

## Pinball Tutorial



### Words by



[Noah](#)  
[Crable](#)

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Stern Pinball's latest Marvel-themed pinball machine might be their most ambitious one yet. Jack Danger wowed me with his [Foo](#)

[Fighters](#) pinball machine in 2023, which took a simple band theme and turned it into a full-blown homage to 80s Saturday morning cartoons with a layout that was just as crazy. Also in 2023 came [Venom](#), a [Brian Eddy](#)-designed machine with a more basic layout but including video game-inspired rules that encouraged the player to save their progress. [The Uncanny X-Men](#) looks like a machine that combines the best aspects of both of those two!

The layout of *The Uncanny X-Men* is unlike many pinball machines that came before it, including a small area on the lower left of the playfield called the Danger Room that gives the table a steeper learning curve than its contemporaries, and a large variety of ramps and orbits that wind throughout the entire playfield. Though this machine might be a struggle to learn at first, thanks to its unusual layout, I hope to make the process a little easier to understand by explaining how I approach making shots on this wild machine.

# About The Uncanny X-Men

Based on the Uncanny X-Men comic series, specifically the “Days of Future Past” and “Mind Out of Time” comic arcs. Learn more about [The Uncanny X-Men on the Kineticist game page](#).

- Manufacturer: [Stern Pinball](#)
- Year: 2024
- Design: [Jack Danger](#)
- Code: [Waison Cheng](#)
- Art: [Jeremy Packer \(Zombie Yeti\)](#)
- Animation: [Chuck Ernst](#)
- Music: [Charlie Benante](#)
- Sound: [Jerry Thompson](#)



# The Uncanny X-Men Playfield Overview



The best way to approach this pinball machines' playfield design would be to discuss the shots with arrows on them first. The farthest left shot on the playfield is the X-Jet orbit, which sends balls to the danger room with strong enough shots. Further right of that orbit is the downtown ramp, a unique combination of an orbit and a backwards-facing ramp that can be hit late off the right flipper and feeds the same flipper for repeated shots at the ramp. The uptown ramp is a more straightforward ramp that passes above the orbit entrance to downtown and can be hit from the right flipper.

The main gimmick of the machine is a giant Sentinel head positioned between the midtown and subway ramps. The midtown ramp is most reliably hit from the right flipper and sends balls back to that flipper for repeated shots, while the subway ramp enters the same ramp exit as the plunger but can only be hit from the left flipper. The Sentinel

head has a magnet in front of it that can fling balls out of control when the giant Sentinel spawns, and its mouth can lower to reveal a kickback that deals significant Sentinel damage but also fires the ball back to the flippers quickly.

The last major shot on the playfield is the highway ramp. This steep ramp can only be hit with strong left flipper shots and typically feeds the ball to the right flipper, though if Cerebro is available it will instead divert to the left flipper. Cerebro itself is located directly above the apex of the left flipper, and acts as a post that holds balls there when either the Cerebro rule is advanced or a mission is available to start.

Scattered throughout the playfield are several gray “BAMF!” targets for Nightcrawler, which qualify Cerebro when hit enough times, and right of the uptown ramp is Beast’s lab, which takes the form of a leaper target like the Icarus on [\*Led Zeppelin\*](#) on Pro models, or an elevated captive ball on Prem / LE models. There is also a hidden “sneak-in” lane below the entrance to the downtown ramp, which cannot be hit reliably but scores a bonus built up by the Kitty Pryde target nearby when hit and spots shots during missions. Lastly are two bumpers for Bishop and Gambit, the former replacing the typical left slingshot and the latter below the X-Mansion target used to light ball save.



This wouldn't be a complete playfield overview without discussing the Danger Room! This secluded area to the lower left of the playfield includes a mini-flipper, three targets (including one directly below the flipper that holds bonus when lit), a spinner, and a small ramp that feeds Cerebro. It can be fed with strong shots to the X-Jet orbit or lucky bounces that head past Bishop's bumper. Mastery of the Danger Room is important to success on *The Uncanny X-Men* as completing the required shots down there increases mode and multiball scoring for the rest of the game, and draining due to missed Danger Room shots can be tragic.

