

Mario Kart: Double Dash!! FAQ

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Introduction.

Mario Kart: Double Dash!! is the latest installment in a series of Mario Bros. multiplayer racing games. Like most good games specifically intended for multiplayer festivities, this game has no real plot, other than, "One day everyone in the Mushroom Kingdom decided to get together and race". If you're a fan of the Mario Kart series, you'll recognize a lot of things from the older games, like favorite items such as the Spiny Shell, or characters like Mario and Bowser. New to this game is the fact that you have two players in one kart. You can even have a friend over and race co-op with him/her or you can take control of both racers by yourself. Additionally, each character pair gets his/her own set of Special Items to use. As you play, you'll unlock new modes, characters and karts.

Characters & Karts.

This section describes the playable characters and their karts. Note that with the karts, only pure statistics and no real background information is given. Also, many of the karts, and some of the characters, must first be unlocked. Since each car holds two players, remember that a character cannot ride in a kart with a smaller weight class. Additionally, characters cannot ride higher-weight class karts unless accompanied by a character that matches the kart's weight class. Each character and each kart has its own weight class, with the exception of one special kart that can hold any weight combination of characters.

Characters.

Mario & Luigi.

It should be no surprise to anyone as to why the ever-famous stars of Nintendo have appeared in this game. Both Mario and Luigi are medium-weight racers.

Donkey Kong & Diddy Kong.

These apes love bananas, hence why they wield the mighty fruit as a Special Item. Donkey is a heavy character, though Diddy is a lightweight.

Daisy & Peach.

Daisy is new to the Mario Kart scene. Like Peach, she is a medium-weight character, though its interesting to note Peach was a light character in her 64' version.

Koopa & Paratroopa.

These enemies from the Mushroom Kingdom seem friendly now. Both can use a barrage of either Green or Red Shells. Additionally, both are light characters (probably aided by Paratroopa's lofty wings).

Baby Mario & Baby Luigi.

These babies are as expected, lightweight characters. Though they're still in diapers, they seem able enough to drive karts and even control the ferocious Chain Chomps!

Yoshi & Birdo.

Ooh, look. Yoshi got a girlfriend. Birdo hasn't appeared in a game for a while, but proves to be an able driver. Yoshi, like Peach, was a lightweight but now is a medium-weighted character, as is Birdo.

Bowser & Bowser Jr.

Bowser is well known as being the monstrous nemesis of Mario. His son is Bowser Jr., an equally troublesome Koopa. Bowser is obviously a heavy character, though Bowser Jr. is a light character.

Wario & Waluigi.

Like the Bowser family, these guys are evil and sneaky. They are also quite dangerous (to themselves and others) with their arsenal of Bob-ombs. Wario is a heavy character while Waluigi is a medium-weight.

Toad & Toadette.

These stars from the previous Mario Kart game appear as unlock-able, hidden characters. Actually, Toadette is completely new to racing. Both of these guys are lightweights.

King Boo & Petey Piranha.

These two troublemakers are also hidden characters. While they are both heavy (how does a ghost weight anything?!), they are interesting because of their Special Item. Rather than using their own, these two can randomly acquire any other player's item when they snag an Item Box (in addition to any regular item). This includes Mario's Fireballs, Toad's Super Mushrooms, Donkey Kong's Giant Banana and more. Nevertheless, the better the item, the farther back you have to be in rank to get the item. Both of these characters appeared in relatively recent games; Luigi's Mansion and Super Mario Sunshine, respectively.

Karts.

Goo-Goo Buggy.

Weight Class: Light
Speed *
Acceleration *****
Weight **

Rattle Buggy.

Weight Class: Light
Speed **
Acceleration ****
Weight **

Koopa Dasher.

Weight Class: Light
Speed **
Acceleration ****
Weight **

Para Wing.
Weight Class: Light
Speed *
Acceleration *****
Weight **

Barrel Train.
Weight Class: Light
Speed ****
Acceleration **
Weight ***

Bullet Blaster
Weight Class: Light
Speed ****
Acceleration ***
Weight *

Toad Kart.
Weight Class: Light
Speed **
Acceleration ****
Weight **

Toadette Kart.
Weight Class: Light
Speed *
Acceleration *****
Weight **

Red Fire.
Weight Class: Medium
Speed ***
Acceleration ***
Weight ***

Green Fire.
Weight Class: Medium
Speed ****
Acceleration **
Weight **

Heart Coach.
Weight Class: Medium
Speed **
Acceleration ****
Weight ***

Bloom Coach.
Weight Class: Medium
Speed ***
Acceleration ***
Weight **

Turbo Yoshi.

Weight Class: Medium
Speed **
Acceleration ****
Weight ***

Turbo Birdo.
Weight Class: Medium
Speed ***
Acceleration ***
Weight ****

Waluigi Racer.
Weight Class: Medium
Speed ***
Acceleration ***
Weight ***

Piranha Pipes.
Weight Class: Heavy
Speed ****
Acceleration **
Weight *****

Boo Pipes
Weight Class: Heavy
Speed **
Acceleration ****
Weight *****

Wario Car.
Weight Class: Heavy
Speed ****
Acceleration **
Weight ****

DK Jumbo.
Weight Class: Heavy
Speed ****
Acceleration **
Weight ****

Koopa King.
Weight Class: Heavy
Speed *****
Acceleration *
Weight *****

Parade Kart.
Weight Class: All
Speed ****
Acceleration ***
Weight ****

Note: This glamorous golden kart, unlocked at the very end of the game, can hold any combination of characters.

Items.

When racing, you can use several items to help you get to first place.

They vary from defensive or power-up items to offensive attack items. Each character even comes with his/her own set of Special Items, something new to the Mario Kart series. To get an item you need to drive through the Item Boxes that appear across the stage.

Item Box.

Touch this colorful box and it will randomly give you an item to use. The item you get depends largely on your position. For example, if you're in first place, you'll most often get simpler items like Green Shells or Bananas, but you'll never get a Star or a Spiny Shell. Likewise, if you're in dead last, you'll have a much better chance of getting those rare items. If you are already holding an item, you can't grab an additional item.

Double Item Box.

Occasionally, you'll find an Item Box that's actually two boxes stacked together. This simply lets both of your characters to hold items; when the rear character uses the item, they'll switch places with the driver so that they can use their item. Other than that, Double Item Boxes work exactly like regular Item Boxes.

Dropped Items.

When a character holding an item gets hit by something strong (like an explosion) or goes off course too far, they will drop their item. There are other ways to get dropped items to appear, such as by hitting the Mushroom Karts in certain stages, or by using the Yoshi's/Birdo's Egg item. By touching a dropped item, it will affect you instantly. Some are beneficial, like the common Mushrooms, but others you'll want to avoid, like dropped Bob-ombs.

Standard Items.

Banana.

Bananas are most common when you're in the lead, or close to it. When used, the Banana will be left on the path as a hazard; any kart that drives over one will slip up and spin out of control. Bananas are most strategically placed around curves, especially if there is no guardrail along the outer curve to stop a Banana-purged kart from tumbling into nothingness. Bananas can also be used to block other items like shells, and they can be thrown forward or backwards.

