

# Clu Clu Land FAQ/Walkthrough

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NES Clu Clu Land

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1985, when the NES was first released in North America, Clu Clu Land was among the 17 games available for the system. Originally developed in Japan in late 1984, this game uses a very unusual and aggravating control scheme: Instead of directly controlling your character, you're limited to spinning her around various turnposts in the game (Since 'clu clu' comes from クルクル [kuru kuru], a Japanese onomatopoeia for going around and around).

Though it has been referenced in many later games (including Super Smash Bros., NES Remix, and the original Legend of Zelda), Clu Clu Land never reached the popularity of many other NES classics of its time. Frustrating by design, this arcade-style game is far from enjoyable for everyone, but you might find yourself drawn in by its confusing and original control gimmick like I was.



## STORY



You control Bubbles, a red bubble fish in the mystical underwater world of Clu Clu Land. Bubbles is unable to turn on her own, so instead she spins around the turnposts of Clu Clu Land to reorient herself.

In this world, the evil Sea Urchins have stolen Bubbles' gold bars. To keep their stolen goods safe, they've hidden them in the ground of Clu Clu Land. But the Sea Urchins aren't very bright, so they've hidden the gold in simple patterns that they can easily remember.

Bubbles has to use this information to uncover the hidden gold bars and retrieve them from the evil Sea Urchins!

## CONTROLS

The controls in Clu Clu Land are incredibly simple, but trying to get used to them can be incredibly complicated. In a two-player game, the first player controls the red Bubbles, and the second player controls the green Bubbles.

### On the Title Screen

- **SELECT:** Switch from '1 PLAYER GAME' to '2 PLAYER GAME' or vice versa.
- **START:** Select a game.

### In Game

- **START:** Pause the game. Press again to unpause the game.
- **CONTROL PAD (When immobile):** Move in the chosen direction.
- **CONTROL PAD (While moving horizontally):**
  - Hold up for Bubbles to hold her arm up.
  - Hold down for Bubbles to hold her arm down.
- **CONTROL PAD (While moving vertically):**
  - Hold left for Bubbles to hold her arm to the left.
  - Hold right for Bubbles to hold her arm to the right.
- **CONTROL PAD (While swinging on a turnpost):**
  - Hold any direction to continue to swing on the turnpost.
  - Release to let go of the turnpost.
- **A or B:** Send out an electric shock wave.

## GAMEPLAY

### Controlling Bubbles

Bubbles starts in a ball on a specific spot against the upper edge of the stage. In this form, she cannot be harmed by any of the Sea Urchins, but she cannot make any progress in finishing the stage either. The timer also does not stop counting down while she's in this form.

Once you move her from her initial position, Bubbles automatically moves forward in whatever direction she's facing. Once she hits a wall, she simply bounces off it and continues in the opposite direction. The only way to change her movement is to hold one of her arms out with the control pad: While you do, once she reaches a turnpost, she'll begin to swing around it. Once you let go of the control pad, she'll let go of the turnpost and move forward in her new direction.



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## Hazards



There are between one and four black holes on every stage. If you try to cross over one, Bubbles will fall into the black hole and a life will be lost. The only way to safely move past a black hole is to swing yourself over it by holding onto an adjacent turnpost.

Sea Urchins will occasionally appear from the black holes in the stage. If a Sea Urchin comes into contact with Bubbles, a life will be lost. However, you can fight back against them! If you shoot an electric shock wave at a Sea Urchin, it'll turn yellow and shrivel up into a ball. Sea Urchins in this stunned state cannot move or defend themselves. If you touch a stunned Sea Urchin, you won't lose a life, and you can push them around with you. Push one into a wall to crush it and get some extra points, but remember that another one will replace it from the black holes sooner or later.

If a stunned Sea Urchin is not crushed after several seconds, it'll turn from yellow back to blue. Sea Urchins in this state can be safely crossed over, but can no longer be pushed around until they are stunned again. After another couple of seconds, it will expand again and become dangerous to the touch, moving around once more.

Sea Urchins cannot cross over revealed gold bars, and Bubbles can only fire two electric shock waves at a time.

