

Calm Down! Relax! Don't Panic!

Cart life has a frantic pace. Part of the fun is the initial frustration. It's part of that resurging of old school game sensibilities that prefer to teach by punishment, rather than reward. So it's okay if you fail horribly on your first four or five plays. Don't be afraid of making mistakes and don't worry about results on early playthroughs too much.

At the time of writing this, I played through with Melanie and Andrus three times total (twice Melanie, one time Andrus) and I feel like I've only seen 10% of the content that I could see with them. In order to succeed, you only need to find one good way of making money. And once you have, the way to make enough of a living, is to ignore nearly everything else. I guess it's like real life when you're in a difficult situation... and each of these characters is facing one of the most difficult weeks of their life. (Vinny's game continues after that week)

Time will pass during everything except for during the shower. So if you follow the tutorial, I'd advise to restart straight after to save the time listening to the tutorial. Although on the other hand... the first runthrough is NOT going to be successful. So don't worry. Mess up. Explore.

I've seen it said on the game's forum that Richard Hofmeier has heard two conflicting sentiments:

"It's too hard! You have to work all day and by the time you catch your breath, you're too tired to explore the world or do anything fun!"

"It's too hard! There's too much to see and too many conversations to have, and then you don't have any time to go to work!"

Which says alot about what kind of person you are.

That's all you need to start having non-fun with this game.

And really, the rest of the guide could be SPOILING the exact things that make CART LIFE interesting. The initial confusion you'll feel are intentional game design choices.

But what good is a guide if I stopped there? Here's a few tips that help you understand what you're playing (and then from "2. playable characters" on I'll go into deep guide and walkthrough kind information)

Frantic pace

Although time always goes on, and there's a bit about time management later in the tips section... try to set it up so you have time to play one day uninterrupted. Because except for the shower scene at the end of the day, time will always go on. Then you immediately get a save oppertunity after waking up.

One thing that has worked for people, is to alt-tab out of it as a pause game trick. It doesn't always work. It seems to work less frequently on the steam version. But it can work. It has always worked for my 1.6 download-straight-from-website version.

End Game

After you've finished a playthrough, you can see the results of your playthrough by starting the game up again and going to the appropriate character.

Instead of the normal information, you'll get a small epilogue text.

2. Playable Characters

For first timers, I strongly recommend Melanie. Once you get into the habit of picking up your daughter at the right time, you've got a pretty decent day rhythm. The free food at home will help (just press up at the fridge. Or if your sister is cooking, press up at her instead)

Vinny, the character that is only playable in the full game is very different from the other two. For one, his game doesn't end until you end it (by not paying rent / taking a train etc). As such he's best played last, I think, when you've got a decent grip on the game.

Andrus has quite an interesting backstory.

Quoted from the author:

"I'd written a detailed backstory involving Andrus' family moving around Eastern Europe and even began animating a dream sequence recalling his participation in the Baltic Way demonstration, but removed these things to focus on Carolina. His Estonian name is deliberate - I'm hoping to communicate that his family is Estonian, then Andrus spent most of his life in Ukraine before moving to the United States with Carolina."

3. Melanie Guide

There are many different ways to play each character. This is my best experience with melanie. For me this ended with about 600\$ profit and a good relationship with Laura. Although it says somewhere that the goal is \$1000, so I'll be replaying to find some better ways through. If I find them, I'll put it here.

Setting prices

!You can't set prices until you have the right ingredients.
!Yet I find it the most important part.

The happier people are, the worse prices they'll accept.

Things that make them happy:

- A. Knowing their name
- B. Doing the order right
- C. Having had a good product before
- D. Getting the order quick
- E. Smalltalking with them

!Now, I find smalltalk a waste of precious time. I want to know
!their name for that enduring boost. After that I just make sales.