Green Shell.

Another common sight when in the head of the pack is the Green Shell. When fired, these Koopa shells will travel along a straight path, bouncing off the edges of the stage until they hit something or someone. When it strikes a player, Green Shells will cause them to tumble and lose a lot of speed. Be careful though, since a bouncing Green Shell can ricochet right back to you. Green Shells can also be launched backwards.

Red Shell.

Red Shells are similar to Green Shells, but have one added benefit. They have homing capabilities and will pursue the kart in front of you until they are hit. However, a Red Shell does not bounce, so if it hits an obstacle, it will shatter. Red Shells can be fired backwards too, but will lose their homing capabilities this way. Another interesting fact about the Red Shell is that if you have one behind you, you will hear an alarm and you'll get a picture of the Red Shell on the bottom of your screen. This can help you prepare for dodging it.

Spiny Shell.

Quite simply, the Spiny Shell is the most devastating item in the game. One could go so far as to say it's got its own disposition, or sense of power. When fired, Spiny Shells rocket across the land and hunt down the player in the lead position. They will then home in on their target and strike with a devastating blue explosion. Any kart caught in the immediate blast radius will lose their items and be hurled upwards, and any player that drives through the explosion afterwards will spin out. Obviously, such a powerful item is only available to players who need it; those in the rear. If somehow you're able to hold on to a Spiny Shell and get into first place, the Spiny Shell will turn right back around and hit you when you launch it. A Spiny Shell is nearly unstoppable. You can only protect yourself from one using a Star (which, when your in the lead is unlikely), or by traveling within a vortex (the DK Mountain barrel cannon or the Rainbow Road tunnel) when the shell hits. Lastly, the Spiny Shell, like the Red Shell, gives warning to you by way of a small depiction on the bottom of your screen. If you're in first place and you see this, read it as, "You're screwed because your about to have an explosive rocket covered in spikes and traveling at 200 mph ram into you". Spiny Shells don't appear in Battle Mode.

Fake Item.

These nasty traps look just like Item Boxes when set, except they have a reddish color to them, and the question mark inside them appears upside-down. When another player touches it, they will tumble and crash. Obviously, the best place to put a Fake Items is near a cluster of real Item Boxes, or anywhere that thy will be hard to avoid. You can also give anyone that's tailgating you a nasty surprise by letting this loose in their face.

Mushroom.

Mushrooms give your kart fuel to go faster, allowing you to get a short burst of speed. They are essential for accessing some of the games hidden shortcuts, and are all-around useful for getting ahead in a race. Mushrooms are also found near Goomba populations and Mushroom Karts.

Triple Mushrooms.

Basically a Mushroom, except you get three. The only real trick to using this item is that you should wait until the previous boost you use has completely spent itself out before burning the next Mushroom. Because the player juggles these items, a traumatic impact will cause you to lose all but one of your prized fungi. Triple Mushrooms are most common to players in the rear.

Star.

This useful power-up makes your kart invincible for a short period of time. Not only will you be impervious to any and all other items, but you'll also go faster, and you won't be restricted by off-road driving. Touch a player while under a Star's influence and you'll cause them to bounce backwards, and you'll get to steal any item they where holding. The only thing you can't do with a Star is fall of a stage. If you do, you'll lose your invincibility. Stars almost never appear unless you are in the rear.

Thunderbolt.

The Thunderbolt is a favorite of those unlucky enough be tailing in the race. Use one and all other players will be struck by a bolt of

electricity. The bolt will cause them to spin out, drop their items and shrink. When shrunk, players will move at slower speeds and be susceptible to more damage when a full-sized kart collides with them. The shrinking effect is only temporary though. Thunderbolts also affect other things in a racecourse, like Piranha Plants, who will be dazed for a few seconds when the lightning strikes.

Special Items.

Fireballs.

Mario and Luigi can pelt balls of flame either forward or backwards, which will divide into multiple fireballs for increased effectiveness. Fireballs that touch enemies cause them to spin out and catch on fire. The fireballs also bounce off walls, so a good place to use them would be a narrow path.

Giant Banana.

This jumbo-sized, angry-faced, potassium-filled hazard is used by Donkey and Diddy Kong. They work just like regular Bananas and can even be thrown forward. Giant Bananas however, are much harder to maneuver around and are pretty much indestructible when it comes to being shot at by other items (like Green Shells). Additionally, when a player hits a Giant Banana, the banana will split into three regular Bananas to add to the hazard.

Heart.

Heart shields are used by Peach and Daisy. Hearts surround the players' kart in a protective shield that will allow them to absorb other items. If, for example, you fire a Red Shell at a player using a Heart shield, the shell will instead be absorbed by the hearts and be usable by that player. Also, if a player using the Hearts runs over a dropped Banana or Fake Item, that item harmlessly becomes theirs to use. Hearts last until you manage to absorb two items.

Triple Shells.

Like the standard Triple Mushrooms item, Koopa and Paratroopa's Triple Shells item simply lets them use three Green or Red Shells at once. Green Shells fired in threes can be very unpredictable, while a trio of Red Shells should easily get you ahead by a position or two with their homing capabilities. While you can't get three Spiny Shells with this, both color shells can be acquired by both Koopa and Paratroopa.

Chain Chomp.

While Chain Chomps can be found naturally tethered within the Luigi and Mario Circuit racecourses, Baby Mario and Baby Luigi have their own legion of these ferocious beasts. This fun item will unleash a Chain Chomp that will drag your kart through the course at a faster speed than normal. The chomp, in its destructive rampage, will take out any character or trap in your path, so not only is it an enjoyable free ride, but it clears the path for you as well. It's impossible to tell when the Chain Chomp will break free of your grip, so be ready for when it does escape. A released Chain Chomp will continue through the course until it hits something like a wall or large obstacle. Like Red and Spiny Shells, the Chain Chomp produces an image of itself when it's behind you.

Yoshi's & Birdo's Egg.

Yoshi and Birdo can supply colorful eggs that can be rolled down the course or thrown backwards. When rolled forwards, the eggs behave like Red Shells, seeking out the player in front of you. The eggs even give

that player a warning image when it gets near. Unlike a Red Shell however, the eggs will break open on contact and release three random items, similar to the Giant Banana. The items vary from Mushrooms, Stars, Green Shells and Bananas to even Bob-ombs.

Bowser's Shell.

Bowser and his offspring can use the colossal Bowser's Shell, a giant, spiked shell that bounces down the road, wiping out anything in its way. Like the Green Shell, this item can't home in on anything, but it can bounce off walls and obstacles. The shell won't break when it hits an enemy, but it will vanish after some time. Anyone hit by this beast will lose their items as well.

Bob-omb.

The villainous Waluigi and Wario use these explosives. Bob-ombs are the wildcards of this game; highly unpredictable, they cause destruction to friend and foe alike. Bob-ombs can be thrown forward or dropped along the course. They'll detonate when a player or item hits them, or a few seconds after launch. The explosion that follows is similar to a Spiny Shell blast; players drop their items, get thrown in the air and most likely lose their position in the race. Its better to drop one for players behind you, since tossing one forward means that by the time it goes boom, you might have caught up to it to catch the blast. Bob-ombs play an important role in Battle Mode's Bob-omb Blast mode.