Scoring on *The Uncanny X-Men* is lower than average for its era, roughly comparable to scoring on [\*John Wick\*](#). 50M would be considered a great starting point, but the best players can expect to exceed 300M.

# Getting Started with The Uncanny X-Men



# Getting Started

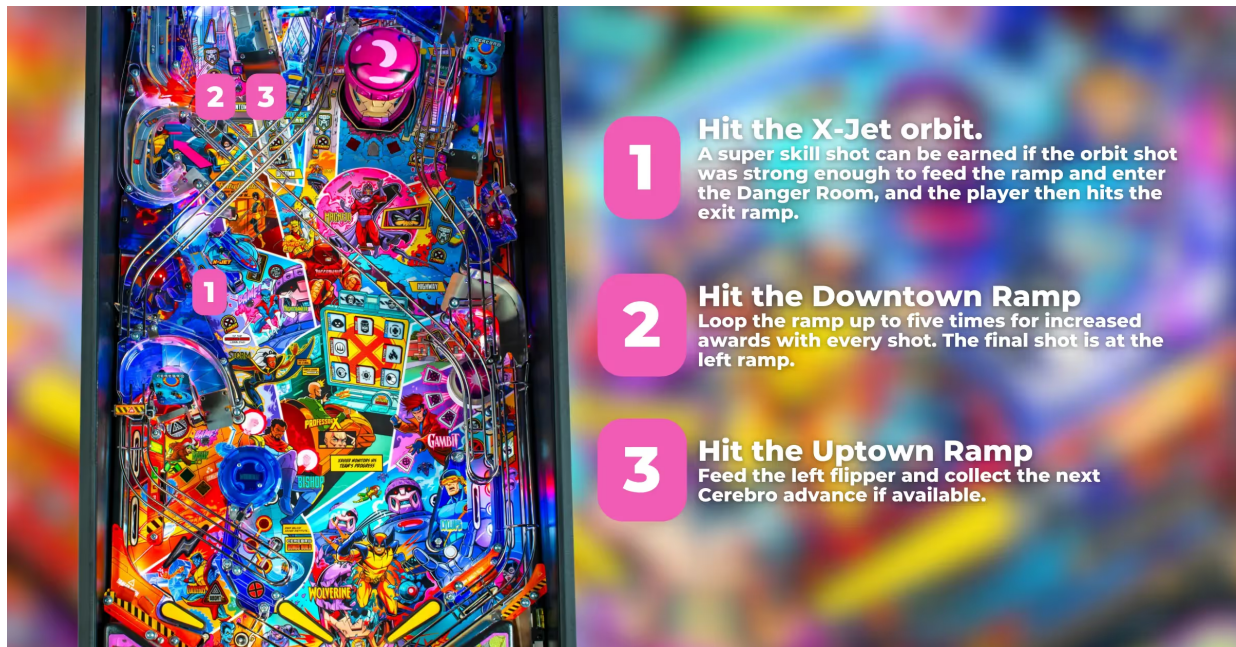
- Shoot the white shots to light missions at any shot that feeds the inlanes. Use the flippers and action button to select a mission. The "challenging" missions are worth more than the others but require more shots to complete successfully.
- At every 2 missions completed, Cerebro is lit to travel in time to the future. Shoot the flashing shots to escape the ruins, defeat any Sentinels that show up, and press the action button to enable or turn off Cerebro if you want to escape to the past. Defeating Sentinels will spawn Nimrod - escape him by shooting the three randomly flashing lanes.
- Hit the giant Sentinel head enough times to spawn one, then start Sentinel multiball by defeating the one that spawns. Defeat the Sentinels to light the giant head for jackpots / super jackpot.
- Complete two shots to every ramp and orbit on the playfield to light Save the City multiball at the center ramp (lit yellow). Hit the standup targets and bumpers to light the ramps and orbits for jackpots.
- Light Cerebro by collecting sets of gray standup targets, then advance the rule by hitting any ramp that feeds the post. To Me, My X-Men multiball starts after advancing Cerebro three times. Shoot blue shots for jackpots and the uptown or danger room ramp when lit red for super jackpots.
- Complete training in the Danger Room to increase scoring for all other game features.
- Hit Bishop's bumper enough times to qualify the action button, then hold the action button during a mode until the blue light is over the shot you want to spot to collect it instantly.
- Shoot Beast's Lab to collect mystery awards based on the level of the award (increased by hitting ramps prior to the target).
- Hit Gambit's bumper three times to increase the next mode's shot value to 2x or hit the bumper with an alley pass to increase the values of further mode shots.

