Contents at a Glance

Introduction  1
CHAPTER 1  Getting Started  5
CHAPTER 2  First-Night Survival  25
CHAPTER 3  Gathering Resources  51
CHAPTER 4  Mining  75
CHAPTER 5  Combat School  91
CHAPTER 6  Crop Farming  115
CHAPTER 7  Farming and Taming Mobs  141
CHAPTER 8  Creative Construction  155
CHAPTER 9  Redstone, Rails, and More  185
CHAPTER 10  Enchanting, Anvils, and Brewing  223
CHAPTER 11  Villages and Other Structures  245
CHAPTER 12  Playing Through: The Nether and The End  263
CHAPTER 13  Mods and Multiplayer  291
Index  317
Table of Contents

Introduction to the Third Edition  1
What’s In This Book  2
How to Use This Book  4
Crafting Recipes  4
There’s More Online...  4

Chapter 1 Getting Started  5
Registering and Downloading  5
Registering a Mojang Account  7
Purchasing Minecraft  8
Launching Minecraft  10
Starting a New Game  13
Choosing a World-Generation Style  14
Singleplayer Game Modes  17
Seeding Your World  19
About Snapshots  20
Controls  21
The Bottom Line  23

Chapter 2 First-Night Survival  25
Surviving and Thriving  25
Heading for the Trees  27
Using Your Inventory  29
Building a Crafting Table  31
Building Some Tools  32
Creating a Shelter  36
The Furnace Is Your Friend  40
Let There Be Light  42
Slumbering with Lumber  44
Tools and Their (Over)Use  47
A Bit About Achievements  47
What Is This “Bonus Chest” You Speak Of?  48
The Bottom Line  50
Table of Contents

Chapter 3  Gathering Resources  51
  Introducing the HUD  51
  Improving Your Tools  56
  Chests: Safely Stashing Your Stuff  58
  Avoiding Monsters  61
  Hunger Management  63
  Your Mission: Food, Resources, and Reconnaissance  64
    Getting Food on the Run  66
    Finding a Building Site  68
  Using the Creative Mode Inventory  71
  The Bottom Line  73

Chapter 4  Mining  75
  Dig Deep, My Friend  75
  The Mining Layer Cake Guide  77
  Lava Lakes and Other Pitfalls  80
  Descending to Layer 11  82
    The 2×1 Ladder Descent  82
    The Straight Staircase  84
    The Spiral Staircase  85
  Layouts for Fast, Efficient Mining  86
  Staying Safe While You Mine  88
  The Bottom Line  90

Chapter 5  Combat School  91
  Introducing the Menagerie  91
    Zombies  92
    Spiders  93
    Skeletons  95
    Cave Spiders  95
    Spider Jockeys  96
    Chicken Jockeys  96
    Creepers  97
    Slimes  97
    Endermen  98
Zombie Pigmen 99
Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog 99
Guardians and Elder Guardians 99
Defensive Mobs 100
Snow Golems 100
Iron Golems 101
The Dogs of War 101
Mob Target Practice 102
Weapons, Armor, and Shields 103
Swordcraft 104
Bows and Arrows 105
Shields 108
Armor-All 109
Color-Coordinating Your Leather 111
Taking Combat Damage and Healing 112
The Bottom Line 113

Chapter 6 Crop Farming 115
Choosing a Crop 115
Cooking with Minecraft 119
Minecraft Bakery 119
Minecraft BBQ 119
Alchemy Eatery 120
Raw Food Diet 120
Eat at Your Own Risk 120
Establishing a Farm 121
Automated Farms 128
Creating a Piston Harvester 132
Sticky Piston Harvesting 135
Creating a Water Harvester 136
Harvesting Other Crops 138
The Bottom Line 140
Chapter 7  Farming and Taming Mobs  141
Farming and Working with Friendly Mobs  141
   Using Leads  145
   Breeding Animals  146
   Dying for Dye?  147
Taming and Riding Horses, Donkeys, and More  148
   Armoring Your Horse  150
   Loading Up the Pack  150
   Riding Pigs  151
Fishing  152
   Ah, the Squid  153
The Bottom Line  154

Chapter 8  Creative Construction  155
Leaving the Cave  155
Building a Custom World  159
Unleashing Your Interior Decorator  161
Building Underwater  169
   Getting Started  172
   Building the Structure  174
Protecting Your Perimeter  176
   Become a Ditch Witch  176
   Mob Pitfalls  178
   Thick as a Brick  179
Making Fireworks  180
The Bottom Line  183

Chapter 9  Redstone, Rails, and More  185
Seeing Red: A Beginner’s Guide  186
   Power Sources and Signals  186
   Redstone Wiring  190
   Powered Blocks  192
   Modifiers  194
      Repeaters  194
      Comparators  197
   Output Devices  198
Chapter 10 Enchanting, Anvils, and Brewing 223

Enchanting Wiles 223
   Creating and Mining Obsidian 225
Crafting Books 228
Casting Enchantments 228
Improving Enchantment Chances with Bookshelves 230
Earning and Managing Experience 232
Sprucing Up Your Weapons 233
Enhancing Your Armor 234
Improving Your Tools 235
Hammering It Out with the Anvil 235

Brewing Potions 237
   Brewing Up a Storm 240
Enhancing Potions 242
The Bottom Line 243

Chapter 11 Villages and Other Structures 245

Village Life 245
Emerald City: Your Ticket to Trade 248
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 11 Hidden Temples and Other Structures 251</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desert Temples 252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungle Temples 252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witch Huts 254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungeons 254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandoned Mine Shafts 255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongholds 255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Monuments 256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nether Fortresses 257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping, or There and Back Again 257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting a Clock 260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bottom Line 261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 12 Playing Through: The Nether and The End 263</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternate Dimensions 263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting to The Nether 266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portal Magic 268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surviving the Nether Fortress 271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nether Mobs 272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The End Game 275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a Stronghold 276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defeating the Ender Dragon 278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beckoning a Beacon 285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bottom Line 289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 13 Mods and Multiplayer 291</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customizing Your Experience 291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the Skin You’re In 292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minecraft Skin Editors 293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miners Need Cool Shoes</strong> 294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Skindex</strong> 294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nowaskan</strong> 294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loading Your New Skin 296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About the Author

Stephen O’Brien is an Australian-born writer and entrepreneur currently residing in Sydney after too many years in Silicon Valley. He has previously written 28 books across multiple editions with publishers such as Prentice Hall and Que, including several best-selling titles. He also founded Typefi, the world’s leading automated publishing system, and invented a new type of espresso machine called mypressi. He has been using Minecraft since its alpha release and remains astounded at the unparalleled creativity it engenders. The first edition of this book was an international bestseller. Stephen is also the author of The Advanced Minecraft Strategy Guide, published by Que.
Dedication

To Mika, for the singular joy that is the blessing of every parent

Acknowledgments

Having spent many years wordsmithing, I have to say that my experience writing the first two editions of this book was one of the most enjoyable projects with which I’ve ever been engaged.

I can point to several reasons.

First, Minecraft truly is an astonishing work of technical art. Its endless limits create a canvas that can only bring joy to a writer’s soul.

Second, the amazing team at Que created a fabulous support network. I must thank Rick Kughen for spearheading the effort; Keith Cline for superb copyediting (any typos, etcetera that remain are entirely my own fault); Tim Warner for the technical edit and many other contributions; Mark Shirar for the cover design; and Seth Kerney for keeping production running just the way it should.

I am also ever grateful to Preeti Davidson for not only everything that makes life as one might always have dreamed, but also for her huge help in proofing the final galleys of this title.

Finally, to you, the readers, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. The first two editions of this book brought delight to many a young (and not so young) Minecrafter’s gameplay, just as I hope this one also does for you.

Thank you all.
We Want to Hear from You!

As the reader of this book, you are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we’re doing right, what we could do better, what areas you’d like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you’re willing to pass our way.

We welcome your comments. You can email or write to let us know what you did or didn’t like about this book—as well as what we can do to make our books better.

*Please note that we cannot help you with technical problems related to the topic of this book.*

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Imagine a world where the possibilities are the limits of your own imagination!

Welcome to Minecraft, one of the most interesting open-ended games ever produced.

From the first moment I started playing this game, back in the beta, to today’s extraordinary experience, Minecraft has developed into a tour de force of absolutely splendid gameplay—one that, with a little help from this book, anyone can enjoy countless hours exploring, creating, and digging.

Before I even thought about writing the first edition of this book, I found it popping up more and more often in random conversations among all age levels—everyone from my 9-year-old’s best friends going on up… way up. Minecraft’s unique open-endedness offers an equally open-ended fascination to people of all ages.

The first edition of this book came at a time where there were few reliable online resources. One could spend hours watching YouTube videos without really going in depth or truly capturing the nuances of the game. And, among all that, there are literally thousands of junk sites trying to trick you into clicking on ads or installing malware.

This third edition continues to fill the gap, bringing together all the key information you need in a single place. Written from the player’s perspective, it takes you through the essentials and then far beyond, with all the background information, crafting recipes, strategies, and ideas you need to make your Minecraft world truly your own. It covers everything from first-night survival to hosting your own multiplayer server.

If you have ever wondered how to sculpt completely customized worlds, explore underwater dungeons, play Minecraft multiplayer in Spectator mode (and more), this edition has you covered.

If you are a parent wondering whether Minecraft is suitable for your own kids, consider that as of 2013, students at Viktor Rydberg school in Stockholm, Sweden, have been taking a mandatory course on Minecraft, teaching them various skills such as

- Environmental issues
- City planning
- Getting things done
Introduction

- Planning for the future
- Interactivity
- Safe online habits
- Building and making objects using your creativity
- Computer skills

To this list, The Atlantic, in a recent article about the benefits to children of playing Minecraft, adds:

The most clearly visible are visuospatial reasoning skills—learning how to manipulate objects in space in a way that helps them create dynamic structures. Visuospatial reasoning is the basis for more abstract forms of knowledge like the ability to evaluate whether a conclusion logically follows from its premises.

Minecraft also helps youth learn how to collaborate to solve problems, and collaborative learning improves critical thinking skills that support motivation for learning.

No matter who you are or how you play, you’ll find Minecraft to be an endlessly fascinating, wonderful, enjoyable world.

What’s In This Book

Survive and thrive in Minecraft with 13 chapters of detailed step-by-step guides, tips, tricks, and strategies. Each chapter in this book focuses on a key aspect of the game, from initial survival to building an empire. Make the most of your Minecraft world today:

- Chapter 1, “Getting Started,” walks you through the steps needed to download and install Minecraft and start a new game, optionally using seeds to control the world generation.
- Chapter 2, “First-Night Survival,” is an essential strategy guide to one of the most challenging times in Minecraft. In this chapter, you learn to craft essential tools and build your first mob-proof shelter, all in less than 10 minutes of gameplay.
- Chapter 3, “Gathering Resources,” teaches you the skills you need to build a permanent base of operations, build better tools, store resources, and find food to stave off hunger. You also learn how to use the built-in GPS so that you can always find your way home, even after extended forays into the wilds.
- Chapter 4, “Mining,” unlocks some of Minecraft’s deepest secrets. This chapter shows you the best tunneling plan to uncover the most resources in the shortest possible time, the essential tools required, and the layers you should dig to uncover everything from basic iron ore to diamonds.
Chapter 5, “Combat School,” will get you ready to tackle any mob, including the creeper. From sword-fighting techniques to armor, this chapter has you covered. You’ll also learn the essential perimeter protection techniques for your home.

Chapter 6, “Crop Farming,” will help you become completely self-sufficient, ensuring that the hunger bar stays full, constantly boosting your health. Learn to hydrate 80 blocks of farm land with a single water block and how to automate your harvests at the touch of a button.

Chapter 7, “Farming and Taming Mobs,” is all about Minecraft’s passive animals, the chickens, pigs, cows, horses, and more that populate its world and provide you with valuable resources. Learn to breed animals, tame ocelots to scare off creepers, and gallop across the world on horseback.

Chapter 8, “Creative Construction,” will help you unleash your inner architect. From grand constructions to inventive interiors, learn about the decorative ways you can use Minecraft’s blocks and items to build the perfect abode.

Chapter 9, “Redstone, Rails, and More,” empowers your world with a host of automated devices. Control redstone power and automated doors, send minecarts on missions, and build stations, stopovers, and more.

Chapter 10, “Enchanting, Anvils, and Brewing,” will have you brewing up a storm. Cast spells, improve your weapons and armor, and fall from great heights with grace.

Chapter 11, “Villages and Other Structures,” is your key to interacting with the other nonplaying characters. Trade your way to better goods, and learn the secrets of the game’s temples and monuments.

Chapter 12, “Playing Through: The Nether and The End,” is the strategy guide you need to get through these tricky sections of the game. Find a fortress fast, get what you need, and then prepare for the Ender Dragon. It’s easy when you know how.

Chapter 13, “Mods and Multiplayer,” shows you how to customize the game, from new character skins to mods that add a host of functionality. And along the way, you also learn how to access multiplayer games and set up a permanent world on your own server for family and friends.
How to Use This Book

Throughout this book, you’ll see that I have called out some items as Notes, Tips, and Cautions—all of which are explained here.

NOTE

Notes point out ancillary bits of information that are helpful but not crucial. They often make for an interesting meander.

TIP

Tips point out a useful bit of information to help you solve a problem. They’re useful in a tight spot.

CAUTION

Cautions alert you to potential disasters and pitfalls. Don’t ignore these!

Crafting Recipes

You’ll also see that I’ve included crafting recipes throughout this book. I’ve included the actual ingredients in the text, so just match the pattern you see to create the item, as shown here for a wooden pickaxe. It’s easy, and you’ll be surprised how quickly you can whip them up after just a few uses.

There’s More Online…

In addition to the information packed between the covers of this book, I’ve put together a complete guide to all the crafting recipes online. Feel free to download. Visit http://www.quepublishing.com/register to register your book and download your free PDF copy.
Gathering Resources

In This Chapter

■ Never get lost. Learn the secrets of the HUD and its hidden GPS.
■ Improve your tools with more durable materials.
■ Safely store your hard-earned resources.
■ Learn the easy way to manage hunger.
■ Build your first outdoor shelter and enjoy the view.
■ Access the full Creative mode inventory.