!This means that the first day of sales Will miss A and C, so it's
!a good idea to set prices .50 or 1.00 lower than these final prices.
!Be sure to hike them up for the second day to around these values:

- A. Coffee for 4.00 (it was my most sold item. Giving change is easy. Nobody refused the price at downtown after I had reputation.)
- B. Pipeline crest for 3.00
- C. Milk for 2.00
- D. Americano for 3.50
- E. Cappucino for 4.00

!Selling only 5 products satisfied all my customers needs and the
!pipeline is good for a sleep reduction boost.
!Maybe I could charge 4.00 for americano and 3.50 for pipeline.
!I haven't tried yet.
!In my best playthrough I did the price hike friday, not thursday,
!so I'm not sure if the coffee an cappucino would be too
!expensive for some.

Setting up

The game starts sunday night and unless you know anything good to do, the best thing I've found is actually to go to bed straight away, so that you can have an early rise at around 6:00.

Here's my set-up run for the first day:

A. Go to bed

And the day right after:

A. Walk downstairs

B. Eat leftovers at the fridge

C. Walk to the superstore (I get there at 6:50, so I wait 10 minutes)

D. Buy:

!Espresso and coffee machine from equipment
!1x cups, 1x milk, 2x pipeline crest from inventory
!Buy 1 digital watch

!See 3J for why I buy the digital watch
!I've never run out of cups. Some customers bring their own and
!this really cuts down on the amount you need.
!You might not get a message that they do, but they do
!Don't buy pipeline crest and rinse. This makes it harder trying to
!remember what people asked.
!All people that want rinse will default to crest instead without

complaining

!People do complain if they want crest and you only have rinse
!They'll still buy, but they'll waste time
!Also the typing on rinse is slightly longer and more difficult.
!Evervescant!

E. Walk to downtown. Continue to council building on the next screen. (8:30)

F. Go inside, pick a number. Pray for a low number.

!If it's not a low number, I'll set my milk and pipeline prices.
!(look above about prices)

!According to a cryptic clue from the author, there's a way to
!quicken the time here, but I haven't figured out how yet

!When there's a cop waiting you can exchange numbers to get a book

!You can talk to the janitor and click where the "make a sale"
!button is, even if it's grayed out.
!He'll try to buy a milk or pipeline from you as if you were at a stand

!That's why I set prices just before, to make a bit of money before
!I have a permit

!If you got a very high number and weren't able to speed up the
!count much, you may be too hungry to talk
!which means you can't buy a permit.

G. Exchange names. Ask about permit. Buy one for downtown

!Downtown is a good spot. You'll have unlimited customers who don't
!mind high prices.
!The grumbling man is quite rare here
!it does cost \$300, so I'll try out other locations in future runs
!University seems like a bad spot. Students are cheapskates.
!If you need, there's food nearby.
!The council building is next door for both court hearings.
!You can restock pipeline or coffee D at bigby's and even eat here
!Although I never eat outside with melanie.

!Or buy coffee D

H. Walk to Collins. Go inside first building. Exchange names. Buy a cart.

!No upgrades is fine. Downtown I'll have a neverending supply of
!customers without looking fancy
!By now I'll check the time frequently. I want to leave towards
!Laura (bottom right on map) as soon as it's between 2:30 and 3:30
!If it's 4:00 I'll take a cab. As long as you get there before
!5:00 you can pick her up
!Although you might not have money for a taxi after you bought a cart

I. Walk to inner city. Go to pawn shop. Pawn diamond ring and watch for \$340.

!If you haven't picked up Laura before and eaten food,
!you've probably missed your chance.
!Most of the time cart life rewards mistakes in some other way
!So it's worth it to keep playing
!Let me know if you can turn angry Laura into happy Laura somehow
!If you bought a digital watch for \$8 you'll still be able to
!tell the time.

J. Walk to Florin's gate. Go inside roastery. Buy 2 grade B coffee.

!In my best run through I went through 2.5 coffee portions.
!I ignore the latte's, tea's and other fancy stuff
!People are fine with just cappuccino, milk, pipeline crest,
!coffee and americano
!I might try without milk in the future.
!Milk gives the worst margin of profit.
!But people might complain if you don't have cappuccino. They'll
!make do with americano or coffee
!But complaining takes time. Time is money.
!People find high prices coffee B acceptable and it's twice as
!cheap as grade A
!In my epilogue I had become the de facto place for coffee
!Even better than the roastery, because of the downtown location

K. Haven't found anything useful to do after this so go home.

That sets up everything you need in one day.
If you are unlucky with the number at the council, you might have to bump
one step into the morning.
If Laura is happy, this is a typical reason why I'd skip bringing her to
school.

