

THE ADVANCED STRATEGY GUIDE TO

MINECRAFT™



QUE

STEPHEN O'BRIEN

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THE ADVANCED STRATEGY GUIDE TO MINECRAFT

Stephen O'Brien

que[®]

800 East 96th Street,
Indianapolis, Indiana 46240 USA

The Advanced Strategy Guide to Minecraft

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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 over 30 titles 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 early days and remains astounded at the unparalleled creativity it engenders. Stephen is also the author of the internationally bestselling *The Ultimate Player's Guide to Minecraft*, published by Que.

Dedication

To Mika, who has been ever patient while I worked through endless weekends. Thank you, darling son. Your dad could not love you more.

Acknowledgments

This has been an interesting project. Having had a very varied career that has also included some 30 books, I don't think there was ever one more challenging. The mod market for Minecraft involves an astonishing cavalcade of creativity that is somewhat wild westish. So west it's somewhere over the Pacific, probably beyond any cardinal point.

Bringing some sense to the chaos has been a bit of a challenge.

It has also been a challenge for my ever-patient publisher. Thank you, Rick Kughen, for your endless patience. You can cajole the best out of anyone. Also to Tim Warner who has become my partner in crime. Seth Kerney, you didn't freak out even as things went down to the wire. Not sure if I'd ever be able to exude such control.

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One last person, but not the least by any stretch. Preeti Davidson. You have given me everything one could want. You are God's gift. (That last is for your mother.)

Thank you everyone. Reader, I truly hope you enjoy this work and find much delight herein.

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.

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Introduction

Minecraft has become one of the most talked about gaming titles in recent years. It has, quite remarkably, reached across all walks of life. In a surprisingly short time, it has gained footholds in educational institutions (K-12 and beyond), in rehabilitation centers, and in many other markets where a traditional game would never dare tread.

But what do you do after you've gained your own foothold in the *Minecraft* world? You've survived, plundered, and mined your way through the hills, dungeons, and temples; fought a tough but successful battle with the Ender Dragon; and taken home the prized Dragon Egg. What next?

Well, that's where the fun really begins... and is precisely the source of so much of *Minecraft*'s enduring appeal.

Many of the features included in the standard *Minecraft* installation—redstone wiring, the ability to create complex automated mob farms, and the ability to use standard features in very creative, unexpected ways—makes *Minecraft* the ultimate sandbox game. Add to that downloadable custom-crafted adventure maps, the massive multiplayer servers whose customizations add trading systems, mini-games, and arguably entire societies, and the game becomes a whole other world.

But even that isn't the end of the story. Incredible add-ons provide *Minecraft* with goals and creative capabilities that are far more numerous than those built in to the standard game. These include taking *Minecraft* into the industrial age, all the way to nuclear power, high-speed rail, signaling systems, pipes that automate crafting and shift supplies across the landscape, and so much more. These alone, which are free to download, give the game an enduring playability that goes far beyond the original premise.

However, as with everything *Minecraft*, the discovery of these things is by no means easy. Their documentation is scattered across the Internet in a mish-mash of YouTube videos and enthusiastic wiki sites that, as a result, lack cogency. Although this is certainly no fault of the sites, among this turgid churning of possibility, there has been no single guide or site that can lead *Minecraft* players with surety—and a set of clear tutorials—through the extraordinary, awe-inspiring age of wonder that is *Minecraft* beyond the basics.

Thus, this book, is written to delight you in a process of discovery, quickly help you on your way, and leave you amazed at how much further you can go in a game that you may well have thought you'd already completed.

Become a *Minecraft* Expert!

Go far beyond *Minecraft*'s initial game with this ultimate guide by your side. You'll learn to use the standard features in amazing, new ways, and a whole lot more:

- Easily install mods and manage *Minecraft* versions, games, and profiles.
- Automate all aspects of your mining, harvesting, and building tasks.
- Generate infinite ores on demand.
- Build mob spawners and traps for fast experience gains and a wealth of item drops.
- Create gorgeous 2D and 3D art.
- Add beautiful aesthetics to any building or construction.
- Run redstone as it should be run, with timed circuits, combination locks, and other exciting creations.
- Take *Minecraft* into the industrial and nuclear ages, and gain numerous new goals, tools, and capabilities.
- Run connected trains and bore tunnels.
- Share your creation with the world and learn how the professionals capture their videos and overlay audio.