It might not look like it on the surface, but each Minecraft world is rich with resources. Making the most of them is the next step in getting the most out of the game. In Chapter 2, “First-Night Survival,” you put together a pack of essentials sufficient to last the first night, but this is really just the smallest prequel to the real game, and describing how to find, create, and use other types of resources forms much of this book. This chapter is about building a foundation you can use to launch into the rest of the game. The focus is on a few key points: building an outdoor shelter, finding food to stave off hunger, improving your collection of tools, and building a chest to safely store items. Mastering these processes solidifies your position, makes your base more defensible, allows you to do all sorts of Minecrafty things more efficiently, and helps you set yourself up for longer excursions above and below ground.

The good news is that you already have a base, so you can explore during the day (trying not to lose your way) and head back at night. However, you still need to avoid at least some of the hostile mobs that persist during the day.

Introducing the HUD

Let’s start by taking a look at the Heads-Up Display (HUD)—that collection of icons and status bars at the bottom of the screen. Figure 3.1 shows the HUD as it appears in Survival mode, with all possible indicators displayed. (The Creative mode HUD only shows the hotbar.)
CHAPTER 3: Gathering Resources

FIGURE 3.1 The HUD provides key status indications. Health is all-important, but low hunger also leads to low health, so keep a close eye on both.

1. Armor bar
2. Health bar
3. Experience bar
4. Oxygen bar
5. Hunger bar
6. Hotbar

Each section of the HUD provides a key nugget of information about the health or status of your avatar:

- **Armor bar**—The armor bar appears when you’ve equipped your avatar with any type of armor and shows the current damage absorption level. Each armor icon represents an 8% reduction in the damage you’ll take, so a 10/10 suit of armor reduces the damage you take by 80%, whereas a 1/10 suit absorbs only 8%. Armor becomes less effective the more damage it absorbs, although the rate at which it deteriorates also depends on its material—leather being the weakest and diamond the strongest. While the HUD shows only 10 armor icons, each represents 2 points, making 20 points in all.

- **Health bar**—You also have up to 20 points of health available, represented by the 10 hearts shown. Each time you endure damage—such as from hunger, spider bites, zombie slaps, a fall, being under water too long, and so on—half a heart or more disappears, accompanied by a distinctive click noise. Health and hunger have a complicated relationship. You can read more about this later in this chapter, in the section, “Hunger Management.”

- **Experience bar**—The experience bar increases the more you mine, smelt, cook, kill hostile mobs, trade with villagers, and fish. Your current level is shown in the middle of the bar. You move to the next experience level when it’s full. Experience isn’t generally important until you start enchanting and giving additional powers to items such as swords (see Chapter 10, “Enchanting, Anvils, and Brewing”). Unlike in other role-playing games, experience in Minecraft is more like a currency that you spend on enchantments, so it waxes and wanes. But all experience gained since your last death, even experience you spend on enchantments, counts toward the final score shown on the screen when you die. Killing a mob drops experience orbs that either fly directly toward you or float to the ground, waiting for you to collect them. You can also gain
Introducing the HUD experience by smelting certain items in a furnace and carrying out other activities such as finding rare ores, breeding animals, fishing, and more. Dying, however, drops your experience level to zero, although you can rebuild it a little by picking up your own experience orbs (seven for each level you’ve attained) after you respawn if you can make it back within five minutes.

- **Oxygen bar**—The oxygen bar appears when you are underwater and quickly starts to drop. You can probably hold your own breath for longer! (The world record, at an impressive 22 minutes, is held by Stig Severinsen.) As soon as your oxygen level hits zero, your health starts taking a two-point hit every second, but it resurfaces for just an instant if you hold down the jump key until you’ve reached air once more. There’s no danger with deep dives, either. You can use this ability to do interesting things like building an underwater base. Figure 3.2 shows an example, and you’ll learn how to build your own in Chapter 8, “Creative Construction,” along with some tricks for staying under longer than Stig.

![Figure 3.2](image)

**FIGURE 3.2** Underwater bases are impervious to mob attacks (but watch your oxygen while building one). In fact, the only mobs that spawn underwater outside of the huge ocean monument structures are squids, which pose no danger to you.

- **Hunger bar**—You also have 20 points of hunger available, as well as a hidden value called Saturation. Like armor and health, each hunger bar icon holds 2 points and can reduce by half an icon (that icon is, incidentally, a shank, or the lower part of a leg
of meat) at a time. You’ll learn more about hunger later in this chapter, in the section “Hunger Management.”

- **Hotbar**—These nine slots represent items you can select with the mouse scroll wheel or by pressing the 1–9 keys. Press E to access your full inventory and to change the items in these slots. The white number next to a slot shows that slot’s count of stacked identical items. A durability bar also appears, in green, under each tool’s icon, and it gradually reduces as you use the tool until that tool actually breaks and disappears from your inventory. You’ll have some warning of this because the bar turns red when it’s close to zero. See “Improving Your Tools,” later in the chapter, to learn more about the durability of different materials. Finally, any item you are dual-wielding shows up as an icon to the left of the hotbar.

**TIP**

**Showing Durability Stats in the HUD**

Press F3+H (or fn+F3+H on OS X) to display the current and maximum durability values of all the tools in your inventory. A durability value appears in a ToolTip when you hover your mouse over an item.

**NOTE**

**The HUD Changes When You’re Mounted on a Horse**

The HUD changes when you ride a horse so that it shows the horse’s health in place of your hunger bar. The experience bar also changes to the jump bar. You can learn more about horses and other mountable mobs on page 148 in the section “Taming and Riding Horses, Donkeys, and More.”

In Multiplayer mode, your HUD also displays a chat window in the bottom-left corner. Press T to expand the chat window.

Toggle the entire HUD display off and on by pressing F1. Press F3 with the HUD turned on to view a much more detailed HUD debug screen (see Figure 3.3.)
NOTE

Hiding the HUD in the Xbox/PS3 Editions

You cannot hide the HUD in Minecraft Pocket Edition, but there is an option for doing so on the console editions. Press the Start key and open the Help & Options menu. Scroll down to **Settings > User Interface** and deselect **Display HUD**. There isn’t a quicker way to do this at present.

---

**FIGURE 3.3** The Debug HUD provides a lot of cryptic information but can also help you navigate home. It also provides information about your system, available memory, and more.

1. Your location in blocks east of your original spawn point. Blocks west are shown as a negative value.
2. Your current vertical height in layers above bedrock.
3. Your location in blocks south of your original spawn point. Blocks north are shown as a negative value.
4. The direction you are facing and how moving forward will change the current coordinates.
5. The current biome type.

The coordinates shown in the debug screen are based on the world’s origin, where x=0 and z=0. (y shows your current level above bedrock.) Take note of the current values. If you become lost before you have a chance to build a bed and reset your spawn point, you can always find your way back to your original spawn and, presumably, your first shelter, by facing in a direction that brings both x and y back to those noted values. If you sleep in a bed and reset your spawn, turn on the debug screen and write down the coordinates shown before you head out. This is particularly useful if you plan to use the teleport cheat (/tp xxx yyy zzz).
Incidentally, just so we’re clear: Cheating in Minecraft doesn’t carry with it the negative connotations of cheating in most other contexts. If you have enabled cheats in the game menu, type a forward slash (/) followed by the cheat text to customize the running state of the game. Make sure to press Enter or Return after you type your cheat to submit the command to Minecraft.

When you need to return to those earlier coordinates—and I should warn you that this can take some experimentation and a little practice—turn and take a few steps and note the change in values of your current coordinates. Shift those x and z values back toward the coordinates you originally recorded. You’ll probably wander around a bit, but eventually you’ll get there.

Improving Your Tools

Wooden tools wear out fast, so it’s best to upgrade your kit as quickly as possible.

Each type of material has a different level of durability. Think of durability as the number of useful actions the tool can perform before wearing out completely and disappearing from the inventory. I’ve included the durability in parentheses after each material’s description, listed from least to most durable:

- **Gold (33)**—Although it is the least durable material, gold happens to be the most enchantable material, so you can imbue it with superpowers (see Chapter 10). But given that gold is about five times as rare as iron, and it can be used to craft many other useful items, I wouldn’t recommend using gold for tools.

- **Wood (60)**—Wood is easy to obtain, especially in an emergency above ground, but wooden tools can’t mine the more valuable ores, such as iron, gold, diamond, and redstone. You will need a pickaxe of any kind to mine stone because digging with bare hands will just break the stone down into unusable dust.

- **Stone (132)**—With over twice the longevity of wood, stone makes a great starting point for more serious mining and other activities. Stone tools are built from cobblestone blocks, which in turn come from stone. That may seem a little circuitous, but it will feel natural enough after a while.

- **Iron (251)**—Iron is your go-to material. It is found between bedrock, the lowest possible level in The Overworld, and up to about 20 levels below sea level. Iron is used for building all kinds of tools, implements, and devices, including armor, buckets (for carrying water, lava, and milk), compasses, minecarts, and minecart tracks. All these require at least iron ingots, which you obtain by smelting iron ore in a furnace; each block of ore produces one ingot. Ingots and many other items are found scattered throughout the world in village chests, mineshafts, dungeons, and strongholds. You might also find them dropped from killed zombies and iron golems, if you dare tackle them.
- **Diamond (1562)**—Diamond is the strongest material of all but also the most expensive, given that it is relatively rare (about 25 times as scarce as iron). A diamond pickaxe is the only kind that can successfully mine obsidian, a material required for creating the portal to reach The Nether dimension. Use iron pickaxes as much as possible and switch to diamond only when you need to mine obsidian. You’re better off saving any diamonds you find for weapons, armor, and enchantment tables.

**NOTE**

**Different Materials for Different Items**

Durability applies to all tools, weapons, and armor, although there are differences in the materials you use to make different items. For example, you can craft leather armor from leather, and you can make stone tools from cobblestone, but you can’t make armor from stone or tools from leather.

**CAUTION**

**Don’t Let Tools Wear Out**

Try not to let a tool become so worn that it actually breaks down completely and disappears. Instead, place two of the same type of worn tools in the crafting grid to combine their remaining strength into another and give it a second shot at busting blocks. Consider it recycling, Minecraft style. You can also repair tools and weapons at an anvil found in the smithy in villages, or at one you’ve crafted yourself.

The recipes for crafting tools from all materials are identical, except that you can replace the head of an implement with the material of your choice:

- To make a stone pickaxe, you need two wooden sticks for the handle and three cobblestone blocks.
■ Replace the planks with stone in the crafting recipes for the axe and the sword to create stone versions of those.

■ You might also want to add a shovel to your collection, because using one is about four times faster than using hands to harvest softer materials such as dirt, gravel, sand, clay, and snow, and using a shovel helps some of those blocks deliver resources rather than just dig them out.

As you craft more items, you need to find a place to store the ones that you don’t need to use right away. You should also store other resources and food you come across on your travels. That comes next.

**Chests: Safely Stashing Your Stuff**

Whenever you head away from your secure shelter, there is always a reasonably high risk of death. Creepers, lava pits, long falls—they can all do you in. While your new life when you respawn is only a moment away, the real danger is that any items you’ve collected will drop from your character’s inventory at the place of death. You’ll have about five minutes of real time before they vanish forever. If the site of your death proves impossible to return to, your hard-earned tools and supplies will be lost.

You can think of a chest as an insurance policy. Put everything you don’t need in a chest before you embark on a mission, and those things will be there when you get back or after you respawn.

The natural place to leave chests is in your shelter, but you can also leave them elsewhere, perhaps at a staging point as you work deep in a mine, or far afield outside. Mobs will leave them alone, and the only real risk you face is leaving them out in the open on a multiplayer server where they can be ransacked by other players, or that you could get blown up by a creeper while you’re rummaging around inside.

Chests come in two sizes: single and double. A single chest can store 27 stacks of items. A double chest, which you create by placing two single chests side by side, stores up to 54.
stacks of items. Given that a stack can be up to 64 items high, that’s an astonishing potential total of 3,510 blocks in a crate that takes just $2 \times 1$ blocks of floor space. If you’ve ever followed the *Doctor Who* TV series, consider chests the TARDIS of storage! Or in Dungeons & Dragons terms, it’s a Bag of Holding. Figure 3.4 shows a chest in one of my personal hidey holes.

![Figure 3.4 A furnace at left and a storage chest at right.](image)

Create a chest at your crafting table with eight blocks of wooden planks arranged around the outside, leaving a space in the middle.

![Crafting](image)

Place the chest and then right-click it to open it. You can then move items back and forth between your inventory and the chest. In Figure 3.5, I’ve transferred to the chest all the items I don’t need for the next expedition.
FIGURE 3.5 Chests act as an insurance policy for your items so that they aren’t lost if you die. Use the inventory shortcuts you learned earlier to quickly move items between your active inventory and the chest’s storage slots.

THE CONNECTED CHEST

Chests are undoubtedly useful; it’s difficult to survive without them. But you can’t transport a chest’s contents with you.

Enter the Ender Chest, which is like storage in the cloud. An Ender Chest isn’t cheap to make. You’ll need eight obsidian blocks, obtained by combining lava with water, or via regular mining and caving, and one Eye of Ender, collected by combining Ender Pearls from downed Endermen with Blaze Powder in the crafting table—and you can’t get Blaze Powder without first heading to The Nether dimension. So what’s so good about Ender Chests? All of them access the same virtual chest, sharing all contents between them. Say that you’ve built multiple dwellings across your vast world, and you have some items—a few favorites—that you’d like to be able to access anywhere you go. Place an Ender Chest in each of your dwellings, and any items that you place in any of the chests become available in all others. It’s like quantum travel without all that entanglement business.
Before you head out, you should know two other things: how to avoid monsters and how to deal with hunger. Read on.

Avoiding Monsters

There’s a key difference between the Minecraft world on the first day and the second day. In a word, mobs (hostile ones, to be specific). Mobs spawn only in dark areas, and some only during the night, so if you are outside during your first day and stay in well-lit areas, you’ll be reasonably safe. By the second day, however, mobs have had a chance to build their numbers and wander about. It’s not very likely you’ll encounter them on day 2, but it’s best to be prepared.

