STARACE

FOR THE VECTREX. 1 PLAYER. VECTREX CONTROLLER.

FREEWARE. Starace for the Vectrex is a free fan conversion of a 1987 Commodore 64 game. Selling it, or selling cartridges with it, is not allowed.

THE STORY

In an age where space travel is commonplace, a way of travelling between solar systems has been found. A tunnel of space and time independence is made by harnessing the power of small stars. Small spacecraft fly through it faster than light. Pilots began to race through the tunnels, breaking speed records. The sport of Staracing was born. The tunnels became tracks and the STARACE league was drawn up.

GETTING STARTED

1. Copy the cartridge image to your flash cartridge. **The game is a 64K image.** Your flash cartridge must support 64K images with PB6 bank switching (VecMulti, VecFever and similar). A cartridge limited to 32K will not run it.
2. Insert the cartridge. **Leave the joystick centred** and switch on.
3. The calibration screen appears. See below.
4. A credits card shows for a few seconds. Press any button to skip it.
5. The menu appears. Press button 1 to start a race.

THE CALIBRATION SCREEN

All text in this game is drawn in rows, swept left to right and then right to left. Every Vectrex lines these sweeps up a little differently. At power-on the game shows sample text and an ALIGN number.

- Press **2** to raise the number and **3** to lower it, until the sample letters look clean. It runs from 0 to 21. Hold the button to keep going.
- **Let go of the stick**, then press **4** to continue. The game reads the stick's rest position when you press 4.
- Hold **4** while switching on to skip this screen and the credits card. ALIGN is then 13, and the stick's rest position is not read.

The starting value, 13, is right for MAME and for the real Vectrex it was tested on. The setting is not saved. It resets at each power-on.

EMULATORS. MAME matches a real Vectrex and shows clean text at the starting value. Emulators based on vecx (including libretro-vecx) are not supported, because their timing and brightness differ from a real Vectrex. For the best results use a real Vectrex or MAME.

THE MENU

The menu lists five items. The marker (>) shows the one you have selected.

Item	Choices
TRACK	0 to 13. The track's name is shown.
LEVEL	NOVICE, AMATEUR, PROFESSIONAL, EXPERT.
CONTROL	MANUAL, COMPUTER ALIGNMENT, COMPUTER ASSISTED, DEMONSTRATION.
STEERING	LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH.
MUSIC	ON or OFF. The race tune. Sound effects always play.

- Push the stick **up** or **down** to select an item. Push it **left** or **right** to change that item. Hold the stick and it repeats.
- Buttons **2** and **3** also change the selected item: 2 goes back, 3 goes forward.
- Press **1** to start the race. Press **4** for TRACK VIEW.
- The game starts with TRACK 0, NOVICE, COMPUTER ALIGNMENT, MEDIUM and MUSIC ON. Your choices stay until you change them, even after a race.

TRACK VIEW shows the track's number, its name, a two-line comment and a line drawing of the track seen from the side. Push the stick **left** or **right** to turn the drawing. Push it **up** for the previous track and **down** for the next. The drawing takes about a second to build and the stick is ignored meanwhile. Press **4** or **2** to go back to the menu. Press **1** to start the race.

CONTROLS

Control	Action
Joystick left / right	Moves your ship left or right across the tunnel.
Joystick up	Tips the ship down: it dives.
Joystick down	Tips the ship up: it climbs.
Button 1	Thrust. Hold it to speed up. Let go and the ship slows down to its lowest speed. Starts a race on the menu.
Button 2	Changes the selected menu item, backwards. Not used in the race.
Button 3	Changes the selected menu item, forwards. Not used in the race.
Button 4	TRACK VIEW on the menu. Not used in the race.

You fly as in an aeroplane. Push the stick forward and the nose goes down.

ANALOG CONTROL

Starace uses the analog joystick of the Vectrex controller. A small push steers gently. A full push steers hard. **Use an original Vectrex controller, or another analog controller, if you can.** Digital controllers and adapters work, but the ship then always steers at full strength and fine flying is much harder.