What's in This Book

Go far beyond the basics with a whole new set of 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," goes beyond the *Minecraft* launcher to help you install mod packs and access all kinds of advanced functionality.
- Chapter 2, "Automated Produce Farms," contains the best techniques I've found (in too many gameplay hours) to create self-sustaining systems that deliver constant results, hands off. You can then sort and stock chests with the results using rails, minecarts, and some very neat tricks.
- Chapter 3, "Mining and Ore Generators," removes the need for mining. Build an endless supply of cobblestone, and create portals to The Nether without searching for diamonds.

- Chapter 4, “Mob Farms, Traps, and Defense,” creates an endless supply of items and experience points. Mob grinders remove the grind and give you endless drops.
- Chapter 5, “Advanced Construction,” moves into awesome building tips that focus on aesthetics. Create 2D and 3D art, decorate with style, and create trees and natural-looking terrain. Use terraforming tools to make huge changes to your world.
- Chapter 6, “More Power to You,” takes *Minecraft*’s redstone and delivers a jolt of creativity. Build a combination lock to protect your fortress, learn rail switch designs, and take power to a new level.
- Chapter 7, “Empire Building with BuildCraft,” takes on one of the most complex mods. You’ll learn how to sort with simplicity, dig huge quarries, shift oil with pumps, refine fuel, and power massive engines.
- Chapter 8, “Titans of IndustrialCraft,” will help you create new plant species, build powerful new weapons and tools, and even create a nuclear power station.
- Chapter 9, “Rolling with Railcraft,” brings a bevy of enhancements to the minecart system. Let’s just say that it will keep you on track.
- Chapter 10, “Recording and Sharing,” will help you publish to the world. Three of the Top 10 YouTube channels are run by regular Minecrafters. You’ll learn about the right hardware and software, how to plot camera paths, overlay audio, and publish like a professional.
- Chapter 11, “Building Your Own Adventure,” is your game within the game. Learn to create a map you can share with others and then fill it with hidden extras (including teleportation). It’s the perfect, fun way to terrify noobs.

There’s a lot herein—a cornucopia of tips, tricks, and very cool stuff that extends *Minecraft* in surprising and very fun ways.

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!



Mining and Ore Generators

In This Chapter

- Create an endless expanse of self-healing cobblestone.
- Generate all the stone you need for massive constructions.
- Save on diamonds and create a portal on the spot without mining obsidian.

Ores are the building blocks of *Minecraft*. You can use them to create creeper-proof buildings, dwellings, and rail bridges across the sky. Actually, unless you plan to live in a mud hut, you really can't beat cold, hard stone. But why grub about in dark tunnels when you can create all the building ore you could ever possibly need, and then top it off with an overdose of some of the toughest stuff in *Minecraft*—obsidian—and do so without putting so much as a scratch on your new diamond pickaxe. It's all surprisingly easy.

Creating Cobblestone

Cobblestone is one of the most prevalent and useful blocks in *Minecraft*. As a building material it provides the same blast resistance as any other, with the exception of obsidian, which is about 200 times tougher, and the essentially indestructible bedrock. Even a wall of diamond blocks won't provide any greater protection than cobblestone against a creeper waiting outside your door.

The venerable cobbled stone is also exceptionally versatile. Cobblestone is used in the crafting of furnaces, dispensers, droppers, levers, and pistons, among other things. It can also be turned into stairs, slabs, moss stone (for that *Temple of Doom* appeal), and the usual tools.

Although cobblestone is found just about everywhere underground, it's also one of the easiest ores to automatically produce. I'll show you how to create an endless supply, and also how to turn it into an endlessly healing platform. Doing so requires a few pistons and a simple redstone clock circuit.

Cobblestone is formed when flowing water meets flowing lava at the same level, as shown in Figure 3.1. (Flowing water meeting a lava source block produces obsidian, and flowing water dropping on top of flowing lava creates stone.)

Creating a supply of cobblestone therefore requires just a bucket each of lava and water.

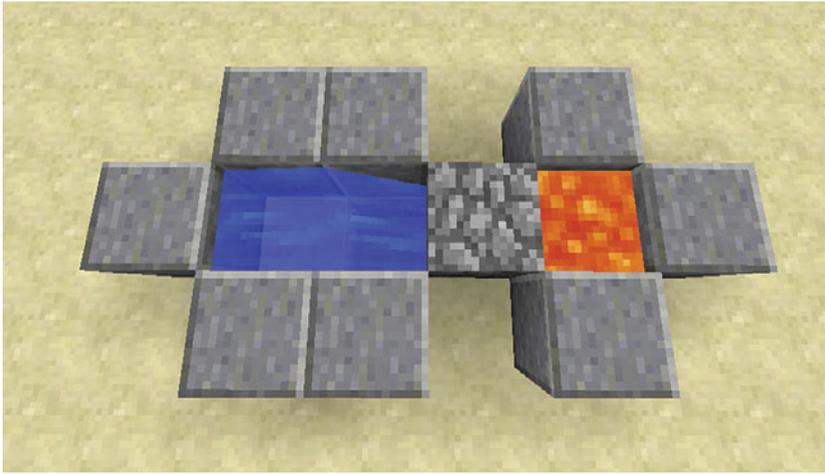


FIGURE 3.1 Cobblestone forms at the junction point of flowing water and flowing lava.