Super Mushroom.

The two hidden characters, Toad and Toadette use this ultimate fungus. Once activated, the Super Mushroom will stay with you, meaning you can keep tapping buttons to keep pumping fungus fuel into your kart. The Super Mushroom should easily boost you up to a good spot in the race, but when you go that fast you'll have less control of your kart. Super Mushrooms don't stay with you forever.

Courses.

These are the actual courses in which the races will take place. The courses are divided amongst cups, which initially you get three of (Mushroom Cup, Flower Cup and Star Cup). Later you can unlock the Special Cup, and then the All Cup Tour, which is a composite of all four cups. Some courses vary slightly depending on what difficulty (cc) you are playing.

~Mushroom Cup~

Luigi Circuit.

The very first stage is also one of the simplest and it hasn't changed much since its '64 days. Start by boosting off the first ramp, then head down the two-way straightaway. Sometimes, a divider will separate the two lanes, depending on the difficulty. Near the end you can grab some Item Boxes, and you can also turn right to take a shortcut behind the Chain Chomp's court. There are a few Item Boxes in this path, but the threat of the Chain Chomp usually deters most drivers.

The road will curve around and come back to the straightaway next. You can use the dash panels on top of the outer-edge ramp, but it's quicker to power slide along the inner curve. Grab the items, and then get back onto the straightaway, avoiding karts coming at you.

The course is basically the same as you head back, but there's no Chain Chomp to worry about on the return trip. Grab the Items at the end of the straightaway, as well as the ones by the curve before the finish line. You can take a hidden path at the end of the returning straightaway by turning right at a path. This isn't recommended as it's not really a shortcut and it may cost you some time getting to it. Continue curving around to the finish line.

Peach Beach.

This course is fairly easy, but it's also easy for opponents to get a big lead here. When starting off, you'll approach your first set of Item Boxes right before the shoreline. These are valuable since there won't be much cover once a kart hits the beach. Also, after the initial straightaway, you can turn left to head into a warp tunnel. Doing this will most likely put you in last place, but at least you get a Double Item Box. Most likely, the items you get will be good ones.

Once you reach the shores, the path will fork. Take the normal path by going right, but watch out for the Cataquaks. These duck-like beach denizens will approach you if they spot you, and if you touch one it will flip you up into the air. Use shells, Stars, Thunderbolts or Chain Chomps to knock out a Cataquack. Go left at the fork to use the boost ramp with the Item Boxes perched on top of it. Just be sure to grab a Mushroom beforehand because the high tide will slow you down considerably. If you're lucky, the tide will be down so that you can pass easily.

After the first section of the beach, you'll pass a curve that turns right. Take the Item Boxes here and prepare for more Cataquack dodging. Follow the beach until you get to paved road. The next bit of track has a couple of Item Boxes that slide from side to side. Don't bother swerving to try and get one, since going straight will usually let you get one. Up ahead is the finish line, but if you're on your first or second lap, take note of the Delfino Fountain on your left. Behind the fountain is a set of Double Item Boxes, but their far out of the way, so use a Mushroom or Star to balance out the loss of time.

Baby Park.

This is undoubtedly the simplest course there is. It consists of one easy loop, with a cluster of Item Boxes right before each of the two turns. Because each lap is small, you get seven laps to complete. This stage is perfect for power sliding around the corners as well. The only other thing to worry about is the chaotic atmosphere; get a couple of Green Shells going and things will get frantic due to the course's small size. That doesn't even compare to an unleashed Bowser's Shell or two careening around the place. Also, if using a Chain Chomp, beware that a passing rollercoaster doesn't knock the chomp out of commission.

Dry Dry Desert.

This course is fairly long, and it's got a fair share of interesting traps to trip up the unwary racer. Once you start, make sure you grab an Item Box from the first cluster that appears. As you continue, the path will take some sharp curves around the sand. Stay on the track, since the sand will slow you down a lot. Use Mushrooms to get an advantage by boosting through the sand.

At the end of the curvy nightmare are a few Item Boxes. Beware of the sand twister as well. The tornado will suck you up and lose you a lot of time. It will also inhale items as well, such as Green Shells, and send them for a spin. Past this section is the quicksand deathtrap. The large area in the middle is quicksand that will suck you into the center, which is where a Piranha Plant lurks. You can boost out of the sandpit, but otherwise you'll either become plant food or be slowed down. To avoid this altogether, take the path around the sandpit. The beginning of the pit (where the path forks) is a good spot to lay some traps or fire off some shells to trip up the opposition and send them tumbling into the center.

Continue past the pit to a set of Item Boxes. The next area is wide, bumpy terrain that's home to a few cacti creatures. These things, pending on the difficulty, can also be seen in the beginning section where all the curves where. They are nothing too dangerous to worry about, but watch out for the ones that bend over and use their heads as additional obstacles. Often times there will be Item Boxes situated in between the cacti, but if you want to be safe, go for the ones scattered around the rest of this large area, including the ones on top of the hills.

Next are more Item Boxes and another dusty whirlwind. Avoid that and take the relatively calm path to the finish line. Watch out so that you don't bump into the structure that's next to the finish line. That, my fiends, completes the Mushroom Cup.

~Flower Cup~

Mushroom Bridge.

The Mushroom Bridge introduces a new obstacle to the game: traffic. This highway course takes place across a road congested with cars, trucks and all sorts of other vehicles. Avoid the cars, since touching them will cause a nasty spin out. The good thing is that they don't move very fast. Other than the regular varieties, there are three special kinds of vehicles to watch for. The first is a Mushroom Kart. This vehicle totes an endless supply of Mushrooms, but in order to take part in the fungal festivities you need to bump into the kart, and it will spill a Mushroom onto the pavement. Another type is the Bob-omb Kart. Shaped like large, black Bob-ombs, these karts explode if run into or hit with shells. Avoid these at all costs. Finally, watch out for the Wiggler Bus. This long, green vehicle can resist even a Star-influenced racer, and usually brings great annoyance to players who get caught under its wheels. There's also a regular bus that behaves similarly as well. Anyway, on with the course.

Right from the get-go, you can swerve right to head down a secluded path. The path will take you to a warp pipe. Like the pipe in the Peach Beach course, this will dump you back on the main road, cost you your position and reward you with a Double Item Box. Continue through the tunnel, collecting the many Item Boxes scattered between the tires of traveling vehicles.

Upon exiting the tunnel, you'll emerge out onto a section of the course with a high concentration of alternate paths (a.k.a. shortcuts). The main road goes left and then makes a right turn to a second tunnel. However, with a Mushroom or Star, you can boost over the sandy slope and cut across to the other side. Without an item, this path will be nothing but a chance for opponents to get ahead of you. Also, if you

take the main road, you can avoid cars by riding on the sidewalk, which you can enter by finding gaps in the fence that separates the road from the sidewalk. Grab some more items, and then go into the second tunnel.

