Second Life (SL) is a new world accessible only through the Internet. You don’t need to buy anything to participate; it’s free to join. You will find passion, history, art, politics, culture, government, and drama in SL. It has an aboriginal population (old timers), and it has an ever-growing number of artists, explorers, entrepreneurs, settlers, designers, musicians, misfits, builders, vamps, scripters, furries, griefers, androids, dragons, and yes, even corporations.

SL is not a game of winners and losers or of heroic quests (although quests can be found). It is practically without boundaries and, just like real life (RL), you set your own course or drift directionless. It is a new frontier, sometimes thrilling, sometimes lawless, and sometimes exasperating. One thing it is not is short on opportunity and entertainment. Welcome to SL and your guide to success!
Chapter 1  Welcome to Second Life

If you already have an avatar and understand things like inventory, lag, rez, TP, prims, sim, L$, chat, and IM, then you can skip ahead.

If you’re new to SL and these terms are unfamiliar to you, then start here in Chapter 1. Here, I hit all the highlights of this new country in which you are about to arrive. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have.

In this chapter, we start a journey together to learn about SL and dig deep into both the fabric (platform) of SL as well as SL culture. This chapter answers many questions newbies ask (or noobs, short for new residents). OK, maybe it doesn’t answer all questions, but at least it gives you a path to discovering your own answers.

WHAT IS SECOND LIFE?

Second Life is not easy to sum up. It’s kind of like the Blue Man Group (if you’ve seen it, you know what I mean). In the end, you define what SL is to you. Let me offer my own definition of SL, first as a platform and second as a community:

• The Second Life platform is an Internet-based, multi-user, 3D world construction set that emphasizes creativity, collaboration, socializing, and self-government.
• The Second Life community is a semi-self-governing group of residents who collaboratively create, live, and interact in a 3D online world owned and operated by Linden Lab.

You can participate in SL free simply by downloading the SL client from http://www.secondlife.com. It does not require a CD purchase from a store. SL does not have quests, winners, losers, experience, hit points, levels, and other things you might find in a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG). If you have never heard of MMORPG, then forget about it! Welcome to the future of a 3D Internet that is strikingly like RL.

Let me offer the typical one-liners people use to describe SL so we can move past the first questions and into all the fun stuff:

• SL is like RL, only you can fly.
• SL is The Sims On-Line™ on steroids.
• SL is the latest incarnation of the “metaverse” as envisioned by Neal Stephenson in his novel Snow Crash.
• SL is an MMORPG, except there are no nonplayer characters (NPCs) or quests.
• SL is a glorified 3D chat room.
• SL is something created by Linden Lab.
• SL is a synthetic world (as described by economics researcher Edward Castronova in his book Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games).
• SL is a virtual world (as described by Richard Bartle in his book Designing Virtual Worlds).
• SL is Web 3.0 or the 3D Internet.

Makes sense now? Probably not. As the cliche goes, “You’ve got to see it to believe it.” In the future, you will not need to explain the concept of a virtual world to anyone, no more than you need to explain what the Internet is today. Until then, join the multitude of SL residents who try to explain it to their nonresident friends and family.

WHAT IS LINDEN LAB AND HOW IS IT RELATED TO SL?

SL was created by and is hosted by Linden Lab (LL). As of this writing, Linden Lab (http://www.lindenlab.com) is a privately held firm headquartered in San Francisco, California. Founded in 1999 by Philip Rosedale (formerly VP and CTO of Real Networks), the company has a powerhouse of financial backers: Mitch Kapor, creator of Lotus 1-2-3; Pierre Omidyar, eBay founder; Jeff Bezos, Amazon CEO; and Ray Ozzie, Microsoft chief technology architect, to name a few.

Linden Lab represents the ultimate authority in SL, and you will find residents whose last name is Linden wandering about in SL. The best place to find them nowadays with SL being so large is in Linden Village.

In the company’s own words:

Linden Lab is a privately held company established to develop an extraordinary new form of shared 3D entertainment. Through its first product, ‘Second Life,’ Linden Lab offers a truly
collaborative, immersive and open-ended entertainment experience, where together people create and inhabit a virtual world of their own design.

**IS SECOND LIFE A GAME?**

Whether SL is a game is a topic of great debate. Some would say SL is a game, in the same way that Sims On-Line or World of Warcraft is, whereas others would argue that SL is too open ended and without any artificially imposed goals to be classified as a game.

Those who say SL is not a game might argue it's no more a game than attending a friend's wedding is a game. I have attended weddings in SL and browsed the photo albums afterward. You are not there physically; the wedding itself is all enacted and presented virtually, but there are still two human beings on the other end of their computers making a commitment to each other.

Imagine you were confined to a wheelchair as a burn victim or you were housebound. What would it mean to you if you could interact with people all over the world on a social level where your RL attributes were not a consideration? What would it mean to walk like everyone else and even fly?

The answer to the question “Is SL a game?” boils down to your own definition of what constitutes work, leisure, and play and how you choose to approach SL.

