.
- » You have an email address, and you know how to use it.
- » Your computer can download and run Java programs.
- » You have a functioning keyboard and computer mouse.

Icons Used in This Book

We’ve placed various icons in the margins of this book to point out specific information that you may find useful:



TIP

This icon calls attention to any tip or trick that you can use to enhance the gameplay.



ALEX'S
CORNER

These tips, written by Joseph's 11-year-old brother, Alex, reflect the mindset of the younger generation of Minecraft players (11 years and younger).



REMEMBER

This icon emphasizes information that you should attempt to retain in your memory. If you can remember these special points, you'll become a better player.



WARNING

If you see this icon, read its information! Warnings can prevent you from making a big mistake that can be hazardous to your Minecraft world (or your computer). We don't want you to learn these lessons the hard way — like we undoubtedly did.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

You can safely skip this geeky stuff. However, it deserved a place in the book, so you may be interested in reading it.

Conventions Used in This Book

In *Minecraft Basics For Dummies*, we use numbered steps, bullet lists, and screen shots for your reference. We also provide a few sidebars containing information that's nonessential but may help you understand a topic a little better. Web addresses appear in a special monotype font that looks like this:

www.youtube.com/minecraftdummiesbook

Beyond the Book

Understanding Minecraft goes beyond these pages and onto the Internet, where you can access additional information:

- » **Cheat Sheet:** You can find this book's online Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/extras/minecraft.

You also can follow this book's YouTube channel, as well as the book's Facebook Page. We've also set up a Facebook Group for you to collaborate with, and learn from, each other. Here's how to find them all:

- » ***Minecraft For Dummies* YouTube channel:**
<https://youtube.com/minecraftdummiesbook>
- » ***Minecraft For Dummies* Facebook Page:**
<https://facebook.com/minecraftfd>
- » ***Minecraft For Dummies* Facebook Group:**
<https://facebook.com/groups/minecraftfordummies>

More than anything, get out there and play Minecraft. We hope to see you sometime — look under the username jessestay for Jesse, TheRealStayman for Thomas, expelymarndo for Joseph, and Alex_Stay for Alex. See you in the Nether!

Part 1

Getting Started with Minecraft

IN THIS PART ...

Understanding what Minecraft is

Getting started with Minecraft

Surviving your first night

Chapter 1

Minecraft Is for Everyone — But What Is It?

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Following along with the game the children in your life are playing
 - » Letting Minecraft serve as a teaching tool
 - » Getting started with Minecraft
 - » Staying safe on Minecraft
 - » Increasing your Minecraft knowledge via YouTube
-

Minecraft is what you make of it. It can be a complete waste of time, or it can be a place to learn, explore, create, and compete — at all ages and coming from various backgrounds. I wrote an entire book about it, *with* my kids! It's not just for kids. Minecraft is for everyone!

Although the rest of the book is coauthored by my son, Joseph, with some tips interspersed by another of my children, Alex, this chapter has been written entirely by me, the dad, who's familiar with the concerns of parenting a Minecraft "Steve" or "Alex" — which are the names of the default male and female characters everyone assumes when they begin to play Minecraft.



ALEX'S
CORNER

I, Jesse's 11-year-old son, am named Alex, but in addition to "Steve," who identifies as he/him and is a boy in the game, you can also choose to start as a she/her girl character named "Alex" in the game. Don't get me confused with the default girl Minecraft character, though, when you read the "Alex's Corners."

When my friends and other parental figures find out that I helped write the book *Minecraft For Dummies* with my children, I'm usually flooded with millions of questions: "What is Minecraft?" "Is it safe for children?" "My kids are always on Minecraft — isn't it a waste of time?" "I need your book! Will you sign a copy for me?"

I always smile whenever they ask that last question. I hope that you're one of these people, and that I, and my kids, have signed your book.

The truth is that Minecraft is an amazing teaching tool and a product that every parent can use to encourage exploratory learning, where children get to explore new concepts in a controlled environment.

Playing Minecraft with the Children in Your Life

The best thing you can do in Minecraft as a parent, coparent, guardian, or that favorite uncle or aunt for the kids in your life is play with them. They'll bond with you in ways you never anticipated, and you'll get to know the game — *and* find new ways to teach the kids by using the game. Minecraft is an excellent educational tool for kids,

and the gameplay is full of opportunities for parental figures and teachers to participate in the learning process. I personally — as a single, divorced coparent — enjoy using the game as a way to bond remotely with my kids when they aren't at my house and they're with their mom instead.

Rather than refer you to [Chapter 2](#) to get started, I present a few highlights and cross-references in this section so that you can hit the ground running with the kids in *your* life.

Getting a handle on the basics

Peruse the official Minecraft wiki at <https://minecraft.fandom.com>. It has up-to-date information about Minecraft — more than you've ever wanted to know. Ads and downloads that are available on the wiki can introduce malware to your computer if you're not careful, so consider letting your kids focus on the information in this book and reserving the wiki for yourself.

Minecraft has two main modes: Creative and Survival. In Survival mode, you can still play with other players, but dangerous mobs abound (usually, evil characters that can kill you) and you can die (see [Figure 1-1](#)). If you play in Survival mode, check out the section in [Chapter 3](#) about setting up for your first night. Few people survive the first night on their first attempt.