There are over two dozen types of hostile mobs: Enderman, Iron Golem, The Wither, Creeper, Ender Dragon, Zombie, Baby Zombie, Zombie Villager, Endermite, Giant, Blaze, Slime, Wither Skeleton, Ghast, Silverfish, Witch, Human, Skeleton, Spider, Cave Spider, Wither Skeleton Jockey, Magma Cube, Spider Jockey, Zombie Chicken Jockey, Guardian, and Elder Guardian. Of those, here are the ones you might meet on your second day outside:

- **Zombies**—Zombies burn up in sunlight but can still survive in shadows or rain or when wearing helmets, and, of course, they’re fine in caves all hours of the day or night. They are relatively easy to defeat, and if any come after you from out of the shadows, just head to a well-lit area and keep your distance while they burn up in the sun.

- **Skeletons**—Skeletons also burn up in sunlight unless they’re wearing helmets, and they can survive at any time in lower light conditions. They’re quite deadly with a bow and arrow and best avoided for now.

- **Spiders**—Spiders come in two varieties: large and cave. You’ll probably only see the large spiders at this stage. They are passive during the day but become hostile in shadows and can attack at any time if provoked. They’ll climb, they’ll jump, and they are pretty darn fast. Fortunately, they’re also easy to kill with some swift sword attacks. The blue spiders are the smaller, poisonous cave spiders. They live only in abandoned mineshafts underground, but they do so in substantial numbers. If you suffer from arachnophobia, I don’t have much good news for you, except that with a little time, you’ll get used to them, and they won’t seem quite so nasty. If you see a skeleton riding a spider, you’ve just encountered the rather rare spider jockey.

- **Creepers**—Creepers have a well-earned reputation as the Minecraft bad guys. They are packed to their green gills with gunpowder, and they’ll start their very short 1.5-second fuse as soon as they are within three blocks of you. Their explosion can cause a lot of real damage to you, nearby structures, and the environment in general. If you hear a creeper’s fuse—a soft hissing noise—but can’t see it, run like heck in the direction you’re facing. Remember to sprint by double-tapping and holding your W key. With a little luck, you’ll get three blocks away, and the creeper’s fuse will reset. Creepers are usually
best dealt with using a ranged attack from a bow and arrow. However, if you sprint at them with an iron or diamond sword and take a swipe at just the right moment, you can send them flying back out of their suicidal detonation range, causing the fuse to reset. Most creepers despawn around noon, leaving the afternoon generally free of their particular brand of terror.

- **Slimes**—Slimes spawn in the swamp biome and in some places underground. They initially spawn as small, medium-sized, or quite large gelatinous green blocks and are more than capable of causing damage. Attacking eventually breaks them up into two to four new medium-sized slimes. These slimes can still attack but are relatively easily killed, at which point they spawn a further two to four tiny slimes each. These last slimes don’t cause any attack damage but may still push you into peril if you’re unlucky.

If you come across a lone spider, a zombie, or even a slime, that’s as good a time as any to get in some sword practice. Just point your crosshairs at the creature and strike with the left mouse button. Keep clicking as fast as you can, and you’ve got a very good chance of killing the mob and picking up any items it drops before it lands too many blows. Try to avoid the other mobs for now.

**TIP**

**Switch to Peaceful Mode to Get a Break**

Getting mobbed by mobs? Click Esc to open the Options window and change your difficulty level to Peaceful. This despawns all hostile mobs and allows your health to regenerate.

Use these tips to survive and avoid mobs:

- Stay in the open as much as you can, and avoid heavily wooded areas if possible.
- Most mobs have a 16-block detection radar. If they can also draw a line of sight to your position, they will enter pursuit mode. (Spiders can always detect you, even through other blocks.) At that point, they’ll relentlessly plot and follow a path to your position, tracking you through other blocks without requiring a line of sight. Pursuit mode stays engaged much farther than 16 blocks.
- Keep your sound turned up because you’ll also hear mobs within 16 blocks, although creepers, as their name suggests, are creepily quiet.
- Avoid skirting along the edges of hilly terrain. Creepers can drop on you from above with their fuse already ticking. Try to head directly up and down hills so you have a good view of the terrain ahead.
- Mobs are quite slow, so you can easily put some distance between them and yourself by keeping up a steady pace and circling around to get back to your shelter. Sprint mode will leave them far behind.

**CAUTION**

**Sprinting Makes You Hungry**

Sprint mode burns up hunger points, so try to use it only in emergencies (and if you have food ready).

---

**Hunger Management**

Hunger plays a permanent role in Minecraft, much as in real life. While it’s only possible to starve to death on Hard difficulty, hunger lowers your hit points, leaving you vulnerable, so it’s always important to ensure that you have the equivalent of a couple of sandwiches packed before heading deep into a mine or going on a long trek.

Hunger is a combination of two values: the one shown in the HUD’s hunger bar and a hidden value called *saturation*. The latter provides a buffer to the hunger bar and decreases first. In fact, your hunger bar doesn’t decrease at all until saturation reaches zero. At that point, you see the hunger bar start to jitter, and after a short while, it takes its first hit. Saturation cannot exceed the value of the hunger bar, so with a full hunger bar of 20 points, it’s possible to have up to 20 points of saturation. However, a hunger level of 6 points also provides only a maximum of 6 points of saturation, and that makes you vulnerable.

You’ll find some key information about the hunger system here:

- On Easy and Normal Survival modes, there is no need to worry too much about hunger because your character won’t drop dead from it. If you’re close to home and pottering around in your farm or constructing some building extensions, you’re fairly safe, but your health starts to drop. Eat something as soon as you can to fill your hunger bar and start rebuilding your health.

- Sprinting isn’t possible when the hunger bar drops below 6 hunger points, or 3 shanks, as shown in the HUD.

- Keeping a relatively full stomach at 18 hunger points (9 shanks in the HUD) allows health to regenerate at 1 point (half a heart) every 4 seconds.

- Health depletes if the hunger bar drops to zero, increasing the risk of dying in one of the many imaginative ways Minecraft has on offer (see Figure 3.6).
CHAPTER 3: Gathering Resources

FIGURE 3.6 The effects of extreme hunger on Normal difficulty: Health depletes to just one point, or half a heart.

1. Hunger at zero
2. Health at one point

Some limits apply to the amount that health can drop, according to the difficulty level. On Easy, health cannot deplete from hunger further than 10 points, or half the full quotient. On Normal, it drops to 1 point, which is an extreme level of vulnerability. On Hard difficulty, there are no limits, so don’t ignore the hunger bar, or death from starvation could be just moments away. See “Getting Food on the Run,” later in this chapter, to help avoid this.

Your Mission: Food, Resources, and Reconnaissance

Your second day is the perfect time to gather food and other resources and to take a quick survey of the landscape surrounding your first shelter. In particular, you want to find somewhere suitable for your first outdoor shelter. Keep an eye out for any of the following:

- **Passive mobs**—Chickens, pigs, rabbits, sheep, and cows all provide a ready source of food, raw or cooked, although cooked meat restores more hunger points than raw. Cows also drop leather that you can use for your first armor, and when you have an iron bucket, you can milk cows, and milk gives you an instant cure for poisoning. Chickens also lay eggs, so gather any that you find.

- **Natural harvest**—The harvest includes cocoa pods, apples, sugar cane, carrots, wheat, and potatoes (found in villages), as well as seeds. Knock down tall grass to find seeds (see Figure 3.7). When you plant the seeds, they mature into wheat within five to eight day/night cycles. From wheat, it’s easy to bake bread, one of the simplest but most effective sources of food, especially if there are no passive mobs nearby. See Chapter 6, “Crop Farming,” for more on agricultural techniques.

- **Construction resources**—You can mine plenty of cobblestone quite safely by digging into the terrain to expand your original shelter. But some other resources will definitely come in handy:
  - **Wood**—Wood is always useful, both for crafting and for fueling your furnace, where you can convert it into charcoal and then create torches.
Sand—You can smelt sand into glass blocks, which you can then use as is or turn into glass panes to allow daylight into your shelter.

Coal—Coal is used to fuel your furnace and make torches. You can often see it in veins on the surface of the walls of small caves or on the sides of cliffs. If you can safely get to it, make like a miner and dig it out.

![Figure 3.7](image.png) Knock down grass to gather seeds to plant wheat, an easy crop to farm. You can then turn the wheat into bread—a handy food if you're stuck with no other options.

**TIP**

**Making Use of Bones**

The morning sun burns skeletons, leaving bones behind that you can craft into bone meal. Bone meal acts as a fertilizer, helping your crops grow faster—much faster! You can also use bone to tame wolves (changing them into dogs), which gives you an extra level of protection. Chapter 7, "Farming and Taming Mobs," has a lot more information on breeding and taming mobs in Minecraft.

Back to your mission. Start early, heading out with a stone sword at the ready, just in case. If you are low on wood, swing an axe at a few nearby trees.

Move carefully so that you don't lose your bearings. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and the clouds always travel from east to west, so you can always at least get your bearings. The sun also appears as a face (a recent addition) that is upside down in the east and right-side up in the west. Following a compass cardinal point (north, south, east, or
west) using the sun and clouds as a reference can reasonably and accurately lead you away and back home again.

**TIP**

**Finding Your Way**

It's easy to become lost in Minecraft. Run helter-skelter from your base, chase a herd of livestock, discover a natural cave system, or take a shot across the sea like that famed Norseman Leif Eriksson. It's all part of the Minecraft charm. But don't become Columbus in the process.

A few quick tips:

- When you're able, craft a compass. It takes redstone and iron, and both are relatively easy to obtain with some assiduous mining. The only problem with a compass is that it's not a GPS; it always points to your original spawn point in the world. Think of that point as the magnetic north pole. Sleeping in a bed resets your spawn point but not your compass, so this method falls out of date as soon as you move to new dwellings and update your spawn point. You can also use a cheat code `/spawnpoint`, to reset your spawn point.

- Also, obtaining a compass is the first step in crafting a map. A compass is actually much more useful to your quest when crafted into a map; see "Mapping, or There and Back Again" on page 257.

- Don't forget that you can always use the built-in GPS that's available through the debug screen; see "Introducing the HUD" on page 51 earlier in this chapter.

**Getting Food on the Run**

If you are getting dangerously hungry, head to the nearest equivalent of a fast food outlet—a passive mob—sword at the ready. Your best bet is to look for cows and pigs. Each cow drops up to three pieces of raw meat when killed, with each piece restoring 3 hunger units and 1.8 in saturation, making for an excellent target of opportunity. Kill sheep to gather up to two pieces of raw mutton. You can also eat raw chicken and rabbits, but there's a 30% chance of developing food poisoning from them.

Rotten meat harvested from zombies is guaranteed to give you a stomach ache, but there is a quick fix. Cure any type of food poisoning by drinking milk obtained with a bucket from a cow. You can then eat any amount of poisoned meat, gain its restorative benefits, and cure the whole lot with one serving of milk. In other words, keep that rotten flesh the zombies drop just in case you need a quick top-up, and chase it down with a gulp of milk. (You can also feed rotten flesh to tamed dogs to keep up their health with no fear of them suffering any ill effects.)
Unless you are desperate, though, it is actually much better to take the time to cook all your meat first. There’s less health risk, and you’ll end up restoring more hunger and saturation points. It’s therefore quite handy to always carry a furnace in your inventory, along with fuel. Think of it as a camping stove and cooler chest. When you’ve finished cooking, break down the furnace with a pickaxe, and it floats back into your inventory. If your tastes run to cookouts over an open fire, you can kill and cook pigs, chickens, rabbits, and cows in one blazing swoop by setting the ground beneath them on fire with a flint and steel. To do this, right-click on the ground, not the animal. Just take care that you don’t do this anywhere near that fantastic wood cabin you just spent the last three weeks building. Fire can leap up to four blocks away.

**NOTE**

**Fishing in the Sea of Plenty**

Unlike hostile mobs, mobs such as chickens, cows, sheep, and pigs don’t spawn on their own, so consider them a nonrenewable resource if you kill them in the wild. You’re better off breeding them in a farm so they can be harvested and readily replaced. Fish, in contrast, are unlimited in quantity and very plentiful, especially if you fish when it’s raining. By the way, your hunger bar never decreases when travelling by boat, making it the perfect opportunity to get in a spot of fishing. You also will never get food poisoning from chomping on raw fish. And they come pre-filleted. Sushi, anyone? Fishing is also something of a lucky dip, as you will pull up different types of fish and have a slim chance of hooking other valuable items such as saddles. See Chapter 7 for more information on saddles and slipping on some spurs.

**TIP**

**Let Them Eat Cake**

What’s the quickest way to fill your hunger bar? Eat cake! Unlike in another well-known game, Minecraft’s cake is not a lie. Each full cake provides up to 6 slices, each worth 1.5 hunger points, or 9 in total, and it’s less resource intensive than creating golden apples. However, as in the real world, it won’t last. The nutrients are lacking, so cake doesn’t provide any saturation benefit. Make sure you eat some more nutritional foods such as protein as your hunger bar starts to top out to ensure that you also get that extra boost. A balanced diet is important in Minecraft, too!

Finally, if you simply cannot find mobs, your hunger bar has dropped to zero, and your health has plummeted to half a point, consider at least planting a wheat field and waiting it out in your shelter for the wheat to grow so you can harvest it and bake bread.
There's one final option if you're desperate: dying. If you are near your spawn point, place all your items in a chest and then find some quick way to die, such as drowning, falling, or mob baiting. You respawn back in your shelter with full health, a restored hunger bar, and all your possessions waiting for you. Get dressed, fully equipped, and head out there to try again.

Finding a Building Site
As you scout around, keep an eye out for a new building site. It doesn't have to be fancy or even particularly large. A 6×5 space manages just fine, and even 6×4 can squeeze in the basics. You can also level ground and break down a few trees to clear space. I did this in Figure 3.8. The site is located just up the hill from the first dugout, overlooking the same lake and river system.

![Figure 3.8](image)

A nice, flat, elevated building site after clearing some trees and filling some holes in the ground with dirt.

I usually prefer space that's a little elevated because it provides a better view of the surroundings, but it's perfectly possible to create a protected space just about anywhere. You may even decide to go a little hybrid, building a house that's both tunneled into a hill and extending outside.