David Kirkpatrick, *Fortune* magazine’s senior editor, had this to say on the topic in his article “Second Life: It’s Not a Game” (http://money.cnn.com/2007/01/22/magazines/fortune/whatsnext_secondlife.fortune/index.htm):

> Second Life is important not because it resembles a game, or because of how many people are signing up, or the big companies starting to do business inside it. What convinces me it is one of the most significant technology breakthroughs in history is that it is a platform on top of which users can create their own software and content, realize their ideas, and even make money.

Here is Philip Linden’s take from a forum post on April 7, 2006. (Once you have your SL account, you will have access to all forum posts. The full text of Philip’s post can be found at http://forums.secondlife.com/showthread.php?postid=978622#post978622):

> I’m not a gamer, and SL isn’t a game. From the start, we/LL observed that something like SL would have its first uses in entertainment, and then grow beyond those uses and people became more confident in the capabilities of the new platform/OS/whatever-we-want-to-call-it. So we focused on making SL very exciting and visceral and inspirational, but not on making it a game.

The future that we are all most passionate about is creating a new version of the world with a fundamentally different and better set of capabilities, and then see what happens when we all move there. This means we want SL to be able to reach everyone in the world, to be able to scale to 100’s of millions of users and millions of servers, and to remain an open decentralized system in which creativity rules.

I can tell you this much. The overwhelming response from all but one person I interviewed in the course of researching this book was “No, Second Life is not a game.” Is it fun? Most definitely yes. Is it entertaining? Also a yes… But SL is something more…

Just what SL will become remains to be seen.

And the secret is, it’s up to you to decide!

**SL GEOGRAPHY AND GETTING AROUND**

SL has a lot of geography to explore, and one of the first things you must learn is how to get around. You don’t need to own land to enjoy SL, but if you decide you want your own plot, it will cost you.

**SL GEOGRAPHY**

To give you an idea of the exploration potential, you need only look at the size of land available in SL. As of January 2007, SL contained virtual land that is the equivalent of over six times the size of New York’s Manhattan Island.
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Figure 1-1 shows a comparison of Google’s aerial view map and SL’s world map. The similarity may be shocking. Which is real and which is virtual? We come back to mapping in SL in Chapter 2, “Exploring the New Frontier.”

Island estates are often owned by a single individual, corporation, or a group of like-minded residents and tend to be themed with more control over what you can and cannot build or do there.

A region has a name and 65,536 square meters of area. All locations in SL can be specified by the region name and x, y, z coordinates. You can reference SL locations in RL using a SLURL (Second Life uniform resource locator), which takes the following format:

```
SLURL http://slurl.com/secondlife/<Region Name>/
<Region Name> is the name of the region and <X>, <Y>, <Z> are the coordinates within that region. In this book, all locations in SL are indicated using this format. Think of SLURLs as the SL equivalent of RL addresses such as country, state, street, and home addresses or maybe a better analogy is that of global positioning system (GPS) coordinates. More on SLURLs in Chapter 2.
```

The geography or land of SL tends to be flat, ±4 meters in most mainland regions and ±100 meters on islands. However, the ground does not limit your building. Your home (or floating castle) may be up to 768 meters off the ground or underwater for that matter.

Land in SL is divided into regions. Regions are often called sims. Sim is short for simulator, referring specifically to the servers that simulate the SL world itself (there are other types of SL servers, which we get into in Chapter 12, “Practical Matters: Under the Hood of the Metaverse”). As of this writing, there are three mainland continents in SL and over 4,000 islands. Figure 1-2 shows the entire SL world zoomed way out and with all indicators active. The three continents are somewhat visible even at this range.

Mainland regions typically consist of many landowners living side by side just like in RL, with all its pros and cons.
Land can be owned, rented, bought, and sold in SL. Land ownership has some very cool benefits, but you also start paying monthly fees to own land in SL. You learn more about owning and renting land, premium accounts, terraforming, and landscaping in Chapter 9, “Land Ownership, Terraforming, and Landscaping.”

GETTING AROUND IN SL

The typical way to move about within a region is to walk or fly from place to place. To get from region to region, the primary mode of transportation is the teleport (TP). You can teleport from location to location much more quickly than walking. You save locations in SL using landmarks (LM). Landmarks are basically a way to save and share locations by saving the region and coordinates.

To look around the world, you use a mini-map and world map. The mini-map is good for determining who is nearby and used locally within a region. The world map gives you a high-level view of the entire SL world. When I arrived in SL, I made it a practice every time I logged in to use the world map and teleport to a random spot. Try it a few times. You’ll be happy you did. You will find interesting places and new people almost every time you teleport.

You learn how to get around in SL, teleport, create and share landmarks, and use the mini-map and world map in Chapter 2.

SL CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

RL people are represented in SL as avatars. Avatars are 3D visual representations of you as you exist in SL. That is, when others see you in SL, they see your avatar. When you join SL, you pick a default avatar, but you will want to quickly personalize your look. You learn all about avatars and how to make your avatar look the way you want in Chapter 4, “Your Avatar, Your Virtual Self.” Figure 1-3 shows a small sample of avatar possibilities.

