

4 free iPhone games worth playing

March 5 2009, By Eric Gwinn

In these harsh economic times, no one can begrudge you a little free fun. Especially if that fun comes on an iPhone, for which you paid a pretty penny back in the salad days of 2007-08. Here are a few free iPhone games to get your fun meter swinging toward the red zone, while keeping your bank account in the black. You can download them via iTunes, by clicking on "App Store" in the upper-left corner, or from the icon on your iPhone's touch screen.

And you won't be the only one. According to market researcher comScore, the number of mobile game downloaders grew 17 percent from November 2007 to November 2008, when 8.5 million people, or 3.8 percent of mobile subscribers, downloaded a game to their mobile device. So, get ready for some good, free fun:

- **Labyrinth 'Labyrinth Lite':** Transforms your phone into a wooden maze with a steel ball inside. Hold your iPhone as if it were a plate, tilting the phone to help the ball roll through the maze. But don't fall into the dastardly well-placed holes! Great artwork and sound design make "Labyrinth Lite" look, feel, sound and almost smell like a wooden maze. Mesmerizing.
- **'Mafia: Respect & Retaliation':** This is the latest text-based gangster game that's actually a social network. Like "iMob Online," "Mob Live" and "iMafia," the goal is to rise from hood to mafia don. To build power and weaponry, recruit your friends to help rob banks and execute opponents. The more people who have your back, the better your chances of taking over. Unlike its competition, parts of "Mafia: Respect

& Retaliation" can be played while offline, using less battery juice.

- 'Fastlane Street Racing Lite': OK, this isn't really a full-fledged game. It's only a demo. But whoa, it's fun. Grab your iPhone like a steering wheel and skid your way through a street course as fast as you can. Swerve to the right and the whole screen shifts, smacking you in the gut with a really-feels-like-you're-there perspective. You'll produce the universal sign of video game immersion when you involuntarily tilt your head, as if you were behind the wheel of a speeding car. This free version of the game is a riot, but the \$4.99 version _ with more cars to command and more tracks to defeat _ is a treat.
- 'Frotz': Before "Grand Theft Auto," there was "Zork" and other text-based interactive adventure games. "Frotz" includes many of these games, and a reader to let you relive the spine-tingling moment you first read, "It is pitch black. You are likely to be eaten by a Grue." Reading a room description on a computer screen builds up a tension that today's gory "Resident Evil" games can't quite muster. "Frotz" opens the world of text-based games, with a browser that searches the Interactive Fiction Database for more games to enjoy. The simple days are yours again.

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