**TIP**

**Light Those Caves**
Check for any caves or tunnels close to your site's location. If they aren't too big, light them up with torches to prevent mobs from spawning inside and wandering out during the day. Or you can just block their entrance for now.
So, what can you build on this site? Figure 3.9 shows a basic structure. It takes 34 cobblestone blocks that you dig out of the first shelter and 12 wood blocks for the roof, which you obtain by cutting down the three trees that were occupying the site.

**FIGURE 3.9** The layout for a small cobblestone cabin using 46 blocks, roof not shown. The sharp-eyed will notice that it can be reduced in width one space further, but the extra space is worth the cost of the four blocks.

You can build the roof from almost any handy material, including dirt, cobblestone, or wood. Avoid blocks that fall down, such as gravel and sand. A two-block-high wall keeps out all mobs except for spiders. Spiders can easily scale two blocks, but an overhang on the wall keeps them out as they can’t climb upside-down. However, it’s easier to just add a roof, especially if there are trees nearby that the spiders can climb up and use as springboards to jump straight into your dwelling. (Yes, it’s happened to me more than once. Having a large hairy spider drop on your head at night is not for the faint of heart.) Figure 3.10 shows the finished hut with a few torches on the outside to keep things well lit.

**TIP**

No Housing Codes in Minecraft

The roof in Figure 3.10 rests right on the lip of the inner wall. You can’t directly build a roof like this from scratch. First, place a block on top of the wall and then attach the inner block for the roof. Remove the first block, and the inner block floats. Attach new blocks to that to build out the roof structure. It won’t pass a building inspection in the real world, but it certainly works in Minecraft.
FIGURE 3.10 The finished hut—basic but serviceable. And it’s spider proof. Although there is a large gap above the door, in Minecraft’s geometry, the door fills the entire space, keeping the mobs out.

Building a wall even two blocks high can take a little bit of fancy footwork. Some basic techniques help:

- Place your walls one layer at a time. Put down the first layer and then jump on top to place the second.
- If you fall off your wall, place a temporary block on the inside of your structure against the wall and use it to climb back up. You can remove it when you’re finished.
- Use pillar jumping if you need to go higher. While looking directly down, press the spacebar to jump and then right-click to place a block underneath you. You land on that block instead of the one below. Repeat as often as necessary. To go back down, dig out the blocks from directly underneath you.
- Hold down the **Shift** key as you work around the top of a tall wall so you don’t fall off. You can even use this technique to place blocks that are normally beyond sight on the side of your current layer.

See Chapter 8 for more building techniques and ideas.
TIP
Topping Your New Shelter

You might want to consider building a pillar and platform on top of your new shelter. This can help you survey your terrain and provides an easy-to-see landmark when you’re further afield. Put some torches on top because mobs can spawn on any platform, even those that are quite small, and you don’t want to poke your head up through the platform only to discover a creeper on a short fuse.

Using the Creative Mode Inventory

Minecraft’s resources fall into several primary categories. Some of them are a natural early focus as you improve your position from first-night survival. Others come into more focus as you get further through the game, gear up for your exploration of The Nether and The End dimensions, and become more creative with all that Minecraft has to offer. You can view all the possible tools and resources by opening your inventory in Creative mode, as shown in Figure 3.11. The categories that follow correspond to the tabs running across the upper and lower sections of the Creative mode inventory.

FIGURE 3.11 Creative mode inventory provides access to the full set of resources and tools.
TIP

Turn On Cheats

Turn on cheats when you start a new world to quickly jump between different gameplay modes. Type `/gamemode creative` (or `/gamemode 1`) and `/gamemode survival` (/gamemode 0) to move between the main types.

Here’s a quick summary of the different resource categories:

■ **Building Blocks**—Building blocks are used, as you might expect, for construction, including housing and almost anything else. Build a bridge for your redstone rail. Construct a dam. Elevate a farm above a level that won’t get trampled by mobs or put up a fence. Build a skyscraper or reconstruct a monument. Minecraft provides a large number of primary blocks—such as cobblestone, gravel, wood, and dirt—that can be harvested directly, but things definitely become more interesting once you start creating secondary types of blocks from primary materials. You can store many items more efficiently (for example, by converting nine gold ingots into a single gold block) and climb more efficiently by crafting stairs instead of jumping up and down blocks on well-traveled routes. Building blocks are punny enough—the building blocks of creativity.

■ **Decoration Blocks**—Decoration blocks are something of a catchall category. Generally, they are things you can use to make your constructions more interesting. Some of them are just visual, such as carpet, whereas others—such as crafting tables, chests, and the bed that keeps you safe at night—provide vital functions.

■ **Redstone**—Redstone is an almost magical resource. You can use it to build powered circuits—quite complex ones—and then activate pistons to automatically harvest a farm plot, set up traps, open and close doors, and much much more. The limits are set only by your imagination. Redstone is also used to craft powered rail tracks and a range of other useful items, such as a compass and clock. See Chapter 9, “Redstone, Rails, and More,” for more information.

■ **Transportation**—Transportation is a small category but one that’s a lot of fun and very useful. It includes powered and unpowered rails, minecarts, a saddle, a boat, and anything else related to moving yourself and other items around. There are enough options there to enable you to build everything from massive transportation systems to incredible roller coasters.

■ **Miscellaneous**—Miscellaneous contains a range of useful and obscure items. You’ll find the buckets quite handy for setting up new water and lava sources, and you can use the eggs to spawn most of the mobs, populate a farm, and more.
■ **Search Items**—This category isn’t for items, per se, but instead allows you to quickly locate particular items by using free-text search.

■ **Foodstuffs**—This category contains the full range of edibles, including the enchanted form of the golden apple, the rarest edible in the game. Take a few of these with you the next time you think you’ll be in a tight spot, and you may just be able to make it through that moaning zombie horde.

■ **Tools**—Tools can be wielded as weapons, but not very effectively. They are, however, great for digging, chopping, and hoeing. You can use flint and steel to set Nether Gates on fire. You’ll also find shears for stripping the wool from sheep, a fishing rod, and a few enchanted books that can add special powers to your tools.

■ **Combat**—Combat provides your weapons and armor, as well as the remaining enchanted books that relate to combat items.

■ **Brewing**—The Brewing tab contains all possible potions and a number of rare ingredients that don’t fit into other categories. Potions are incredibly handy. Caught outside at night? The Potion of Night Vision triples the brightness to almost daylight conditions. You can learn more about brewing in Chapter 10.

■ **Materials**—Materials is the final catchall category, along with the miscellaneous and decoration blocks. However, it differs because it is composed of secondary items that are derived from other actions. For example, killing a chicken can drop feathers, and you’ll need those for the fletching on arrows unless you gather them from skeletons. Grow wheat to get bushels that can be used to tame horses, donkeys, and mules.

■ **Survival Inventory**—Here is where you can equip your avatar with clothing and other items to take into Survival mode if you so choose. (Remember that you can do this from a Creative session by simply typing `/gamemode survival`.) Survival mode inventory also contains any items you were carrying when you switched to Creative mode. (It is empty if you started your world in Creative mode.) You can shift items between the Creative mode inventory and your Survival mode inventory. Any items you drag down to the hotbar are common across both inventories. Remove items from your Survival mode inventory by dragging them down to the square on the lower right that shows an X.

**The Bottom Line**

Congratulations! You’ve now learned everything you need to know to monitor your health, improve your tools for better longevity, avoid getting lost on your travels, and create your first mob-proof outdoor shelter.

These are the keys to Minecraft. Just remember to head back to your chest often to store the valuables you’ve gathered. Or build other chests further afield.

The next chapter is all downhill: It will take you deep into your first mine.
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Symbols

2x1 ladder descent, mining and, 82

A

abandoned mineshafts, 255-256
accounts, Mojang passwords, 8 registering, 7-8 security, 8
achievements, 47-48 activator rails, 217
ads (pop-up), downloading resource packs, 299
Advanced Strategy Guide to Minecraft, 132
Adventure mode, 17
airlocks, crafting, 39
alchemy recipes, 120
Alex (character skin), 292
Allow Cheats setting (Create New World screen), 13
Amplified world type, 15
anchor blocks, 192
AND gates, 210-211
animals, 141
breeding, 143-146
sheep, 147
cats, 144
chickens, 143
crafting arrows, 106
defences, 142
cows, 143
donkeys, 143, 148
jumping with, 149-150
packing, 150
riding, 148
taming, 148
establishing farms, 141-144
fences, 142
fish, 67, 152
herding, 144
horses, 143
armor and, 150
jumping with, 149-150
leading, 146
riding, 148
taming, 148
hostile mobs and safety, 145 jumping with, 149-150 leading, 143-146 flying while leading, 145
mooshrooms, 143
mules, 143
jumping with, 149-150
packing, 150
riding, 148
taming, 148
ocelots, 144
pack animals, 150
pigs, 143
riding, 151
rabbits, 144
as resources, 64-67
riding, 54, 148, 151
sheep, 143
breeding, 147
dyeing wool, 147
speeding up growth of, 144
squid, 153
taming, 143, 148
wolves, 143
anvils
combining two items with, 237
crafting, 235-236 enchantments, 237
placement of, 236
renaming items, 237
repairing items, 236
apples, 120
Aqua Affinity enchantment, 234
architectural plans, finding, 158
armor, 103-104
crafting
  color, 111
  leather, 109
  recipes, 110-111
  requirements, 109
critical hits, 104
damage absorption, 109
durability bar, 47, 54
enchantments, 234
End survival checklist, 275
horses and, 150
Nether survival checklist, 266
armor bar (HUD), 52
Armor slots (inventory), 29
arrows
crafting, 105-106
End survival checklist, 275
fighting, 107
Nether survival checklist, 267
skeletons, 95, 106
arrow slits, building, 180
ATLauncher, 300
attacking
  Peaceful mode, resting via, 62
  swords, fighting with, 62
automated farms, 128-129, 132
  crop selection, 130
  harvesting, 130
  nondestructive harvesters, 138-139
  piston harvesters, 132-134
  sticky piston harvesters, 135
  water harvesters, 136-138
  automatic doors, building, 200-204
avoiding mobs, 62-63
awkward potions, 240-241
axes, crafting, 34
underwater bases, mob attacks, 53
basins, 251
beacons, 285-288
BeastsMC multiplayer server, 311
beds
crafting, 44-45, 162
End, The, 266, 276
Nether, The, 266
taking with you, 47
villages and, 247
wool, crafting, 45
bedside tables, building, 162
beef
cooking steak, 119
raw, 120
Beijing, China, 157
biomes
changing, 28
choosing, 14-16
Deep Ocean, Ocean Monuments, 256-257
islands, first-night survival, 28
Large Biomes option, 245
oceans, first-night survival, 28
resetting, 28
trees
  first-night survival, 27
  lumberjacking, 28-29
blacksmiths in villages, 249
baked potatoes, 119
bakery recipes, 119
Bane of Arthropods enchantment, 233
banners, building, 168-169
barbeques
  building, 167
  recipes, 119
barricades, building, 271
bases
  mining bases, setting up, 88-89
Blast Protection enchantment, 234
blaze rods
brewing potions, 238
finding, 266
Nether, The, 266, 272
blaze spawners, 272
blazes in The Nether, 273
blocking attacks with swords, 105
blocking off areas (mining), 81
blocks
anchor blocks, 192
cobblestone
furnaces, crafting, 41
huts, building, 69
mining, 64
Nether survival checklist, The, 267
powered blocks, 192
Command Block, 308-309
dimensions of, 16
floating blocks, 158
Monster Egg blocks, 277
Netherbrick, 270
Nether quartz, 270
Nether, The
barricades, building, 271
survival checklist
note blocks as output devices, 200
obsidian
End survival checklist, 275
Nether Portals, building, 268
Nether survival checklist, 267
powered blocks, 192
buttons, 192
levers, 193
two block rule, 193
redstone blocks, 188
scale of, 157
signs, placement of, 162
snow blocks, 267
soft blocks, building
underwater, 171, 175
sponge blocks, 175
wood blocks, 267
boats, crafting, 153
bobbers (fishing), 152
bone meal, 65
in farming, 125
bones
farming, benefits in, 125
as resources, 65
bonus chest
contents of, 49
explained, 48-49
Bonus Chest setting (Create New World screen), 13
books
crafting, 228
enchantment tables, 228
storing enchantments, 231
bookshelves
building, 167
enchantments, 230-231
bottles, crafting, 240
bowls, crafting, 140
bows and arrows
crafting, 105-106
End survival checklist, 275
fighting, 107
Nether survival checklist, 267
branch mines, 86-88
bread, 119
crafting, 67
breaking your fall while mining, 83-84
breeding animals, 143-146
sheep, 147
brewing potions, 237
awkward potions, 240-241
blaze rods, 238
bottles, crafting, 240
brewing stands, building, 240
Creative mode inventory, 73
negative potions, 243
Nether wart, 238-241, 272
positive potions, 241-243
soul sand, 238-239
testing potions, 239
buckets

crafting, 76
mining and, 76
building, 155. See also
crafting
arrow slits, 180
automatic doors, 200-204
barricades, 271
beacons, 288
brewing stands, 240
enchantment
bookshelves, 230-231
enchantment tables, 224
books, 228
casting enchantments, 228-230
obsidian, 225-228
eamples of, 155-157
fantasy trees, growing, 163
fireworks, 180-182
fountains, 165
griefing, 158
hedges, growing, 163
hoppers, 220-221

interior design
banners, 168-169
BBQ, 167
beds, 162
bedside tables, 162
bookshelves, 167
chairs, 162
dining tables, 162
doors, 165

fireplaces, 167
floors (raised/lowered), 167
indoor plants, 163
item frames, 164
netting, 166
paintings, 165
stained objects, 166
wall clocks, 165
wall maps, 165
location, determining, 157, 172
multiplayer rules, 158
Nether Portals, 268
perimeters, 176
arrow slits, 180
ditches, 176-177
lighting, 178
mobs, 178-179
towers, 178
walls, 179
pits
mobs, 178-179
pressure plates, 179
plans, finding, 158
planter boxes, 164
ponds, 166
pools, 166
resource packs, 156
scale of, 157
security
arrow slits, 180
ditches, 176-177
lighting, 178
mobs, 178-179
perimeters, 176-180
pits, 178-179
pressure plates, 179
towers, 178
walls, 179
signs, placement of, 162
sliding doors, 204-206
tennis courts, 166
tool enchantments, 235

tracks
halfway stations, 219-220
mobs, protecting tracks
from, 220
powered rails, 217-218
T-junctions, 218
zig zags, 217

underwater, 169, 174-175

Creative mode, 169
doors, 172
enchantments, 176
flooding, 175
island spawn points, 171
ladders, 172
lighting, 171-173
location, 172
oxygen, 172
required equipment,
170-171
security, 176
signs, 172
soft blocks, 171, 175
Survival mode, 170
vandalism, 158
villages, building next to, 157
walls, 179
water, building on/under, 157
floating blocks, 158
building sites
housing codes, 69
roof, building, 69
walls, building, 70
buildings
building blocks, 72
decoration blocks, 72
huts, building, 69-70
lighting, 68
overhangs, spiders and, 69
redstone, 72
sites, finding, 68
butchers in villages, 249
buttons, 188. See also pressure plates
automatic doors, 200
powered blocks, 192
buying Minecraft, 8-9
gifting, 10

