

ARCHON - THE LIGHT AND THE DARK

Unexpanded VIC 20 Version by Aleks Eeben in 2021
Second Release (29 June 2021)

Download from the Eight Bit Shed: <http://bit.ly/vic20archon>

Acknowledgements:

This Unexpanded VIC 20 port/adaptation of Archon is based on the original game by Anne Westfall, Jon Freeman and Paul Reiche III released in 1983. This version is not approved or endorsed by them, and I've done this solely as a hobby and as an act of showing respect to this immersively great game, that has definitely survived time. No code was copied from the original, it's all written from scratch during one month of hot summer nights in May-June 2021.

Icon graphics are copied pixel-by-pixel from the Commodore 64 version with minor adjustments in the outlines to make them fit the 8x16 pixel box and flat pixel ratio of VIC 20. Title image is adapted from the original Archon manual scans found on web.

Original title music was composed by Tommy V. Dunbar. A short jingle version is used in VIC 20 Archon title screen and when a game has ended.

About Archon:

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archon:_The_Light_and_the_Dark

Original manual: <https://www.mocagh.org/ea/archon-manual.pdf>

Detailed information on the official Atari 800 version: <http://www.vintagecomputing.com/index.php/archives/44>

I have done my best to keep the essential gameplay as close as possible to the original, but due to the limited RAM (5K) of unexpanded VIC 20 and the limited graphics capabilities, I had to leave out certain details.

Many of these are due to the memory limit: The game currently uses every single byte of RAM, so adjusting simple features like these is not quite as easy as it might seem - any changes always require size-optimizing or leaving out something else.

Differences to the original Commodore 64 version:

- Phoenix is not invincible while bursting flames. This makes Phoenix-Shapeshifter battles less boring
- Icons do not have walking animations, but they're mirrored in battle when moving to the other direction
- Icons do not regenerate their health over time
- Revive spell always revives the last defeated icon and allows placing the revived icon anywhere on the board
- Ground moving icons on board cannot retrace back to starting square to restore their steps. It's 3 steps and you've done your turn. However, if you make a mistake on the first step and immediately step back, you can cancel the move
- Ground moving icons immediately attack an opponent when walking into their square on the board. Flying and teleporting icons obviously require a button press
- Original game didn't allow canceling moving a piece after it was picked up. I had to leave out the check for legal moves, so you can now cancel any move by pressing the button while standing on the starting square

- There's considerably less text in the game, especially when casting spells. Used spells are shown in red in the spellbook. Press button after selecting the spellcaster to open spell selector
- When opened, the spell selector shows the first spell Shift Time without any further instructions. Move up or down to browse through spells
- "Cease Conjuring" is just "Cancel", last item on the list
- Summoned elementals or revived icons appear on top of the spellcaster, just move them to their desired target location from there
- Teleportation (both the spell and spellcaster movement) use the same code as flying instead of the teleport animation
- Exchange spell requires selecting two icons after casting the spell. There's unfortunately no instructions on the screen, but you'll figure it out
- You can shoot through barriers in their half-transparent (blue) state, but not walk through them. In the original half-transparent barriers slow down both movement and bullets
- There's only 1 joystick on VIC 20. Light always plays on the keyboard (AWDX, Left Shift) and Dark on the joystick
- There's no single player mode. That is, no opponent AI. Find a friend and play! :)
- Bullet reload times, bullet speeds, health points, damages, light cycle bonuses, etc. are not 1:1 matched with the original, but they are quite close and proportionally the same. No big differences that would disturb the balances between the icons
- End game doesn't announce the winner in text, but the board frame color is changed to the winner's color and the Archon jingle is played. A button press on keyboard (Left Shift) starts a new game
- Light always starts the first game, later games are started by the player who didn't make the last move

New in this update:

- Support for 2 joysticks using Protovision user port joystick adapter (LOAD"BOOT 2X JOY",8,1)
- Summon, Teleport and Revive spells no longer allow targeting icons on power points
- Teleport spell self-attack bug fixed
- Fixed stuck step sound at end of game when stepping to 5th power point on last step
- Loading text added
- Drive spinning after loading fixed
- New memory expansion compatible boot (thanks to Mike on Denial forum for the idea)

Known bugs:

- Earth elemental summoned by Dark side walks backwards in battle (visual glitch)
- A colored block flashes on NTSC after some spells or after ending a battle (visual glitch)
- If the opponent has only 1 icon left and you imprison it, the game gets stuck and you won't get to hear the end game jingle

Please report bugs to aleksi.eeben@gmail.com with a screenshot and a description how to replicate the bug, thanks!