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- News
- Reviews
- Hot Games
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'Unitied' Review – A Puzzle Game that's at Its Best on iOS

by Shawn WilkinsFebruary 3, 2020

TouchArcade Rating:

★★★★☆

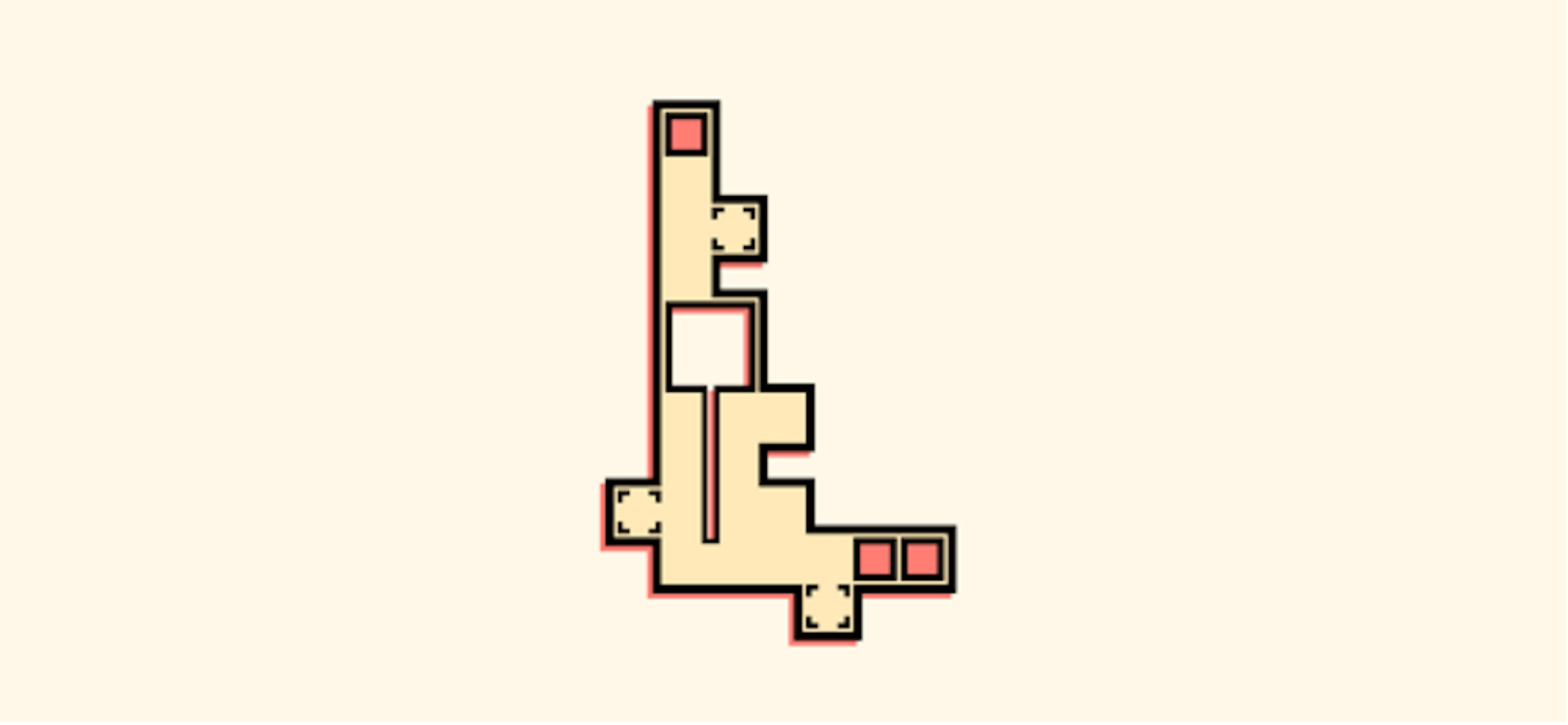
iOS and simplistic, quick puzzle games have been a match made in heaven since the launch of the App Store in 2008. Being able to almost mindlessly open an app and begin solving puzzles, at its core, defines what mobile gaming strives to be. The noncommittal attachment to finish just one more challenge to keep people interested, but never making it too obscenely difficult. Starting off as a game available through Steam, *Unitied* (\$0.99) captures that same essence and transports it to iOS seamlessly.

Putting a minimalistic spin on the age old and aptly named "sliding box puzzle," *Unitied* aims to be as simple as its execution. There's no steep learning curve, the methods for completing each puzzle are slowly introduced, and the difficulty climb never stops directly at a wall. The game itself and its processes are as simple as can be. This is exactly how game developers for quick and easy puzzle games should build apps for iOS. *Unitied* has the benefit of already being well received when on PC – but it's naturally made for iOS.



When tackling a game founded in its own simplistic gameplay and style overall and attempting to bring it into a modern world of mobile gaming, it's expected that there will be some quirks and tweaks added to give the game new life. With *Unitied*, it starts off with the basic: get a box from its starting point to an outlined destination by swiping it in the four cardinal directions. Luckily, there's no stress of completing a puzzle in the least amount of swipes or any other achievements – it's just the game itself. However, things get more difficult as the levels increase.

The twists and turns the game introduces come in the form of hideaway nesting places where the block can go in and come out in the same direction, but not necessarily move up or down – or vice versa. They aren't problematic simply for existing, but figuring out their role in the puzzle as it's being solved is when the challenge is introduced.



Then come the even "smaller" blocks. The smaller blocks have designated areas they need to go as well, but the puzzle therein is maneuvering the set of them – which move at the same time in the same direction – and figuring out which moves to make, when to make them, and knowing when an irreversible mistake has been made.

*Unitied* is a short game; it only features 42 levels of increasing difficulty. However, each one is paired with a soothing, relaxing audio track with no distractions otherwise. What's presented is exactly what the game encompasses. The middle of the screen shows the puzzle itself, offset by a cream background. The only other markings on the screen are the menu icon in the top right to change the level, the reset icon in the middle, and the level currently being played to the left. The gameplay itself is situated right in the center of the screen and never deviates from that focal point. All of these factors play a key role in what makes *Unitied* part of a growing list of uber simplistic puzzle games. It doesn't aim to be more than it is, and what it is presented immediately with no obstruction.

Unitied - Game trailer

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With shorter games like *Unitied*, it's usually assumed that the value is lost because of its playtime. That somehow, the price of admission outweighs the value received from the product itself solely due to how quickly the game can be completed. With *Unitied* only costing a dollar, that argument flies out the window. However, the value in the game itself is easily far beyond that dollar figure. Short breaks at work, waiting in line at a restaurant, or casually occupying time throughout the day, all of that can be encompassed by games built like this – short, fun, challenging puzzle games made with no filler. There's no overarching commitment, there's nothing more to it than the puzzle itself, and because of all of these factors, *Unitied* excels as a puzzle game. Although it may have started its journey on other platforms, it's definitely found its place right at home on iOS.

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