

Writing Interactive Fiction With Adrift



Writing your own interactive fiction can be an enjoyable challenge. Three of the best authoring systems for IF are called Inform 7, Quest, and Adrift. All are free of charge.

Below, you'll find an introduction to creating interactive fiction with Adrift. You can find introductions to Inform 7 and Quest in other parts of this website.

Would you like to try writing some interactive fiction without leaning to use a programming? A Windows-based software tool called Adrift Developer makes it possible for you to do so with very little fuss. Adrift Developer costs nothing and is available on the Web at: <http://www.adrift.org.uk/>

Adrift works best for stories that are fairly simple and straightforward. For such stories, Adrift is quite easy to use and requires no computer-programming skills. To make more complicated stories, a writer may need to learn some programming.

For the purposes of this tutorial, we'll write an extremely simple story. Here's a transcript of one user's experience with this story.

"Lost Chicken" Script

You've made it to your home, as usual, but it seems that you've forgotten your key.

Lost Chicken
An Interactive Fiction by Brendan Desilets

Outside Front Door
You're outside your front door. The door is to the west, and your front yard is to the south.

You can see a doormat and an oak door here.

>take doormat

You find a note under the doormat and pick it up. Then you drop the doormat.

>read note

The note reads, "The chicken hides the spare."

>s

South Yard

This is the lovely south yard of your home.

You can see a plaster chicken (closed) here.

>open chicken

You open the plaster chicken, revealing a key.

>take key

Taken.

>n

Outside Front Door

You're outside your front door. The door is to the west, and your front yard is to the south.

You can see a doormat and an oak door here.

>w

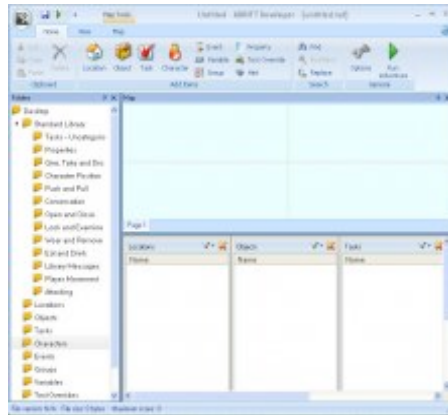
You unlock the door and enter your house.

Front Hall

You have made it inside. Congratulations!

*** The End ***

An Adrift Tutorial



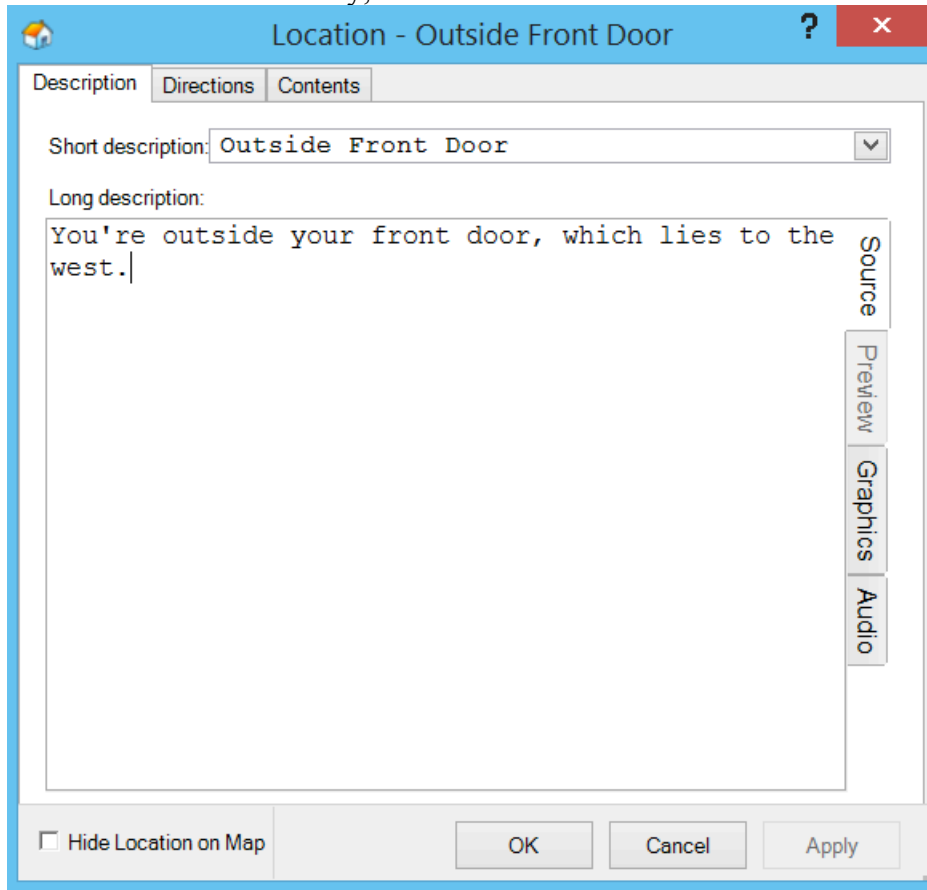
When Adrift Developer starts, it usually displays five windows. The windows are labeled “Rooms,” “Objects,” “Tasks,” “Events,” and “Characters.”