This tunnel isn't much different than the first. Be careful, because in later laps the tunnel will be littered with accumulated Banana peels and/or Fake Items. Avoid the cars as usual and continue to the other side, where you'll have to make a left turn.

The last stretch of road before the finish line is the Mushroom Bridge itself. It's a nice straightaway, with a few Item Boxes scattered here and there. To avoid traffic, you could ride on top of the sides of the bridge. This is very risky though, since the path is very narrow and the dash panels make things even more unnerving. If you fall, you'll plummet into the turbulent waters below to be fished out by Lakitu. The good thing is there's not traffic here! Anyway, the finish line is right after the bridge.

Mario Circuit.

The Mushroom Circuit is this game's main racecourse. It's somewhat like a more advanced version of Luigi's course, and it even has got a tethered Chain Chomp halfway through the course. When you start, you might see the Item Box cluster up ahead at the end of the straightaway. Get a good start so that you can snag yourself an early item, especially if you see a Double Item Box.

From here, you'll need to make a left turn to continue. Not long after, make a sharp right turn and follow the curved road around the Chain Chomp. Like the last one, this hungry beast will make short work of your kart if contact is made, so try to stay away from the inside edge of the track. Alternatively, you can use a Star or Super Mushroom to boost through the grass and trees behind the chomp, effectively creating yourself a shortcut. Once you get past the Chain Chomp's domain, continue towards the castle.

The path here contains a few more Item Boxes, then a right turn towards a tunnel that goes under Princess Peach's Castle. The Tunnel isn't perfectly straight, but it shouldn't give you much trouble. Watch out for wayward Bananas or Green Shells in this tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, you'll cross a bridge but the path will be straight for a while. Continue through the dirt path, avoiding the hungry Piranha Plants growing along the sidelines. These carnivorous plants can stop your car cold with their vicious bite, so stay away from the sides. Up ahead you'll need to make a sharp left-bound u-turn.

From here, the path continues in a somewhat right-hand direction over some hilly terrain. Grab the items here, since it's your final chance before the finish line. Continue past the curves, but avoid the Goombas, which will cause a spin out. They can be shot at with shells, Thunderbolts, etc. and doing so will cause Mushrooms to appear in the road. Look for them on your later laps for an appreciated burst of speed before the finish line. Once on paved road, cross the bridge but avoid the sides. The finish line is right ahead, but if you hug the edges, the two Piranha Plants will take a decent-sized chunk out of you and most likely cost you the race.

Daisy Cruiser.

This racecourse takes place aboard a cruise ship. There are a couple of

shortcuts to take and you might also encounter your first 'vortex'. The course itself has a few nasty turns, so make sure you have a good feel for the controls by the time you race here. When you start, you'll need to go right so that you don't smack the wall. The path beyond has a nice cluster of Item Boxes, but the ship's constant rocking makes them tumble from side to side, making them slightly more difficult to grab. Continue down the ship's deck to a stairway on your left.

Taking the stairs means you'll need to make a sharp turn to go down them. The following area is the pool area. Don't fall in the pool or you'll fall way behind. Continue around the pool to another shallow set of stairs. Note that it's possible to drive behind the pool, but it's not worth the time and effort to go there (not to mention its dangerous). Anyway, the second stairway curves to the left so keep titling in that direction to avoid the wall.

At the bottom, continue left and race down the lower deck straightaway. This hallway is nice for using Bowser's Shell, since there isn't much room to outmaneuver the thing. Up ahead is the dining room. Be careful here; even though the room is quite large, there are pillars and tables that will obstruct you. The tables move, making them that much harder to avoid. The good news is that there are a few Item Boxes scattered here and there, but they also tumble from side to side, making them a pain to get. The exit is along the left end of the upper wall.

Now you'll reach another indoor hallway. Turn right immediately after the dining room, and then turn right when the path bends up ahead. Along this path you'll see a gaping hole in the ground, which takes you through a shortcut. If you choose not to take it, you'll need to continue through the halls until you reach the outside deck again.

Let's say you do decide to drop down into the hole. You'll be in some sort of engine room, and all there is to see here is a Double Item Box near the exit. This box will always be a double, and it re-spawns quickly. Exit via the pipe behind the box. This pipe will blast you out onto the main deck. This is what I like to call a 'vortex' section of a racetrack. You have no control of your kart as you get blasted, but you are invulnerable to things like Thunderbolts and Spiny Shells. This particular vortex is quite short unfortunately.

Anyway, once on deck, continue towards the back of the ship, collecting items as you go. Turn right and you'll find a final stairway leading to the finish line. On the stairway there are two life tubes that you can smash through to cause them to swing back and forth. Players who take a life tube to the face will spin out. Anyway, turn right diagonally and cross the finish line.

Waluigi Stadium.

This course is really more of a dirt bike track, and hence it's got tons of jumps, obstacles and bumpy areas. Enjoy! After starting, you'll pass over a small bump that spans the width of the track. It's unavoidable, but at least you get Item Boxes. Past that is a turn to the right that takes you underneath a bridge, over a few minor speed bumps. Keep going and you'll hit a larger jump with dash panels built onto it. The panels will give you an extra boost as you pass through the ring of fire. It's kind of hard to hit the fire, but if you do manage to touch it, be ready to feel the burn. Aim so that you boost right through the Item Box positioned in the center of the flame ring.

After that, make yet another turn to the right. Again, you'll need to clear a jump (which is actually the bridge you just past under) decked out with dash panels, through a ring of fire with an Item Box in the center. Once you clear that, go for the Item Box cluster in the corner. Alternately, use a Mushroom or Star to cut across the darker dirt, saving you some time. Turn left and head down the dirt trail.

Next up is obstacle after obstacle. Down this trail are three huge pipes, each one housing a monstrous Piranha Plant. The plants periodically emerge and withdraw from their lairs, causing a roadblock every time they come out. The good news is these kinds don't do anything to your kart other than stop it (as if you had hit a wall). In other words, you won't be knocked back or spun out. The first and last pipe will appear on your left, the second on the right. In between each pipe (roughly in the center of the road), you'll have to dodge more flame contraptions. These, rather than taking the form of rings, appear as three columns of fire that rotate around the center like a windmill. Like a mini-windmill you'd find on a miniature golf course, the trick is to drive through when there's an opening in the 'blades'. Collect Item Boxes as you dodge the many obstacles, and remember to lay Bananas or Fake Items, which are particularly nasty here.

After that mess is cleared, loop behind that last Piranha Plant and head left. The course will dip into a ditch (which is underneath a jump you'll get to in a bit), another dip, and then continue down a straightaway until it turns right. Upon turning right, the track will make a winding path through some more dark dirt. It slows you down, but once again, if you've been hoarding a Mushroom or Star, now is the time to use it to get a small lead on the opposition. Wind your way right, left, and then right again.

To finish this track, you need to drive over one last jump (don't say I didn't warn you about it earlier). Boost over the many dash panels and sail through the flame ring. If you're on your first or second lap, try snagging the Item Box. Also, if you set a trap right before this (or any other) jump, the unlucky racer who slides into it will forfeit their boost and tumble into the road below. Bearing that in mind, try to avoid such things as Bananas and Fake Items as you make the jumps. Now continue forward to the finish line.