There are many ways to arrange such a junction, but the simplest is shown in Figure 3.2. You could sink this arrangement one block further into the ground and avoid having to place the bordering blocks, but we’re going to use this layout because it lifts the cobblestone above ground level where it can be pushed with pistons.

Spill a bucket of water on the far left. It will flow down over the lip into the two-block-deep hole and, due to the mechanics of the water flow model, will actually, and rather conveniently, stop right there.

Then spill a bucket of lava on the far right, forming the cobblestone that was shown in Figure 3.1.

Try mining the cobblestone, and you’ll see it pop out and another block form within moments. Infinite cobblestone. Pretty easy, right?

Let’s ramp this up a bit.

Place a standard piston so that it’s facing the cobblestone. (You may need to scoop the lava into a bucket and then remove the formed cobblestone before placing the piston because it can be quite tricky to obtain the right angle for the piston with the cobblestone block in front.) Figure 3.3 shows the intended layout.

It’s possible to build a BUD switch, as described in Chapter 2, “Automated Produce Farms,” to detect the creation of the cobblestone block and then activate the piston to push it out. However, an easier way is available that introduces a new type of circuit we haven’t looked at before: the repeater clock.

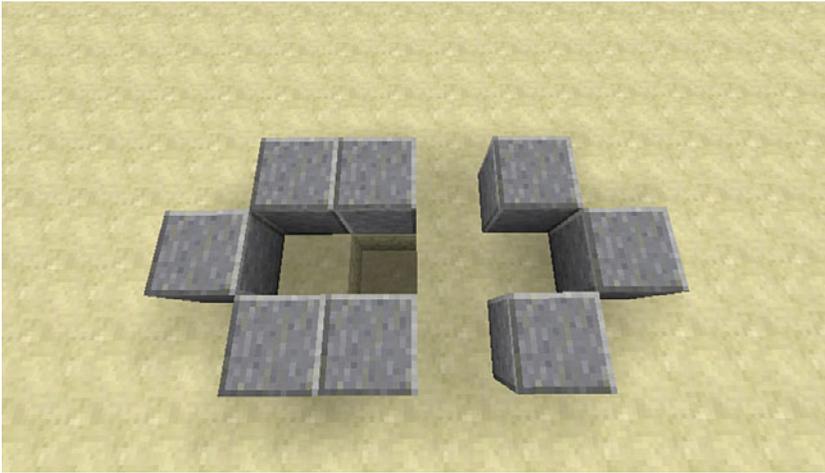


FIGURE 3.2 Cobbling together some cobblestone.

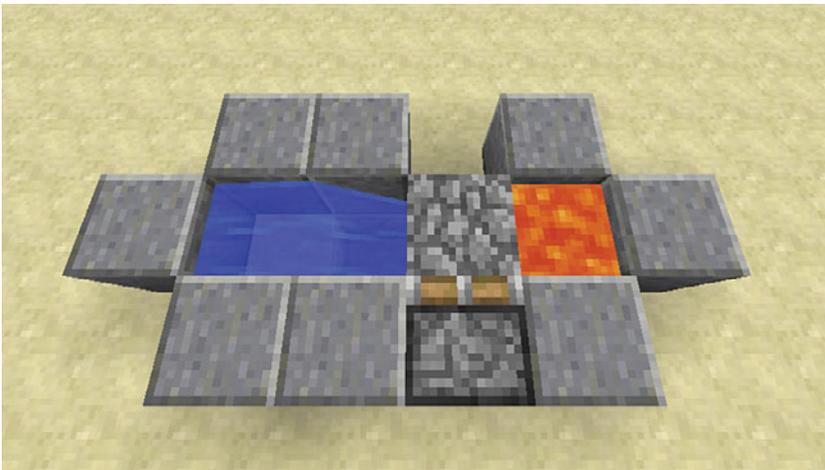


FIGURE 3.3 Pistons provide an easy way to push out a string up of up to 12 cobblestone blocks.