Let go of the stick when you press 4 on the calibration screen. If the ship or the menu marker creeps by itself, switch off and on again and leave the stick at rest.

STEERING sets how strongly the ship answers a push of the stick. LOW is the original game's response. MEDIUM answers a

push twice as strongly and HIGH four times. A full push is always a full push.

CONTROL TYPES AND LEVELS

CONTROL decides how much the computer helps you.

Type	What it does
MANUAL	You fly alone. If you leave the tunnel you stay outside and lose speed until you steer back in.
COMPUTER ALIGNMENT	You fly. If you stay outside the tunnel for a short while, the computer takes over and puts you back in the middle of the tunnel.
COMPUTER ASSISTED	As COMPUTER ALIGNMENT, but the limit on how fast your ship can move across the tunnel is lower.
DEMONSTRATION	The computer flies and you watch. Press button 1 to stop it. The race ends by itself at the end of the track.

LEVEL sets the speed of the other craft. NOVICE is the slowest and EXPERT is the fastest.

THE RACE

The object is to reach the end of the track in the fastest time. Press button 1 on the menu. The STARACE letters fly into the tunnel, the lights count down from 5 and the race starts. You start in 16th place.

You fly down a tunnel of energy. **Stay inside the tunnel.** Outside it, you cannot speed up and you slow down. If you go too far out, you are disqualified.

OTHER CRAFT race down the tunnel with you. If you hit one, you go out of control for a moment. Then the computer puts you back in the middle of the tunnel.

BOLLARDS are round markers outside some of the bends. If you hit one, the screen cracks and you lose control. After a moment the computer puts you back in the middle of the tunnel.

Messages appear over the tunnel:

Message	Meaning
OUTSIDE ENERGY FIELD	You are outside the tunnel.
OUT OF CONTROL	You hit another craft.
COMPUTER OVERIDE	The computer is flying your ship back to the middle.
DEMONSTRATION MODE	The computer is flying.
PLAYER DISQUALIFIED	You went too far from the tunnel. The race is over.

When the race ends, the END page shows RACE OVER, the place you finished in and your time. A disqualified race shows only its message. After about seven seconds, or when you press button 1, you return to the menu. A demonstration goes straight back to the menu.

THE SCREEN

At the top, from the left: your position in the race, the time since the start, and the distance still to go. Under the top line, a short bar at the left grows as you move along the track. A second bar, under the time, grows with your speed.

At the bottom, from the left: your speed, the radar box, and the best time. The best time is 1000 on every track. This version does not keep records.

In the radar box, the triangle shows where your ship is in the tunnel. The small dot shows which way you are moving.

THE TRACKS

No	Name	No	Name
0	THE QUANTUM TWIST	7	VEIL NEBULA
1	NURSERY TRACK	8	THE MILKY WAY
2	SPAGHETTI STRANGLER	9	SCORPION STRIP
3	SPRING RING	10	THE PLASMA RIFT
4	STELLAR DRIFT	11	QUASAR BUMPS
5	VICTORIAS WAKE	12	WARPED HORIZONS
6	PLEIADES RUN	13	THE IONIC SOLUTION

HINTS

- Learn to fly on the straighter tracks first. Track 1, NURSERY TRACK, is a gentle track for the beginner.
- The craft turns faster at slower speeds. Let go of button 1 before a bend.
- Staying inside the tunnel is the way to a fast time. Watch the radar box.
- Look at a track in TRACK VIEW before you race it.
- Choose DEMONSTRATION to watch the computer fly a track.
- Start on NOVICE with COMPUTER ALIGNMENT. Try MANUAL when you are ready to fly without help.
- If the ship feels too slow or too sharp on a small stick movement, change STEERING.

CREDITS

Starace for the Commodore 64, 1987.

Made by **Denton Designs**: **Dave Colclough** and **Stuart Fotheringham**.

Music: **Fred Gray**.

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Vectrex version, 2026: **Sad Enby Games**.

This is an unofficial fan conversion. It is freeware: you may copy and share it free of charge, but you may not sell it.