Rubber traps are the final hazard in the game, set by the Sea Urchins to defend their stolen gold. In the gold stage, there are two rubber traps visible on the screen, but in every stage there is at least one hidden rubber trap. If you try to pass over a hidden rubber trap, it is revealed and pushes you away in the opposite direction, like a wall. The turnpost on either side of the rubber trap disappears once it is revealed, limiting your movement options. Once a rubber trap is revealed, it acts like a regular wall from now on.

Note that hidden rubber traps will not be revealed if you pass over one by spinning with a turnpost next to it: They only trigger if you cross over the trap from at least one space away. Additionally, stunned Sea Urchins cannot be crushed against rubber traps: They will simply be pushed through the trap while Bubbles is pushed away.

## Lives

At the top of the screen, the game displays your remaining lives, how many gold bars are still hidden in the stage, and how much more time you have to complete the stage.

You begin the game with five lives. A life is lost if you touch a Sea Urchin, if you cross over a black hole, or if the timer drops to 0. Whenever you lose a life, Bubbles returns to her spawn point near the top of the stage. If you run out of time, the timer resets to 400 once Bubbles respawns. The timer will not reset to 400 if you lose a life in any other way.

If you lose a life while your life count reads 0, the game is over. The score screen appears to show you your final score, and then the game resets to the title screen.

## Clearing the Stage

Whenever you cross over a hidden gold bar, it is revealed. Once you reveal every gold bar in the stage, the timer immediately freezes, Bubbles disappears (as do as any Sea Urchins or random items in the stage), and the victory theme plays. The score screen then appears.

## Items

Some items are inherently a part of the stage, and some randomly appear throughout the stage.

### INHERENT ITEMS/OBSTACLES

- **Gold Bars:** There are between 22 and 34 gold bars hidden throughout each stage. Once all are revealed, you can move on to the next stage.
- **Black Holes:** Each stage has between one and four black holes in it. The black holes are all visible from the beginning of the stage. Crossing over a black hole without holding onto a turnpost will cause you to lose a life.
- **Sea Urchins:** Sea Urchins emerge from black holes and wander around the stage. Touching a Sea Urchin kills Bubbles, but she can stun them with her electric shock wave and crush them against solid walls.
- **Rubber Traps:** If you try to cross over a hidden rubber trap, it is revealed and behaves like a wall.



### RANDOM ITEMS

- **Bonus Fruit:** A pineapple, melon, cherries, bananas, or apple will sometimes appear somewhere on the stage. Collecting any that appear will immediately give you 800 points.
- **Bonus Timer:** If the bonus timer appears, you can collect it to stop the timer from counting down and prevent any Sea Urchins from moving. If Bubbles touches a Sea Urchin while the bonus timer is active, it will still kill her. Sea Urchins will still spawn from black holes and unstun as normal. The effect bonus timer disappears after 10 seconds.
- **Bonus Sack:** Instead of a bonus fruit appearing, sometimes the rare bonus sack will appear on the stage. If you collect it, you'll instantly gain 1500 points.
- **Bonus Flag:** Very rarely, a bonus flag will appear somewhere on the stage. Collecting it will give you an extra life.



## Scoring

After clearing each stage (or after getting a game over), the score screen appears, and your score is adjusted in the following way:

- 800 points for every bonus fruit you've collected and 1500 points for every bonus sack you've collected. These are the only points you can earn in a stage where you get a game over.
- 500 points for every Sea Urchin you've crushed.
- 100 points for every gold bar you've revealed.
- 10 point for every 10 counts remaining on the timer. If fewer than 10 counts remain, you score 10 points anyway.
- 2000 points if you've cleared the level within 300 counts of the timer.

- 30 points if you clear the bonus stage at the end of the stage rotation (The screen reads 3000 points, but due to a mistake in the programming, only 30 points are scored in the NES version of the game).

## 2-Player Mode

The following changes are in place during a 2-player game.