Clocks constantly repeat a redstone pulse. There are many ways to achieve this, including with the use of pistons, items moving between hoppers, and by just using a string of torch inverters. However, the easiest method for fine-tuning the interval between pulses is with a string of redstone repeaters arranged in a loop. In its default configuration, each repeater adds a 0.1 second delay to the circuit, with the slider on top of each repeater allowing this to be lengthened to as much as 0.4 seconds.

Figure 3.4 shows the circuit we'll use here. The pulse originates with the button attached to the plank block. A trail of redstone leads directly to the base of the piston, but also splits off into the repeater loop. As it travels through each repeater, it is ever so slightly delayed, eventually traveling around the entire loop in a clockwise direction, back through the plank block and toward the piston once more, and also restarting its endless circuit of the loop.

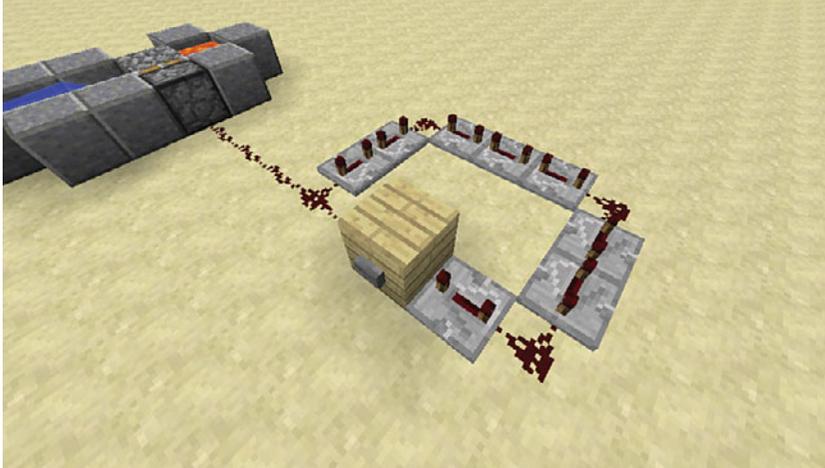


FIGURE 3.4 Clocking on and off with a repeater loop.

Create the circuit by laying the repeaters, ensuring they all run clockwise. Run the redstone to the piston and also to connect the repeaters; then press the button.

Now take a look at the piston. You'll see it start to push out the cobblestone, but there's a slight problem. The piston flies back and forth so fast that it spends most of its time blocking the flow of lava, preventing the cobblestone from forming. There's an easy way to fix this. Start right-clicking the repeaters, shifting their sliders back to the last available position. As you do so, the pulses will slow down. Keep going until you have the piston synchronized with the cobblestone production. I've found this requires setting six of the repeaters to their slowest position.

This is all well and good. You should see a row of cobblestone form, as shown in Figure 3.5, spanning out 12 blocks—the maximum a piston can push at any time. Try digging out any of those blocks, and the piston will quickly “heal” the gap with a new block of cobblestone. This is quite commonly used to create self-healing bridges, but why stop there? Let's create an entire self-healing platform—perfect for that game of Spleef (see the note “Playing Spleef”) or just developing an expanse of easily minable cobblestone.

Start by laying down a line of pistons and blocks behind, as shown in Figure 3.6. Connect them up to the timing loop with some redstone. You'll also need to place one more repeater before the pistons to boost the current so they all fire off. Otherwise, the redstone trail will

be a little long and will lose its punch before it reaches the end of the pistons. Other than that, that's all there is to it. If you need the platform created in a more specific shape, use other blocks that pistons can't shift to form the outline. This includes growing trees, other extended pistons, and most block-sized items such as dispensers, hoppers, furnaces, and the like.

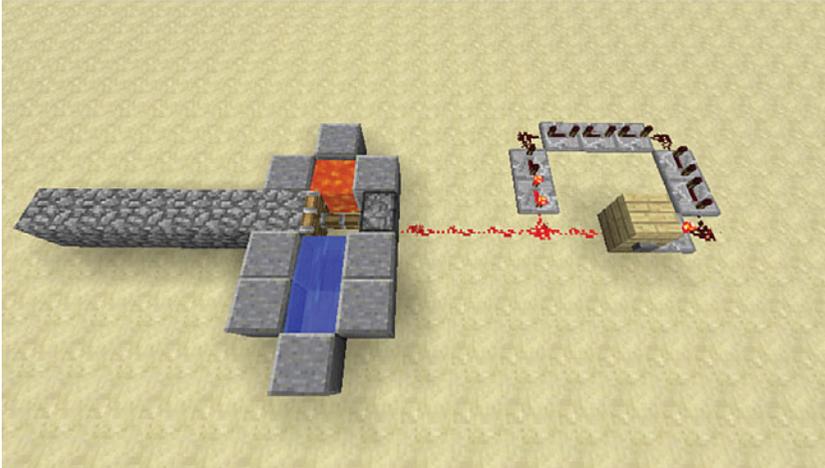


FIGURE 3.5 Periodic pistons provide an easy way to push up to 12 cobblestone blocks out of the generator.

