2 Clear?This file ¸Gerry Quinn 1998-1999TOCLEAR1yesyesyesyesyesFALSEyesyes02/02/99

2 Clear? - Version 1.0

If the print is too small, there is a menu option to use larger fonts.

Overview and System Requirements

2 Clear? from Ultisoft, Inc. is a challenging new puzzle game for Windows 95 or better.   It takes seconds to learn but will take a lifetime to master.   And if the standard version loses its appeal, almost every aspect of the game is customisable, so there is always a new level to conquer.

2 Clear? will run on Windows 95, 98 or NT4.0+.   Any PC capable of running these should be satisfactory for playing the game.   To hear the sound effects, you will require a sound card.

Although the game is playable in 256 colours, it will look better in 16-bit or 24-bit colour modes.

2 Clear? and all its components are copyright of Gerry Quinn, 1998-1999.   You are at liberty to give individual copies of the zip or exe archive to anyone you wish so long as all files are present and not altered in any way, and no other files are included.   However, you must have express permission to place the program in an archive for Internet download, or on CDROM or similar media.   Contact Ultisoft, Inc. at http://www.ultisoft.com .

Installation / Un-installation

Well, since you got this far, you know how to install it!

The installation program creates a program item called Uninstall.   You can run this at any time to remove every trace of 2 Clear? from your system.   You don't actually need the Uninstall program, though, as you can also use the Windows Add/Remove Program applet to do the same thing.

2 Clear? has no evaluation time limit, and you can install or uninstall it as many times as you want.

This is Version 1.0.   If there are future versions, you can just install them on top of the current one (i.e. no need to uninstall before upgrading).

How to Play

The rules of 2 Clear? could not be simpler!

Select a playing level from the available list.   There are four predefined levels, known as Easy, Standard, Twisty and Patch, all with slightly different rules, and you can make as many more as you like!.   However you need to register before you can access Twisty and Patch, or create new levels of your own.

To play, move the mouse pointer over to the top shape of the four shapes on the right (the one with a metallic-coloured square surrounding it), and click the left button to pick up the shape.   You can only pick up the top shape - the other three are there to show you what shapes are coming next.
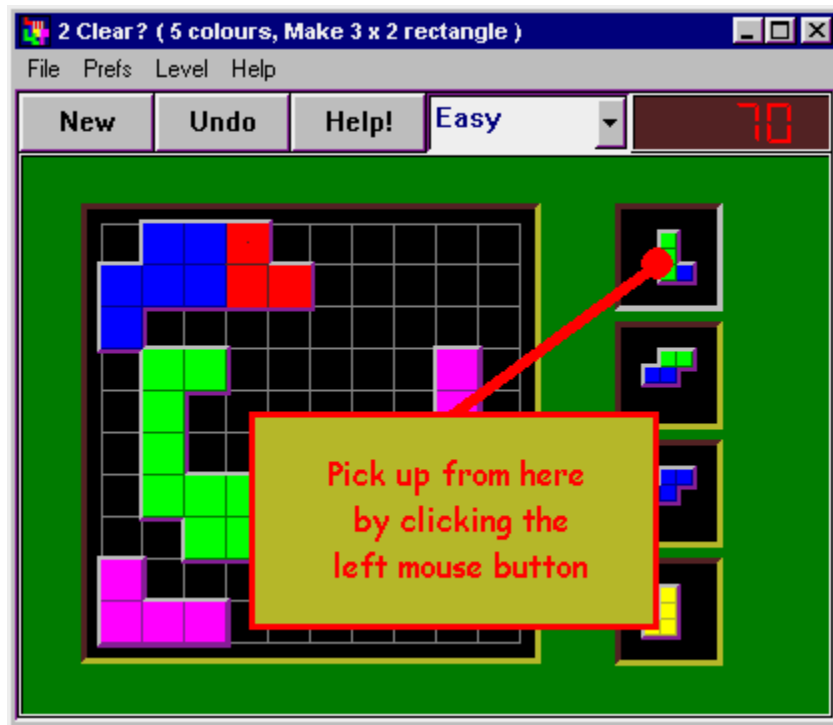
As you move the shape over to the board, you can click the right mouse button one or more times to rotate it clockwise.

When the shape is over a free section of the board, click the left mouse button again to place it.

The object is to make a rectangle of a single colour, and at least a certain size.   The size is shown in the title bar (unless you have unchecked this option in the Prefs menu).   It doesn't matter whether the rectangle is oriented vertically or horizontally.   For the 'Easy' game, the rectangle must be at least 2 x 3 squares (pretty small - that's why the level is so easy…).