C

cabins. See huts
cake, 67, 119
cardinal directions, 65
carrots, 117, 120
carts, 212-213
destroying/reusing, 215
hopper minecarts, 214
powered minecarts, 214-215
rails, 185
activator rails, 217
detector rails, 189, 217
normal rails, 216
powered rails, 216-218
stations, 218
storage minecarts, 214
TNT minecarts, 214, 217
tracks, building
halfway stations, 219-220
mobs, protecting tracks from, 220
powered rails, 217-218
T-junctions, 218
zig zags, 217
trains, minecarts as, 215
underground rails, 215
casting enchantments, 228-230
cats (ocelots), 144
cattle, 143
cooking steak, 119
leather, obtaining, 109
raw beef, 120
caverns, 251
caves
crafting shelter from, 36
doors, importance of, 93
lighting, 68
mining existing caves, 75
cave spiders, 61
fighting, 95-96

chest, building, 162
changing
biomes, 28
character skins, 292-293, 296
Minecraftskins website, 294
needcoolshoes website, 294
nowaskin website, 294
character skins, 291-292
Alex, 292
changing, 292-293, 296
skin editor websites
Minecraftskins, 294
needcoolshoes, 294
nowaskin, 294
Steve, 292
charcoal
crafting, 39
furnaces, fueling, 42
chat window (HUD), 54
cheats
Allow Cheats setting (Create New World screen), 13
enabling, 56
entering, 14
seeding, 19
spawning, 44
turning on, 72
/XP, 232
chests, 58
bonus chest
contents of, 49
explained, 48-49
chests

Bonus Chests setting (Create New World screen), 13

Ender Chests, 60, 264

Crafting, 59-60

End blocks, crafting, 165, 260

Chests, making, 59-60

closing doors, 38

Crafting, 165, 260

Closing doors, 38

Coal, 65

charcoal, crafting, 39

charcoal, crafting, 39

Cobblestone

Crafting, 41

Cobblestone

Cobweb, netting, 166

Cocoa beans, growing, 116

Cold biome, 16

Colors

Armor, crafting, 111

Dyeing, 147

Combat. See also Fighting

Armor, 103-104

Crafting, 109-111

Critical hits, 104

Damage absorption, 109

Bows and arrows

Crafting, 105-106

Target practice, 107

Combat category

(Creative mode inventory), 73

creepers, 97

defending against, 113

critical hits, 104

damage, healing, 112

dogs, 101-102

Ender Guardians, 99-100

Endermen, 98

Hostile mobs, 92

Iron golems, 101

Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog, 99

Peaceful mode, resting via, 62

Shields, 108

Skeletans, 95

Spider jockeys, 96

Slimes, 97-98

Snow golems, 100

Spiders, 93-94

Cave spiders, 95-96

Spider jockeys, 96

Sprinting and, 105

Swords

Blocking attacks, 105

Crafting, 104

Damage, 105

Fighting with, 62

Weapons, 103-104

Bows and arrows, 105-107

Critical hits, 104

Shields, 108

Swords, 104-105

Zombies, 92-93

Zombie Pigmen, 99
combustion enchantments, 233, 287
combat strategies, Ender dragon, 278-282
combining enchantments/items with an anvil, 237
Command Block, 308-309
commands
cheats, 14
/fill, 158
/gamemode survival, 103
/spawnpoint, 112
/summon, 102
/XP, 232
comparators, 197
compare mode (comparators), 197
compasses, crafting, 66, 258
configuring new games, 13
construction, 155. See also building; crafting
arrow slits, 180
automatic doors, 200-204
barricades, 271
beacons, 288
brewing stands, 240
of buildings
building blocks, 72
decoration blocks, 72
huts, 69-70
lighting, 68
overhangs, spiders and, 69
redstone, 72
sites, finding, 68
enchantment bookshelves, 230-231
enchantment tables, 224 books, 228
casting enchantments, 228-230
obsidian, 225-228
examples of, 155-157
fantasy trees, growing, 163
fountains, 165
griefing, 158
hedges, growing, 163
hoppers, 220-221
interior design
banners, 168-169
BBQ, 167
beds, 162
bedside tables, 162
bookshelves, 167
chairs, 162
dining tables, 162
doors, 165
fireplaces, 167
floors (raised/lowered), 167
indoor plants, 163
item frames, 164
netting, 166
paintings, 165
stained objects, 166
wall clocks, 165
wall maps, 165
location, determining, 157, 172
multiplayer rules, 158
Nether Portals, 268
perimeters, 176
arrow slits, 180
ditches, 176-177
lighting, 178
mobs, 178-179
towers, 178
walls, 179
pits
mobs, 178-179
pressure plates, 179
plans, finding, 158
planter boxes, 164
ponds, 166
pools, 166
resource packs, 156
scale of, 157
security
arrow slits, 180
ditches, 176-177
lighting, 178
mobs, 178-179
perimeters, 176-180
pits, 178-179
pressure plates, 179
towers, 178
walls, 179
signs, placement of, 162
sliding doors, 204-206
tennis courts, 166
tool enchantments, 235
tracks
  halfway stations, 219-220
mobs, protecting tracks from, 220
powered rails, 217-218
T-junctions, 218
zig zags, 217
underwater, 169, 174-175
  Creative mode, 169
doors, 172
enchantments, 176
flooding, 175
island spawn points, 171
ladders, 172
lighting, 171-173
location, 172
oxygen, 172
required equipment, 170-171
security, 176
signs, 172
soft blocks, 171, 175
  Survival mode, 170
vandalism, 158
villages, building next to, 157
walls, 179
water, building on/under, 157
  floating blocks, 158
contents of bonus chest, 49
controls
directional keys, 27
discarding inventory items, 31
E key, opening inventory, 29
Esc key, 27
fn key (Mac OS X), 23
left-handed options, 21
list of controls, 21-22
Shift key
  pausing on ladders, 82
  sneaking around hazards, 88
sprinting, 61
viewing durability stats, 54
viewing HUD, 54
cookies, 119
cooking
  food, 119
    alchemy, 120
    bakery, 119
    BBQ, 119
  meat, 67
cows, 143
cooking steak, 119
leather, obtaining, 109
raw beef, 120
crafting. See also building
  airlocks, 39
  anvils, 235-236
armor
  color, 111
  leather, 109
  recipes, 110-111
  requirements, 109
beds, 44-45
boats, 153
books, 228
bottles, 240
bowls, 140
bows and arrows, 105-106
bread, 67
buckets, 76
charcoal, 39
chests, 59
  Ender Chests, 60
clocks, 260
compasses, 66, 258
crafting table, 31-32
doors, 37-38
emergency shelters, 40
fireworks, 180-182
furnaces, 41
heat sources, 39
hoses, 116
hoppers, 221
light sources, 39, 42-43
maps, 257-260
multicrafting, 38
pillar jumping, 40
planks, 31
PlayStation edition, 33
pocket edition, 33
shelter, 36-37
  doors, 37-38
  emergency shelters, 40
  heat sources, 39
  light sources, 39, 42-43
shortcuts, 38
signs, 81
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sticky pistons</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swords</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>axes</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>durability</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handles</td>
<td>32-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pickaxes</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shovels</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swords</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wearing down</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>torches</td>
<td>42-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weapons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bows and arrows</td>
<td>105-106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swords</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wool</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xbox 360 edition</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting grid (inventory)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crafting table</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crafting</td>
<td>31-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first-night survival</td>
<td>31-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create New World screen</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative mode</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inventory</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brewing</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>building blocks</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combat</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decoration blocks</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foodstuffs</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materials</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miscellaneous</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moving items to Survival</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mode inventory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>redstone</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>searching</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tools</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>underwater</td>
<td>building, 169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creepers</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defending against</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fighting</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gunpowder and</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swimming and</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical hits (combat)</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crop farming</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>automated farms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128-129, 132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crop selection</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harvesting</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nondestructive harvesters</td>
<td>138-139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piston harvesters</td>
<td>132-134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sticky piston harvesters</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water harvesters</td>
<td>136-138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bones and</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carrots</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choosing crops</td>
<td>115-118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cocoa beans</td>
<td>116-117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>establishing farms</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>block to crop ratios</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bone meal</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficult terrain</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fences</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth cycles</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harvesting</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lighting</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>location</td>
<td>121-122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planting</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raised beds</td>
<td>126-128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saving crops</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>122-124, 127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fences</td>
<td>116, 127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greenhouses</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth cycles</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harvesting</td>
<td>126-127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piston farms</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoes</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lighting</td>
<td>116, 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melons</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minecraft updates and</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piston farms</td>
<td>128-129, 132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crop selection</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harvesting</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nondestructive harvesters</td>
<td>138-139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piston harvesters</td>
<td>132-134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sticky piston harvesters</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water harvesters</td>
<td>136-138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potatoes</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pumpkins</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raised beds</td>
<td>116, 126-128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saving crops</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeds</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planting</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-sufficiency</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sneaking and</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sugar cane</td>
<td>116-118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tending farms, 116
underground farms, 116, 139
wheat, 115, 118
growth cycles, 125
harvesting, 126-127
crosshairs (bows and arrows), targeting with, 107
curing food poisoning, 66
current, vertical, 206-207
current ore layer, checking, 82
Customized mode, 159
Good Luck preset, 160
presets, 159
settings, 161
customizing Minecraft, 291
launchers, 10
mods, 291
defining, 299
finding, 306
Forge mods, 300-302
installing, 301-302
jar files, 303
multiple mods, using, 299
Not Enough Items website, 304
permanent effects of, 300
prebuilt packs, 300
Progressive Automation website, 305
removing, 302
restoring games, 300
Ruins website, 304
Too Many Items website, 303
VoxelMap website, 305
zip files, 303
resource packs, 291, 296
Dokucraft, 297-298
downloading and pop-ups, 299
Faithful 32, 298
installing, 296-298
Ovo’s Rustif, 298
pixels per texture, 298
skins, 291-292
Alex, 292
changing, 292-293, 296
Minecraftskins website, 294
needcoolshoes website, 294
Novaskin website, 294
Steve, 292
damage
armor, damage absorption, 109
healing, 112
swords, 105
dandelions, dyeing and, 147
dangers in mining, 80-81
Dante, influence on The End and The Nether, 274
daylight sensors, 188
death, respawning after, 112
debug screen (HUD), 54-55
decoration blocks, 72
Deep Ocean biome, Ocean Monuments, 256
defense
barricades, building, 271
creeper attacks, 113
doors, importance of, 93
Ender dragon, defeating, 278-282
spiders, walls, 94
defensive enchantments, 234
defensive mobs, fighting
iron golems, 101
snow golems, 100
demo (Minecraft), time span, 5
Depth Strider enchantment, 234
underwater, building, 176
desert temples, 252-253
destroying/reusing minecarts, 215
detection systems
daylight sensors, 188
detector rails, 189, 217
tripwires, 188-190
detector rails, 189-190, 217
diamond (material type), 57
difficulty settings, 18
Peaceful mode, 62
Survival mode
   Easy option, 18
   Hard option, 19
   Normal option, 18
   Peaceful option, 18
digging permanent watering holes, 124. See also mining
dimensions
   of blocks, 16
   End, The, 26
   Nether, The, 26
   Overworld, 26
dining tables, building, 162
directional keys, 27
directions, navigating, 65
disabling spawners, 251
discarding inventory items, 31
dispensers, 138
   as output devices, 200
displaying
   achievements, 47-48
   durability stats, 47, 54
ditches
   building, 176-177
   tunnels and, 177
dogs, 101, 143
   feeding, 144
   fighting, 101-102
puppies, speeding up growth of, 144
skeletons and, 102
Dokucraft resource pack, 297-298
donkeys, 143
   HUD changes while riding, 54
   jumping with, 149-150
   packing, 150
   riding, 148
taming, 148
dos
   airlocks, crafting, 39
   automatic doors, building, 200-204
   caves and tunnels, 93
   crafting, 37-38
   interior design and, 165
   iron doors, 39
   Nether survival checklist, 267
   opening/closing, 38
   as output devices, 199
   sliding doors, building, 204-206
   swinging doors, 201
   underwater, building, 172
double chests, 58
down, digging straight down, 80
downloading
   Minecraft, 8-10
   resource packs, pop-ups and, 299
drinking potions, 241
   Dry/Warm biome, 16
dual-wielding weapons, 104
dungeons, 254-255
durability
defined, 56-57
diamond, 57
gold, 56
iron, 56
stone, 56
tools
   crafting, 57
   improving, 56-57
   wearing down, 57
wood, 56
durability bar, 47, 54
dye from squid ink, 153
dyeing
   colors, 147
dandelions and, 147
   lapis lazuli ore and, 147
   roses and, 147
   wool, 147
dying, restoring health, 68

E
earning
   achievements, 47-48
   XP, 232
Easy option (Survival mode), 18
hunger, 63-64
Efficiency enchantment, 235
eggs, collecting Ender dragon egg, 284
E key, opening inventory, 29
Ender crystals, Ender dragon and, 279
Ender Dragon, 265, 277
defeating, 278-282
egg, collecting, 284
Endermen, 278-279, 284
Ender Pearls, 98
Eyes of Ender, 98
Endermen, 274
Ender Pearls, 266
Endermen and, 98
End, The, 26, 263
Dante’s influence on, 274
Ender Chests, 264
Ender crystals, 279
Ender dragon, 265, 277
defeating, 278-282
egg, collecting, 284
Endermen, 278-279, 284
Ender Pearls, 98
Eyes of Ender, 98
fighting, 98
Endermotes, 274
Ender Pearls, 266
Endermen and, 98
End, The, 26, 263
Dante’s influence on, 274
Ender Chests, 264
Ender crystals, 279
Ender dragon, 265, 277
defeating, 278-282
egg, collecting, 284
Endermen, 278-279, 284
Ender Pearls, 98
Eyes of Ender, 98
fighting, 98
Ender Pearls, 98, 266
Ender Poem, 284
End Portals, 278