- Shoot the white shots to light missions at any shot that feeds the inlanes. Use the flippers and action button to select a mission. The "challenging" missions are worth more than the others but require more shots to complete successfully.
- At every 2 missions completed, Cerebro is lit to travel in time to the future. Shoot the flashing shots to escape the ruins, defeat any Sentinels that show up, and press the action button to enable or turn off Cerebro if you want to escape to the past. Defeating Sentinels will spawn Nimrod - escape him by shooting the three randomly flashing lanes.
- Hit the giant Sentinel head enough times to spawn one, then start Sentinel multiball by defeating the one that spawns. Defeat the Sentinels to light the giant head for jackpots / super jackpot.
- Complete three shots to every ramp and orbit on the playfield to light Save the City multiball at the center ramp (lit yellow). Hit the standup targets and bumpers to light the ramps and orbits for jackpots.
- Light Cerebro by collecting sets of purple standup targets, then advance the rule by hitting any ramp that feeds the post. To Me, My X-Men multiball starts after advancing Cerebro three times. Shoot blue shots for jackpots and the uptown or danger room ramp when lit red for super jackpots.
- Complete training in the Danger Room to increase scoring for all other game features.
- Hit Bishop's bumper enough times to qualify the action button, then

hold the action button during a mode until the blue light is over the shot you want to spot to collect it instantly.

- Shoot Beast's Lab to collect mystery awards based on the level of the award (increased by hitting ramps prior to the target).
- Hit Gambit's bumper three times, or hit it with an alley pass to the right inlane, to increase the next mode's shot value to 2x.

# Skill Shots



There are two skill shots available just by plunging; a skill shot and a double skill shot at the switches below the entrance to the highway ramp, both of which increase the bonus X. However, full plunging and holding the left flipper on *The Uncanny X-Men* is the way to go as there are three skill shots available from the right flipper:

- Hit the X-Jet orbit. A super skill shot can be earned if the orbit shot was strong enough to feed the ramp and enter the Danger Room, and the player then hits the exit ramp.
- Hit the downtown ramp to complete time loops. Loop the ramp up to five times for increased awards with every shot. The final shot is at the left



ramp.

- Hit the uptown ramp to safely feed the left flipper and advance Cerebro towards starting To Me, My X-Men multiball.

While the former two skill shots are the most fun to pull off (especially the 5-way time loop skill shot!), in competitive settings, your best bet will be either the plunger skill shots, or the uptown ramp skill shot to advance towards To Me, My X-Men, allow you to set up for missions, and get in some early Sentinel hits before the ball save expires.

# Missions



Missions are started by first hitting the white shots enough times (up to four), then hitting any blue strobing shot. Once the last shot is hit, the ball will be held either at the right inlane post or at Cerebro, and the player will be prompted to select a mission using the flippers and action button. The missions at the corners of the monitor are more challenging than the ones in between them but score more if completed.

The four “standard” missions, listed clockwise, are:

- **Rescue the Innocent:** Hit 5 red shots to rescue the innocent citizens. Bishop pop bumper increases the multiplier for each shot up to 5x.
- **Bitter Rivalry:** Hit 4 yellow shots to defeat Sabretooth, with blue shots scoring bonus awards.
- **Smuggled Cargo:** Max. of 4 red shots, then 2 blue shots to recover the cargo. Hit the purple shots to score 2x and double progress.
- **Stopping a Juggernaut:** Make 5 red shots to defeat the Juggernaut; they alternate between ramps and then targets / X-Jet.

And the four “challenging” missions, listed in the same order, are:

- **Sentinel Facility Raid:** Shots move from right to left, then repeat. Hitting the Sentinel head pauses the moving shots until the next lit one is made. 10 lit shots to complete.
- **Fiery Assault:** Shoot the red shots to extinguish Pyro’s flames and the blue shots to damage him. Deal damage to Pyro 3 times to complete.
- **Mayhem in Midtown:** Shoot yellow shots to defeat the Blob. Hit the targets to light red shots near them for increased points and 2x damage. 10 shots to complete.
- **Genosha Under Siege:** 10 red shots to defeat Avalanche & Toad, with randomly lit green shots damaging Toad for bonus scores and briefly opening up that same shot for 2x damage.