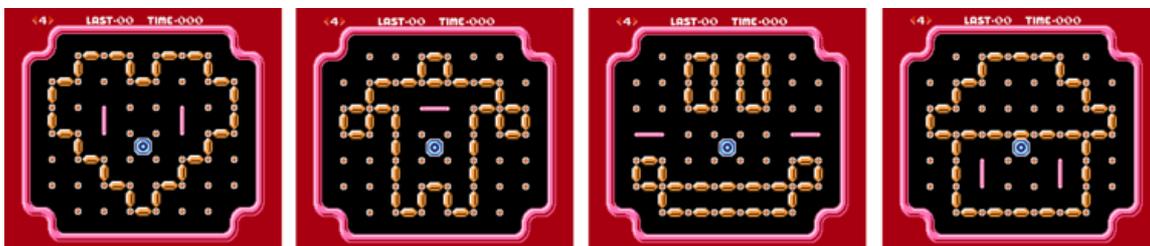
- If both players hit each other while moving in opposite directions (including while swinging on a turnpost), they both bounce off as if they'd hit a wall.
- If both players somehow hit each other while moving in the same direction, they become 'stuck' on each other and will endlessly bounce back and forth across two spaces. The only way out of this is for one of the players to grab a turnpost and spin out of this stuck situation.
- If one player collects a bonus timer, the other player is frozen for 10 seconds as well.
- The points that player one earns are distinct from the points that player two earns.
- The 2000 point bonus is no longer scored for clearing the level quickly. Instead, if one player uncovers more gold bars than the other, that player earns the 2000 point bonus. This bonus is scored even if one player runs out of lives, but is not earned if both players uncover an identical amount of gold bars.
- If one player runs out of lives, the game continues until the other player runs out of lives.



## STAGES

### Pink Stage

When you start a game of Clu Clu Land, you'll always start by playing the pink introductory stage, and the gold bars you must uncover will be in one of the following patterns, chosen at random:



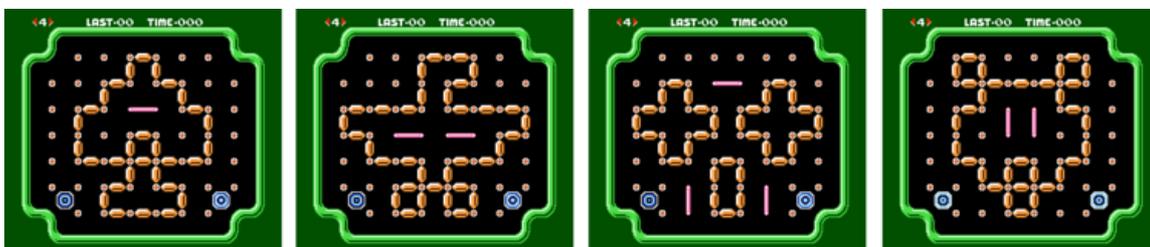
The pink stage is a very simple introduction to Clu Clu Land. Bubbles moves very slowly in this stage, so you have ample time to react to anything that might happen, and there is only one black hole in the center of the stage.

Depending on the pattern you receive, you'll have between 28 and 33 gold bars to uncover. No matter which pattern you're given, there will be either one or two hidden rubber traps in the stage.

Pattern	Gold Bars
Heart	28
Person	33
Face	32
House	31

### Green Stage

After finishing the introductory stage, you'll enter the green stage. One of the following patterns of gold bars will randomly be hidden in the green stage.

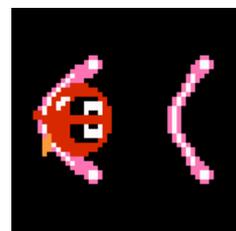


The green stage is only a bit more challenging than the pink stage. Bubbles moves at a slightly faster speed in this stage. Even though there are two black holes in this stage, they're both out of the way in the corners of the screen.

If you're unlucky enough to get the mouse pattern, be careful around the rubber traps in the stage! If you hit the rightmost one while coming from the left, or the leftmost one while coming from the right, you'll be trapped in an infinite loop of bouncing from one rubber trap to the other. It will be impossible to get out until you're hit by a Sea Urchin, or until your timer reaches 0, either of which will cost you a life.

Of course, if you're playing the 2-player mode, the other player can nudge you out of this malicious double rubber trap.

