

Busy, busy



The last day or so has been a bit busy. Part of it was me wasting time on Hamsterball, a clone of the 80's hit arcade game Marble Madness, and part was preparations for church this weekend. I have been wasting a *lot* of time on Hamsterball. Those who remember [Marble Madness](#) will remember that the game uses a trackball. The player would madly roll that trackball to guide his or her marble downhill (in one case *uphill!*) to the exit, encountering many an obstacle on the way down. Two players could even play at the same time, adding to the madness. Hamsterball plays a great tribute to this game, but it looks like the two player game is limited to either a one-on-one battle to knock the other off a platform, or playing just one board at a time instead of an entire tournament. Actually, the battle part can be up to four players- one-on-one-on-one-on-one, as it were. Instead of a marble, the wonder of current technology allowed the programmers to turn it into a hamster ball, with the hamster dutifully running in the ball as it moves. You can play in resolutions of 640×480 up to 1280×1024, in a window or fullscreen. Unfortunately, fullscreen for me means the game is stretched to fill my widescreen display making the ball look flat. When windowed, the game displays a correct aspect ratio fortunately. In lieu of a trackball, I have tried to play this game using a mouse, the track-pad on this oversized laptop, and an analog Saitek game controller. The game controller works the best for my purposes, but I still would like to get an arcade-style trackball at some point. I missed out on buying one for \$50 back when I could afford one. The game itself starts with ideas from Marble Madness and takes off from there. Besides the classic enemies like an enemy ball and disappearing floors, you will encounter fans, saws, giant hammers and mousetraps, and much more. Remember the world on Marble

Madness where your marble goes up ramps instead of down? Well, add sideways to this game in a world where the gravity changes depending on where your ball is on the screen. Here are some pictures from the game (click for larger size). You can also find a bunch of videos on [Youtube](#):



The business with church involved the 4th/5th grade ministry and children's drama. I had a script to finish memorizing for the rehearsal which started at 3:30. In addition, for the review game, Jeopardy, for 4th/5th grade I made some cards to draw for the categories and point values. Sure, we could have let the students pick for themselves, but when there are 30-50 kids in the room, with half of them (two teams) having to agree that would have caused the game to drag. One of the pastors used a die to decide in the past, but where's the fun in that when we could have the kids draw from a box cool-looking cards instead? On top of that it was rewards weekend. As such I had to call about ten kids in my small groups to remind them to bring their reward sheets with them. Most of them did, but a couple still forgot or couldn't find them.

An odd thing happened this weekend. There was a guest pastor from California, and for some reason on Saturday night he thought the service was two hours (it's really 1½ hours) and so we were wondering in kids ministry what was going on when 6:45 rolled around, then 6:50 and the parents still weren't there to pick up the kids. I learned the next day of what happened. The pastor was corrected and had to shorten his message by a half-hour otherwise chaos would have ensued between the two morning services as people for the second service arrived to a full parking lot because the first service hadn't left yet ☹️. In the end, everything worked out well. The review game was only its usual chaos, the drama went well- if not always perfect- for the three services, and the kids were too fully engaged in the room games Saturday

night to care that their parents hadn't arrived yet (I do feel for the other classrooms though that didn't have carpetball, four-square, and air hockey).