Once you know how to get around, you need to learn the mechanics of communicating and the cultural norms of SL. Let’s touch on those next.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between avatars in SL takes the form of a near real-time exchange of typed text. You do not audibly hear what someone types, nor do you hear that person’s voice unless you're using some external means such as a phone call, voice over IP, or a conference call for larger groups. When someone “says” something, he is typing it into a chat window. When someone “hears” something, she is seeing the typed text in her own chat window.

There are two primary means of communication in SL: chat and instant message (IM). Chat is public and heard locally by all nearby avatars, whereas IM is private and can be heard by those private parties no matter where they are in the world.

Chapter 3, “Communication and Social Networking,” covers everything you need to know about SL communication including gestures, common mistakes, and even some tips on doing presentations in SL.

NOTE

By the time you read this, SL will support voice. This is a major cultural change already sparking much debate about its pros and cons. We discuss this revolutionary change a bit more in Chapter 3.
Chapter 1  Welcome to Second Life

CULTURE

SL has its own culture and cultural norms. When you join SL, you agree to the Terms of Service (TOS) and a set of Community Standards (CS). The TOS and CS represent the legal and cultural norms enforced by LL. They apply any place in SL you go. We discuss more details about the TOS and CS in Chapter 12, “Practical Matters: Under the Hood of the Metaverse,” and Chapter 5, “Second Life Culture and Relationships.”

SL also has several thriving subcultures, each of which has its own cultural norms and social standards. These cultures include groups such as furries, vampires, and many sexual subcultures. To avoid becoming the SL police force, LL has given landowners a lot of power to allow or deny other avatars access to their land.

Many landowners have, therefore, established regional norms of behavior that are enforced. So, if you get involved in a SL subculture, it is worth learning the standards of behavior. They may be as simple as wearing a Guest tag when visiting or as complex as very specific requirements for how you dress, behave, and even talk.

You learn more about SL culture, SL relationships, and the steamy topic of virtual sex in Chapter 5.

GETTING STARTED AND GETTING HELP

The following sections cover the basics of accessing SL and how to get help once you are in-world (or logged in to the SL client).

GETTING THERE

Accessing SL is easy. The main problem with describing the process in a book is things change constantly. I can give you the general idea here, but expect your experience to be a bit different from what I have outlined.

Step 1: Make Sure Your Computer Can Support SL

SL requires a pretty decent box. It requires a lot of CPU, a lot of memory (at least 512MB), and a modern graphics card. You also need a lot of bandwidth (broadband/DSL is best). You can check your PC, MAC, or even Linux box against the latest system requirements here:


Julia Hathor notes: “Linden Lab’s stated minimum requirements are generally thought (by the SL population) to be grossly inadequate. Any experience with this world will be either frustrated or facilitated by the quality of your computer and connection.”

Step 2: Create Your Account/Avatar

You create your account and avatar in SL by going to the main SL site and selecting Join Now.

http://www.secondlife.com/

Step 3: Pick an Avatar Name

I suggest you give your avatar’s name some serious thought. Your name is not among all the many things you can change in SL. Consider who you want to be in SL and what that person may be named.

People get to know you by your name, and the name you choose says something about who you are (or who you are role-playing). If you get into SL business, your name can quickly become your brand.

I picked my avatar name on a whim, Ansel Gasparini. I loved Ansel Adam’s photography and my wife had nixed the name as an option for our first son, so I figured Ansel it was. Gasparini might imply I am Italian, but in all honesty, I don’t remember why I picked it.

As of this writing, you may specify only a first name. You select from a list of available surnames. There is discussion about selling surnames (like domains), so maybe you will be able to buy your surname in the future.

Step 4: Provide Credit Card Information

You may create an account for free! When you create a free or basic account, you may or may not provide a credit

NOTE

As of this writing, you may specify only a first name. You select from a list of available surnames. There is discussion about selling surnames (like domains), so maybe you will be able to buy your surname in the future.
Getting Started and Getting Help

Step 5: Download and Install the SL Client

You need the SL client, software that you can download from the SL website, to begin. Download the SL client version that is right for your operating system. The client is free to use, and the source code is available as well if you are so inclined to use it.

http://secondlife.com/community/downloads.php

Step 6: Arrive at Orientation Island

Once your account/avatar is created and you have the client downloaded and installed, you can log in and get started in SL. You start on Orientation Island.

Read on.

GETTING HELP

The new resident experience is constantly changing as the SL population grows. A few key things will probably remain constant:

1. Orientation Island: You arrive first on Orientation Island, a small island with several instructional stations that explain the basics of SL. Current residents are not allowed on Orientation Island (except for SL greeters), so take your time and learn or just run on through. “Look Mom, I’m running with scissors!”

2. Help Island: The next stop is either Help Island or a welcome area. Help Island provides more of an SL atmosphere with additional objects, stores, tutorials, and sandboxes (areas to build in) for you to use.