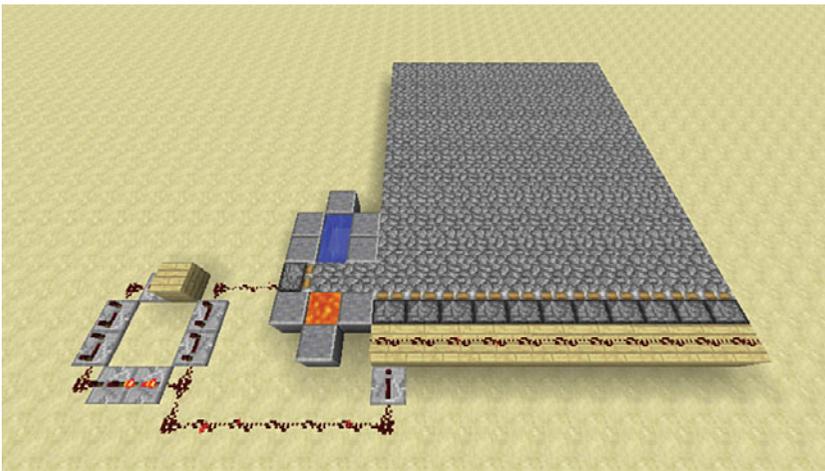


FIGURE 3.6 Creating a full self-generating platform—perfect for that game of Spleef.

Creating Stone

Stone appears abundantly in the Overworld and is also formed ad hoc when lava flows on top of still or moving water. When mined with a normal pickaxe, it turns into cobblestone. Because this takes less time to mine than cobblestone, stone generators are a slightly more efficient method of obtaining cobblestone than through an actual cobblestone generator. Stone mined with a pickaxe enchanted with Silk Touch will drop a stone block instead of cobblestone, but all is not lost if you're lacking one of these. Smelting cobblestone in a furnace also delivers a smooth, elegant stone block. Although using stone for construction, rather than the comparatively knobbly cobbles, is just a matter of aesthetics, it's nice to have the choice of either that a stone generator delivers.

Start by creating the layout shown in Figure 3.8. This is similar to the cobblestone generator with some subtle differences; in particular, take note of the position of the hole in the ground and the slightly different geometry of the border blocks.

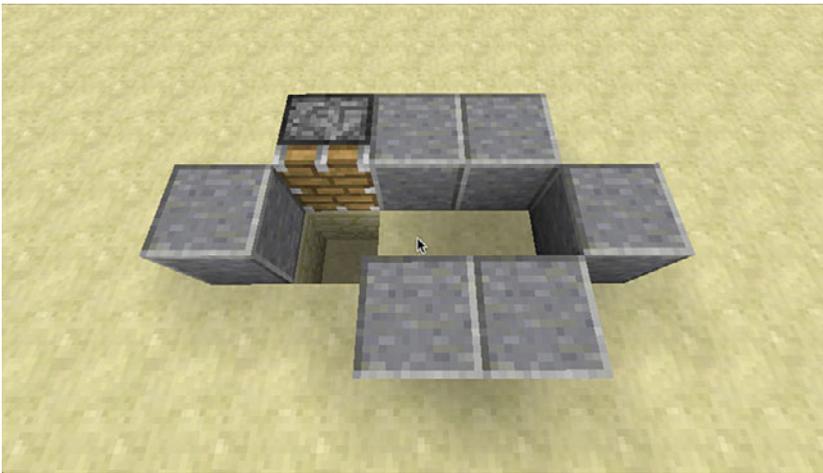


FIGURE 3.8 The foundation of a stone generator.

Now place a set of four glass blocks on top (see Figure 3.9). These act as the tower well for the lava, allowing it to drop down onto the flowing water. You'll need to add some temporary blocks to attach the two floating blocks in the correct position and then remove them. Alternatively, just create a square using eight glass blocks. Either way will work, and you can use any solid block material you prefer, except wood, which has the habit of bursting into flames when in close proximity to lava.

Finally, in this order, spill water into the far end of the trench and pour lava against the inside of one of the blocks at the top of the tower well. This positions the lava source block at the top of the tower so that it continually flows down. Assuming all has gone to plan, you'll see a block of stone form almost immediately under the lava (see Figure 3.10).