After this I get into my daily routine.

Daily routine

The most effective way to play any character is to find a good routine
and then stick to it and become really fast/good at it.

-
- A. Be woken up early by Rebecca because I went to bed late
 - B. Eat a meal, wait to bring Laura to school
 - !You can bring her at 7:50 by talking to her. If you can't,
 - !go outside and back into the house without going anywhere.
 - !This should make it possible to talk to her.
 - !If you feel it's important, you can skip bringing Laura to school
 - !Do this too much and she'll start to hate you
 - !But you can miss about half of the time. She'll take a bus instead.
 - !You'll know she's angry by the sullen look on her face.
 - C. Go to my stand
 - D. Sell until I think it's 3:00/3:30

- E. Pick up Laura
 - !This too can be skipped once in a while. But don't skip the first one!
- F. Eat a meal (You're home anyways)
- G. Go back to stand (probably about 6:00 when you get there. I walk always.)
- H. Before entering the stand, drink 1 or 2 pipeline depending on sleep level
- I. Work until exhausted
 - !Even if you're too tired to make small talk, you can go on.
 - !I don't make small talk ever, but I make sure to know everyone's name
 - !Knowing people's name makes them happy. They accept higher prices,
 - !tip more and have more patience.
 - !Be careful not to get out yourself. If you're tired,
 - !you can't get back in.
- J. Go home
- K. Eat
- L. Check prices and stock
- M. Sleep

Specific points to watch out for:

- A. You have to be at the council meeting at 12:00 at both wednesday and the second monday.
- B. If you don't go to the second one, sometimes the game will bug and let you keep playing.
- C. Saturday, Laura will still wait to be brought to school. Don't bring her. It's a waste of time and a bug.
- D. Seth will pick laura up at saturday. It doesn't matter as long as you get are home after 10:00 and before 23:59

 4. Andrus Guide

Andrus' may be my favorite character. A love of poetry, a foreign backstory mired in tragedy.

Andrus has a bit of a problem compared to the other characters. He has no way to tell the time.
 So, be sure to pick up a watch at the superstore (or at the pawn shop if you want to pay more for the same thing.)

****ADDICTION****

Andrus is a smoker. He starts the game with 1 cigarette.
 Smoking a cigarette refills the smoking addiction meter as well as the hunger a little bit.
 If you go without smoking for too long, he'll cough frequently.
 Although some conversations in the game might leave you to believe it's possible to quit and be healthier, there is no result I've seen of this in the game.

****FOOD****

Unlike melanie, Andrus has to find his own food.
 There are a few options that seem to be decent food solutions.

- A. Buy food from vendors (like a \$1.00 bagel or \$2.00 crisps)
- B. Buy bigwhich sandwiches at bigby's (they cost about \$5.00)
- C. Buy glondola bars at the superstore (costs almost \$4.00)
- D. If you're out of money and are hungry, Andrus can eat cat food.

- A. I find the time it takes to get to those places isn't worth it.
- B. Gives full hunger recharge with a single bite, which makes it fast.
 However, it becomes an 'old sandwich' after a day, that recharges less.
- C. The best, most practical, cheapest food source for Andrus I've found.
- D. Poor Andrus.

****MR. GLEBOVSKI****

Andrus is a gentle man, in my playthrough. He could not imagine not taking care of Mr. Glembovski, his trusty cat.
The result of not feeding Andrus' cat repeatedly is a rather.... stunning ending.

- A. Feed cat food. Buy once, feed in the morning and evening.
- B. Feed milk. Sell milk in your stand (buy plenty).

You can choose which you feed Mr. Glembovski.
In my most recent playthrough I went for milk. Plenty of customers want milk.

Although milk isn't the most profitable, so it might be better to go with cat food next time.

****WALKTHROUGH****

Andrus doesn't have many responsibilities. The main goal is to eat, feed the cat, smoke and sleep. In the meantime you have to pay \$35.00 on friday to keep your newspaper subscription. And you have to pay \$119.00 on monday to pay another week's rent.