~Star Cup~

Sherbet Land.

This course isn't one I'm particularly fond of, but you may think different. It's tough for beginners, most likely because of three things. For one, there are several nasty obstacles in the track. Two, many places on the track are frozen, making control of your kart a little tougher than usual. And three: I forgot the third thing. Anyway, you'll start on your usual straightaway. Start driving, and then make a right turn to come face-to-face with a lovely colony of Item Boxes. Snag an early item and continue to the left.

Here's the first truly nasty part: the frozen pond. As mentioned earlier, the ice layer here will hinder your kart handling, making you slip and slide everywhere. To make matters worse, the Shy Guys (skating ghosts) have decided to have a skating session in this very spot. They usually travel in pairs, so you'll have to do some extra-skilled maneuvering to slip past them. Of course, just eat up a Star and those Shy Guys will think twice about messing with you. However, Star or no

Star, avoid the right portion of this pond. The ice here is, well, not there, but in its place is a section of freezing water. Fall in and Lakitu will fish you out as usual, but this time you'll come encased in a block of ice. Anyway, continue by going in the tunnel up ahead.

The tunnel slopes downwards, gradually to the right. Near the beginning you'll find two unstable Item Boxes that continually glide from left to right. Further down, you'll need to avoid a pillar of ice in the center of the track as the path makes a left turn. The pillar's innermost side has a single Item Box, while to its other side is a pair of them. Though you have a better chance at an item by going to the right of the ice structure, it's quicker to go to its left (it's a good idea to set a Fake Item/Banana right next to the pillar). Continue down the path, which now slopes downwards and curves to the right once more.

The exit of the tunnel curves sharply to the left, and if you exit too fast you'll end up on the snow bank. There are a few more Item Boxes that sort of slide back and forth here. From the tunnel, turn left and go down the small straightaway until you have to make a right turn. The path now will be slightly curvy, but it won't be much harder than a straightaway and you get a group of Item Boxes down the line. Make another turn and drive beneath the blue structure that leads to the next frozen pond.

Like the one before, you won't get far ahead here if you don't master the art of ice racing. Of course, not only must you avoid slick roads, but you also have to watch for Freezies. I only know the names of them because I've played Super Smash Bros. Melee. And just like in that game, contact with these ice blocks will cause you to be temporarily encased in a block of ice, rendering you immobile. Additionally, Freezies have a bounce quality to them; if you get frozen by one, you'll be booted off to the side (possibly into another Freezie). Freezies slide back and forth too, but only if they are hit. Start by heading down the first section, avoiding the first few Freezies. Grab a few items too, and heed the direction of the arrowed signs to the path's side. Turn slightly right, then left, then right again towards the pond's exit. All through here you'll encounter more Freezies. Also, when you exit you'll pass underneath another blue structure. There's also one in the middle of the ice pond, and if you're equipped with a Mushroom/Star, you can avoid ice and Freezie alike by cutting across the snow bank to the left of this middle structure. Anyway, after the pond, cross the finish line underneath the blue structure that says "Mario Kart".

Mushroom City.

This city racecourse is similar to the Mushroom Bridge because those annoying cars will be commuting the roads, forcing you to drive a little more carefully. The good news (and bad news, I guess) is that the same car types appear here, so if you want some fungal enhancement, bump into a Mushroom Kart for it to spew its spoils. Likewise, be alert for the devastating Bob-omb Kart or the obnoxiously large Wiggler Bus. The other distinctive feature about this course is that there are several ways you can get to the finish line, at least for the first half that is. Although this maze of city blocks can get a bit confusing at first, you'll find that there aren't many true shortcuts. Sure, all you have to do is read, but try writing down this discombobulating mess of intersections.

Before you get your engine going, take note of the path on the left

where all the cars are emerging from. There is a sign above it that tells you not to enter. This path is simply an explanation for the apparently infinite supply of cars here, even if one happens to blow up and such. Don't take this route or Lakitu will have a word with you. Anyway, go down the correct road and snag the Item Boxes that span the road's width. Continue down the road and curve right until you get to the intersection.

Cars will be coming at you from the right and turning to go forward. You have a choice of going forward with the traffic, or against it by going right. Either way you'll end up at the same spot because the forward path will turn right and meet up with the right path, which will turn left. I recommend the forward path, since on your right-hand side of the road you'll be able to dodge inside a shortcut. The shortcut appears as a pink pathway into the city block. The path curves and leads to the intersection of the paths as described above. You can also grab an Item Box here as well.

Upon reaching the intersection, the path will divide again so you can go straight or turn. Once again, the paths will converge into one in a short while. Take the Double Item Box at the intersection and choose your path. When the paths meet again, you'll either have to turn left or continue straight, depending on where you came from. From here on out, you can drive with no worry of cars, other than your opponents. Continue down this simple straightaway to another Item Box Cluster. Here you'll curve to the left a few times until you get to a nice-sized straightway with arrows on the road. Traffic will start to emerge again from a point up ahead.

The main road will curve left a little, but if you want to avoid traffic, hug the right wall and dash across the small ledge with a Mushroom/Star. This is another shortcut that takes you right up to the finish line. By way of main road, continue going in-between traffic (the cars avoid the road's center line, so use that as a path of safety) and avoid the chasm in between the main road and the shortcut. The finish line appears right after the chasm ends. And so ends a fun course.

Yoshi Circuit.

This track is an interesting mix of fun and challenge; it's nice and long, and it's got quite a few skill-requiring turns. There are two notable features about this track. Firstly, this track is one of the few with a true, designated shortcut tunnel. Secondly, this course is shaped almost perfectly like Yoshi himself (even the island is colored just like Yoshi), which explains why this isn't an easy course to follow. As such, my description of this race will take reference to Yoshi's body parts, since there's no easier way to explain it. That being said, you start at Yoshi's feet.

After the initial straightaway, take the right curve around the toes and grab the Item Boxes, then continue around this u-bend until you take a relatively sharp left turn. Up ahead is Yoshi's hand and arm. The path is basically a forced detour as you turn left and then make a sharp right curve around his fingers, only to come back and straighten out on a left turn. If you grabbed a Mushroom/Star/whatnot earlier, you can avoid Yoshi's hand and cut across the watery gap at his wrists. This will save you quite a bit of time, especially at the first lap. Up ahead is the cavernous mouth, which is basically a large right-hand curve.

Just before the mouth's entrance, grab some items. These will be good to use in the confined space of the tunnel, especially since players must turn the whole way through. Keep skidding around the curve until you make it to the other side: a left-going turn marked by a red Yoshi billboard.

Now you'll notice that you have to turn sharply at Yoshi's eyes. The shortcut in this area is right ahead, so make sure you grab one of the items here in hopes of a Mushroom or a Star. Just before taking the main path to Yoshi's back ridge cut across the grass to the left of the left-hand guardrail and let loose that Mushroom. Aim for the cliff too so that you enter the well concealed tunnel. You probably won't be able to see it until you're too late to turn back. If you follow this shortcut, you'll take a direct path to Yoshi's back, allowing you to skip a large part of the course. There are even a few Item Boxes in the tunnel for you to relish. Note that the relentless Spiny Shells can find you even in this seemingly secure tunnel.