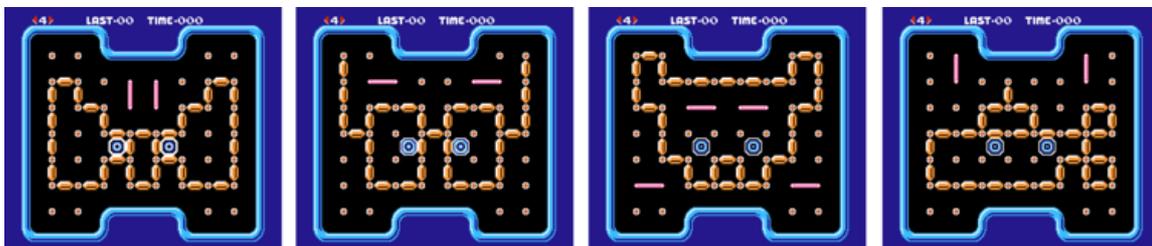
Pattern	Gold Bars
Spade	30



Pattern	Gold Bars
Eagle	34
Clown	30
Mouse	32

## Blue Stage

Whenever you finish the green stage, you enter the blue stage, and will randomly have to uncover one of the following patterns of gold bars:



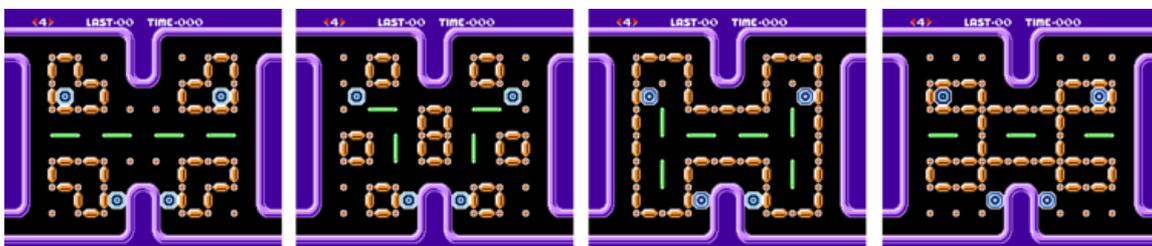
The center of the blue stage is squeezed together, and since two black holes are in that area (and every pattern on this stage has gold bars hidden near those black holes), it's a notable step up in difficulty from the earlier stages. Bubbles still moves at a fairly slow speed, and most rubber traps shouldn't cause any significant problems.

However, if you get the butterfly pattern in this stage, it's possible to be trapped between the two rubber traps in an infinite loop, just like in the green stage.

Pattern	Gold Bars
Butterfly	32
Glasses	29
Koala	29
Submarine	29

## Purple Stage

After finishing the blue stage, you go to the purple stage. One of the following patterns will be chosen at random for you to play.

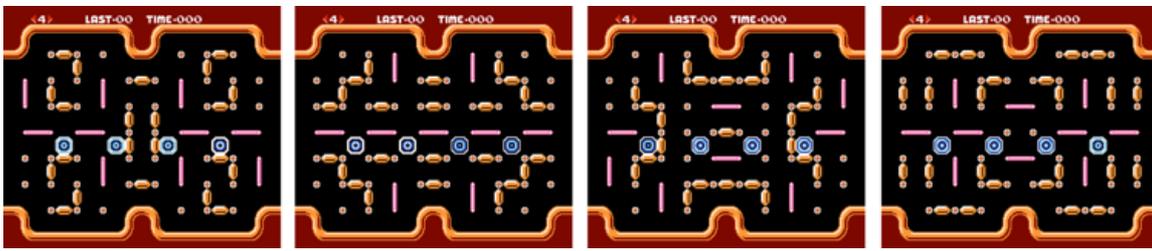


Because there are four black holes on this stage, Sea Urchins can come from unexpectedly from any side. Bubbles can pass through either opening on the left or right side of the screen and come out the corresponding opening on the opposite side of the screen. Be careful though! It is less common, but the Sea Urchins sometimes use these openings too!

Pattern	Gold Bars
Key	32
Hole	31
The Letter "H"	34
Ribbon	34

## Gold Stage

Once you finish the purple stage, you enter the gold stage, and must uncover the gold bars from one of these patterns:

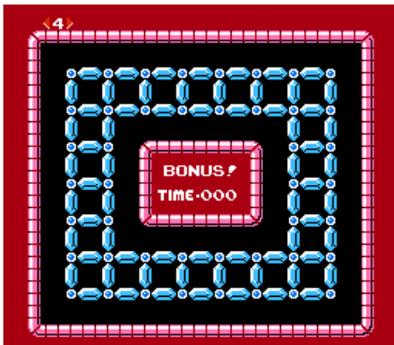


The two rubber traps on the left and right sides of the center row are visible at the start of the stage, but all of the others are hidden as usual. This stage is the most challenging, because most paths from the top half of the screen to the bottom are blocked by black holes or rubber traps, and because the left half and right half of the screen are connected to each other. Always be on the lookout for approaching Sea Urchins, and don't bother trying to crush them in the gold stage: The absence of horizontal walls makes this too difficult to be worth it.