Use these steps to get started with Adrift Developer:

1. Start the computer program called Adrift Developer. Click on the “Home” tab at the top of the screen, if that tab is not already selected.
2. Click on “Options” and then on “Bibliography.” Type in the title of your piece of writing and your name, in the right spaces. Then, click on OK.
3. In the “Characters” section of the Adrift Developer screen, you'll notice that one character, the player/character, has already been created. Double-click on the word “Player,” and type in the name of your player/character. Then type a brief description of your player/character in the appropriately-labeled space. Click on the right gender for your player/character, male or female. Then click on OK.

Create your first location

1. On the Adrift Developer screen, find the section labeled “Add Items.” In this section, click on “Location.”
2. In the form that opens, fill in the “short name” of the room. This name should be three words or fewer in length. For our “Lost Chicken” story, we’ll use “Outside Front Door” as the short name of



The screenshot shows a window titled "Location - Outside Front Door" with a blue header bar containing a home icon, a question mark, and a close button. The window has three tabs: "Description" (selected), "Directions", and "Contents".

Under the "Description" tab, there is a "Short description:" field with a dropdown menu containing the text "Outside Front Door". Below this is a "Long description:" text area containing the text "You're outside your front door, which lies to the west." followed by a cursor.

On the right side of the text area, there is a vertical stack of buttons: "Source", "Preview", "Graphics", and "Audio".

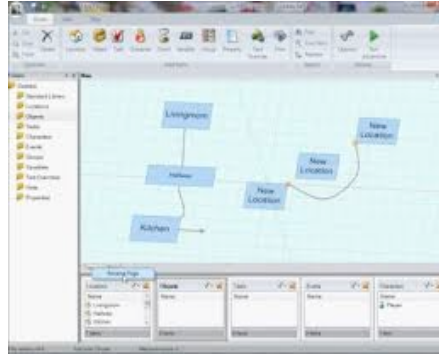
At the bottom left of the window, there is a checkbox labeled "Hide Location on Map" which is currently unchecked. At the bottom right, there are three buttons: "OK", "Cancel", and "Apply".

our first location.

3. Then, in the appropriate space, fill in the “long room description.” You can copy and paste the long description from your word processor, if you like. For our long description of “Outside Front Door,” we’ll use “You’re outside your front door. The door is to the west, and your front yard is to the south.”
4. Click on “OK” when you have finished with this form.
5. You can use the same procedure to make more rooms. For “Lost Chicken,” we’ll create two more locations, “Front Hall” and “South Yard.” We won’t need a long description for “Front Hall.” Our long description of “South Yard” will be “This is the lovely south yard of your home.”
6. Double-click on “Outside Front Door,” from your list of locations. In the form that opens, click on the “Directions” tab. Using dropdown menus that appear, indicate that going west from “Outside Front Door” will take the player/character to “Front Hall” and that going south from “Outside Front Door” will take the player/character to “South Yard.” When you’ve indicated these directions, Adrift may ask if you want these directions to work both ways. In other words, Adrift may ask whether going east from Front Hall should lead to “Outside Front Door” and whether going north from “South Yard” should bring the player/character to “Outside Front Door.” For our story, we can

allow both of these two-way pairs.