Selling newspapers effectively is dependant on speed. Since the register bug makes very high speed hard, this makes it not the best income boost.

In fact I make the most money from D-Grade coffee. This mirrors my real life experience selling drinks at events: People always want and come back for bad coffee if it's affordable and in supply.

Of course to sell coffee you have to buy a coffeemachine at the superstore (or elsewhere).

In this regard Andrus is unique: He can have all his needs with him, as long as he feeds his cat every evening and morning.

****PRICES****

| | |
|-----------|--------|
| Newspaper | \$1.50 |
| Milk | \$2.00 |
| Coffee | \$2.50 |

****DAILY ROUTINE****

- A. Feed glembovski
- B. Smoke
- C. Eat 3 bars
- D. Walk to stand and prepare the newspapers
- E. Sell as much as possible
- F. Halfway through the day, close up shop for a second.
- G. Smoke and eat 2-3 bars
- H. Re-open stand and drink a coffee before the first customer shows up
- I. Continue until too hungry or tired or midnight
- J. Go home
- K. Feed mr glembovski
- L. Sleep

****MISSING CAT****

The first time you go back home (to your hotel room), Mr. Glembovski trusty cat, will be missing. Look under the bed. Look behind the dumpsters.
Smoke a cigarette.
After that (or sometimes before) a woman will come outside.

Talk to her.
(sometimes it's hard to talk to her. Stand a little to the left of her)

WHEW! That's a relief!

Also, it's not possible to buy kitty litter for mr. glembovski. Eww.

****TRADING PERMITS****

Vinny might come along and offer to trade permits.

Be careful, after you've traded permits if officer thalys talks to you and asks for your permit, you'll have to pay a fine.

Go to the collins district and pay to have your stand moved.

Although Vinny says people are always asking him about newspapers in the other location, there actually are newspaper machines there. Price of \$1.00
People will still purchase newspapers from you, even at higher prices.

But the new location did seem to have less customers.

5. Vinny Guide

Haven't played vinny enough yet.

Recipies:

8 flour, 3 salt, 2 yeast, 1 sugar, mix, boil then bake.

6. General Playing tips

A. Transportation

Taking the bus is never a good idea. Walking is faster.

Taking a cab is rarely a good idea. It's very expensive.

Walking is usually the best mode of transportation.

!Note that it doesn't matter how far two spots on the map are, they all take
!about the same amount of time to get to from any location.

B. Prices

You want to experiment a bit to get the right prices. When figuring this out,
it's better to make something too expensive so that people will complain at
first. You can just keep lowering it until people stop complaining.

!Note that some people, especially the grumpy old man, will hardly ever be
satisfied with prices.

!Note that it's best to set prices that it's easy to calculate change for.
3.55 might get you more money per sale, but 3.50 is easier to give change
for. If you get one extra sale in a day, it's usually worth it to be slightly
cheaper.

(but maybe your change giving rate is better than me)

C. Price Feedback

A. If your prices are ridiculously low (as they are at default), then people
will say things like "Wow, is it really only \$0.45?" or "Is it \$0.45 too if I
don't get anything else".

B. If your prices are too high, people will refuse to buy it by saying they
find it too expensive. This conversation takes a little longer than most,
being a drain on your time.

C. If you get a lot of tips, this means you are doing a good fast job in serving customers. It also might mean that your prices could be set higher.

D. Time to talk

If you skip someone's dialog quickly, time will skip with it as if you had waited for them to finish talking.

Although if you wait after the text of what they say is revealed, time will continue on. So skipping quickly does give a small time advantage. But not as much as it may *feel* like.

E. Managing food

Food is an integral part of the game that you need to figure out. That's why I think melanie is a great character to start with: After you have figured out how to pick up your daughter in time, you've got the perfect rhythm:

Wake up, Eat, Bring her to school at 7:50, go to work, pick her up at 16:00, walk her home, eat, and work some more.

Food is harder to manage well with other characters. I haven't gotten it quite right with Andrus yet. Although bigby's sandwich, a carryable item that replenishes health for full is very effective.