3. Welcome Areas: Once you are through Orientation Island and Help Island, you arrive at a welcome area. These areas are often crowded with other new residents, but also older residents who like to hang out and help. Look out for those ready to exploit your newbieness. They may try to sell you something, get you to go somewhere, or get you to do something you don’t want to do.

Not all SL residents are like this, and you learn more about dealing with these bothersome individuals in Chapter 12.

4. Greeters and Mentors: Greeters and mentors are SL residents who enjoy or specialize in helping new residents get started. You will often find them on Help Island and in welcome areas. Feel free to approach these people and ask them questions or for help. You can tell who they are by looking above their avatar name.

5. F1 Help: The SL client comes with a pretty extensive help system. Press F1 and look for the answers to your questions.
6. **Live Help:** If all else fails, you can try Live Help. This connects you via IM to a volunteer support person (sometimes a Linden employee), who can help you address more technical issues. Live Help is not always manned.

Gwyneth Llewelyn’s (see Figure 1-4) “Beginners’ Guide to Second Life” has this to say about getting help:

Welcome to Second Life! For all of you just starting, I hope you have lots of fun in this virtual world!

My name is Gwyneth Llewelyn, and I’m a Mentor. This is a group of users—almost 1600 by now—who help newcomers to get started. You’ll see them mostly at the Welcome Area—like on the Ahern complex, Waterhead or Plum, where most of you probably entered this world after leaving the Orientation or Help Island, or on one of the public sandboxes: Morris, Cordova, Goguen, Newcomb, Sandbox Island, etc.—places where everybody may freely build (but not sell items!). You can always ask Mentors for help, they are here for that!

If your questions are very technical—mostly connected to objects or a bad/slow connection—you should get in touch with Live Help, an option you have on the Help menu on the top gray bar. They are also users, volunteering their time to answer your questions online. Finally, you may also find Liaisons. These are employees of Linden Lab, the company that runs this virtual world. You’ll notice that all of them have the Linden surname. Lindens may sometimes be very busy answering questions of other players, so be patient if they don’t reply immediately! Think of them as the in-world technical support staff of Second Life. They also have special tools not available to users to fix the most complex problems.

You can find the entire beginner’s guide here and other great stuff at Gwyneth’s Blog:

http://gwynethllewelyn.net/

See her post on First Ever Questions:

http://gwynethllewelyn.net/article125visual1layout1.html

**YOU AND YOUR INVENTORY**

Before we go further, you need to know about one critical SL item and that is your Inventory. When you get started in SL, you already have some really cool stuff including different avatars, outfits, rocks, homes, a go-kart, fireworks, dominos, and so on. All this stuff lives in your Inventory.

Items in your Inventory remain there between logins or until you drag them out. Dragging items from your Inventory into the world or creating objects from scratch using building tools is called rezzing. If you take a basic building class, you’ll often hear, “First, rez a cube.”

You learn more about what’s in your Inventory and how to use it throughout this book. You learn how to build your own items and save them in your Inventory in Chapter 6, “Building Basics.” You learn about managing your Inventory as it grows larger and larger (as it will) in Chapter 12, “Practical Matters: Under the Hood of the Metaverse.”

You open your Inventory using the Inventory button in the lower-right portion of your display, as you can see in Figure 1-5. Your Inventory contains two main folders: the Library folder, which contains everything that comes with SL; and a My Inventory folder, which is the place where all your stuff lives.

Now that you’ve arrived, let’s explore what you can do here.
WHAT DO I DO HERE?

Don't wait for me to tell you. There are no quests or structured play as you might find in a multiplayer game like Ultima On-line or Everquest. You need to find your own way. If you ask for help, there are many who are ready and willing to answer your questions. You might begin by searching for and finding an event or place that interests you.

We can only wish there was an SL travel guide. Most RL travel guides such as Fodor's or Lonely Planet need to be updated every year to keep pace with change. In SL, such a reference would need to be updated daily.

The Second Seeker and Second Tourist blogs are great starting points if you want exploration guidance:

http://www.secondseeker.com/
http://secondtourist.blogspot.com/index.html

Rather than explain what you could do here, I show you a few examples. Is it a definitive list? No. Is it the best of the best? Probably not. But again, I did not set out to write a travel guide. Try the ones you like, ignore the ones you don't, and search for the ones that are missing.

Do let me know when you've found something I should try myself!

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Some really wonderful landscapes have been created in SL. They make you want to stop and just look around. One of the best known is Svarga.

Svarga can be found at http://slurl.com/secondlife/Svarga/128/128/0.

In Figure 1-6, I'm roaming through a forest surrounded by a 100-meter sphere in the Dubia sim. You can find an interesting ruin here, and if you look hard, you may locate a cave as well. Will it be there if you go looking for it? Maybe. Maybe not. Things are not as permanent in SL as they are in RL.

Figure 1-6
The forest in a sphere in the Dubia sim.

SLURL The forest in Dubia can be found at

This SLURL gets you close to the sphere, but you're going to have to search to find it.

In Figure 1-7, I am standing next to a lava flow coming from the mountain above and meeting the sea in a steamy bath in the Chi sim. This sim has lot of surprises.