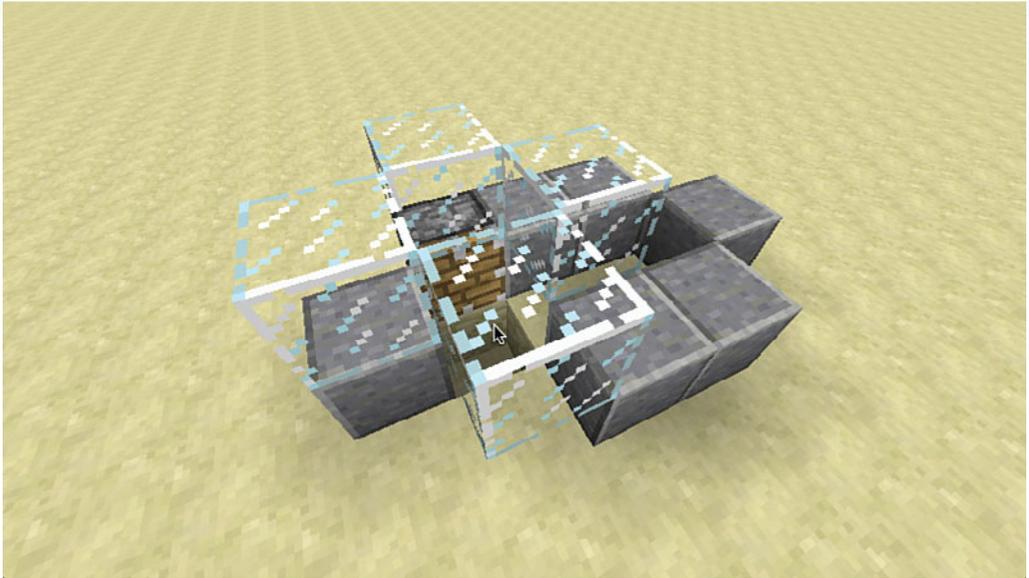


FIGURE 3.9 Creating a tower well for the lava.

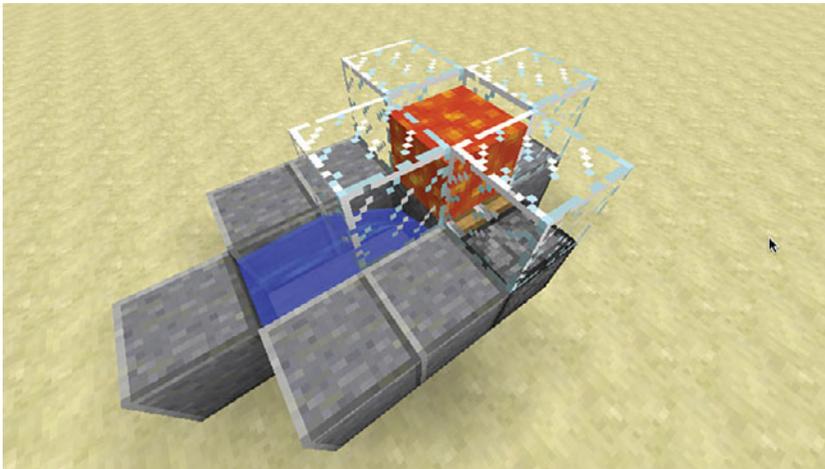


FIGURE 3.10 Place the water source first, and then the lava to ensure they meet in the correct order, forming stone.

All that remains is to set up the same circuit to control the piston as you used in the cobblestone generator. Just make sure you use a stone button on the circuit's starting block because stone buttons produce a 1-second pulse of power. A wooden button will push the piston forward for 1.5 seconds and not leave enough time while retracted for the lava to flow down once more into the water.

Extend the design further, if you like, by adding the same string of pistons shown in Figure 3.6 that created the self-healing cobblestone platform.

Obsidian Generator

Besides building portals, obsidian is primarily useful as an incredibly effective blast-resistant building material. I mentioned earlier that it is some 200 times tougher than any other, excluding the unmineable bedrock, and it is therefore also immune to the attacks of any naturally spawned hostile mob, including exploding creepers. Indeed, the only mob that can break obsidian is the player-created Wither.

Unlike the previous two generators, there is a core problem with automatic obsidian generation: the requirement of lava source blocks. Although it's possible to build an infinite water source by emptying two buckets of water into the diagonally opposite ends of a 2×2 hole, the same cannot be said for lava. In essence, lava source blocks are a finite resource within any particular chunk, although given the practically infinite size of each *Minecraft* world (approximately 64,000,000×64,000,000 blocks in surface area), not to mention the enormous lava pools found in the Nether, lava, like any other resource, can be considered essentially infinite.