Anyway, assuming you weren't able to take the shortcut, you'll have to take the winding path that is Yoshi's 'crest'. Watch for items, and the less desirable Piranha Plants (similar to the ones in the Mario Circuit) eager to hinder you. At the end of this portion of the track, you need to make a very sharp turn to the left. Those who took the shortcut will emerge from the bank above, but the angle of the tunnel in relation to the curve makes it easier for them. Anyway, follow this next portion of the road until you see some signs hanging above indicating u-turns.

Make another treacherous turn to the right here as you head down the tail. The good news is the remainder of the tail is a nice straightaway with items to be fetched. Afterwards, reenter the feet by turning left at the Birdo billboard. Watch out for the Piranha Plant congregation here, located on the innermost curve of the path. You can use a Mushroom to boost behind them and cut the corner, and most likely you'll be going too fast for the plants to snap at you. After this curve, continue down the straightaway and cross the finish line.

DK Mountain.

DK Mountain is another fun course. I should point out that this track contains the second of three 'vortexes'; portions of the track where you move automatically and have no control, yet are immune to items (even Spiny Shells and Thunderbolts). This vortex in particular is caused by the barrel cannon you'll find shortly after starting. The path you take when being shot out of the cannon makes up a miniscule portion of the track time-wise, but half of the track lengthwise.

But let's not rush into things. First, you'll need to get up to the cannon by taking the uphill path from the starting line. The path is somewhat curvy, and relatively thin. If you drive on the grass, you'll be slowed down. Shortly after the first set of items, you'll need to make a large curve to the left at the top of the slope. At the end of this slope is the infamous barrel cannon, waiting to blast you sky-high.

Drive into the barrel cannon and you'll automatically be shot forwards. Note that since enemies are immune to items while in here, it's advisable to use your items before or after the cannon. Also, you can't use items while in there, so if you have something with a longer

lasting effect like a Star, Super Mushroom or Thunderbolt, use it after the cannon rather than before it. Anyway, the cannon will blast you and send you flying at a speed of 195mph! As you fly, you'll be able to see the rest of the course below you. When you fall back to the ground, you'll be on a wide, stony trail at the top of the volcano. So basically, the rest of the course consists of making your way back down the mountain, only to get blasted back up two more times.

As soon as you hit solid ground, the path will incline downwards and curve to the right. Soon after, you'll reach a jump with Item Boxes at its peak. Grab an item and continue down the bumpy road. The nice part about this track is that if you go off-road here, you won't get slowed down as much (but I guess the bumps make up for that). At the trail's bottom, there will be a fence to block you from falling off the cliff and forcing you to turn right. You might be able to see the giant barrel cannon down below, and any kart or Spiny Shell that gets shot through it flying their way upwards.

After the curve around the fence, turn again and continue downhill to a dirt path. Make another sharp turn to the right and continue down the slope. Avoid the tumbling boulders here too, because if you get hit, you'll lose your items and get delayed. Also watch out for the bottom of this particular segment of the road. There is no guardrail at the bottom and the left-hand turn is very sharp, so you'll need some skill to safely round the corner. At least you get a few Item Boxes here as well.

From here on out, the guardrail-lacking path will take some very nasty sharp turns. Go down this path and avoid the chasm on the right side. Mushroom users can take advantage of their fungal friends by boosting over the gap. If not, you'll need to round another sharp corner and go right. Could this area be a good place to dump Bananas or Fake Items? Probably. Anyway, after that curve, head towards the next sharp turn to the left. The good news is that this one has a back edge to it, but it's still quite sharp. Grab the last set of items and continue.

Up ahead is a rickety, unstable wooden bridge. The bridge takes you right up to the finish line, but it tilts from side to side as players cross over it. Place a trap here and your opponents will most likely hit it and fall off the bridge, or fall anyway trying to swerve around it. If you do fall, Lakitu will dump you at the end of the bridge. Past it is the finish line.

~Special Cup~

Wario Coliseum.

After unlocking the Special Cup, you can access four new tracks, the first of them being the Wario Coliseum. This track's most notable characteristic is its length. One lap around this bad boy takes so long that they've shortened the amount of laps needed to complete this race. Like Baby Park, this course doesn't have three laps. Unlike Baby Park, this course has two laps. Wario has turned this coliseum into a motorcycle-style course, complete with cage-like roads that wind in and out of a small space. Also, just like at the Waluigi Stadium, this course is riddled with numerous dash-paneled jumps topped by rings of fireballs.

Start off by heading down to the end of the straightaway. Pass under the thin metal archways and continue left, where up ahead you'll see a

colorful jump with an Item Box floating on top of it. Get to the jump first and center yourself so that you can grab the item. When you land, continue under the covered bridge and follow the path to another jump. This one contains more dash panels and a lone Item Box. Up ahead, you'll need to make a sharp left turn. Soon you'll come up to the first set of Item Boxes, and looming behind them, another fairly large jump. Set some traps on the jump to trip up the opposition. When you boost over the jump, you'll sail through the air and land on a large 'W' landing pad.

If you landed safely, don't celebrate just yet. Up next is a very tight loop that requires constant power sliding and skidding. The loop will spiral downwards and even out at a set of Item Boxes. After this point, the guardrails will be no more, so you'll have to be on your guard now. Luckily, the tight left turn ahead has a small guardrail, but it disappears again after the turn.

Continue left and go up the slope to another brutal left curve. Here you'll reach another set of dash panels, and the railing will reappear. At the end, you'll find more items. The path will now curve sharply to the right, and once again the railings will disappear. Continue forward and they'll return, which is good since there is another loop to the right here. Continue until you see an image of Wario flipping you a double-bird. Duck under him and grab the items, then continue to the right.

When you reach the large ring, you'll be faced with a choice of paths. If you want to play it safe, go around the edge of the pit, similar to the quicksand pit at the Dry Dry Desert. If you're brave, take the boost through the middle of the circle. Both options present you with a few Item Boxes. Up ahead are a tunnel and a turn to the left. The tunnel consists of a stone road. At the end, you can snag a few more items dispersed here and there. Continue to the left and take another big jump.

This jump has a set of four Item Boxes at the top. It's your last chance at an item before the finish line. Grab one and turn left at the small tunnel. Up ahead is the finish line. Rinse and repeat once more to finish the race.

Dino Dino Jungle.

This challenging course takes you through a prehistoric setting of dense jungles, mysterious caves and of course, giant dinosaurs. Although many of the dinosaurs here seem peaceful, their intentions can be evil. The good news is that there is a pretty decent shortcut here, but as is the case with most good shortcuts, only those privileged with a Mushroom or a Star can use it.

The initial path has a few logs on the roadside that serve as speed bumps. After the flying pterodactyl swoops overhead, the road turns left onto a batch of Item Boxes. Continue taking the sharp left curve until you even out and the path turns to the right. The road widens here, and you can also take advantage of more Item Boxes by hopping over the previously-mentioned road logs. Up ahead, you'll encounter a tree obstacle and a massive, stomping brontosaurus that will level you if it plants a foot on your kart, or otherwise spin you out. If you're a good weaver, try snagging the Item Boxes between the dino's legs. Afterwards, the track enters a short, crystal-encrusted cavern. Try planting some traps here, but save any Stars or Mushrooms you may have.