Playing three and seven missions lights extra ball. Every two missions completed lights Cerebro to travel in time to the future.

# The Future



Once the player has successfully completed two missions, normal game progression will be disabled until the player hits any ramp that feeds Cerebro. Once the shot is made, the game will pause to reveal the new timeline that Kitty Pryde and the player have been sent to and show slides for the mode's instructions.

The Future is essentially a “marathon” mode with white shots lit to escape the city ruins for 3M a shot. Sentinels can occasionally spawn to block off these white shots and score small points when hit with a large bonus for fully defeating them, adding to end-of-ball bonus in the process. As soon as a Sentinel has been destroyed, Nimrod might spawn in, and the player will have to hit three random flashing lanes to escape (counting down from 7.5M, and the third shot scores the combined value); otherwise a large quantity of Sentinels will appear and block future progress.

Collecting 50 white shots during the future finishes the journey for 100M and resets the mission grid.

If the player wishes to escape to the past, Cerebro will be lit at all shots that feed the post to return there; 3 are needed for the 1st



future, then 8, then 15. Press the action button when Cerebro is available to disable it.

Completing missions qualifies X-Men that can help make the future either easier to complete by increasing Sentinel damage, or more valuable. For instance, if Stopping a Juggernaut was completed before starting the future, the danger room will be qualified during the future and will add to scoring for everything hit during the mode. Keep an eye out!

# Sentinel Multiball



Hit the giant Sentinel head enough times to spawn one. About 6 hits are needed to the sentinel to open its mouth for the first Sentinel multiball; then when its mouth is open, the Sentinel can be defeated either with shots to the side, or direct shots to its mouth that deal massive damage but also fire the ball at lightning speed towards the flippers. Sentinel multiball starts after approx. 2 mouth shots.

During Sentinel multiball, hit the four randomly lit Sentinel shots for jackpots - two of the same color will defeat one Sentinel. After defeating one, the giant sentinel head will be lit to score two jackpots followed by a super jackpot at its mouth, which can be increased by hitting other purple shots scattered around the playfield. The player must act quickly, however; the giant sentinel head can retreat if the player is too focused on defeating the smaller sentinels, and must be relit by defeating a Sentinel again. After scoring a super jackpot, the process then repeats, with subsequent super jackpots retaining the prior value.

## Save the City Multiball



Every ramp and orbit on the playfield is marked with a certain area of the city. Hitting every labeled shot three times lights the midtown center ramp yellow to start Save the City multiball. You can view your progress towards this multiball using the UI; once all six areas are colored green instead of gray, the multiball will be lit. Progress can be made towards Save the City even during other multiballs, but it can't



start until all of them have ended.

During Save the City, hit the purple standup targets, spinner, bumpers, ramps, and Danger Room spinner to light the various city shots for jackpots, Collect super jackpots by completing full sets of every city shot and then shooting the X-Jet.

# To Me, My X-Men Multiball



Hitting the purple standup targets during normal play lights Cerebro at the uptown, highway, and Danger Room exit ramps. Each lit Cerebro shot advances the rule, or you can also advance Cerebro by making a Cerebro skill shot at the start of each ball. To Me, My X-Men multiball starts after advancing Cerebro three times and can be started during Sentinel multiball, but the two won't stack otherwise.

To Me, My X-Men is a simple but valuable multiball where all shots are lit blue to score jackpots and spawn different X-Men, but can't be hit repeatedly. There are a total of 12 members of the X-Men team to spawn, at which point the shots will no longer add to the jackpot. After scoring six jackpots, the uptown ramp is lit red to score a super jackpot, and the Danger Room exit ramp is lit to score a 2x super jackpot. The super jackpot starts at 5M and increases with every jackpot collected until the full team has been spawned.