At this stage there are several ways to obtain obsidian:

- Pour water on top of the still lava that fills lava lakes. These are most commonly found below level 10 in the Overworld, and everywhere in the Nether, although they do appear on the surface, especially when you're playing a customized world using the "Good Luck" preset (see Figure 3.11).
- Pour lava into a mold, as shown in Figure 3.12, and then place water on top to form obsidian in the final desired shape. This has the advantage that you don't need to mine the obsidian with a diamond pickaxe, saving wear on your tools. Figures 3.13 to 3.16 show how to mold a Nether portal frame without mining any obsidian. It doesn't take long at all and therefore is actually a more efficient construction method than having to tunnel down to layer 12 to find diamonds.
- Obtain enough obsidian to build a portal (including molding a frame, as described earlier), craft a chest (or a couple of ender chests for even easier content transfers), and pack a diamond pickaxe and a couple of stacks of stone or cobblestone. Place a bed and take a nap at night to reset your spawn point, and then clamber through the portal to travel to the Nether. This creates a portal at your destination, automatically spawning the obsidian blocks required for the frame. Create some protection around the frame using the cobblestone so that you can take the time to knock the obsidian out of the destination frame, piece by piece, without worrying about ghosts flinging fireballs your way. When you've finished, place the chest and store everything you have therein—every last skerrick. Then jump into some lava, fall off a cliff, or die in some other

convenient way. You'll respawn next to your bed. Head into the frame again. A new one will appear either at the same place as the original Nether frame or nearby. Take some care before you step out because they can appear over lava, or very close to cliff edges. Then hoist your pickaxe from the chest, take apart the obsidian frame, and repeat. When you have enough, collect everything from the chest and travel back through the frame to the Overworld.

TIP

Bringing Back Disappearing Chunks

Chunks are columns of blocks, 16×16 in surface area, and 256 rows high. Each *Minecraft* world is divided into these chunks. Each spawns and is loaded in its totality as you travel around the different regions. If you find chunks not rendering correctly, leaving odd gaps in the ground through which you can see tunnels, dungeons, and so on in other chunks, try changing your video settings so that the Render Distance is set to 16 chunks. You may find this too much of a slow-down for a low-powered computer, but if you have a recent model with an equivalent of an Intel i5 or i7 CPU, there's a good chance your chunk gaps will become a thing of the past.



FIGURE 3.11 Convert a portion of a lava lake into obsidian by pouring water on a non-lava block nearby so that it has the chance to flow over the lava.

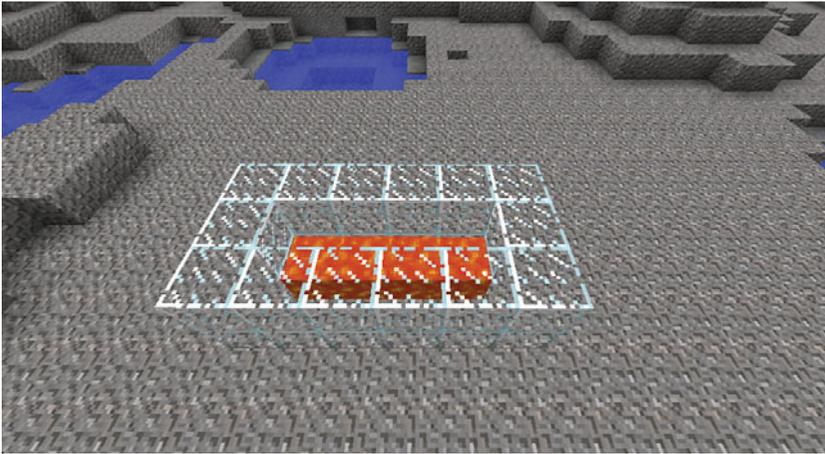


FIGURE 3.12 Mold obsidian with the placement of surrounding blocks, then pour a bucket of lava into the gap in the middle.

