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Review: Minesweeper for Windows Phone 7

22 SEP 2011 BY BRYANT SOMBKE IN GAMING, MOBILE, REVIEWS

Last month, Microsoft released two free Xbox Live games for Windows Phone 7, one of which being the classic Minesweeper. While releasing any game for free is a great way to ensure a lot of people play it, is Minesweeper for WP7 worth your valuable time?

Being the nerd that I am, I was excited to see Minesweeper see a release on WP7. I've sunk many hours into this game over the years, becoming quite good at Expert level puzzles. Originally released for the Windows platform in 1990, this version manages to add some nice new features while staying faithful to the original.

Gameplay

The core of the game consists of the original gameplay we all remember. If you love Minesweeper on the PC, everything will feel familiar here. The game board consists of a matrix of little squares, with the size of the board and number of mines varying based on the difficulty. The game starts when the player clicks on an arbitrary square, at which point the mines are randomly generated and hidden behind the squares. Of course, the challenge comes from figuring out which squares contain the mines. Clicking on a non-mine square will reveal a number indicating how many adjacent squares contain mines, giving a clue as to where the mines may be hidden. However, make a single mistake, and *BOOM!* It's game over.

New Features

While the core game is definitely not groundbreaking, Microsoft has added some new twists to make the game really shine. The most obvious new feature is the power-up system, which gives the player certain powers designed to help solve the puzzle. One power-up acts as a shield and allows the player to click a single mine without losing. Another uncovers a certain amount of squares and automatically flags any mines within the range.

As the game is played, experience points are earned which unlock new power-ups. Each power-up has a cost associated with it, and each time it is used, tokens are deducted from the token bank. Over time, the tokens regenerate, at which time the player can use more power-ups. This system definitely helps add a new dynamic to the classic gameplay, while paring down the difficulty of some of the harder puzzles. Did I mention that highest difficulties are downright tough?

Aside from the power-up system, this version also adds Speed Mode, which is nothing more than playing with a count-down timer, rather than the classic count-up timer. You will also find Xbox Live Achievements, with a paltry 50 Gamerscore available to be earned. More importantly (this is a mobile game after all) Microsoft has given players the ability to suspend a game at any time and resume it later. This is perfect for receiving phone calls or texts, or when your real life requires you to temporarily stop playing, without losing any of your progress.

Updated, yet simplistic graphics for your finger-poking pleasure.

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The only drawback of the game being free is that it is ad-supported, so be prepared to watch ads come in and out across the top of the screen. It in no way hinders gameplay or enjoyment of the game, but it is worth noting.

Bugs

I did experience one minor bug worth mentioning during my extensive playtime with the game. Occasionally when I would try to start a new game, the power-up selection screen would pop up, even when I had not clicked on it. I'd click the exit button to get it to go away, and then start the new game. This would seem to cause the new game board to be unresponsive, forcing me to exit back to the main menu. It's definitely annoying, but it's not a game-breaker and fortunately, it doesn't occur all that often.

Summary

Overall, the WP7 version of Minesweeper is a solid brain-teaser. Minor glitches aside, if you love the classic Minesweeper you'll probably love this updated version as well. If you never got into the classic game, this version may add enough fluff to warrant a second look.

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