Eyes of Ender, 98,
265-266, 275-278
navigating, 265
silverfish spawners, 277
sleeping in, 266, 276
strongholds, finding,
276-277
survival checklist,
275-276
trading versus fighting,
266
End User License
Agreement (EULA), 312
enemies. See mobs
enhancing potions,
242-243
entering cheats, 14
equipment
End survival checklist,
275
Nether survival checklist,
266-267
Esc key, 27
EULA (End User License
Agreement), 312
evenly distributing items in
inventory, 31
experience bar (HUD),
52-53
experience points (XP)
earning, 232
enchancements, 223, 229
managing, 232
exploding minecarts. See
TNT minecarts
Eyes of Ender, 265-266, 275-278
Endermen and, 98
eyes (spider), 121
fermented spider eye, potions and, 242
as food, 94

F

F3 key, checking current ore layer, 82
Faithful 32 resource pack, 156, 298
falling, mining and, 80, 83-84
fantasy trees, growing, 163
Far Lands or Bust website, 16
farmers in villages, 249
farming, 115
animals, 141
breeding, 143-147
cats, 144
chickens, 142-143
cows, 143
donkeys, 143, 148-150
establishing farms, 141-144
fences, 142
fishing, 152
herding, 144
horses, 143, 146-150
hostile mobs and safety, 145
jumping with, 149-150
leading, 143-146
mooshrooms, 143
mules, 143, 148-150
ocelots, 144
pack animals, 150
pigs, 143, 151
rabbits, 144
riding, 148, 151
sheep, 143, 147
taming, 143, 148
wolves, 143
tined farms, 128-129, 132
crop selection, 130
harvesting, 130
nondestructive harvesters, 138-139
piston harvesters, 132-134
sticky piston harvesters, 135
water harvesters, 136-138
bones and, 125
carrots, 117
choosing crops, 115-118
cocoa beans, 116-117
emeralds, 250
establishing farms, 121
animals, 141-144
block to crop ratios, 122
bone meal, 125
difficult terrain, 121
fences, 127
growth cycles, 125
harvesting, 127
lighting, 125
location, 121-122
planting, 123
raised beds, 126-128
saving crops, 126
water, 122-124, 127
fences, 116, 127
greenhouses, 128
growth cycles, 125
harvesting, 126-127
piston farms, 130
horses, crafting, 116
lighting and, 116, 125
melons, 118
Minecraft updates and, 122
piston farms, 128-129, 132
crop selection, 130
harvesting, 130
nondestructive harvesters, 138-139
piston harvesters, 132-134
sticky piston harvesters, 135
water harvesters, 136-138
potatoes, 118
pumpkins, 118
raised beds, 116, 126-128
saving crops, 126
seeds, 116
planting, 123
self-sufficiency, 116
sneaking and, 126
sugar cane, 116-118
tending farms, 116
underground farms, 116, 139
wheat, 115, 118, 250
growth farming, 125
harvesting, 126-127
farmland blocks, 116
Feather Falling enchantment, 234
Feed the Beast, 300
feeding wolves, 144
fences
animals, 142
farming, 116, 127
gates, as output devices, 199
fermented spider eye, potions, 242
fighting. See also combat
armor, 103-104
crafting, 109-111
critical hits, 104
damage absorption, 109
blocking attacks, swords, 105
bows and arrows
crafting, 105-106
target practice, 107
combat category (Creative mode inventory), 73
combat enchantments, 233
creepers, 97
critical hits, 104
defensive enchantments, 234
dogs, 101-102
Elder Guardians, 99-100
Endermen, 98
hostile mobs, 92
iron golems, 101
Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog, 99
Peaceful mode, resting via, 62
shields, 108
skeletons, 95
spider jockeys, 96
slimes, 97-98
snow golems, 100
spiders, 93-94
cave spiders, 95-96
spider jockeys, 96
sprinting and, 105
swords, 62
blocking attacks, 105
crafting, 104
damage, 105
weapons, 103-104
bows and arrows, 105-107
critical hits, 104
shields, 108
swords, 104-105
zombies, 92-93
Zombie Pigmen, 99
/kill command, 158
finding
blaze rods, 266
building sites, 68
End strongholds, 276-277
mods, 306
Nether fortresses, 270
villages, 248
fire, cooking meat, 67
Fire Aspect enchantment, 233
Fire Protection enchantment, 234
Fire Resistance potion, 241
fireplaces, building, 167
fireworks, crafting, 180-182
first night, surviving
crafting
axes, 34
beds, 44-45
crafting table, 31-32
furnaces, 41
heat sources, 39
light sources, 39, 42-43
pickaxes, 34
shelter, 36-40
shovels, 35
swords, 35
torch, 42-43
first-day tasks, 25-26
inventory, checking, 29-31
island biomes, 28
ocean biomes, 28
perimeter structures as protection, 39
trees, 27
lumberjacking, 28-29
wood, gathering, 27-28
fish
cooking, 119
pufferfish, 121
raw, 120
fishing, 67, 152
boats, crafting, 153
rain and, 152
Flame enchantment, 233
flint
arrows, crafting, 106
mining, 107
Nether Portals, 268
Nether survival checklist, 267
floating blocks, 158
flooding, building
underwater, 175
floors (raised/lowered), building, 167
flying, leading animals while, 145
fn key, 23
food
animals, 64-67
bowls, crafting, 140
bread, crafting, 67
brewing, Creative mode inventory, 73
cake, 67
cooking, 67, 119
alchemy, 120
bakery, 119
BBQ, 119
End survival checklist, 275
fishing, 67
foodstuffs category (Creative mode inventory), 73
harvesting, 64
wheat, 67
health and, 63
hunger
Easy mode, 63-64
Hard mode, 64
health, 63
hunger bar (HUD), 53, 63
Normal mode, 63-64
saturation, 63
meat, rotten meat and zombies, 93
mining and, 76
mushroom stew, creating, 140
Nether survival checklist, 267
poisonous food, 120-121
raw food, 120
spider eyes, 94
vegetables, 64
food poisoning, curing, 66
Forge mods, 300-301
installing, 301-302
fortresses (Nether), 257
finding, 270
survival tips, 271-272
Fortune enchantment, 235
fountains, building, 165
frames (item), building, 164
free Minecraft demo version, time span, 5
fueling furnaces, 42
furnaces
crafting, 41
fueling, 42
minecarts with, 214-215

G

Game Mode selector
(Create New World screen), 13
game modes
Adventure mode, 17
Creative mode, 17
difficulty settings, 18
Hardcore mode, 17
Survival mode, 17
Easy option, 18
Hard option, 19
Normal option, 18
Peaceful option, 18
game options, configuring
The Nether options, 270
/gamemode survival command, 103
games
new
biomes, choosing, 14-16
configuring setup, 13
creating worlds, 13
naming worlds, 13
selecting game mode, 13
world generation style, choosing, 14
pausing, 27
gates
AND gates, 210-211
NOR gates, 210
NOT gates (inverters), 208
OR gates, 208
as output devices, 199
gathering resources, 65
gems, lapis lazuli, 78
Generate Structures setting (Create New World screen), 13
ghasts, 269-272
gifting Minecraft, 10
glowstone
glowstone dust, potions, 242
Nether, The, 270
underwater, building, 171-173
golden apples, 120
golden carrots, 120
golden rule of Minecraft, 80
gold (material type), 56
golems
iron golems, fighting, 101
snow golems, fighting, 100
villages and, 246
Good Luck preset (Customized mode), 160
gravel
arrows, crafting, 106
mining, 107
Nether survival checklist, 267
greenhouses, 128
griefing, 158
grill recipes, 119
growing. See also farming hinges, 163
indoor plants, 163
trees (fantasy), 163
growth cycles (farming), 125
guardians, Elder Guardians, 99-100
gunpowder
creeper and, 97
potions, 242

piston harvesters, 132-134
sticky piston harvesters, 135
water harvesters, 136-138
wheat, 67
Haste enchantments, 287
Heads Up Display. See HUD
healing damage, 112
Healing potion, 241
health
food and, 63
hunger and, 63
restoring by dying, 68
health bar (HUD), 52
heat sources, crafting, 39
hedges, growing, 163
herding animals, 144
Herobrine, 292
hiding HUD, 55
hills, crafting shelter from, 36
Hive multiplayer server, The, 311
horses, crafting, 116
home, returning to, 55-56
hoppers
building, 220-221
hopper minecarts, 214
as output devices, 200
horses, 143
armor and, 150
HUD changes while riding, 54
jumping with, 149-150
leading, 146
leather, obtaining, 109
riding, 148
taming, 148
hostile mobs. See mobs
hosting
LAN parties, 307
multiplayer servers, 307, 312-315
hotbar (inventory), 30, 54
mining, 80
moving items between main storage area and hotbar, 31
Nether survival checklist, 267
houses
building blocks, 72
decoration blocks, 72
housing codes, 69
huts, building, 69-70
overhangs, spiders and, 69
platform, adding, 71
redstone, 72
roof, building, 69
cells, building, 70
HUD (Heads Up Display), 51
armor bar, 52
chat window, 54
debug screen, 54-55
durability stats, viewing, 54
experience bar, 52-53
health bar, 52
hiding, 55
hotbar, 54
hunger bar, 53, 63
oxygen bar, 53
riding animals, HUD changes while riding, 54
hunger
cooking food, 119
alchemy, 120
bakery, 119
BBQ, 119
Easy mode, 63-64
food
bread, 67
cake, 67
Hard mode, 64
health and, 63
hunger bar (HUD), 53, 63
Normal mode, 63-64
poisonous food, 120-121
raw food, 120
saturation, 63
sprinting and, 63
huts, 254
building, 69-70
overhangs, spiders and, 69
hydration
farming, establishing farms, 122-124, 127
permanent watering holes, digging, 124
water harvesters, 136-138
indoor plants, growing, 163
Infinity enchantment, 233
ink, squid, 153
installing
mods, 301-302
resource packs, 296-298
interior design
banners, 168-169
BBQ, 167
beds, 162
bedside tables, 162
bookshelves, 167
chairs, 162
dining tables, 162
doors, 165
fireplaces, 167
floors (raised/lowered), 167
indoor plants, 163
item frames, 164
netting, 166
paintings, 165
signs, placement of, 162
stained objects, 166
wall clocks, 165
wall maps, 165
inventory, 29. See also resources
Armor slots, 29
Crafting grid, 29
Creative mode, 71
- brewing, 73
- building blocks, 72
- combat, 73
- decoration blocks, 72
- foodstuffs, 73
- materials, 73
- miscellaneous, 72
- moving items to Survival mode inventory, 73
- redstone, 72
- searching, 73
- tools, 73
- transportation, 72
- discarding items from, 31
- evenly distributing items, 31
- first-night survival, 29-31
- hotbar, 30-31, 54
  - moving items between storage area and hotbar, 31
- Inventory slots, 30
- main storage, moving items between hotbar and, 31
- opening, 29
  - mob attacks and character vulnerability, 32
- picking up items, 31
- placing items in inventory, 31
- removing items from, 31
- stacking items, 30
- storage area, 30

Survival mode, moving items to Creative mode, 73
- inverters (NOT gates), 208
- Invisibility potion, 241-243
- iron (material type), 56
- iron anvils, crafting, 235-236
- iron bars, 267
- iron doors, 39, 267
- iron golems
  - fighting, 101
  - villages and, 246
- iron ingots, 267
- iron trapdoors, 199
- islands
  - first-night survival, 28
  - spawn points, building underwater, 171
- item frames, building, 164

jumping
- donkeys and, 149-150
- horses and, 149-150
- mules and, 149-150
- jungle temples, 252-253

K
- Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog, fighting, 99
- killing animals, 66
- Knockback enchantments, 233

L
- ladders
  - 2x1 ladder descent, mining and, 82
  - End survival checklist, 275
  - pausing on, 82
  - underwater, building, 172
- lamps
  - bedside tables and, 162
  - redstone lamps, 199
- LAN parties (multiplayer games), 307-308
- lanterns
  - Nether, The, 267, 269
  - perimeters, 178
  - underwater, building, 173
- lapis lazuli, 78
  - dyeing and, 147
- Large Biomes world type, 14, 245
large spiders, 61
launching Minecraft
custom launchers, 10
logins, 11
Minecraft Launcher, 9
passwords, 11
steps in, 10-12
usernames, 11
lava, fueling furnaces, 42
lava lakes
mining and, 80, 87
Nether, The, 269
lava pools, mining
obsidian, 225-228
leading animals, 143-146
flying while leading, 145
leads, 98
leather
armor, color, 111
obtaining, 109
left-handed control
options, 21
levers, 189
powered blocks, 193
librarians in villages, 249
lighting
beacons, 285-288
bedside tables and, 162
caves and tunnels, 68
crafting, 39, 42-43
farming and, 116, 125
fireworks, 180-182
mines, 81
Nether, The, 267, 269-271
minecarts, 212-213
perimeters, 178
torches for mining, 76
underwater, building, 171-173
Linux Minecraft,
downloading, 10
logins, 11
loops, repeater, 211-212
Looting enchantment, 233
lost
avoiding
compasses, crafting, 66
debug screen (HUD), 55-56
while mining, 80
lowered floors, building, 167