The final stretch of this prehistoric section of the course starts when the glittering cavern ends. A branched wooden bridge spans the length of this ancient lake, each of its three paths requiring greater skill than the last, but rewarding you with reduced time or Item Boxes in return. The wider, main path gradually curves to the right, while the thinnest and most difficult path, accessible on the right-hand side from the bridge's start, is outfitted with a short series of dash-panels. This path will connect with the medium-difficulty path, which branches out from the main path a little ways in. This path has a few Item Boxes to grab before its union with the difficult path. All three bridges merge and take the course into a new, hieroglyph-inscribed tunnel.

The brief path here has a few angular curves, eventually turning right and into a larger cave lined with sparking crystals. If you saved a Star/Mushroom, hug the right side and boost over the planked ramp and onto the Item Box-decorated platform, but beware of the large bottomless pit. Don't even attempt to make the jump if you don't have the necessary item. This shortcut effectively cuts a nice chunk of time from your race and places you at the cave's exit. If you took the main path, follow it around the bottomless pit, collecting Item Boxes as you go. Make it your business to avoid the geysers here, as they'll propel you upwards and cause you to drop any held items if you get caught in one.

After exiting the cave, you'll emerge back onto the course's jungle area. The dinosaur you avoided earlier is back to cause more mayhem, but this time it's his misleadingly-docile head you must avoid, or otherwise suffer a spinout, as you cross the wooden bridge. Grab the Item Boxes afterwards and make the sharp left turn down the path. The bumpy ride downhill offers a few last-minute Item Boxes for you before you cross the finish line. Speaking of, avoid the alternating double-pair of geysers just before the finish. You'll want to end your Jurassic safari in one piece, after all.

Bowser's Castle

A Mario Kart game wouldn't be the same without its trek through the lair of the nefarious Koopa King. As expected, the hazardous castle conceals several obstacles, ranging from fire-breathing Bowser statues and bone-crushing Thwomps to the simple, but tricky sharp curves and pitfalls.

The course begins on a small straightaway and takes you over an equally insignificant bridge before entering the gateway to Bowser's Castle itself. Your complimentary Item Boxes await you within the first hallway after a brief flight of steps. The hall splits into a fork, but both sides are relatively the same. You'll probably notice the sinister boulders, called Thwomps, trying to crunch the racers as they pass beneath them. Try to avoid contact and time yourself so that the Thwomps are up in the air when you pass.

After the two paths merge, the course turns left down a straight hallway, also patrolled by Thwomps. You'll turn left yet again into a large dungeon filled with molten lava. The course takes you over the inferno by way of the metal bridge. Avoid the pit in the center of the bridge and grab the Item Boxes on either side. Boost over the following jump onto a continuous leftward spiral path that takes you upwards. This part of the course is excellent for laying traps and power

sliding. At the top, you'll move into another large dungeon. There's a large rotating pillar at the room's center revolving a chain of fireballs around in a circle. Avoid getting burned by slipping between the flames and grabbing more Item Boxes.

Across from the room's entrance, a new hallway will take the race leftwards again three consecutive times. Beware of the sharp corners and the right-hand edge with no safeguard. Follow the angry-looking arrows and you'll do fine. After the third left turn, the hallway will slope upwards. Follow the arrows around the bend and through a cluster of Item Boxes. You'll turn right and into another expansive dungeon.

Fly down this flight of steps and take the straightaway forward. In the back of the dungeon is a large Bowser statue expelling hot fireballs down the path as it glides from side to side. The fireballs will be moving towards you at the moment, so dodge them but don't miss out on the Item Boxes. You can turn right at the end of the straightaway and loop around to the left, or you can jump over the gap of lava before the turn and save yourself the trouble of the loop. It's a pretty effective shortcut and it can be taken without requiring a Star or Mushroom, but there is a risk of messing up and plunging into the lava.

After the path loops back around so that you're parallel to the first section, the Bowser statue will be behind you chasing you down with its fireballs. Grab the final Item Boxes and boost over the jump. When you land, turn left down the orange path and cross the finish line.

Rainbow Road.

Rainbow Road is the trademark final track of the Mario Kart series. Although this time around it isn't as long, it makes up for this in its incredible difficulty. Don't be surprised to see hairpin turns with no rails, many of which have dash panels on them to send you flying into the city below. Also notable is that this course contains a decent-sized 'vortex' tunnel. Lastly, take note of those falling stars....

Start by making a jump off the drop in front of the starting line. When you begin the race, try pushing other players off on this part, since you all will be clustered together. The colorful road below goes downhill all the way, and there aren't any guardrails at all until you get further ahead. Upon reaching the first set of railings, the path will curve slightly to the right, and you should come upon a few Item Boxes. Continue downhill, but be extra careful because up ahead is a nastily-sharp curve with no edge. Utilize power sliding to get past this alive. Immediately after that, you'll have to repeat another hairpin curve with no railings, only in the opposite direction. The advantage to the later curve is that you can grab some Item Boxes on it. After you pass this danger zone, continue downhill and boost off the jump to the next section of road below.

When you land, you'll hit a huge dash panel that will boost you through this long straightaway. After it ends, you'll drive on normal path, and then hit another large dash panel. Remember that this area is still devoid of safeguarding railings. The second large dash panel will lead you off another jump that will dump you at another small straightaway. Up ahead, past the Item Boxes, the track will wind upwards. The nasty thing about this part is that not only must you make a constant turn without flying off the edge, but there are several random dash panels peppered throughout the loop. They can help you by allowing you to get ahead, but many times they'll cause you to fly right off the edge of

the course. They seem to alternate from the inside of the track to the outside, so it's recommended to only hit the inner ones. It's interesting to note that Red Shells, especially in curvy areas, have a particularly difficult time hitting their intended targets on this course, and will prove easier to dodge.

After the loop ends, the track will straighten out and make a nosedive downhill. You'll be able to get some more Item Boxes at the start of the slope. Continue downhill, passing under the giant, neon Banana replica. The track is pretty straight, but it has a wavy pattern later on that will require small turns. Also, about those shooting stars; I'm not sure what the deal is with them but they seem to leave behind Stars as dropped items when they hit the tracks. Furthermore, these Stars appear most often in two places, the first being this stretch of road (the second I'll inform you of when you get there). Even if you're in first place, you can snag a Star and get speed and invincibility from wayward Red or Spiny Shells.

Speaking of avoiding Spiny Shells, you'll soon enter another vortex. At the end of the path, the road will start curving (right around where that Bowser's Shell neon replica is hovering) and eventually go left. Go forward and you'll see the circular tunnel up ahead. Use the dash panels and don't forget to grab an item before entering the tunnel. When you hit the circular 'launch pad', you'll be blasted upwards through the wind tunnel, going at a seemingly much faster 38mph. When you land, you'll reach another straightaway. This path is also adorned by a few large dash panels, including the large one you landed on. Watch out for the bumps along this road, but also be alert for more falling Stars, which also tend to appear here often. Pass the Bob-omb replica and boost off the small jump to the last section of road.