SLURL The Chi sim can be reached by going to

Figure 1-7
Lava meets the sea in the Chi sim.
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SKYDIVING
There are many activities in SL, and new ones crop up all the time. One of the most fun (at least for me) is to go skydiving (see Figure 1-8). There are several locations where you can skydive, but one that has been around for a while is Abbotts Aerodrome.

While you can buy great skydiving gear such as the trailing smoke you see in Figure 1-8, you can start with free gear at the skydiving shop.

Abbotts Aerodrome can be found at http://slurl.com/secondlife/abbotts/160/152/71.

HORSEBACK RIDING
Figure 1-9 shows my next-door neighbor riding over on horseback for a visit. In fact, you can ride just about any animal imaginable. How about riding an eagle, dragon, or dancing cow? There are many providers of animals to ride; use Search to find them.

In Figure 1-10 you can see me on a manta ray I designed and created. I really need some snorkel gear!

VISITING MUSEUMS, MEMORIALS, AND ART GALLERIES
There are museums, memorials, and galleries to visit in SL. You may even take home a piece of virtual art for your virtual front yard. You visit the International Spaceflight Museum (see Figure 1-11) in Chapter 2.


The Oyster Bay Sculpture Garden is one of my favorite galleries because it’s always changing. I had a Starax statue on loan there for a bit (see Figure 1-12). Yes, you heard me right, a virtual statue on loan to a virtual museum. Figure 1-13 shows Oyster Bay loaded up with resident-built hot air balloons ready for a launch festival. You can build and even fly your own hot air balloon in SL!
What Do I Do Here?

Oyster Bay Sculpture Park and Aquarium can be found at http://slurl.com/secondlife/Oyster/27/176/82.

GAMBLING AND GAMING

If gambling is your thing, there are many places to play casino games such as poker and slots. You can also find games that were created and popularized in SL such as Tringo, a kind of Bingo/Tetris hybrid (see Figure 1-14).

At the time of this writing, gambling in SL is still legal, but it is definitely coming under more scrutiny by the U.S. government and may become illegal by the time this book comes out.

SAILING, SURFING, FLYING, AND RACING

You can surf, sail, fly, race, and even ice-skate in SL, all due to resident-conceived and built vehicles. You learn more about vehicles and how they are built in Chapter 10, “Particles, Vehicles, Animations, and Sculpted Prims.” Figure 1-15 shows Malcolm Sydney catching a ride on Heather Goodliffe’s scripted waves. Check out the Tropical Island Surf Shop for a rental board.
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Tropical Island Surf Shop can be found at http://slurl.com/secondlife/Quan%20Li/194/133/21.

Figure 1-16 shows a sailboat race. You can purchase your own sailing yacht at Jacqueline’s marina, shown in Figure 1-17. There are several other great locations to learn to sail in SL. Make sure to check out the classic flying Tako.

Take this SLURL to Eggar sim:

If go-karts or bumper cars grab you, see Figure 1-18 and accompanying SLURLs.

Go-kart racing can be found at http://slurl.com/secondlife/Igbo/79/233/351.


MEET OTHER NEW PEOPLE

If you just want to hang out and chat with other new residents, The Shelter is a great place. It is new resident friendly and can direct you to various classes in-world. You can see the house rules of The Shelter in Figure 1-19. You can also see the great pool and water slide available if you want to take a dip with new friends (see Figure 1-20).

The Shelter can be found at http://slurl.com/secondlife/isabel/44/244/79/.
DISCUSSION GROUPS

You may also want to find a place with both new and long-time residents to discuss interesting topics. The Benicia Hill Community Center (see Figure 1-21) fits the bill for this. Whatever you want to discuss, you can find a group in SL doing it, and if you can’t find the group, you can start your own!

The Benicia Hill Community Center is at http://slurl.com/secondlife/Benicia/193/74/80.
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HAVE A DATE: DINNER, DANCING, AND THE TITANIC

If you want to do a date up right in SL, you can pull out all the stops and start with dinner. Yes, there is food in SL. Check out Karamel Madison’s Kitchen Korner for a great selection of foods, wines, and other exotic fare (see Figure 1-22). Try preparing a meal at home for a nice surprise.

Next, go dancing. Search events or look for a club playing the music you like. You can meet in the formal attire-only Club Egret, as shown in Figure 1-24. I never dance the Tango in RL as well as I do in SL!

Figure 1-22
Eating food.

Karamel Madison’s Kitchen Korner can be found at http://slurl.com/secondlife/Kitchen%20Korner/203/68/42.

Second, take a trip up to the top of a replica of Seattle’s Space Needle for a view and a cup-a-joe (see Figure 1-23).

The Seattle Space Needle is located at http://slurl.com/secondlife/Miramare/33/119/24.

Why not top off your date with something spectacular, like a visit to the bow of the Titanic for an “I’m on top of the world” moment, SL style (see Figure 1-25).