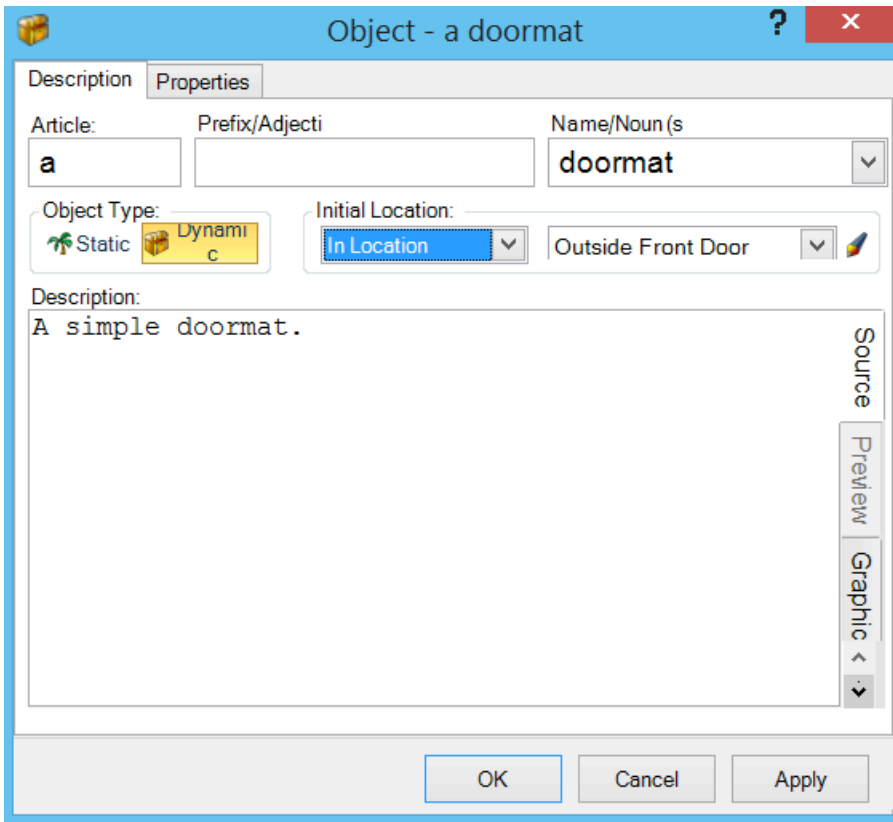
7. Adrift will show a map of the rooms you've created.



Save and Test Your Story, So Far

1. Though Adrift is a solid and mature program, it is important so save your work frequently. It's a good practice to save several versions of your work, in case something goes wrong with your latest saved version.
2. To save your story, click on the circular icon in the top left of the screen, and choose "Save As."
3. To test your story, click on the green triangle in the top center of the screen. This triangle is labeled, "Run Adventure." Adrift Runner will open and display your story. Your player/character should be able to move between the rooms you've created.

Create your first "object."