Immediately grab one of the items here. In this next bit, the road will wind downwards in a spiral around the neon Star. The good news is that there is a guardrail here to prevent you from falling off. Since the spiral is essentially one large sharp turn, most players will be forced to ride up the outer edge of the railing, meaning if you place a Fake Item or a Banana, you're almost guaranteed a hit. Likewise, Red Shells are particularly quite easy to avoid in this section. At the end of the spiral, you'll cross the long-awaited finish line.

Battle Mode.

Battle Mode is now more versatile than ever, with three modes to play. You can play the classic Balloon Battle, or the two new modes, Shine Theft and Bob-omb Blast. In Balloon Battle, players start with three color-coded balloons that they must keep a hold of. You lose a balloon when you get hit with an item or fall offstage. New to this mode is that you can steal opponent's balloons by power sliding into them or smacking them while you use a Mushroom or Star. Additionally, all characters can use any Special Item here.

Shine Theft makes use of the Shine item from Super Mario Sunshine. Your objective here is find the Shine dropped somewhere in the course, and then guard it with your life. Once you find and grab the Shine, a timer will activate. If you hold the Shine until the timer reaches zero, you win. However, you can lose the Shine just like you could a balloon in Balloon Battle. When you lose the Shine, your timer won't reset. Once again, all character can make use of any Special Item.

Lastly, there's Bob-omb Blast. In this dynamic battle mode, the goal is to score points by bombing the tar out of the opposition. When you collect Item Boxes, you'll always receive Bob-ombs. However, each character can hold up to six of these explosive items. Just like Wario's or Waluigi's Bob-ombs, these can be dropped behind you or thrown ahead. When you've gotten all the points necessary, you win. Keep in mind that if you get bombed, you'll lose a point in addition to giving your opponent one. Also, fall offstage and you'll lose all your points. Now, let the carnage begin.

Battle Mode Stages.

Cookie Land.

This circular arena consists of raised strips of what I assumes is jelly that serve as obstacles. There is the center piece, and then a ring around it broken into three sections. It's pretty simple, with Item Boxes found pretty much everywhere. Although you'll probably be able to see the opponents at all times, that doesn't mean you'll be able to hit them with the low obstacles in the way.

Block City.

This stage is somewhat of a remake of a Battle Mode arena found in the Nintendo 64 version of the Mario Kart game. Unfortunately though, the blocks here cannot be traveled upon. Still, there are a few interesting twists. For example, you can take a mini-shortcut by cutting through the path in the yellow block. Of course, there is no finish line, so it's not really a shortcut to anywhere. Also, there is a dead end at the corner where the blue structure is.

Nintendo Gamecube.

This stage takes place atop a giant Nintendo GCN. There are walls preventing you from falling off the edges, but they also close you in and make the scene more chaotic once some items are released, like shells or Bob-ombs. In each of the three buttons on the Gamecube (Power, Reset and Open), you'll find an Item Box. Also, there is a good cluster of them in the center of the cube.

Pipe Plaza.

In this fun stage, you have a main floor, and then a raised cage-like structure that forms an H-shaped second floor. You can use the ends of the 'H' furthest to the pipes to get on and off the two floors via ramps. Speaking of the pipes, they are warp pipes. The far left one on the top will dump you on the bottom right one next to it, whereas entering the bottom left pipe puts you back on the top left pipe. Enter the bottom right pipe to end up on the top right, and enter this pipe to get to the bottom left pipe (all this assumes your facing the pipes from the back).

Luigi's Mansion.

This hidden stage takes its setting from the game, Luigi's Mansion. First of all, as far as I'm aware, the Boos here don't do anything but add to the scenery. Anyway, all players start in the middle floor, which has a bunch of Item Boxes and paths to the other floors. One path

leads to the roof, which has a big hole in the middle that will dump you back in the starting floor. Each of the three other paths that lead downwards will take you to the bottom floor, where the paths connect. You'll find Item Boxes scattered throughout the top and bottom floors as well. Luigi's Mansion is perfect for making quick getaways, since there are many places to escape to.

Tilt-a-Kart.

The Tilt-a-Kart is a hidden stage that must be unlocked. This fun arena takes the shape of a polygenic Mario, though in comparison to the players, he's too big to be easily recognizable. As the battle progresses, the stage will tilt back and forth. This disorientation can not only cause you to slide offstage, but it also causes the randomly-scattered Item Boxes to tumble into space. These Item Boxes don't re-spawn after they are grabbed, but replacements are constantly raining down from above. There isn't anything else to the Tilt-a-Kart in terms of physical features, but it is fairly large.

Secrets.

Here is what you can unlock throughout the course of playing the game.

Characters

Toad & Toadette.

The Toad and Toadette duo is unlocked by beating the Special Cup on 100cc.

King Boo & Petey Piranha.

These guys come together when you clear the Star Cup on Mirror Mode.

Karts.

Green Fire.

Unlock Luigi's racecar by completing the Mushroom Cup on 50cc.

Bloom Coach.

Win Daisy's kart by winning the Flower Cup on 50cc.

Para Wing.

Unlocked by winning at the Star Cup on 50cc.

Bullet Blaster.

Presumably Bowser Jr.'s kart, this Bullet Bill-shaped kart comes by beating the Special Cup on 50cc.

Rattle Buggy.

Beat the Mushroom Cup on 100cc for Baby Luigi's crib.

Waluigi Racer.

This snazzy racer is unlocked by clearing the Flower Cup, 100cc.

Toad Kart.

It comes along with Toad and Toadette (see unlock-able characters above).

Turbo Birdo.

Unlock this kart by clearing the Flower Cup on 150cc.

Barrel Train.

Diddy's kart, unlocked by beating the Star Cup on 150cc.

Toadette Kart.

Beat the Mushroom Cup on Mirror Mode for this kart.

Piranha Pipes.

Comes free when you unlock King Boo and Petey Piranha (see unlock-able characters above).

Boo Pipes.

Beat the Special Cup on Mirror Mode for King Boo's kart.

Parade Kart.

This is Toadsworth's kart. You get it as a gift when you beat the All Cup Tour on Mirror Mode.

Battle Mode Arenas.

Luigi's Mansion.

This arena is unlocked by completing the 150cc Mushroom Cup.

Tilt-a-Kart.

By beating the Flower Cup on Mirror Mode, you'll get this.

Grand Prix Modes.

Special Cup.

Wario Coliseum, Dino Dino Jungle, Bowser's Castle and Rainbow Road. Four new racecourses become available after beating the Star Cup on 100cc.

All Cup Tour.

In this 'cup', you race all races, starting with Luigi Circuit and ending with Rainbow Road. The tracks you race in-between are in random order. The All Cup Tour is unlocked by finishing the Special Cup on 150cc.

Mirror Mode.

This selection can be selected as a cc level. In this mode, races are inverted so that paths that would normally go left now go right, and vice versa. Finish the All Cup Tour on 150cc to unlock Mirror Mode.

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