FIGURE 1-1: A hostile mob in Minecraft.

If you truly want to play the game and dodge evil, Survival mode might be for you. But if you simply want to explore and learn by playing with your kids, try out Creative mode, as explained in the following section.

Playing in Creative mode

In Creative mode in Minecraft, you can truly do anything you want without having to risk dying — in this mode, nothing can kill you except yourself. And you have access to almost every resource in order to build anything you want. And you can even fly!

To get started in Creative mode, you can either select it as you start gameplay (see [Figure 1-2](#)) or, within Survival mode, if cheats are enabled, type **/gamemode creative** and it automatically switches to Creative mode. Refer to [Chapter 2](#) to see what you can do within Creative mode.



FIGURE 1-2: Selecting Creative mode as you start Minecraft.

Winning the game

After you've had some practice in Creative mode, you can start playing in Survival mode to win the game — though the truth is that you never actually win the game. Minecraft is a *sandbox* game: It has no true beginning or end, so the focus of the game is entirely on exploring, and on surviving, as you explore the game.

You'll want to achieve some initial goals, however, as described in the following list, before you move on to plain ol' exploration (refer to [Chapter 11](#) for details on each step).

Letting Minecraft Help You Teach

I asked my sons, Joseph and Alex (and before that, Thomas, in the previous edition) to write most of this book because I wanted them to be the ones to show me

what topics pique their interest and to explain why those topics are interesting to them. If you spend some time reading the chapters in this book, you'll quickly realize that Minecraft is much more than a silly-looking game. In fact, I mentioned this to one of my children's schoolteachers and they invited my children to come talk about Minecraft to their class, for this very reason! Minecraft lets you explore an entire world where you experience life by engaging in these types of activities:

- » **Mining and geography/geology:** The sole premise of Minecraft is that you dig into your world's natural resources and gather different types of stone, precious metals, ore, and wood in order to build and create structures, as shown in [Figure 1-3](#). The more you mine, the more you can build and create.



FIGURE 1-3: The first concept that your kids explore in Minecraft is likely to be geology and the process of mining to “create” structures.

Kids can quickly see that certain types of metal and stone cut faster than others. Wood can burn if placed near a flame or lava. Lava lurks deep within the earth.

And dangerous creatures roam among the trees and plants!

- » **Farming:** Our family announced our latest pregnancy by taking a screen shot of a pink sheep and a blue sheep that had just produced a random pink sheep. (Yes, it was a girl. See [Figure 1-4](#) to see the announcement.) In Minecraft farming, you get to learn about the birds and the bees by viewing animals in 8-bit format — a format that’s safe for young kids to view (and fun, too).



FIGURE 1-4: We used two mating sheep in Minecraft to announce an upcoming birth.

On a Minecraft farm, you learn about growing plants and about needing to water plants to make them

grow. You learn about preventing pests and other creatures that can harm your plants and animals. You also learn that the meat you eat comes from real-life animals that you have to kill before eating them. (Don't worry: It's all in 8-bit format, so kids don't see real violence.)

On a Minecraft farm, you can do things like shear sheep and collect wool. Thomas even created a farm that automatically breeds, hatches, collects, kills, and cooks chickens for eating later.

» **Nutrition:** In Minecraft, you have to keep your character healthy. (Every default user is named Steve for boys, and Alex for girls.) Gathering nutritious foods best maintains your health. Try some beetroot soup. Or have an apple. Keeping your character's nutrition level stable helps the character last longer in the game.

» **Art and architecture:** From full-tilt architecture to simply building fun designs and contraptions, you can express the artist in you in Minecraft. You can create dye from objects such as beets and flowers that you collect throughout the game. You can then use the dye to create panels to decorate your house, for example, or to color wool for other types of items in your house or dwelling place.

Players have created extravagant items such as ships and castles and even entire reproductions of various landmarks, such as the Eiffel Tower and the *Millennium Falcon* (from *Star Wars*). Entire cities have been reproduced in Minecraft. The sky is, quite literally, the limit.

» **Logic and math:** This is one of our favorite features because we're computer nerds. Joseph and Thomas (who wrote the previous edition of this book with me) are studying computer science and engineering in

college, and my entire career has been in the tech world! Minecraft uses binary logic to implement contraptions from an electricity-like dust called *redstone dust*. You can use redstone to create logic-based devices that react in different ways based on power supplied to them. Even if your children don't realize it, creating redstone contraptions helps them learn binary logic, which is a primary element of programming and electronics that can be applied later in life. Check out [Chapter 8](#) to see more about the topics your child can learn about with redstone.

- » **Electronics:** When you're working with redstone, you're creating simple electronic and mechanical devices. Many of the devices work as transistors, capacitors, and even resistors to some extent, which are the basic building blocks of any electronic device or chip. If you can figure out how to compare the different redstone devices, you'll be able to help your child apply these contraptions to real life to build their own real-life robots and other fun, electronic devices.



TIP

We're big fans of LEGO Mindstorms. Using the concepts he learns about in Minecraft, Thomas builds real-life circuitry using LEGO blocks, a little programming, and some simple logic.

- » **Computer programming:** Computer programming and electronics truly go hand in hand. Like electronics, computer programming uses logic to decide what happens in the computer program. Because the redstone circuits in Minecraft are virtual, each circuit is, in essence, a computer program.