F. Managing sleep

Instead of worrying about sleep, drink your own soda or coffee. This should help you keep going. Drinking 2 soda to sell 5 more cups of coffee is very much worth it... and you can usually sell even more.

I'm not sure how good this works with other characters besides Melanie.

G. Managing Cat food

Andrus needs to keep his cat fed. If you don't feed him for a long time, the cat will start behaving strangely and this will end your game. Worth to see once, though. You can buy cat food, but it might be a smarter idea to buy milk. The advantage of milk is that you can also sell it at your stand.

7. Secrets

This game must have some, I have not found all by far.

A. Arcana coffee book

I know that it is possible to somehow get this coffee book for the roastery from the comic book guy. It's supposed to reward you with \$250. I have no idea yet how to achieve this.

B. Pawn shop (melanie)

It's a very good choice to sell your ring and digital watch (get a cheap new one at the supermarket) for a \$380 starting money boost

C. Negative money when buying stand (melanie)

It's possible to buy the coffee stand when you don't have the \$1200 to do so. You'll get negative money and you won't have enough to

8. Locations and shops

Here I'll add a comprehensive list of what buildings are at what location, when I get around to it. For now, just a quick bit from my memory

For now:

Collin's Industrial park (bottom left, right of florin's gate) - Machinery, 5 star meat, train depot

Machinery

Buy your stand here with Melanie. Make sure you get an espresso machine and permit first, though.

Move your stand here with Melanie or Andrus, once you have one.

Upgrade your stand with any character (although this may differ per city location... some not having upgrade options)

5 Star meat

This is for the hot dog character that's not playable. Maybe for vinny too? I haven't played vinny yet.

Train depot

If you can't take it anymore, you can take a train and never return.

Dompactor Raxby

Have some food here, while you're casually made to feel lonely when they ask if it's a table one. I've read that the scrap hash (\$6.00) is a full hunger refill. I wouldn't know. I never eat there. The walking to my table is just a bit too much time waste and I've never had a stand at Collin's.

Florin's Gate (bottom left) - Lease, Georgetonian, Roastery, Jesorganique

Lease Building

They're not open yet. Haven't been able to do anything with this so far.

Georgetonian

3rd floor: Pay for your newspaper subscriptions with Andrus here

2nd floor: Haven't been able to do anything here yet.

1st floor: Buy soda and newspapers. Oh god, I just discovered each day has a newspaper to read. More to explore.

Roastery

This is the home of at least one quest.

The creator has hinted that the expensive espresso machine is really worth it when you can afford it, but I'm not sure it's even possible to ever afford it. I think he's pulling our leg.

Also better quality coffee. B grade has been my favorite so far: Twice as cheap as A and good enough to keep people coming back for very expensive coffee. I'll keep trying.

Marcus stays here too, who has some kind of thing going on with the book store. Haven't figured that out yet.

Jesorganique

This is the other place where you can B grade coffee. Although, it's cheaper at the roastery, which is right beside it. So don't buy it here.

You can buy a coffee maker here.

Brendan Ave Bridge (Slightly to top and right) - Hotdog stand

Park (Bottom, middle) - Kebab stand, Statue of Kushman

Georgetown 13th (Center, Right) - Real estate, Laundromat, Pizzeria

Real estate

Vinny pays his \$130 rent here.

Laundromat
Can't get inside

Pizzeria
Food is always good

Superstore (top left) - Just the store.
Cheap goods. The hotdog stuff can be ignored, it's for a never
released 4th character (Logan).
You can buy an espresso machine and coffee maker here.

Downtown (center)- Catacombs, 1300, Bigby's, Comic book store,
(next screen), Council

Council
Get your permits here. You can also buy a buss pass here, but don't.
(look at General Playing Tips 6A about transportation)

Bigby's
Although most of the stuff is a little more expensive than it is elsewhere,
he does have one very good item: The bigby sandwich and veggie sandwich.
This is food that can be carried and eaten later. If you eat it, it fully
replenishes your 'hunger'. If you wait a day, it will be an old sandwich and
only replenish about 25%

Catacombs
Have never been able to get inside here. Is it a night club? A wednesday
morning only place? Not a clue. Mail me. Email is at the bottom in
giant AsCII.

