

Touch Balloons!

for Windows computers

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Touch Balloons!

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Introduction

Touch Balloons! has been designed primarily to help learners to target a location on screen. Learners develop eye-hand co-ordination skills by popping balloons as they float past, in a 'game-like' environment.

Using a touch monitor, direct targeting skills can be developed. Touch each balloon to pop it. Using a mouse, pupils learn to move the mouse over a balloon and click to pop it. Using a switch, students learn to watch the scanning area, and hit the switch to burst a balloon when it drifts under the cursor.

A wide range of colours and backgrounds allow the program to be configured for individual users and for all ages. In addition, the cursor can be configured to be a large pointer or a crosshair. Select the number, direction and speed of movement of the balloons.

These configurations make the program suitable for learners of all ages who need to develop these 'early' skills, and for many who have visual impairment.

Installation

Please note: an active internet connection is required

To install **Touch Balloons**, simply run the following file:

touch_balloons.exe

The installer will prompt you to enter your name, email address and activation key (sent to you at the time of purchase). All fields are required.



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Accessible Software

Please enter your customer information below.
Hyphens will automatically be added to your
activation key.

User Name:

Email:

Activation key:

Back Install

When the activation key has been successfully validated, the installation will begin.

Running Touch Balloons!



If a **Touch Balloons** icon is visible on the the desktop , you can double- click it to launch directly into the program . If there isn't a desktop shortcut, you can find the software in the **Programs** list of your **Start menu / screen**.

In the bottom right hand corner there is an information button *i*. Click here to see the list of keyboard shortcuts you will need to operate the program.

To start playing, click on the moving balloon in the centre or press any key.

The activity screen has no menu or title bar so as not to distract the learner. Just move the pointer over a moving balloon and click to pop each balloon. The score in the bottom right corner will increase each time a balloon is burst.



Stopping Touch Balloons!

Press **P** to go to the **Preferences** screens.

Press **Q** to quit the program.

The Games

Pop only

Pop a balloon by touching it, clicking on it, or pressing a switch. Each time a balloon is popped, another appears.

Pop and create

Similar to **Pop only**, except that balloons are not replaced when popped. Create new balloons by touching the plus button, right-clicking, or pressing switch 2. A scan and select version is available for the single switch user.

Fixed pointer

This is a timing game for switch users. The pointer position is fixed. Pop a balloon by pressing the switch as the balloon moves under the pointer.

Keyboard controls

The special visual effects of transparency, opacity and 'bubbles' can be varied whilst the activity is underway. The keyboard shortcuts for these choices are:

N - normal opaque balloons

T - transparent balloons

X - bubble effect balloons

P - to go to the **Preferences** screens.

Q - to quit the program.

Preferences

Pressing **P** will take you to the first of the four **Preference** screens. These screens are called:

General Preferences

Background Preferences

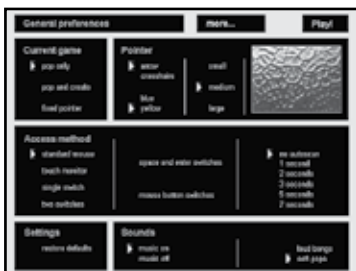
Balloon Preferences

Games Preferences

Click on the **more...** button at the top of each of these screens to move to the next one in the sequence above.

Click on the **Play!** button to return to the activity screen.

General Preferences



Current game

This setting determines which game is to be played when returning to the activity screen.

Pointer

If you choose the **fixed pointer** game, the picture changes from a glass effect to the current background scene.

Click somewhere on this small screen to indicate where to put the fixed pointer. Depending on where you click, the pointer will move to one of nine possible locations.

You have a choice of pointer shape, colour and size. (The colour and size chosen here also apply to the score.)

Access method

Switch users can play the **Pop and create** game. The touch monitor option hides the mouse pointer.

Switch users can use either the **Space** and **Enter** keys for switches, or the left and right mouse buttons.

Single switch users will use Autoscan for the **Pop and create** game. Use the **Second** setting on the right to choose the time delay for the scanning.

Settings

The program always remembers your last settings used.

To restore the standard options, click on **restore defaults**.