M
Mac OS X
fn key, 23
Minecraft, downloading, 10
magma cream, 98
magma cubes, 273
main storage (inventory), moving items between hotbar and, 31
managing XP, 232
mapping
compasses, crafting, 258
numbering maps, 259
villages, 248
zooming in/out maps, 259
maps
crafting, 165, 257-260
VoxelMap mod website, 305
material strength. See durability
materials category (Creative mode inventory), 73
meat
cooking, 67
raw meat, 66
rotten meat, 66
zombies and, 93
Medium/Lush biome, 16
melons, 118
milk, curing food
poisoning, 66
minecarts, 212-213
destroying/reusing, 215
hopper minecarts, 214
mechanics in version 1.8, 215
powered minecarts, 214-215
rails, 185
activator rails, 217
detector rails, 189, 217
normal rails, 216
powered rails, 199, 216-218
pressure plates, 190
stations, 218
storage minecarts, 214
TNT minecarts, 214, 217
tracks, building
  halfway stations, 219-220
mobs, protecting tracks from, 220
powered rails, 217-218
T-junctions, 218
zig zags, 217
trains, minecarts as, 215
underground rails, 215
Minecraft
controls
  Esc key, 27
  fn key (Mac OS X), 23
left-handed options, 21
list of controls, 21-22
demo version, time span, 5
downloading, 8-10
gifting, 10
launching
  custom launchers, 10
logins, 11
Minecraft Launcher, 9
passwords, 11
steps in, 10-12
usernames, 11
logins, 11
new games
  choosing biomes, 14-16
  choosing world generation style, 14
creating worlds, 13
naming worlds, 13
selecting game mode, 13
PC edition
  technical specifications, 6
  video cards, 6
PlayStation edition,
crafting in, 33
Pocket Edition
crafting in, 33
hiding HUD, 55
purchasing, 8-9
gifting, 10
updates, farming and, 122
Xbox 360 edition
crafting in, 33
hiding HUD, 55
Minecraft Realms, 310
Minecraftskins website, 294
Minecraft wiki, 48
mines
abandoned mineshafts, 255-256
blocking off areas, 81
cave spiders, fighting, 95-96
torches, 81
unlit areas, 81
mining
  2x1 ladder descent, 82
  bases, setting up, 88-89
  branch mines, 86-88
  breaking your fall, 83-84
  buckets, 76
caves, existing, 75
  chests, placing in mines, 89
  chunks, 90
cobblestone, 64
dangers in, 80-81
down, digging straight down, 80
falling, 80, 83-84
farming underground, 116, 139
flint, quick mining tips, 107
food, 76
gravel, quick mining tips, 107
hotbar, keeping blocks in, 80
ladders, 82
  pausing on, 82
lapis lazuli, 78
lava lakes, 80, 87
lighting, 81
mobs and, 89
Netherack, 269
obsidian, 77, 225-228
ore layers, 77-80
  checking current layer, 82
pickaxes, 76-77
safety and, 88-89
sleep, 89
snaking around hazards, 88
staging points, 89
staircases
  spiral staircases, 85-86
  straight staircases, 84-85
strategies for starting, 75
tools, 76-77
torches, 76
up, digging straight up, 80
way out, knowing, 80
wood blocks and, 76
miscellaneous category
(Creative mode inventory), 72
mobs
avoiding, 62-63
character vulnerability and inventory checks, 32
chicken jockeys, 96
creeper, 61
defending against, 113
fighting, 97
gunpowder and, 97
swimming and, 97
defined, 19
ditches, crossing, 176-177
Elder Guardians, 99-100
employing, 178-179
Endermen, 98
farming and animals with hostile mobs, 145
fighting, 92
swords, 62
iron golems, fighting, 101
Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog, 99
mining, 89
Nether, The, 268-274
passive mobs. See also
animals
animals as, 64-67
squid, 153
Peaceful mode, 62
pursuit mode, 62
security
ditches, 177
pits, 178-179
tunnels, 177
water, 177
skeletons, 61
arrows and, 95, 106
dogs and, 102
fighting, 95
spider jockeys, 96
sleep, 89
slimes, 62
fighting, 97-98
snow golems, fighting, 100
spawners, disabling, 251
spawning, 102-103
spiders, 61
cave spiders, 95-96
defending against, 94
eyes as food, 94
fighting, 93-94
overhangs and, 69
spider jockeys, 96
string, 94
uses for, 94
walls as defense, 94
tracks, protecting from attack, 220
tunnels, 177
types of, 19
underwater bases, 53
water, 177
Wither Boss, 274
zombies, 61
arrows, crafting, 106
fighting, 92-93
reinforcements, 92
rotten meat, 93
Zombie Pigmen, 99
mods, 291
defining, 299
finding, 306
Forge mods, 300-301
installing, 301-302
installing, 301-302
jar files, 303
multiple mods, using, 299
Not Enough Items website, 304
permanent effects of, 300
prebuilt packs, 300
Progressive Automation website, 305
removing, 302
restoring games, 300
Ruins website, 304
Too Many Items website, 303
VoxelMap website, 305
zip files, 303
accounts passwords, 8
registering, 7-8
security, 8
prerelease snapshots, 20-21
Monster Egg blocks, 277
monsters. See mobs
mushrooms, 143
moving inventory items between main storage and hotbar, 31
mules, 143
jumping with, 149-150
packing, 150
riding, 148
taming, 148
 multicrafting, 38
MultiMC, 10
multiplayer games, 306-307
Command Block, 308-309
LAN parties, 307-308
multiplayer servers
BeastsMC, 311
EULA (End User License Agreement), 312
Hive, The, 311
hosting, 307, 312-315
joining, 307-310
Minecraft Realms, 310
Phanatic, 311
Shotbow, 311
Supercraft Brothers, 311
TeamExtreme, 311
 whitelisted (trusted) players, 158
singleplayer games versus, 12
trapped chests, 190
mushrooms in The Nether, 270
mushroom stew, creating, 140
music, note blocks, 200
mutton cooking, 119
raw, 120

naming worlds, 13
navigating cardinal directions, 65
compasses, crafting, 66
directional keys, 27
End, The, 265
lost, avoiding, 55-56
Minecraft controls fn key (Mac OS X), 23
left-handed options, 21
list of controls, 21-22
Nether, The, 265
needcoolshoes website, 294
negative potions, 242-243
negative structures, 251
Nether fortresses, 257
Nether quartz, 270
Nether, The, 26, 263
barricades, building, 271
beacons, 285-288
blaze rods, 266, 272
blazes, 273
blaze spawners, 272
cliffs, 269
Dante’s influence on, 274
Ender Chests, 264
Endermotes, 274
Ender Pearls, 266
fortresses finding, 270
survival tips, 271-272
game options, configuring, 270
ghasts, 269-272
glowstone, 270
jack-o’-lanterns, 269
lanterns, 269
lava lakes, 269
lighting, 269-271
magma cubes, 273
mobs, 268-274
mushrooms, 270
navigating, 265
Nether Portal, 268
Nether quartz, 270
Nether wart, 272
Netherbrick, 270
Overworld size comparison to, 274
sleeping in, 266
Sneak key (Left Shift), 269
soul sand, 270
stairs, 269
survival checklist, 266-267
torches, 269-271
tunnels, 269
water, 267
wither skeletons, 273
Nether wart, 272
brewing potions, 238-241
Netherbrick, 270
Netherrack, 167
mining, 269
netting, 166
Neutral biome, 16
new games
biomes, choosing, 14-16
configuring setup, 13
creating worlds, 13
naming worlds, 13
selecting game mode, 13
world generation style, choosing, 14
night (first), surviving
crafting
axes, 34
beds, 44-45
crafting table, 31-32
furnaces, 41
heat sources, 39
light sources, 39, 42-43
pickaxes, 34
shelter, 36-40
shovels, 35
swords, 35
tool handles, 32-33
torches, 42-43
first-day tasks, 25-26
inventory, checking, 29-31
island biomes, 28
ocean biomes, 28
perimeter structures as protection, 39
trees, 27
lumberjacking, 28-29
wood, gathering, 27-28
Night Vision potion, 241
nightstands. See bedside tables
nondestructive harvesters, 138-139
NOR gates, 210
Normal option (Survival mode), 18
hunger, 63-64
note blocks, as output devices, 200
Not Enough Items mod website, 304
NOT gates (inverters), 208
Novaskin website, 294
O
obsidian
enchantment tables, 225-228
End survival checklist, 275
mining, 77, 225-228
Nether Portals, building, 268
Nether survival checklist, 267
Ocean Monuments, 256-257
oceans, first-night survival, 28
ocelots (cats), 144
opening
chest, 59
doors, 38
inventory, 29
mob attacks and character vulnerability, 32
OR gates, 208
ore layers, 77-80
checking current layer, 82
origin point, 55
OS X (Mac)
fn key, 23
Minecraft, downloading, 10
output devices, 198-200
dispensers, 200
doors, 199
fence gates, 199
hoppers, 200
hopper minecarts, 214
note blocks, 200
pistons, 199
sliding doors, 204-206
powered rails, 199
redstone lamps, 199
vertical current, 206-207
TNT, 200
TNT minecarts, 214, 217
trapdoors, 199
overhangs, spiders and, 69
Overworld, 26
Nether size comparison to, 274
Ovo’s Rustic resource pack, 298
oxygen bar (HUD), 53
oxygen, building underwater, 172

P
pack animals, 150
paintings, interior design and, 165
passive mobs. See also animals
animals as, 64-67
squid, 153
passwords
Minecraft, launching, 11
Mojang accounts, 8
pausing games, 27
on ladders, 82
PC edition (Minecraft)
downloading, 10
technical specifications, 6
video cards, 6
Peaceful option (Survival mode), 18, 62
Pearls (Ender), Endermen and, 98
perimeter fences
animals, 142
building, 176
arrow slits, 180
ditches, 176-177
lighting, 178
mobs, 178-179
towers, 178
walls, 179
farming, 116, 127
as protection, 39
Phanatic multiplayer server, 311
pickaxes
crafting, 34
mining and, 76-77
Nether survival checklist, 266
picking-up items in inventory, 31
pigmen, zombie fighting, 99
Nether, The, 268-269, 272
pigs, 143
cooked pork chops, 119
raw pork chops, 120
riding, 151
pillar jumping, 40
walls, building, 70
piston farms, 128-129, 132
crop selection, 130
harvesting, 130
nondestructive harvesters, 138-139
piston harvesters, 132-134
sticky piston harvesters, 135
water harvesters, 136-138
pistons as output devices, 199
sliding doors, 204-206
sticky pistons, crafting, 132
pits, building
mobs, 178-179
pressure plates, 179
pixels per texture (resource packs), 298
placing items in inventory, 31
planks (wood), crafting, 31
planter boxes, building, 164
planting, establishing farms, 123
plants, growing
fantasy trees, 163
hedges, 163
indoor plants, 163
platforms, adding to shelter, 71
platforms (Minecraft)
demo platform, time span, 5
downloading, 10
PC edition
downloading, 10
technical specifications, 6
video cards, 6
PlayStation edition, crafting in, 33
pocket edition
  crafting in, 33
  HUD, hiding, 55
Xbox 360 edition, crafting in, 33
PlayStation edition, crafting in, 33
play-testing prerelease snapshots, 20-21
pocket edition
  crafting in, 33
  HUD, hiding, 55
Poison potions, 243
poisonous food, 120-121
poisonous potatoes, 121
poisons
  rotting meat, zombies and, 93
  spider eyes, 94
ponds, 166
pools, 166
pop-ups, downloading resource packs, 299
pork chops
  cooking, 119
  raw, 120
portals
  End Portals, 278
  Nether Portal, 268
positive potions, 241-243
potatoes, 118-120
  baked, 119
  poisonous, 121
potions
  awkward potion, 240-241
  brewing, 237
    blaze rods, 238
    building brewing stands, 240
  crafting bottles, 240
  Nether wart, 238-241
  soul sand, 238-239
  testing potions, 239
Creative mode inventory, 73
drinking, 241
End survival checklist, 275
enhancing, 242-243
fermented spider eye, 242
glowstone dust, 242
gunpowder, 242
negative potions, 242-243
Nether wart, 272
positive potions, 241-243
redstone dust, 242
skeletons, 243
splash potions, 242
zombies, 243
powered blocks, 192
  buttons, 192
  levers, 193
two block rule, 193
repeaters, 194-195
prerelease snapshots, 20-21
presets for Customized mode, 159
Good Luck preset, 160
pressure plates, 189. See also buttons
automatic doors, 204
detector rails, 217
minecart rails, 190
pits, 179
weighted, 189
priests in villages, 249
Progressive Automation mod website, 305
Projectile Protection enchantment, 234
Protection enchantment, 234
protection enchantments, 234
pufferfish, 121
pumpkin pie, 119
pumpkins, 118
Punch enchantment, 233
power sources, 186-187
comparators, 197
powered blocks, 192
  buttons, 192
  levers, 193
redstone blocks, 188
redstone torches, 187
redstone wire, properties of, 190-192
repeating, 194-195
prerelease snapshots, 20-21
pressure plates, 189. See also buttons
automatic doors, 204
detector rails, 217
minecart rails, 190
pits, 179
weighted, 189
priests in villages, 249
Progressive Automation mod website, 305
Projectile Protection enchantment, 234
Protection enchantment, 234
protection enchantments, 234
pufferfish, 121
pumpkin pie, 119
pumpkins, 118
Punch enchantment, 233
puppies, speeding up growth of, 144
purchasing Minecraft, 8-9
gifting, 10
pursuit mode, mobs and, 62
PvP (player versus player). See multiplayer games
pyramids, beacons, 285-288

Q
quick access area
(inventory). See hotbar
(inventory)