When you form a big enough rectangle, it and all connected squares disappear
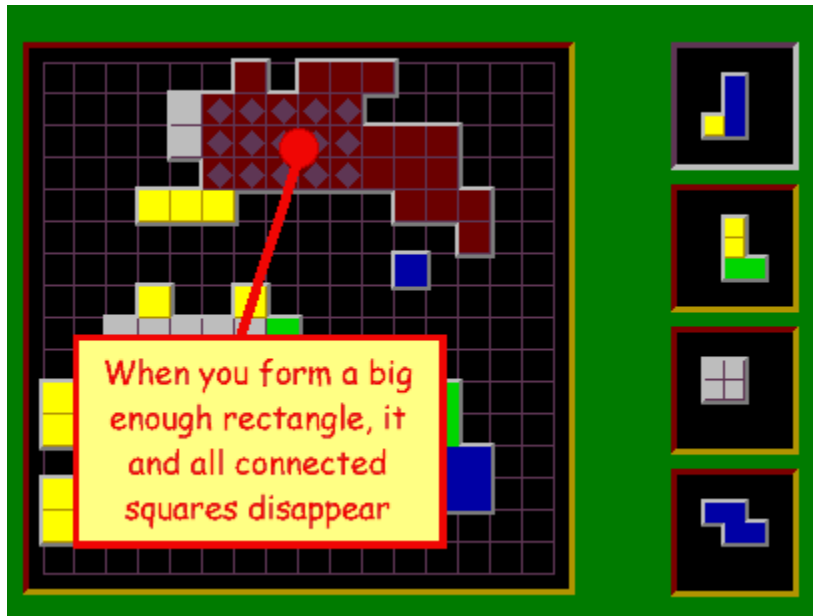
When a rectangle is made, the squares in it fade away - and so do any squares of the same colour connected to it along a continuous path.   This is an important part of the game, because you can get rid of squares that are mixed in with other colours.

Eventually (unless you are playing too easy a level) there will be no room to place the next piece.   Then the game is over and you may have the opportunity to enter your name in the High Score table.

The objective is simply to get a high score at a challenging skill level.   Once you have registered, you can edit the rules to make the game as hard or easy as you like.

If you quit in the middle of a game, the current game is saved and will continue the next time you start 2 Clear?

How the Scoring Works

Note: Although the score window starts with space for only four digits, the score is not limited by this.   If it goes above 9999, spaces for extra digits will be created.

Individual high scores are saved for every version of the game, including any levels you create.

The scoring system is as follows:

20 points for making a rectangle of the smallest allowed size.
  OR   20 x Area Ratio for making a bigger rectangle than necessary.
1 point for every extra connected square.
An extra 5% is added to the total for every 1% 'Evil' pieces selected.

Example: a 3 x 4 rectangle is needed, and you make a 5 x 3 one, with four extra squares attached to it.
There are 10% 'Evil' pieces.
20 x (15 ÷ 12) = 25
25 + 4 = 29
29 x 150% = 43 (rounding to the nearest integer)
Total score for this play is 43.

If you make two rectangles of different colours in the same move, both are scored.
Only the biggest rectangle in any connected group counts.

Designing New Levels

2 Clear? is designed to be many games in one.   The predefined levels that come with it are only a starting point.   At any time you can add a new level (or delete one you are tired of).   The predefined levels cannot be deleted.

You have to register to design new levels.   See Registration to find out how to purchase this game.

Select Add New Level from the Level menu.   A dialog box will open up, containing all the things you can change.   The current values are the same as the level you have just been playing, so it is very easy to make a small change (e.g. an extra colour) and save it as a new level.   The meaning of each is as follows:

Name of this version: Whatever you want to call it.   It will appear in the drop down list of level names, and will have its own set of high scores saved for it.

Shape set: Small (Tetris-style pieces), Medium (5 blocks in each) or Large (6-7 blocks in each piece).

Board size: Can range from 8x8 to 24x24.   Large sizes make for a much easier game.

Number of colours: There can be up to ten.   More colours make the game harder, obviously.

Rectangle size: How big a rectangle you have to make.   Bigger rectangles are harder to make. Although it will allow you to input any size up to 24x24, very small or very large values are ridiculous.   If you pick 1x1, every shape you put down will instantly disappear, while if you have 6x6 or more it is unlikely that you will ever make one.   You can experiment with very long thin ones (e.g. 1x10) though.   It doesn't matter whether you select 1x10 or 10x1 - the game always accepts rectangles whether they are vertical or horizontal.

