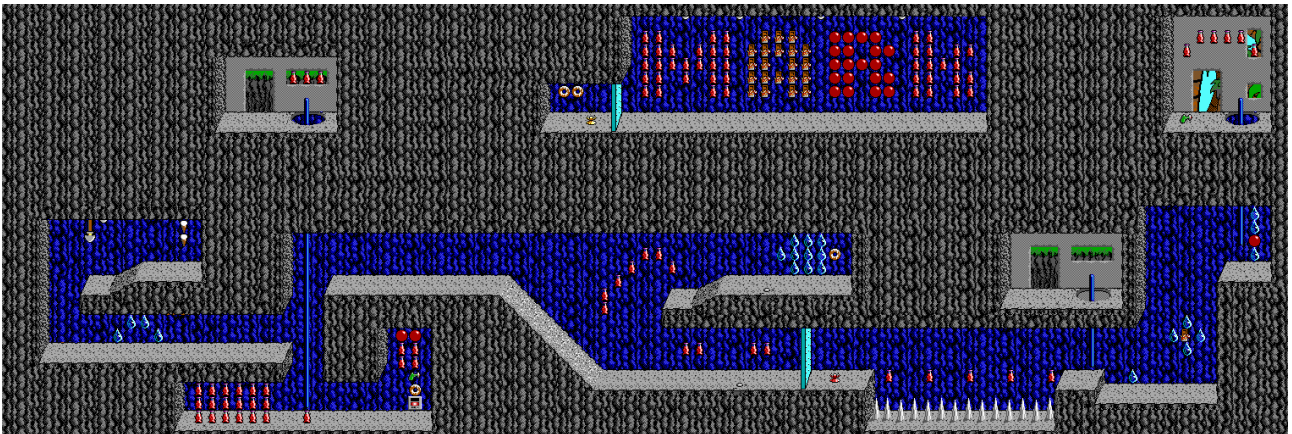


# PCKF

## - Modding Theory - Point Placement & Secret Areas



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## 1. Point Placement (by Xky Rauh)

### 1.1 [What's the point of Points?](#)

When designing levels in which you plan to include point items, it's important to ask yourself what purpose points will have in your game. There are a few answers to this:

- Points are collected to contribute toward a high score,
- Points are placed simply to give the player something extra to do
- Points are placed in order for the player to gain extra lives
- Points are placed to liven up the level atmosphere.

If the purpose of points is up to the individual game designer, but knowing the purpose of points in your game will help to you place them strategically and in a manner that maximizes player experience.

Points should, first and foremost, stand out from the background. It doesn't matter what they are, but if they look like background tiles (or, heaven forbid, hazards), nobody will notice or collect them.  
(Grelphy, 2004)

Personally I don't find collecting toys or other stuff like that so nice, probably mainly because I spent all my childhood collecting shikadi sodas, teddy bears, lollipops, vorta-colas... Or actually teddy bears aren't very eatable, but you got the point. Most of the Keen collectables are something delicious.  
(Keenrusher, 2004)

### 1.2 [System of Balancing](#)

Is there some sort of system you guys can think of for balancing risk-reward? For example... a series of two-brick platforms in the air (5) leads to 1000 points (Keen1-lv1). Or an extended risky section leads to a full-on extra life (Keen1-lv13, lower left corner). Are there any rules you follow when designing your levels? Do you set down and say *"As a standard, all levels need a possible total of 18,000 points, but only 8,000 of them should be attained in a straight-line minimalist path to the exit."* or something similar?

Writing up outlines for each level and putting point guidelines are things I've used since my Keen1 mod – I just set the points standard far too low for it. Originally I had about 25000 points in each level, total, and I'd thought that was too much – I was wrong. I should have kept all those points I erased--by the time my Keen1 mod was released, the average points per level was around 12000... which lead to quick game-overs and complaining. Better to have an overabundance of points than difficulty.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Score

What purpose, if any, does SCORE serve in your game/mod? Sounds like a completely inane and stupid topic, I know, but think about it, really. What does a player's score represent?