You can find the Titanic at http://slurl.com/secondlife/Caribbean%20Wave/75/78/27.
NIGHT LIFE AND MUSIC

One of my all-time favorite pastimes in SL is listening to the great live music performers in the wide range of venues. You can dance to the blues of Komuso Tokugawa live from Japan in your own living room (see Figure 1-26). You learn all about SL music and movie making in Chapter 11, “Photography, Music, and Movies.”

ATTEND AN SL BIRTHDAY

Rosedrop Rust is a live performer in SL, and he hosted a great birthday. In SL, birthdays are celebrated on the year of your initial joining as an SL resident. Rosedrop did a reverse roast on all his friends and performed some exotic piano playing (or at least played on an exotic piano), as you can see in Figure 1-27.
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CHILLING
You may just want to chill out, listen to the radio, and watch a sunset or moonrise in SL. There are plenty of places to do it. Figure 1-28 shows moonrise over my own land and an open air gazebo/roundhouse I built.

SHOPPING
Everyone wants to look good in SL, and there is a thriving clothing design industry with shops and malls galore to help you! I could fill a whole book with an SL shopping guide, but you will have to wait for that one. Use Search on Places to find what you’re looking for. Even better, however, is to ask around. If you see someone with something you like, ask that person where he got it.

Stores in SL look a lot like stores in RL. Figure 1-29 shows Ayla Holt’s Men In Action store. This is one of the best spots for hard-to-find good men’s clothing. Just like in RL, the women have waaaay more options!

The ::MIA:: Main Store can be reached at http://slurl.com/secondlife/MIA/165/56/29.

Figure 1-27  Rosedrop Rust’s Babes on Grand.

Figure 1-29  Ayla Holt’s Men In Action store.

Figure 1-28  Unwind by moonlight.

Figure 1-30 shows Calico Creations, a great store to buy an upgrade to your LL-issued hair.


Figure 1-30  Shopping at Calico Creations.
BUILD YOUR OWN STUFF

You can build your own things in SL, and, for me, this is one of the most enjoyable things about SL. Almost everything you see in the world was created by other residents just like you. If you can’t find it, then build it! This book teaches you how, starting in Chapter 6, “Building Basics.”

You learn about the basic building blocks of every object in SL called prims. Prim is short for primitive, which in 3D modeling lingo is the term for basic geometric shapes like cubes, spheres, cylinders, and tori. Prims in SL can be shaped, linked, and textured to form more complex objects.

We also cover some of the really cool SL prim properties like creating local lighting and using flexible prims for things like flags or bushes.

CREATE TEXTURES, CLOTHING, AND SKINS

After you build what you want, you will want to add textures to make it look more realistic or surrealistic. Textures are 2D objects created in software like Photoshop to make things look real in SL. You can use textures to make something look rough, smooth, shiny, or even transparent.

You learn about texturing in Chapter 7, “Advanced Textures and Clothing.” Also in that chapter, you learn how to use textures to create an avatar’s skin and clothing. If you’re interested in designing your own clothing, that is the place to start.

BRING YOUR OBJECTS TO LIFE

Once you’ve built your house, you may want to add a door that opens, or perhaps you want your dragon to follow you around. SL offers a rich scripting language called the Linden Scripting Language (LSL). You don’t have to be a scripter to get started with LSL. You learn the basics of scripting in Chapter 8, “Making the Magic: Scripting Basics.”

CREATE PARTICLES, VEHICLES, ANIMATIONS, AND SCULPTED PRIMS

If you have some background in computer animation, particle systems, physics, or 3D modeling, you may want to try your hand creating some of SL’s more advanced objects and effects. You learn about all of these in Chapter 10.

HOW DO I MAKE MONEY?

So, you’ve explored awhile, made friends, and built a few objects. You’ve collected a huge number of freebies in your Inventory, and now you want to go buy something cool. How do you get money without paying RL dollars?

Well, you can make money in SL, but let me be the first to tell you not to quit your day job! Before you even think about making money, you should first understand the currency you will be using.

Second Life has its own currency called Linden Dollars, abbreviated L$. You can use L$ to buy anything in SL, such as houses, yachts, animations, airplanes, fish, clothing, hair, skin, and sunglasses. You can also purchase land in SL using L$.

Unlike most multiplayer game companies that actively resist the buying and selling of virtual goods, Linden Lab has set up the Linden Exchange, or LindeX, where you can buy L$ with RL dollars and exchange L$ for RL dollars that show up in your PayPal account.

As one might expect, there is a currency exchange rate from virtual dollars to real ones, just like there is from one currency to another in RL. Figure 1-31 shows the exchange rate for September 2006 to March 2006. The L$ value as I write this is approximately 268 L$ to 1 US$.

Figure 1-31 also shows the cost of land charted at L$ per square meter. Land prices have risen quickly where the L$ exchange
rate has remained relatively stable. There is, of course, a lot of variability based on location, location, location. For example, my latest land purchase in February 2007 cost me L$19 per square meter versus the average of L$6 per square meter in the chart. You learn about land ownership and why you might want to purchase land in Chapter 9.

