

Gator [Bally, 1969]

Skill shot – lit top lane for 100; either the center lane or both side lanes will be lit.

There are two keys to this game: zipping up the flippers and opening the three gates. The blue mushroom bumper in the center of the game, #2, closes flippers; red mushroom bumpers #1 and #3 open the flippers.

The gates are opened through various combinations of numbers. Open the top “Gator Lake” gate for 500 via either hitting rollover lane #6 or getting both yellow mushroom bumpers #4 and #5. Completing bumpers #1-#5 opens the middle “Gator Run” gate for 500. Completing bumpers 1-3 opens the lower “Gator Swamp” gate, worth just 50 points.

All six numbers, i.e. lane 6 and bumpers 1-5, are worth 100 points the first time you hit them, then drop to 10 points until relit. They relight when the ball goes through any open gate back to the plunger lane. Numbers reset when ball goes through gate.

Strategy: first things first, hit #2 to zip the flippers, then try to get the ball to settle onto the tips of the closed flippers. Use microflips to get the ball on the face of either flipper to set up your shots. Note that backhand flips are often stronger than forehand flips on this game.

There are two schools of thought on how to proceed next. Flipper power, bumper and slingshot action and your accuracy may determine which is better on an individual Gator unit. One idea is to go ahead and shoot the #'s 1 and 3, reclosing the flippers by shooting #2 after each hit to #1 or #3, with the goal to complete all of 1 through 5, then shoot the middle gate. The other idea is to ignore 1 and 3 and that middle gate unless you hit them accidentally and go for 4, 5 and 6 and the top gate and bumpers, trying to leave the flippers closed the whole time. If at any point using the 4-5-6 strategy you do get the middle gate open, shoot through it. But remember that whenever the balls hits 1 or 3 to reopen the flippers, your top priority is to re-close them.

The stronger and livelier the game, the more the up top 4-5-6 scheme is the way to go. With weaker action, the 1-5 middle gate is often the better of the two. Another way machine power impacts you play style is whether or not to let the ball come to rest on zipped flippers. While a settled-then-microflipped ball is under more control, if the flippers are weak, you may want to flip when the ball is first rolling or falling onto the flipper to get a little extra energy in the shot.

Nip-It [Bally, 1973]

How about 3 flipper buttons? But the upper button on the right triggers a “gator grabber” metal loop instead of a flipper. You’ll see.

The skill shot is to roll over one of the top white discs that lights either the red bumpers or the yellow bumpers, then have the ball fall into the 500 point saucer. When the ball is ejected from the saucer, it goes down and to the right; you want to hit the “grabber” button to have the gator metal bar come out of the upper right side to catch the ball as it does so. This scores 1000 points plus a bonus advance for going down the gator lane and feeds the ball towards the right flipper when it comes out of the one-way gate below.

The grabber can also be used as a flipper of sorts: if you trigger it early, before the ball would be trapped inside it, it will push the ball away to the left. If you can tell that the ball won’t be rolling quite far enough to the right to get inside the grabber, you might want to do this to change its trajectory.

Like all games with zipper flippers, you want to keep them closed as much as possible. And like many other zipper games, it’s the center mushroom bumper that closes flippers. On Nip-It, the white rollover disk to the right of the mushroom bumper opens the flippers.

There’s an “Open gate” standup target on left side middle, which lights on some funky switch hits cycle (it does not appear to be keyed to any of the scoring reels). If you see it lit, go ahead and shoot it to open the lower right gate, otherwise ignore that target.

A ball can be locked in lower right-side saucer, which will score your bonus and feed a second ball to plunger lane. When you get the new ball to the plunger, go for whichever light-bumpers button you haven’t already triggered plus the 500 point top saucer again. Grab the ball as it exits, and when it feeds out the bottom of the gator gate, close the flippers if you haven’t already done so, then let the ball settle onto them.

Now you have a strategy choice to make. One option is to shoot for either “release ball” target in the upper center of the game to start multiball. Your bonus, maximum 10000, does NOT reset when you lock a ball, so if your bonus is close to 10K, this is a good choice. If you go this route, try to relock a ball to collect your bonus again, then re-release it, etc. to collect your bonus multiple times.

The other choice is to shoot the left gate or up top for gator-grab-all-day. This can be done even if you’re in multiball if you have a ball cradled on the left flipper and can just keep going into the gate or up top from the right flipper, then catching the ball on it again when it feeds

out of the gator. The risk here is that on some Nip-Its, the feed from the gator may drain down the center some of the time.

Like Gator and other zipper flipper machines, backhand flips may be more accurate or stronger than forehands. As always with zipper flipper games, top priority is to keep the flippers zipped as much as possible and let the ball settle onto the zipped flippers whenever you can to set up controlled shots via microflips. When you have the flippers zipped and start multiball, try to keep one ball settled on the zipped flippers and just knock the other ball around.

Final note: locked balls can be stolen by subsequent players – beware!

Slick Chick [Gottlieb, 1963]

It's a bumper-love luck box for the most part. Most points on the game come from the three standup targets and the six lanes. Only the two side standups can be shot from the flippers, and most of the time you'll be shooting them on the fly since cradling on this game isn't that easy to come by. None of the six lanes can be shot directly from either flipper; you get one chance per ball to for one of the two at the top with your skill shot. The bumpers are only worth one point, lit or not.

Despite the lack of side outlanes, the huge center gap keeps ball times down and makes house balls not uncommon.

Note the hard rubber ovals just below the flipper tips: balls falling from above with enough speed that hit these often bounce up and across to where the opposite flipper can hit them. Don't lose a ball you didn't need to by giving up on it too soon!

The Slick and Chick letters are all about completing lanes to light specials and are largely irrelevant in tournament play. They do change the value of the top stand up target (that you can't shoot).

Center gobble hole is worth 100 but ends the ball.