Is it a simple answer, like *"a player's score reflects how thoroughly they scoured my levels, collecting every treasure I sprinkled about."* Or is it more complex, stating that *"a player's score represents their skill within my realm, their ability to perform awkward and sometimes nearly impossible jumps when asked, and their talent at avoiding danger."*

It could go further than that, too, saying *"a player's score shows just how much knowledge of the game's layout the player has – a player who knows that red bricks always point towards secrets will have a significantly higher score than the player who doesn't."* And likewise, it could be a lot more basic: *"a player's score represents their completion percentage of my game--I put exactly 20,000 points in every level; thus a perfect score is 360,000 (16 levels, 4 ship parts)."*

This whole topic was sparked by a recent discussion in the PCKF regarding TUIT, and indirectly regarding Lives, Score, etc. Older games usually gave a player 3 lives and a score of 0; levels were little more than variations on a theme that increased in speed and thus difficulty over time. Resultingly, a player's score represented a talent at managing resources, a skill at avoiding traps, and a knowledge of appropriate tactics, strategies, and loopholes. As video games have aged, they've slowly slumped off the Score aspect, and are now beginning to shun even the mainstay Lives counter. In order to keep the spirit of older games like Keen alive, we have to decide: WHAT DOES SCORE MEAN?

Another interesting use for points, used by Spleen is as "goal" items. AFAIK, from reading his story, the point items are what Keen is really going after. This is an interesting idea, and may spur on other brainstormers.

But points are really just meant for the enjoyment of the player. After all, what would a game be without points? (Grelphy, 2004)

Regardless of whether the points are necessarily balanced to the edge of perfection, or scattered in every corner of the level, they're still fun to collect. (Commander Spleen, 2004)

In a lot of mods there are just way too many points... In shadowkeen 2 for example you're never below 15+ lives. Not only makes these points worthless (player won't be bothered with that secret passage - in shadowkeen 2 I walked past teddy's like they were nothing) but when you're low on ammo the smartest thing to do is grab ammo, die, grab ammo, etc... Not the way it was meant to be.

Basically, collecting bullets and point items is a very important part of the gameplay, but as soon as the player has plenty of that part is gone. (EazyJay, 2004)

## 1.4 Rules

- 1.) Keen shouldn't be able to get points just by walking around. He should at least have to jump or navigate to where they are. (LevelLord)
- 2.) Use points to indicate jumps, etc Use low value items for this and do it creatively.
- 3.) Think of each set of items as being in an area, ask yourself 'how hard is it to get into this area?' and value the points accordingly.
- 4.) Its best to have several low value items, especially if you want to spread them around to liven up your level, but its good to keep at least one item that is high value and used only sparingly.
- 5.) Items cannot decorate the level. They are an added extra to by laid over the level after its done. Don't fill blank space with points as it looks repetitive and when the points are got, the space will still be there.
- 6.) Make your points look gettable, and attractive.
- 7.) Theme your items to your mod. (Levellord)
- 8.) Interactive points are good.

Don't be afraid to put more than 1 extra life's worth in points in a level – as long as the level is of appropriate size, and the points are risky enough to allow it. (Xky Rauh, 2005).

## 2. Secret Areas

One thing you'll notice about keens 4-6 (especially with F10-Y) is the huge number of secret areas... If done right, someone can play a game for years and not find all of them. (Grelphy, 2003)

Some of the coolest secrets are the ones that you don't need to go through foreground to find. You just have to go at them differently than what you might expect. Or, they could be highly visible in the middle of a very complex level, but ridiculously hard to figure out how to get. A good example is the door in the Pyramid of the Moons that is right underneath the area with the red gem. (Stealthy71088, 2006)

I love that "ID" made of goodies... it's worth more than the points just to go through the effort of getting there. That could be an interesting strategy--creating bonus locations that have a higher value than their point total due to the way they're shaped, or because of a particular background component, etc. (Commander Spleen, 2004)