So, back to the topic of how to make money in SL. The easiest way to get money in SL is to buy L$ using RL money. A little goes a long way. You can get a house for US$10, while a pair of jeans may run you 50 cents. But if you’re looking for more of a challenge, you can earn money in SL by getting a job.

Be warned that to make money in SL, you really need to work for it. Just like in RL, there is no free lunch. The next section briefly describes common SL jobs.

SL JOBS

Perhaps the first thing you should know about SL before you think about getting a job is that, unlike typical multiplayer games, in SL there are no character levels, and jobs are not a means to increase your character’s skills. There are no quests or guided play in SL. You are who you are when you join, and you can choose to do whatever you like.

The hype cycle on making money in SL is in full swing, and before you set your hopes too high, be aware that very few people are making a RL living in SL. Some do make a living, and I am inclined to think there will be many more in the future, but doing this is about as extraordinary as becoming a rock star or a football player. You are more likely to make a living in SL by having a RL company hire you to do so. That said, if you’re willing to work hard, you can afford all the cool stuff you want to buy. A more achievable goal, if you own land, is to be able to make enough at your SL job to cover the cost of your usage fees or “tier”—in other words, to make enough to fund your SL.

The needs of SL residents continue to evolve, and the need for specialized skills will follow suit. Therefore, the jobs in SL today may not be the same jobs in the future. For information on SL jobs, check out the Knowledgebase article “Guide to Jobs in Second Life” at http://secondlife.com/knowledgebase/article.php?id=077.

Here is a quick summary of common SL jobs:

- **Animator**: Create animations using Poser and Avimator for all the different things you can do in SL. Learn about how to do this in Chapter 10.
- **Builder**: Build things to sell or for others. Learn about building in SL in Chapter 6.
- **Business Owner**: Decide to create, market, and sell things in SL, including creating your own stores.
- **Couch Potato/Camping Chair**: Some people want your avatar to sit in their space (it increases the published “popularity” of their spot). They will pay you to sit or dance in one spot.
- **Dancer**: Many club owners would like to have dancers (typically female) dance in their clubs. You may be asked to do this with fewer and fewer clothes. If you’re getting started, one perk of this job is that you may be provided with a freebie avatar makeover.
- **DJ**: If you have an audio stream or nice music library, you can DJ at clubs in SL just like you do in RL.
- **Escort**: Escorts in SL will show you around and show you a good time. This is a very high paying profession in SL, if you’re willing to undress and do all (virtually). You will need to learn the subtleties of the trade, find a location, and get some pose balls (animations for avatars).
- **Event Host**: There are music events, weddings, and more serious nonprofit activities in SL. If you know how to draw a crowd and set up the acts, this may be the role for you. Learn a bit about hosting musical events in Chapter 11.
- **Fashion Designer**: Clothing design is H-O-T in SL. Whether you are already there or aspiring, you can make a name for yourself in the competitive field of fashion design.
- **Gambler**: Well, there are casinos in SL and slots. Maybe you can make your living here, but don’t count on it.
• **Landlord:** Many residents are not too interested in locking into monthly land-use fees. Building apartments and renting may be for you.

• **Model:** All the fashion designers need models for their clothes (at least if they don’t have alternative avatars, or alts, that they use for this purpose).

• **Musician:** If you can play, and you have an audio stream, you can play venues in SL. Avoid the mainstream music moguls and play for an international audience. Learn about music in SL in Chapter 11.

• **Real Estate Broker:** Well, as they say, it’s location, location, location. If you can find a deal in SL, buy low, and sell high, perhaps you can make your money buying and selling land in SL.

• **Scripter:** Making the magic in SL often requires some development or scripting skills. Pair up with a builder or texture artist and you may find your path. Learn more about this in Chapter 8 and Chapter 10.

• **Shop Staff:** Sometimes business owners just need a helping hand. They may want you to help people shopping, or they may want you to be a bouncer in their bar.

• **Texture Artist:** Everything in SL boils down to textures. If you are highly skilled in Photoshop, you may want to pair up with builders to take their builds to the next level.

This is by no means a comprehensive list! Part of SL’s appeal is the possibilities for new jobs that are invented every day.

**HISTORY, POLITICS, AND GOVERNMENT**

SL V1.0.0 was released on July 23, 2003. LL published subscriber data, which indicated that in April 2001 there was one registered resident in SL. What a lonely existence it must have been as compared to today. SL already has a rich history for being around such a short time. You can find out quite a bit on the SL history wiki at http://slhistory.org/.

The wiki includes, among other things, the release notes for all SL versions. Figure 1-32 shows a screenshot from the beta version of SL. You can find an interesting article on the alpha version with screenshots at http://archive.gamespy.com/preview/december02/secondlifepc/.

![Figure 1-32 SL beta screenshot.](image)

There has been a string of firsts in SL chronicled in the SL history wiki. A few interesting ones are listed here:

- **First Sim/Region:** Da Boom; **Current Owner:** Rockwell Ginsberg
- **First privately owned region on the mainland:** Indigo; **Owner:** FlipperPA Perigrine
- **First Private Island:** Elysian Island (Cayman)
- **First Sim/Region Auctioned:** Then Island now Avalon; **Winning Bidder:** Fizik Baskerville
- **World Turns a Year Old:** MP3 of Philip Linden’s speech (http://www.slinked.net/slmedia/PhilipLinden-SecondLife1YearAnniversary-20040626.mp3) “OK, testing one, two, three…my gosh it seems like this thing actually works.”