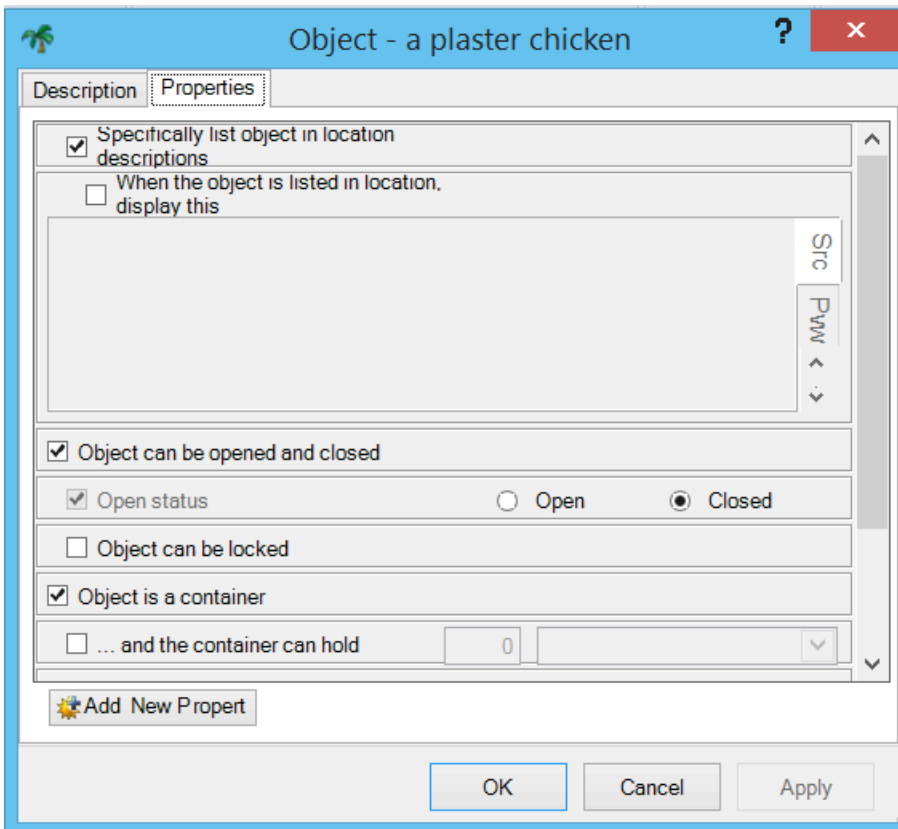


1. From the “Add Items” list, choose Object.
2. In the form that opens, type in the name of the object. In our example, we'll create the doormat as our first item. Using the buttons and dropdown menus, indicate that this object is “dynamic” and that its initial location is “Outside Front Door.” A dynamic object is an item that the player/character can pick up.
3. Then, in the “name” box, type “doormat” and then press the Enter key. Next, type “mat.” Now, we've signaled that we want to create an object named “doormat,” which the user can also refer to as “mat.”
4. Next, type in the description of the object.
5. Click on the Properties tab, and indicate that the object should be mentioned in room descriptions.
6. Click on “OK.”
7. You can use the same procedure to make more objects.

Create more objects.

1. Next, let's create the object called the “note.” This object will be similar to the doormat, except that its location will be “hidden.”
2. Now, let's create, or “implement,” the plaster chicken, which will contain the key. This object will be similar to the others, but with several differences.
 1. It will be static, rather than dynamic.
 2. It is in the South Yard.
 3. Its properties, accessed through the “properties” tab, will specify that
 1. it is a container,