R
rabbits, 144
cooking, 119
leather, obtaining, 109
raw, 120
rabbit stew, 119
rails, 185
activator rails, 217
detector rails, 189-190, 217
minecarts, 212-213
destroying/reusing, 215
hopper minecarts, 214
powered minecarts, 214-215
storage minecarts, 214
TNT minecarts, 214, 217
trains, 215
normal rails, 216
powered rails, 216-218
as output devices, 199
pressure plates, 190
stations, 218
tracks, building
halfway stations, 219-220
mobs, protecting tracks from, 220
powered rails, 217-218
T-junctions, 218
zig zags, 217
trains, minecarts as, 215
underground rails, 215
rain, fishing in, 152
raised beds (farming), 116, 126-128
raised floors, building, 167
ranching. See farming ravines, 251
raw food, 120
beef, 120
chicken, 121
fish, 120
meat, 66
mutton, 120
pork chops, 120
rabbit, 120
salmon, 120
Realms, 310
recipes
alchemy, 120
armor, crafting, 110-111
bakery, 119
BBQ, 119
redstone, 72, 185-188
automated farms, building, 131
circuits. See circuits comparators, 197
output devices. See output devices
piston farms, creating, 131
powered rails, 216-218
power sources. See power sources
repeaters, 194-195
signals. See signals
sticky piston harvesters, building, 135
redstone dust, potions, 242
redstone lamps, 199
redstone torches, 187
powering blocks with, 193
vertical current, 206-207
redstone wire, properties of, 190-192
Regeneration enchantments, 241, 287
registering Mojang accounts, 7-8
reinforcements, zombies, 92
removing
inventory items, 31
mods, 302
renaming items, anvils and, 237
repairing
anvils and, 236
enchantment items, 230
worn tools, 57
repeater loops, 211-212
repeaters, 194-195
resetting biomes, 28
Resistance enchantments, 287
resource packs, 156, 291, 296
Dokucraft, 297-298
downloading and pop-ups, 299
Faithful 32, 156, 298
installing, 296-298
Ovo’s Rustic, 298
pixels per texture, 298
resources. See also inventory
animals, 64-67
bones as, 65
chests. See chests
coal, 65
cobblestone, 64
fishing, 67
gathering, 65
harvesting, 64
sand, 65
skeletons as, 65
tools. See tools
vegetables, 64
wood, 64
respawning
after death, 112
defined, 19
Respiration enchantment, 234
underwater, building, 176
resting. Peaceful mode, 62
restoring games, 300
restoring health by dying, 68
returning to home, 55-56
reusing destroyed minecarts, 215
riding
donkeys, 148
horses, 148
HUD changes while riding, 54
mules, 148
rockets, fireworks, 181
roof, building, 69
roses, dyeing and, 147
rotten flesh, 121
rotten meat, 66
zombies and, 93
Ruins mod website, 304
running, 61
hunger and, 63
S
safety, mining and, 88-89
salmon
cooking, 119
raw, 120
sand, 65
saturation, hunger and, 63
saving crops, 126
searching Creative mode inventory, 73
security
arrow slits, building, 180
ditches, building, 176-177
Minecraft game, 11
mobs, 177
Mojang accounts, 8
perimeters, building, 176
arrow slits, 180
ditches, 176-177
lighting, 178
mobs, 178-179
towers, 178
walls, 179
pits, building
mobs, 178-179
pressure plates, 179
towers, building, 178
underwater, building, 176
walls, building, 179
water, 177
seeding game, 19
seeds (farms), 116, 123
selecting
biomes, 14-16
crops, 115-118
game mode, 13
world generation style, 14
sensors, daylight, 188
servers (multiplayer)
BeastsMC, 311
EULA (End User License Agreement), 312
Hive, The, 311
hosting, 307, 312-315
joining, 307-310
Minecraft Realms, 310
Phanatic, 311
Shotbow, 311
Supercraft Brothers, 311
TeamExtreme, 311
whitelisted (trusted) players, 158
setup
Mojang accounts
passwords, 8
registering, 7-8
security questions, 8
new games, configuring options, 13
sharing seeds, 19
Sharpness enchantment, 233
sheep, 143
cooked mutton, 119
raw mutton, 120
wool
crafting, 45
dyeing, 147
shelter
building blocks, 72
caves, 36
cliffs, 36
crafting, 36-37
decoration blocks, 72
doors, crafting, 37-38
emergency shelters, crafting, 40
heat sources, crafting, 39
hills, 36
housing codes, 69
huts, building, 69-70
light sources, crafting, 39, 42-43
overhangs, spiders and, 69
pillar jumping, 40
platform, adding, 71
redstone, 72
roof, building, 69
tunneling, 37
walls, building, 70
shields, fighting, 108
Shift key
ladders, pausing on, 82
sneaking around hazards, 88
shortcuts, crafting, 38
Shotbow multiplayer server, 311
shovels, 58
crafting, 35
Nether survival checklist, 267
signals, 186-187, 190
buttons, 188
automatic doors, 200
powered blocks, 192
daylight sensors, 188
detector rails, 189, 217
levers, 189
powered blocks, 193
pressure plates, 189
automatic doors, 204
minecart rails, 190
weighted pressure plates, 189
redstone torches, 187
tripwires, 188-190
signs
crafting, 81
placement of, 162
underwater, building, 172
Silk Touch enchantment, 235
silverfish spawners, 277
single chests, 58
singleplayer games
Adventure mode, 17
Creative mode, 17
difficulty settings, 18
Hardcore mode, 17
multiplayer games versus, 12
Survival mode, 17
Easy option, 18
Hard option, 19
Normal option, 18
Peaceful option, 18
skeletons, 61
arrows and, 95, 106
bones, farming benefits, 125
dogs and, 102
fighting, 95
potions, 243
as resources, 65
spider jockeys, fighting, 96
withers, 273
Skindex, 294
skins, 291-292
Alex, 292
changing, 292-293, 296
skin editor websites
   Minecraftskins, 294
   needcoolshoes, 294
   Novaskin, 294
Steve, 292
slash commands. See cheats
sleeping
   beds
   crafting, 44-45
   taking with you, 47
End, The, 266, 276
mining and, 89
mobs and, 89
Nether, the, 266
time and, 44
villages and, 247
sliding doors, building, 204-206
slimeballs, 98
slimeblocks, 98
slimes, 62
fighting, 97-98
Slowness potions, 243
Smite enchantment, 233
snapshots, prerelease, 20-21
Sneak key (Left Shift), 269

sneaking
   farming and, 126
   around hazards, 88
snow blocks, 267
snow golems, fighting, 100
Snowy biome, 16
soft blocks, building
   underwater, 171, 175
soul sand
   brewing potions, 238-239
   Nether, The, 270
spawners
   blaze spawners, 272
   disabling, 251
   silverfish spawners, 277
spawning
   after death, 112
   cheats, 44
   defined, 14, 19
   mobs, 102-103
spawn points
   defined, 14
   islands, building
   underwater, 171
/spawnpoint command, 112
Spectator mode, 315-316
Speed enchantments, 287
spider eyes, 121
spiders, 61
cave spiders, fighting, 95-96
defending against, 94
ditches, crossing, 176
eyes as food, 94
fermented spider eye, potions and, 242
fighting, 93-94
overhangs and, 69
spider jockeys, fighting, 96
string, 94
uses for, 94
spiral staircases, mining and, 85-86
splash potions, 242
sponge blocks, 175
sprinting, 61
   combat and, 105
hunger and, 63
squid, 153
stacking inventory items, 30
staging points, mining and, 89
stained objects, 166
staircases
   Nether, The, 269
   spiral staircases, mining and, 85-86
   straight staircases, mining and, 84-85
starvation. See hunger
stations
   building, 218
   halfway stations, building tracks, 219-220
status bar. See HUD
steak, cooking, 119
towers, building

**tool handles**, 32
**tools**, 33-35
**torches**, 42-43
first-day tasks, 25-26
gathering wood, 27-28
island biomes, 28
ocean biomes, 28
perimeter structures, 39
trees, 27-29
Swiftness potion, 241
swimming, creepers and, 97
swimming pools, 166
swinging doors, 201
switches. See levers
swords
blocking attacks, 105
crafting, 35, 104
damage, dealing, 105
End survival checklist, 275
fighting with, 62
Nether survival checklist, 266

**T**
tables
building, 162
enchantment tables, 224
books, 228
casting enchantments, 228-230
obsidian, 225-228
taming
animals, 143, 148
wolves, 65, 101
TeamExtreme multiplayer server, 311
Technic Launcher, 300
teleporting players into LAN parties, 308
temples, 252-253
tending farms, 116
tennis courts, building, 166
testing potions, 239
texture packs. See resource packs
textures, pixels per (resource packs), 298
Thorns enchantment, 234
time, sleeping and, 44
t-junctions, building tracks, 218
TNT
as output devices, 200
TNT minecarts, 214, 217
tools
crafting
axes, 34
durability, 57
handles, 32-33
hoes, 116
pickaxes, 34
shovels, 35
swords, 35
durability bar, 47, 54
enchantments, 235
End survival checklist, 275
improving
diamond, 57
gold, 56
iron, 56
stone, 56
wood, 56
mining, 76-77
Nether survival checklist, 266
pickaxes, 76-77
tools category (Creative mode inventory), 73
wearing down, 57
Too Many Items mod website, 303
torches
bedside tables and, 162
crafting, 42-43
farming and lighting, 116, 125
mines, 81
mining, 76
Nether survival checklist, 267
Nether, The, 269-271
perimeters, 178
powering blocks with, 193
redstone torches, 187
vertical current, 206-207
underwater, building, 171-173
towers, building, 178
tracks, building. See also
rails
halfway stations, 219-220
mobs, protecting tracks from, 220
powered rails, 217-218
T-junctions, 218
zig zags, 217
trading
fighting versus, 266
with villages, 247-250
trains
minecarts as, 215
rails, 185
activator rails, 217
detector rails, 189, 217
normal rails, 216
powered rails, 199, 216-218
stations, 218
tracks, building
halfway stations, 219-220
mobs, protecting tracks from, 220
powered rails, 217-218
T-junctions, 218
zig zags, 217
underground rails, 215
trampolines, 98
transportation
boats, crafting, 153
Creative mode inventory, 72
donkeys/horses/mules
jumping with, 149-150
riding, 148
taming, 148
rails. See rails
riding animals, HUD changes while riding, 54
sprinting, 61
hunger and, 63
trapdoors, as output devices, 199
trapped chests, 190
treasure
abandoned mineshafts, 255-256
desert temples, 252-253
dungeons, 254-255
emeralds, farming, 250
Ender Pearls, 266
jungle temples, 252-253
Nether fortresses, 257
spawners, disabling, 251
strongholds, 255
witch huts, 254
trees
biomes, 27
fantasy trees, growing, 163
first-night survival, 27
lumberjacking, 28-29
tripwires, 188-190
trusted (whitelisted) players, 158
tunneling, 37
tunnels
ditches and, 177
doors, importance of, 93
lighting, 68
mineshafts, abandoned, 255-256
Nether, The, 269
underground rails, 215
turning on/off cheats, 72
Twitch, 22

U
Unbreaking enchantment, 235
underground
dungeons, 254-255
farms, 116, 139
mineshafts, abandoned, 255-256
rails, 215
strongholds, 255
underwater, building, 169, 174-175
Creative mode, 169
doors, 172
enchantments, 176
flooding, 175
island spawn points, 171
ladders, 172
lighting, 171-173
location, 172
oxygen, 172
required equipment, 170-171
vertical current, 206-207
video cards, Minecraft PC edition, 6
Video Settings menu (game options), 270
viewing
achievements, 47-48
durability stats, 47, 54
villages
appearances of, 246
beds, 247
commonality of, 245
finding, 248
inhabitants
blacksmiths, 249
butchers, 249
children, 247-249
farmers, 249
interacting with, 246-250
librarians, 249
priests, 249
trading with, 247-250
iron golems and, 246
sleeping in, 247
uses of, 246
wells, 251
zombies and, 246-247, 250
villages, building next to, 157
VoxelMap mod website, 305

W
wall clocks, building, 165
wall maps, building, 165
walls
building, 70, 179
spider-proof walls, 94
water
boats, crafting, 153
breaking your fall, 83-84
building on/under, 157
floats, 158
farming, establishing farms, 122-124, 127
fishing, 152
boats, 153
rain and, 152
fountains, 165
Nether, The, 267
obsidian, mining, 225-228
permanent watering holes, digging, 124
ponds, 166
pools, 166
security, 177
underwater, building, 169, 174-175
Creative mode, 169
doors, 172
enchantments, 176
flooding, 175
island spawn points, 171
ladders, 172
lighting, 171-173
location, 172
oxygen, 172
required equipment, 170-171
security, 176
signs, 172
soft blocks, 171, 175
Survival mode, 170
water harvesters, 136-138
water affinity enchantment, 176
way out, knowing (mining), 80
Weakness potions, 243
weak power, 192
weapons, 103-104
bows and arrows
crafting, 105-106
target practice, 107
combat category
(Creative mode inventory), 73
combat enchantments, 287
critical hits, 104
durability bar, 47, 54
enchantments, 233
Ender dragon, defeating, 278-282
End survival checklist, 275
Nether survival checklist, 266-267
Peaceful mode, resting via, 62
shields, 108
swords
blocking attacks, 105
crafting, 104
damage, 105
fighting with, 62

web resources
mods
finding, 306
Not Enough Items website, 304
Progressive Automation website, 305
Ruins website, 304
Too Many Items website, 303
VoxelMap website, 305
multiplayer server websites
BeastsMC, 311
Hive, The, 311
Phanatic, 311
Shotbow, 311
Supercraft Brothers, 311
TeamExtreme, 311
skin editors
Minecraftskins, 294
needcoolshoes, 294
Novaskin, 294
websites
Far Lands or Bust, 16
Minecraft wiki, 48
weighted pressure plates, 189
wells, villages and, 251
wheat, 118
farming, 115, 250
growth cycles, 125
harvesting, 67, 126-127
whitelisted (trusted) players, 158
Windows, downloading Minecraft, 10
wiring (redstone). See redstone; redstone wire
witch huts, 254
Wither Boss, 274
wither skeletons, 273
wolves, 143
feeding, 144
taming, 65
wood, 56, 64
gathering for first-night survival, 27-28
mining and, 76
Nether survival checklist, 267
planks, crafting, 31
wood buttons, 188
automatic doors, 200
powered blocks, 192
wool
crafting, 45
dyeing, 147
worlds
  biomes, choosing, 14-16
  Create New World screen, 13
  creating, 13
  naming, 13
  origin point, 55
  Overworld, 26
  seeding, 19
  world generation style, 14
  worn tools, repairing, 57

X
  Xbox 360 edition
    crafting in, 33
  HUD, hiding, 55
  XP (experience points)
    earning, 232
    enchantments, 223, 229
    managing, 232
  /XP command, 232

Y
  YouTube, finding
    architectural plans, 158

Z
  zig-zag tracks, building, 217
  zip files, mods as, 303
  zombie pigmen
    fighting, 99
  Nether, The, 268-269, 272
  zombies, 61
    arrows, crafting, 106
    fighting, 92-93
    potions, 243
    reinforcements, 92
    rotten flesh, 121
    rotten meat, 93
    villages and, 246-247, 250
    wells, 251
  zooming in/out maps, 259