On October 18, 2006, SL reached over 1 million registered users. Many thanks to Gwyneth Llewelyn (http://gwynethllewelyn.net/) for taking the screenshot shown in Figure 1-33 only 5,088 users after the moment. While this was not likely the number of unique human SL users,
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it was a tremendous milestone for LL and was really the point at which the “hockey stick” of SL growth began.

For example, visit Linden Village, which houses the in-world offices of LL employee’s: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Kirkby/177/209/45.

One blog to keep on top of is the Official Linden SL Blog (http://blog.secondlife.com/).

Other informative venues are the town hall meetings, which are usually held to gather feedback on some important topic or explain a decision LL has made.

There are also ample opportunities for you to volunteer your time in SL to help others get started in various capacities such as greeters, mentors, and instructors. You can find in-world locations for volunteers at http://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/Inworld_Locations_for_Volunteers.

AN INTERVIEW WITH CRAIG ALTMAN

Craig Altman (see Figure 1-34) is best known for his couples’ animations, which can be found at his chain of stores called Bits and Bobs. I exchanged Q&A via notecards with Craig. Here is what he had to say about his initial SL experience:

**Ansel Gasparini:** How did you discover SL?

**Craig Altman:** After playing games like Quake online and Ultima Online for 3 years, I was looking to try more friendly games, I tried the Sims online but found very few players, and those that were there were AFK [away from keyboard]. While looking on a Sims online forum to find out if anything happens there, I came across a post by someone talking of SL being better and the post had a link, so I signed up.
An Interview with Craig Altman

AG: What was your initial experience like?
CA: Confusing really, most of the precepts of other online games don’t exist here, you don’t need to eat, you can carry infinite things, you can just go anywhere in a split second, there are no NPCs (non player characters), and their seemed no actual way to play it.

I fell foul of the fact it’s actually frowned upon to drop litter or rez objects wherever you want, a lot of old SL players seem to forget that in most other online games, the land is not owned by a player, and objects dropped just disappear after a short while, in fact it was actually a good thing to drop unwanted things on the ground in Ultima Online, that way other players could pick them up if they needed them.

AG: Why did you decide to stay? When did you decide to buy land?
CA: At that time I was working a night shift, so I didn’t spend a lot of time in SL, but when I did I mostly spent it at events at a club in the game who someone I had met took me to, it was there I met Jenny, we got on really well, she ran events at the club so I would help, yes many use the word “glorified chatroom”, but to me it was nice and relaxing after those other types of games, nothing I needed to do if I did not want to.

It was about 3 months before I owned land, up until then the need for land in SL had confused me, you can carry infinite things and you have no actual need for a house, after a while I realized SL is not really about things you need, its more about making and having the things you could not in real life, rather like “if you could have anything you wanted, what would it be?”

AG: What is the most annoying thing newbies do that they should not do?
CA: That’s a hard one really, as a lot of annoying things that happen are very often unintentional (like me littering others land), if the annoyance is intentional then it applies to all players, it’s by no means only new players that do things like that.

Because SL is so different to other online worlds if a new player offends through not realizing a thing is not the done thing in SL, then how the mature player explains this to them is very important, to mute and ban or react in a hostile manner is likely to make the new player react in kind, he may then “shoot first and ask questions later” to the next player to approach him.

I guess the answer to the question is probably panhandling, often using the word need, do you ever need money in SL?

All online games do have people who ask for money, and often abuse you if you refuse, this I always found funny because in other games basically there is a set way to make money, you either go kill monsters/do quests etc., so any person asking for money in those games is basically saying “I can see you have gone out and spent ages doing what I know you need to do to get money, but I’m lazy so I’d rather you did that and give me it, than I do it myself”.

In SL of course there is no set way to make money, so its more understandable, but in my first months here I never found I needed money really, I did work here as an event host for a short while, but it was more for fun than money, so it’s not need its want, others should not be made to feel guilty about what someone else wants.

AG: Any general advice for new residents?
CA: If you came in because of tales of people making fortunes in SL expecting the streets to be paved with gold you are in for a disappointment, lately it seems the SL is marketed that way, if money is your motive you will find its very much like RL, its a lot of effort.

Also bear in mind that those are real people, don’t act in a way you would not in RL if that person was stood in front of you, it amazes me how having anonymity changes people sometimes.
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SUMMARY

In this chapter, we started a journey together to learn about SL and discover your virtual artist, explorer, and entrepreneur! Now you may have a little better idea about what SL is, what you can do here, and how you might make friends and money as well.

But nothing compares to hands-on experience. In the next chapter we dive right in and start learning how to get around in SL, including how to fly and teleport.

If you have not already created your own SL avatar and gotten in-world, now is the time to do it! See you on the other side!