Sounds

Decide here whether you want the music to play or not, and how loud the sound will be when the balloons burst. The loud bangs are... loud!

Background Preferences

Click the **more...** button at the top of the screen to see the background preferences.



Plain coloured background

Click on one of the 'paint chart' samples for a background of that colour.

Picture background

Choose one of the pre-set pictures or load one of your own. Pictures loaded can be in bitmap, jpeg or pcx format.

The program will resize the picture to suit. However, for best results use pictures that are 640 by 480 pixels in size and decrease their colour depth to 32K colours.

Balloon Preferences



The third screen sets up the balloon colours and special visual effects. The lower half of the screen shows how the game will look with the options chosen.

Basic colours

This paint chart shows the balloon colours at high intensity. Click on a colour to add it to your list. Click again to remove that colour.

Colour intensity

Pick **high intensity** for bold colours, **pastel shades** for lighter shades and **foggy days** for low contrast colours.

Special effects

Pick **transparent** to make all the balloons transparent and **bubbles** for an interesting bubble-like effect.

Game Preferences



The final screen determines how easy or difficult the activity will be.

Balloons move

Specify the direction of balloon flight across the screen. This option is particularly useful for assessing a student's field of vision.

Wind speed

Pick the speed at which balloons float across the screen.

Maximum number of balloons

Set the maximum number of balloons that can be on the screen at any time. Select a minimum of 5 balloons for the **fixed pointer** game, to avoid student frustration.

The maximum number is also dependent on how powerful your PC is. Slower PCs will give poor performance for 15, 20 or 25 balloons. Experiment to find what is best for you.

To pop a balloon

Decide here how accurate the student needs to be. For mouse and touch monitor, this option defaults to **touch near** a balloon. If this is too easy, choose **touch exactly** instead.

Mouse and touch monitor users can also burst balloons by clicking or touching anywhere on the screen. To achieve this, click on **More...** to go back to the **General Preferences** screen. Select **Access method - single switch, mouse button switches**.

For switch users, this option is fixed at **touch anywhere** on the screen for the **Pop only** and **Pop and create** games. However, for the **fixed pointer** game, it defaults to **touch near**, but can be changed to **touch exactly**.

Score

If this option is set to **show**, a score will be displayed in the bottom right hand corner of the activity screen.

The Activity Screen



Plus and minus buttons

In the top left hand corner are the **plus** and **minus** buttons. These are only shown in two cases:

Access method is set to **touch monitor**.

Current game is set to **Pop and create**, and **Access method** is **single switch**.

Touch monitor users can touch the **plus** button to make more balloons and the **minus** button to pop balloons. (They can also touch the balloon they want to pop.)

Single switch users play the **Pop and create** game by scanning and selecting the **plus** and **minus** buttons. Press the switch when the **plus** button is lit up to create new balloons. Press the switch when the **minus** button is lit up to pop balloons.

The score

In the bottom right hand corner is the score. This shows the number of balloons popped since the activity was begun.

Mouse and Touch Monitor Access

Standard mouse users just click on the mouse buttons over a balloon. On a touch monitor, simply touch the balloon required. Select **Touch monitor** from the **General Preferences** screen - **Access method** (press **P** to bring up the **Preferences** screen).

Switch Access

Switch users can access ***Touch Balloons!*** with **Space** and **Enter** on the keyboard or the left and right mouse buttons.

Pressing the switch will randomly pop balloons and increase their score.

The **Pop and create** game is rather different for switch users. Single switch users play by scanning and selecting the **plus** and **minus** buttons.

Two switch users will be able to pop balloons using one switch and create new balloons using the other switch.

Connecting switches

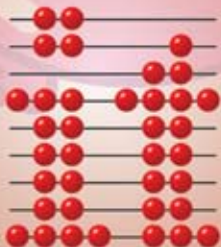
Because ***Touch Balloons!*** uses **Space** and **Enter**, most switch interfaces will work.

A keyboard interface such as **Simple Switch Box** or the **Don Johnston Switch Interface** can be used to connect your switch.

If you have an **IntelliKeys** keyboard, the **Standard Arrows** overlay can be used, and a switch connected to the board will operate correctly.



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