Pattern	Gold Bars
Figure 1	22
Figure 2	24
Figure 3	23
Figure 4	24

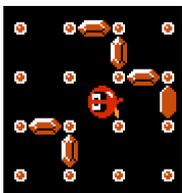
## Bonus Stage

Once you complete the gold stage, you get to play the bonus stage. The timer for the bonus stage is always 200, and there is no way to die on this stage: Your goal is simply to try to uncover all 66 gold bars before the time runs out. If time does run out before you manage to reveal all of the gold bars, the game simply shows you the score screen without taking away one of your lives.



Finally, once the bonus stage is finished, you go back to the green stage and must uncover a new pattern of gold bars. Bubbles will move a bit faster than before whenever you complete the bonus stage, and the Sea Urchins remain stunned for a shorter length of time. You repeat this rotation of green-blue-purple-gold-bonus until you've played all four patterns for each stage.

You will never replay the pink stage until you get a Game Over.



Once you successfully complete all four of the patterns from the gold stage (completing 21 stages in total, including the bonus stages), you go back to the green stage. You replay the stages in the order of green-blue-purple-gold-bonus as usual, and the patterns will appear in the same order as they did for you in stages 2 to 20. Bubbles returns to her slowest speed, and the Sea Urchins stay stunned for longer again. However, if you cross over a revealed gold bar, it now flips over to reveal its dull, non-reflective side. Crossing over it again will toggle the gold bar between its regular shiny side and its dull, bland side.

To complete a stage from now on, not only must every gold bar be revealed, but they must all be flipped over to their regular shining side. This means you'll have to carefully plan your moves in advance so you don't end up sabotaging the pattern by flipping particular gold bars over again.

## STAGE PROGRESSION

Use this as a reminder for how the stages will change as you play through Clu Clu Land.

- Stage 1 will always be a pink stage. Afterwards, stages will always follow this pattern: Green, blue, purple, gold, bonus stage.
  - Stage 1-4 will begin with 800 counts on the clock, and a maximum of two Sea Urchins onscreen at a time.
  - Stage 5 and stage 7-10 will begin with 700 counts on the clock, and a maximum of two Sea Urchins onscreen at a time.
  - Stage 12-15 will begin with 600 counts on the clock, and a maximum of four Sea Urchins onscreen at a time.
  - Stage 17-20 will begin with 500 counts on the clock, and a maximum of four Sea Urchins onscreen at a time.
- Once you reach stage 22, you'll have to be careful not to cross over any revealed gold bars, or they'll flip over to their dull, worthless side.
  - Stage 22-25 will begin with 800 counts on the clock, and a maximum of two Sea Urchins onscreen at a time.
  - Stage 27-30 will begin with 700 counts on the clock, and a maximum of two Sea Urchins onscreen at a time.
  - Stage 32-35 and stage 37 will begin with 600 counts on the clock, and a maximum of four Sea Urchins onscreen at a time.
  - Stage 38-40 will begin with 500 counts on the clock, and a maximum of four Sea Urchins onscreen at a time.
- Once you reach stage 42, it repeats the rotation from stage 22 onwards.

# STRATEGY TIPS

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## Basic

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- Practice to get used to Bubbles' control scheme. It takes some time, but once you do get used to it, it becomes second nature.
- Pick up a bonus flag whenever you see one: Every life counts. It's often worth it to drop what you're doing to collect a bonus sack. It's sometimes worth it to do so for bonus fruit or bonus timers.
- Know the patterns ahead of time. If you've memorized where the rubber traps are, you don't have to worry about triggering one by surprise. Memorize where the gold bars are, and you don't have to worry about wasting time looking for them.
- As soon as the stage starts, look at the counter for how many gold bars are remaining to uncover. It might tell you what pattern you're playing.
- Remember that the timer only resets when it reaches 0, and not if you lose a life in any other way. So if the timer is close to 0 and you don't think you can finish the pattern before time runs out, focus completely on staying alive until the timer reaches 0. You'll lose only one life this way, whereas carelessly trying to make ineffective progress on the pattern could cost you another life.
- If you hit a rubber trap, you move a bit through it before it pushes you back. That means that if there's a Sea Urchin on the other side of the rubber trap, it *will* hit Bubbles when she touches the rubber trap. Be careful!