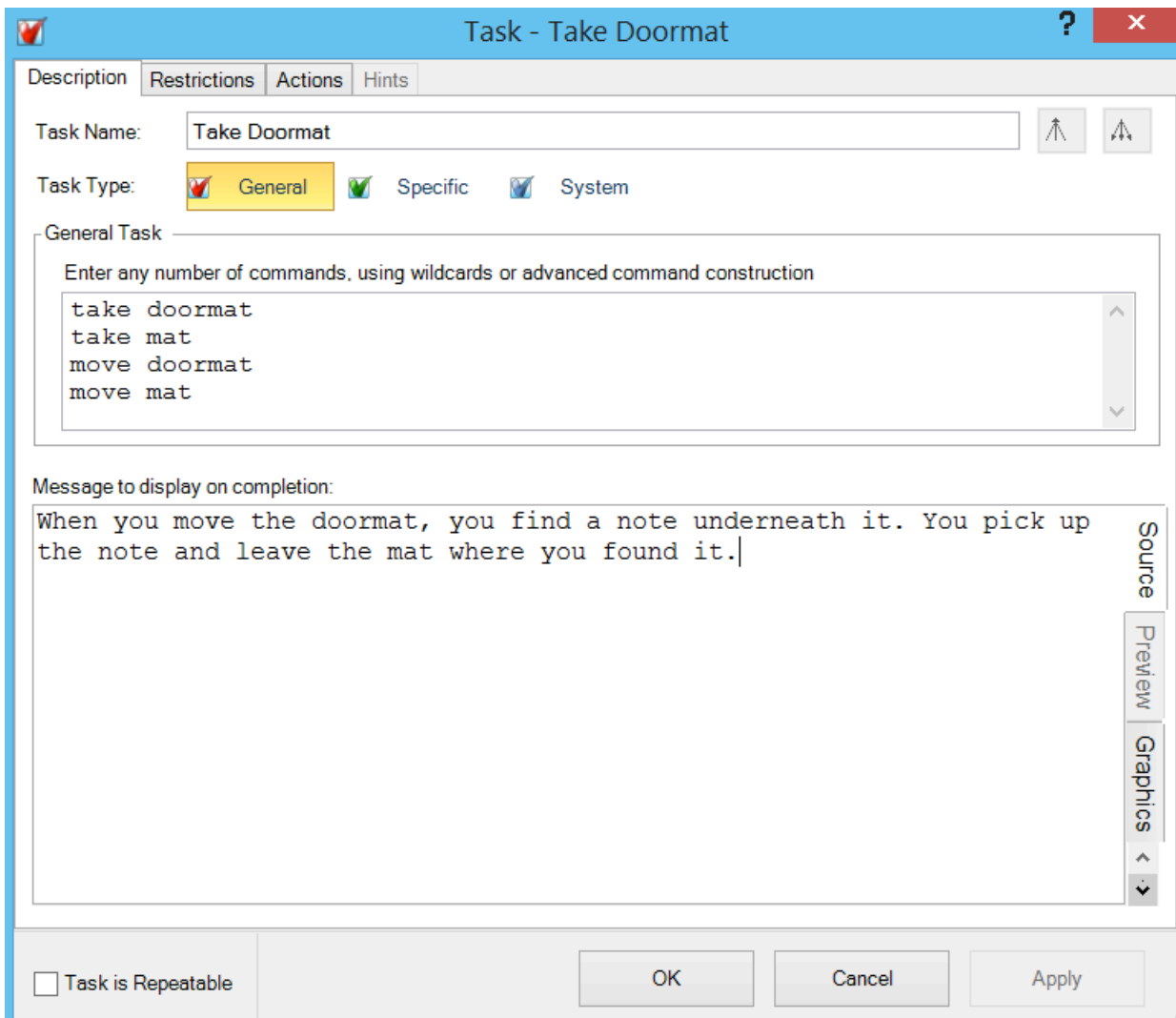
2. it can be opened and closed,
 3. it is closed, and
 4. it should be included in room descriptions.
3. Finally, let's implement the key. It will be a dynamic object, and its initial location will be inside the plaster chicken.



Set the Opening and Closing Text

1. Click on the circular icon that appears in the top left corner of the Adrift Developer screen. From the menu that opens, choose "Introduction & End of Game."
2. The page that opens will have two tabs, one for the opening of the game and one for its ending.
3. The "Introduction" tab allows for the creation of opening text, for specifying the story's first location, and for displaying, or not displaying the description of the opening location.
4. This would be a good time to save and test your story, so far.

Create your first "task."



1. A task is an action that the player/character must, or may, take to produce a certain result. Adrift has lots of built-in tasks, such as picking up an object, but you'll want to create your own, too. Tasks that you create generally override Adrift's built-in tasks. Tasks can be a bit complicated, but they're necessary.
2. Our first example of a task will implement what happens when the player/character first takes the doormat, thus revealing the note. Recall that, when we created the note, we placed it in the "location" called "hidden." In other words, it's not anywhere in the story's world until we bring it in.
3. In the "Add Items" section at the top of the screen, click on "Task." A fairly complex window will open.
4. With the Description tab selected, type in a name for the task. We'll use "Take Doormat." Our "Task Type" will be "General." (We could also implement this task as "Specific," but, if we did, we would not be able to introduce the action called "move," which Adrift does not normally understand.)
5. In the box labeled "Enter any number of commands," type in all of the commands that the reader will be able to use to activate the task. Put one command on each line. In our case, we'll list these commands:

take mat
take doormat
move mat
move doormat

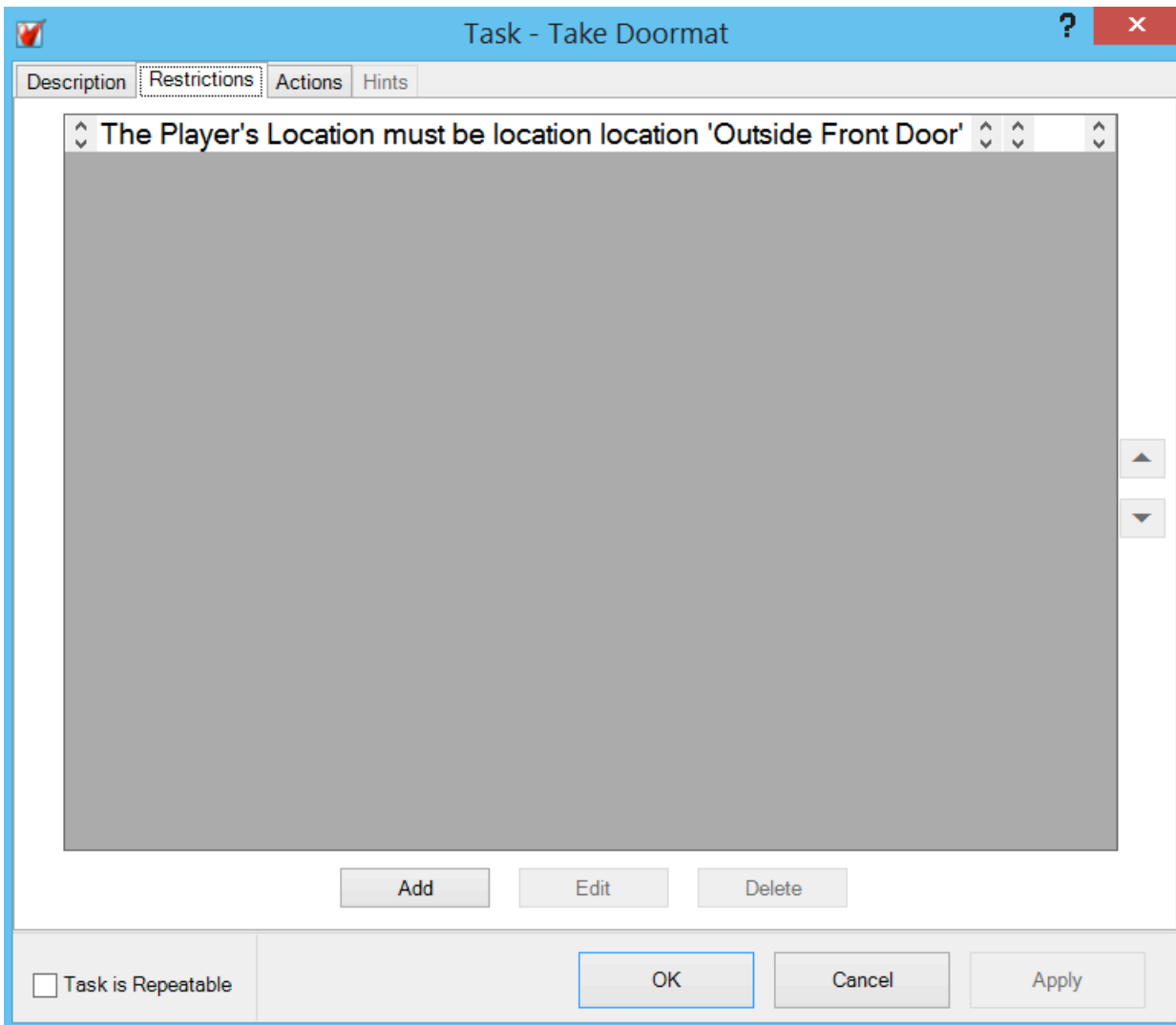
6. In the box labeled “Message to display on completion,” type something like “When you move the doormat, you find a note underneath it. You pick up the note and leave the mat where you found it.”