## Danger Room



Surviving and completing training in the Danger Room is an important aspect of scoring well on *The Uncanny X-Men* as every training level completed increases scoring for the rest of the game. At the top of the display are four icons, for the target, spinner, bumper, and ramp in the Danger Room. Collecting the required shots to all four will advance the training level and increase scoring for all mode and jackpot shots.



If it looks like a ball is about to enter the Danger Room, hold up your left flipper! This should become a force of habit as you play. Just don't do this if you're entering the Danger Room off the exit from the X-Jet as you won't like the drain that occurs.

# Bishop



Hitting the left pop bumper (around the area where a left slingshot would usually be) 5 times will charge up Bishop at the action button. During any mode or multiball, if the action button is held, a light blue shot will start moving around, and Bishop will ask you to tell him what he's shooting at. Release the button when the blue light is over the shot you want to instantly collect it. Up to three shots can be spotted in a single Bishop use.

Bishop can be a great help during challenging missions or multiballs that only light one shot at a time for bonuses, but it's not worth risking an out-of-control ball to spot shots using him.

# Beast's Lab



Beast's Lab starts every game at level 1, but hitting the ramps prior to hitting the target the first time will increase its level up to level 3. As soon as the target is hit, further shots will count down towards a mystery award given after the target is hit with a green light in front of it.

Typical mystery awards include points or lighting the right outlane ball save. The level 3 award will always light extra ball the first time, and then spot Beast for use in the future the second time. Beast's Lab can also award the traditional add-a-ball one time only during any multiball, but only if the award is at level 2.

# Gambit





Players likely won't aim for Gambit's pop bumper intentionally, but he'll always be happy to help. Every three shots to the right bumper increase the value of the next mode or jackpot shot to 2x, and hitting the bumper through an alley pass (sending it through the right inlane) does the same.

Gambit might not seem like much, but he can significantly increase mode scoring if his multiplier is used on the final shot of any mission!

## Noah's Strategies





# Noah's Strats

- Uptown ramp skill shot is my preferred skill shot, as it sets up the left flipper safely and allows me to get in some safe shots at the Sentinel before the ball save expires.
- I always start off my games going for Fiery Assault and Mayhem in Midtown missions. In Fiery Assault you can get bonus points if you extinguish all the red fires before completing the mission (not to mention Storm's valuable future perk that deals bonus damage to all Sentinels), and Mayhem in Midtown lends itself well to combo play. If you're brand new to the game, consider starting with easier modes like Stopping a Juggernaut or Bitter Rivalry.
- Don't sleep on Cerebro! The highest scoring in the game currently comes from starting Sentinel multiball and then lighting Cerebro advances via standup targets during it to stack To Me, My X-Men multiball with it.
- The Sentinel is best hit from the right flipper as a backhand, especially when its mouth lowers for direct shots.
- If you're used to handling the Danger Room, it might be beneficial to shoot for the X-Jet orbit early during the ball save to start training and increasing mode scoring while the ball save is still active. Otherwise, play with caution and try to keep the ball alive.

- Uptown ramp skill shot is my preferred skill shot, as it sets up the left flipper safely, advances me towards To Me, My X-Men multiball, and allows me to get in some safe shots at the Sentinel before the ball save expires.
- I always start off my games going for Genosha Under Siege and Stopping a Juggernaut missions. Prioritize the green shot during Genosha Under Siege and then hit the same shot again for massive scores, and during Stopping a Juggernaut, try alternating between the midtown (center) ramp and the Beast's Lab target.
- Don't sleep on Cerebro! The highest scoring in the game currently comes from starting Sentinel multiball and then lighting Cerebro advances via standup targets during it to stack To Me, My X-Men multiball with it.
- Save the City is also a massively valuable multiball! The jackpots average 7M with the super jackpot, being the jackpot total, typically being worth 35M, and this is without accounting for Gambit's 2x multipliers. Prioritize this multiball whenever it presents itself and work towards other multiballs while scoring big points from jackpots.
- The Sentinel is best hit from the right flipper as a backhand, especially when its mouth lowers for direct shots.
- If you're used to handling the Danger Room, it might be beneficial to shoot for the X-Jet orbit early during the ball save to start training and advance towards Save the City while the ball save is still active. Otherwise, play with caution and try to keep the ball alive.