## In 2-Player Mode

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- It's easier to get farther in the game in this mode because together you have twice as many lives as you do in 1-player mode.
  - However, it's much harder to get a high score because you're splitting the points between two players.
- Be aware of where the other player is at all times. You don't want to unexpectedly run into each other when a Sea Urchin or black hole is near.
- After stage 22, be extremely aware of what the other player is doing. With two Bubbles moving at once, it's incredibly easy to accidentally sabotage the part of the pattern that the other player is working on.

## Surviving

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- If you're just trying to see how far you can get in the game, ignore point-based items and just focus on clearing the level as quickly as possible.
- Because you can only have two electric shock waves on the screen at a time, be careful about spamming them if a Sea Urchin is near.
- You cannot stun a Sea Urchin that is partway through crossing from one side of the screen to the other (in the purple and gold stages), so be careful.
- Once you reach stage 7, the Sea Urchins spawn too quickly to be worth killing. You'll be safer for longer if you simply leave them stunned instead of crushing them.
- On the gold stage and the purple stage, Sea Urchins can cross from the left side of the screen to the right side and vice versa. While a Sea Urchin is using these openings, it cannot be stunned with your electric shock wave. Be extremely careful not to be using these paths while a Sea Urchin is near.
- In most cases, it's best not to trigger any hidden rubber traps. As long as they remain hidden, you can freely use the turnposts on either side of the trap. Once the trap is revealed, you no longer can.
  - In the green stage and blue stage, it might be worth revealing the rubber traps if you have the mouse pattern or butterfly pattern. If you reveal them early, you don't have to worry about getting caught in the double trap and losing a life.

## Stage 22

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- Remember the order that the patterns appeared for you in the stages 2 to 20. Once you get to stage 22, they'll repeat in that exact same order.
- Once you reach stage 22, Bubbles will effectively re-hide gold bars if she crosses over them again. But if you cross over a gold bar while it's in the middle of its flipping animation, it won't recognize the extra flip.
  - This can be done by crossing over a gold bar and immediately hitting a wall or rubber trap behind it, or by revealing a gold bar for the first time and immediately using an adjacent turnpost to swing over it again.
  - This can be used to fix a pattern that appears impossible, or to turn over all the bars in a row or column except for those adjacent to the walls.
- The timer doesn't count down while the game is paused, so if you need to, pause the game and take a breather. It can help you plan out how you can uncover the pattern without sabotaging it.
- It's even more important not to die after this stage, because dying in an inconvenient location can sabotage the pattern.
- Remember that Bubbles will disappear as soon as the last gold bar is flipped over to its proper side. If there's one gold bar that will put you in a position where you must sabotage your pattern after revealing it, save that gold bar to be the last.

## Hi-Scores

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- You can get the most points out of the pink stage if you have the face pattern or person pattern. Reset the game until you get one of these two for your first pattern.
- If you're trying to set a high score, ignore finishing the level as quickly as possible and spend as much time as you can defeating Sea Urchins. The points you get from them dwarfs the time bonus you'd get from completing the stage early (Except possibly while in the gold stage, where it is hard to defeat Sea Urchins). Of course, once you reach stage 22, it might be worth just going for the time bonus so you don't end up sabotaging your pattern.

## CHALLENGES

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If you're ever finding yourself bored with this classic game, see how many of these challenges you can complete! If you complete them all, you've truly mastered Clu Clu Land.

### EASY

- Collect a bonus flag, bonus timer, and bonus sack in the same playthrough.
- Collect a pineapple, melon, cherries, bananas, and apple in the same playthrough.
- Complete the four patterns on the pink stage across four playthroughs.
- Score the 2000 point time bonus on any stage.

### MEDIUM

- Get a perfect score in the bonus round.
- Set your own high score, and then break it.

### HARD

- Have 10 or more lives at a time.
- Reach stage 22, when the gold bars can be flipped over.

### VERY HARD

- Reach stage 42, where you've completed every pattern in the game twice.

### IMPOSSIBLE

- Roll the stage count over at stage 100.
- Roll the score over at 1,000,000 points.
- Beat my personal high score of 2,069,720 points on stage 299.



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