7. Since we want the note to be revealed only once, uncheck the box that's labeled “Task is repeatable.” Then click on “Apply.”

8. Click on the “Restrictions” tab. Here we'll indicate what conditions must be met for the task to do whatever it does. In this case, our only restriction will be that our character must be in the location called “Outside Front Door.”

9. However, as of this writing, the screen that you're looking at right now is a little buggy. It displays a large box, currently blank. When you create restrictions, the box is supposed to display them. It should also allow you to change the order in which the restrictions are applied and to edit each restriction by clicking on it and then on an “Edit” button. However, when you've created a restriction, even if you make no mistakes in doing so, the restriction usually does not appear in the large box. To find out if the restriction is really in effect, you usually have to close the whole task-creation window by clicking on the “OK” button at the bottom of that window. When you do, you'll see that the name of your task appears on the “Task” list on the main screen of Adrift Developer. If you double-click on the name of your new task on the task list, and then on the “Restrictions” tag, the large box will list all the restrictions that you've created, just as it was supposed to all along. A bit later in this tutorial, when we create actions for a task, you'll work with a very similar big box that lists of actions the actions that you've created. This box exhibits the same bug.

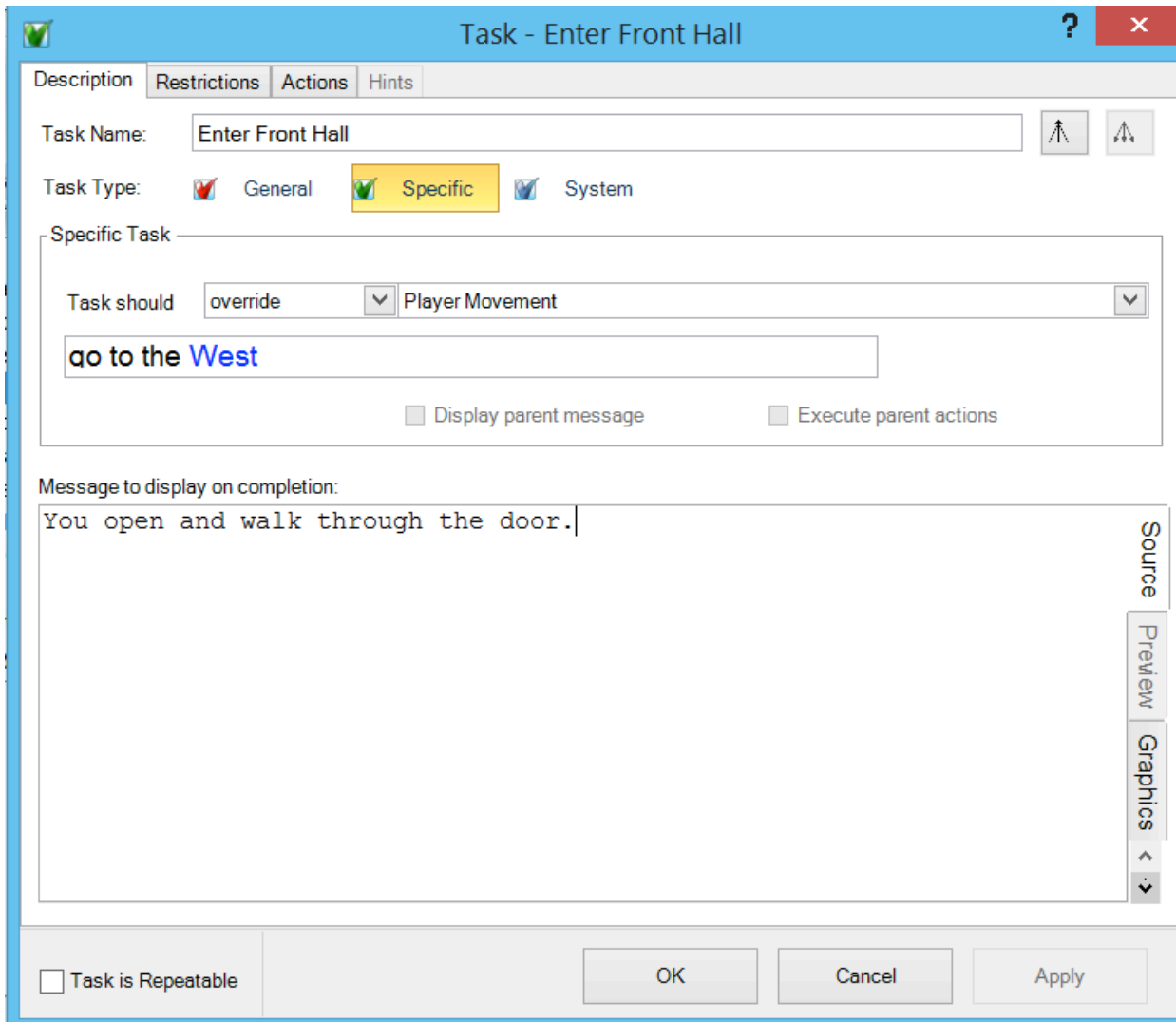
9. With the “Restrictions” tab open, click on “Add.” Using the dropdown menus that appear, create the restriction that the player/character must be in the “Outside Front Door” location. Click on “OK” and then on “Apply.” You should now see your newly-made restriction in the previously-blank list on the “Restrictions” tab. Your restriction should read, somewhat awkwardly, “The Player's Location must be location location 'Outside Front Door'”