1300
See Catacombs.

Hotel
There's someone inside if you find the stairs on the left. But I can't
do anything at this location yet.

Book store
The book store has a couple of secrets associated with it, that I haven't
figured out yet. I know that the cookbook and drinks book(coffee) don't do
anything extra, but they're still worth having a look at, at least once.
There's a book by an author that Melanie's daughter loves, but I haven't been
able to figure out how to do anything about this, except talk about it. An
interesting place.

Melanie - House (Bottem left): get food for free here
Melanie - School (Bottom right): pick up your daughter, Laura here
Andrus - Motel (Top right): you and your cat sleep here
Vinny - Home (Middle left): You live here

9. Thoughts about the game

It's frustrating. It's fun. It's a reminder that it's okay that life isn't
always exciting.

After reading about how Richard Hofmeier once spent a long time building a
bagel shooting game for a specific bagel place, I kinda can do nothing but
love the guy. He then showed up with at that place. They didn't know at all
he was making a game for them. Then when they asked what he wanted for the
machine, he said a lifetime of free bagels for one of friends, who lived
nearby. I'm not doing the story justice, but since it isn't on his website
anymore, it's the best version you're gonna get. If you ever find the story
in it's full glory, please send me a mail. Contact info is at the bottom.

Well written thoughts by other people:

ShaStaTM:

I guess this game hit me in an odd but profound way. You see, I've worked retail all my life, amidst aspirations of doing things I actually like to do. I think many of us have. I play games to escape reality, but this one is real,

folks. This game haunts me in a way that no other game ever has; the bleak reality of American Dream is condensed in the sad lives of the main characters.

Life and the story it unfolds is what the focus of the game, and indeed, reality is about, yet the money not made from having to buy cigarettes or having to take your kid to school stares you right in the face. Tack on to that the way people interact; it's so genuine it's unnerving. As of yet, I've never had a discussion with Laura that I felt was uplifting or satisfactory. I've never played a game that hits so close to home, that communicates so well the struggle of making it on your own.

This game is subtle yet powerful. Very well done; I'd like to see a spinoff.

KyrahAbattoir:

I discovered this the other day while talking about cart life to a friend and doing search about how it worked in NY (having visited NY)

As it turns out, pushcart concessions in NY are very cheap, most of them being 200\$ for two years, but they are in limited quantity and applying to the city for one can take more than 10 years, to a point where applicants enter every members as their family to increase the chances of getting a concession.

There is a black market going on, where concession owners will rent their concession to pushcart owners for prices like 14000\$ a year. This is illegal in NY but proving it is very difficult, and apparently the authorities are not too motivated to stop it.

The introduction scene in cartlife where Andrus is buying the news stand from Thimoty might then be illegal?

I just thought it might interest someone.

Spzygiel:

What vendor would ever move around their inventory from sale to sale just to F with themselves when time to make the next sale?

Why do I have 10 seconds to play a typing game when making a transaction then figure out on my own that I have to click the drawer and divine how the game wants me to handle the drawer interaction. Why is this not covered in a tutorial, help bubble, or several screen game infor already in the game? Why does it take a half hour to walk past a grocery store?

I'm stuck eating granola bars because I cannot find a restaurant. How can someone be in a city large enough for a city hall and not find a restaurant. Wait, maybe because I have less than a minute of real life time to scower the city to find stuff before I fail the game.

I really want to like the game, but it is just impossible to be happy with a \$5 dollar purchase for something that is nothing but irritating and stressful when games with more depth, enjoyability, and strategy are available for free on flash game sites.

10. Bugs and preventable bugs

This game is unfortunately rife with bugs.
Some are funny. Some are annoying. Some are game-breaking.

Although, in this case, they serve to underscore what I perceive to be this game's message:

Life is an unfair, mundane and repetitive experience. Except when it's not.

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I'll send you a reply asap and use your wonderful suggestions to improve it.
Feedback is also appreciated, especially if you think I suck.
Although in that case, please send it to myotheremailaddress@gmail.com

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