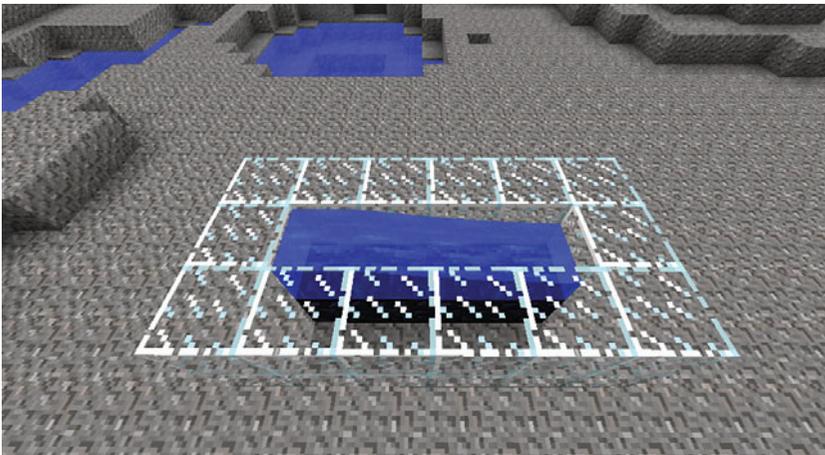


FIGURE 3.13 You can convert a row of lava with one bucket of water, but building a vertical tower requires a layered approach.

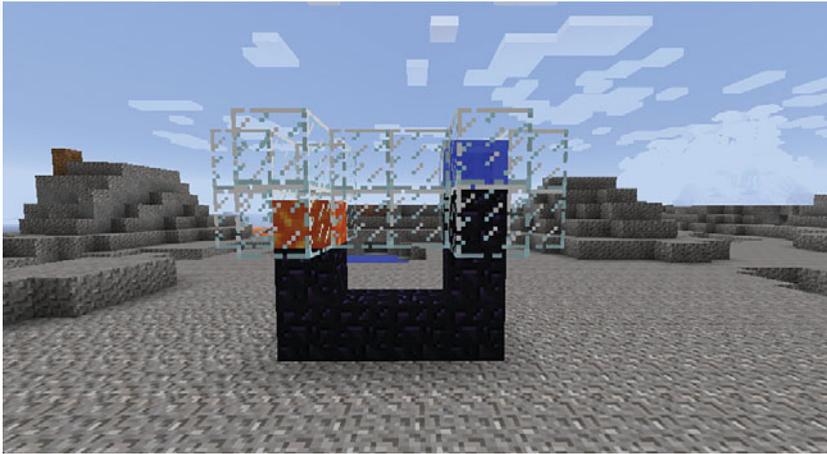


FIGURE 3.14 Build the frame one layer at a time, placing the lava and then water on top to control the conversion of the blocks. The left side of the frame is ready for the water, whereas the right side shows it already converted.



FIGURE 3.15 A final spill along a channel at the top completes the frame.

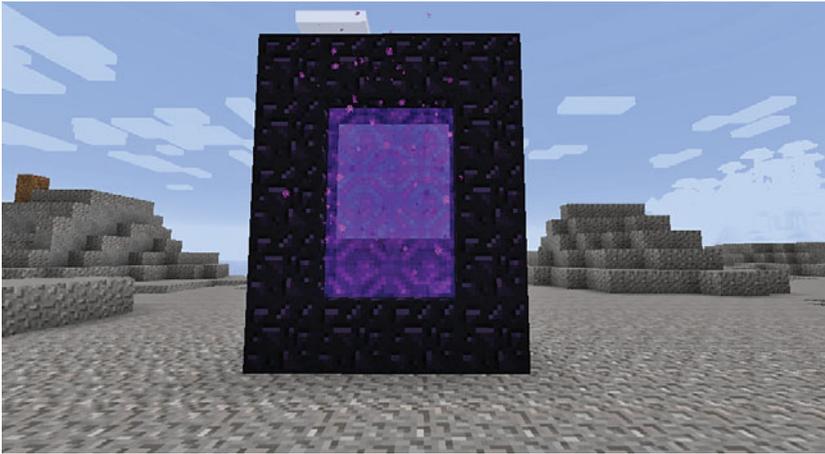


FIGURE 3.16 The frame is now ready for action and requires just 10 lava source blocks nearby if you leave out the corners.

The Bottom Line

Although you can't generate a huge number of the different ores in *Minecraft*, being able to create the basics, such as stone and cobblestone, can be a boon, saving you from having to tunnel through the countryside or mar the landscape with strip mines. Indeed, ever wonder how players create enormous structures while playing a game that is strictly Survival? Well, they don't do so by digging up all that ore. Generators take up very little space, and pistons are easy to create. Plant some saplings to provide wood for the handles, and you'll have all you need to build any number of pickaxes so you can keep pulling in the output from the generator and use it wherever you require. Build an enormous castle and turn the pistons so they face up and create towering walls. You may even want to use a generator to create huge platforms such as the one required for the mob farm described in the next chapter. Read on to gain a huge amount of other useful resources from mob drops.

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