10. Click on the “Actions” tab and then on “Add.”
11. Use dropdown menus to construct an action that moves the note from “Hidden” to “Held by the player.” Click on “OK” and then on “Apply.”
12. Your action should now appear on the previously blank list of actions, in the odd but useful form, “Move object 'a note' to held by character 'Player'”
13. Click on “OK” until the “Task – Take Doormat” window closes.

Create a task that ends the story

1. From the “Add Items” Section, click on “Task.” We’ll call this task “Enter Front Hall.”
2. This task will not require that we introduce any new verbs, and so our task type will be “Specific.”
3. Using dropdown menus, indicate that the new task should “override” “player movement” “go west.”
4. As a “Message to display on completion, use something like “You open the door and walk through it.””



5. Click on the “Restrictions” tab. Click on “Add.”
6. Using the dropdown menus create the restriction, “The Player's Location must be location location 'Outside Front Door'”
7. Click on “OK,” and “Apply.”
8. Again, click on “Add” in the “Restrictions” tab. Using the dropdown menus, create the restriction, “Object, 'a key' must be held by a character 'player'”
9. Click on “OK” and “Apply”
10. Click on the “Actions” tab.
11. Click on the “End Game” tab, and choose “In Victory.”

Save and Test Your Story

1. To save your story, click on the circular icon in the top left of the screen, and choose “Save As.”
2. To test your story, click on the green triangle in the top center of the screen. This triangle is labeled, “Run Adventure.” Adrift Runner will open and display your story. Your player/character should be able to work through the entire story.

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File Edit View Macros Window Help
[Icons]
Lost Chicken
You've made it home as usual, but it seems that you've forgotten your key.

Outside Front Door
You're outside your front door, which lies to the west. Also here is a doormat. An exit leads south.

> take mat
When you move the doormat, you find a note underneath it. You pick up the note and leave the mat where you found it.

> x note
The note reads, "The chicken hides the spare."

> south
You move south.

South Yard
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A challenge to try on your own

1. Implement the door, as mentioned in the transcript.
2. The Adrift Manual Wiki (<http://wiki.adrift.co>) explains how to create a fully-featured door, but you could get away with something much simpler in this story.