Two-colour pieces: This determines what percentage of pieces come in two colours (the rest will each have a single colour).   The bigger the percentage, the harder the game.

'Evil' pieces: Are they truly evil to the core, or do they just have trouble fitting in?   It is no dilemma in the simplistic moral universe of 2 Clear?   You can select up to 20% of these pieces.   Whether they are checkerboard patterns, pieces with three colours, or large pieces with holes in, they are guaranteed to cause strife and disruption wherever they go.   Note: the percentage of two-coloured pieces applies to normal pieces only.   If you have 20% 'Evil' and 50% two-coloured, the actual proportions will be 40% one-colour, 40% two-colour, 20% 'Evil'

Extra 'Evil' every 1000: You may get so good at your favourite level that you can carry on effectively forever, if you don't make a mistake.   It might be preferable to make the game get harder with time.   You can arrange this by checking the 'Extra Evil' box.   For every 1000 points you score, an extra 2% 'Evil' pieces will be added.   These are in addition to the selected percentage of 'Evil' pieces, and there is no 20% limit.

Experiment with all of these settings.   Most of them affect the difficulty quite considerably.   Try to balance the things you change, so that the difficulty will be about right.   Most of the factors have quite a large effect, so you can easily compensate one with another.   The predefined levels do not even scratch the surface of all the playing possibilities, each of which will require a subtly different strategy.

Note: You can select See Current Rules from the Level menu anytime to see the values for the current level.   It gives almost the same dialog as Add New Level, but any changes you make will have no effect.

Strategy Tips

If you can, pick one area on the board for each colour, leaving enough space to build up a rectangle. Often, two-colour pieces will fit quite nicely between two of these areas.

Inevitably, there will be stray squares of certain colours that are far away from any prospect of becoming rectangles.   Try to stick them together in groups if you can, so they can all be connected to a rectangle and removed at once.

When you have a rectangle nearly made, see if it can be connected to loose squares of the same colour before it is completed.   In this way you can get rid of the 'rubbish' that builds up on the board.   On these occasions it is particularly important to look at what pieces are coming up next.

You can leave a nearly-made rectangle on the board for a long time, connecting it to all the squares you want to remove along with it.   But don't be too greedy!   It's all too easy to be caught out doing this, and find you can't get rid of the rectangle at all…

Remember that the pieces are all (or nearly all) the same size.   Don't leave holes in your position that can't be filled!

When starting on a new level with different rules (especially a different piece set, or a different target size for the rectangle), it takes a little while to get used to it, even if you are an experienced player.   One practice game should get you back on form!

Remember that each level is subtly different.   Formations that will help you make a 4x3 rectangle may be worse than useless if you are going for 6x2.   And if you have mostly one-colour pieces, you can leave gaps in your patterns that you cannot risk if the two-colour pieces are more common.

Preferences

From the Preferences menu, you can toggle any or all of these on and off:

Sounds On - This causes 2 Clear? to play sound effects, otherwise it will be silent.   (You need a sound card to hear them; the PC speaker is not used.)

Score Animation - If checked, the score will be 'clocked up' as in a pinball machine, otherwise the current score will be shown immediately.

Fading Sectors - If checked, when you make a rectangle the squares will fade out slowly, with the biggest rectangle marked.   You don't have to wait for the animation to finish; if you make another move it will catch up immediately.

Animate New Pieces - If checked, when you pick up a piece the new pieces will move up slowly into the boxes on the right.

It is recommended that Fading Sectors and Animate New Pieces always be checked.   However, if you have a very slow PC, or you are playing 2 Clear? while logged onto the Internet, you may get a crisper performance by turning one or both off.

Rules In Caption - If checked, this shows a summary of the rules in the 2 Clear? title bar.   It reminds you of how many colours there are and what size rectangle you have to make.   (To see the complete details, select the item See Current Rules in the Level menu.)

Start Maximised - If checked, the game will use the full screen when you start up.   Otherwise it will run in its own window, keeping whatever size it was last time you played.

Flash Top Box - This causes the border of the top box to flash, as a reminder that this is the piece you can pick up.   You can turn it off when you no longer need reminding!   Turning it off also removes the reminder at the bottom of the game window about which mouse buttons to use.

All these options will be saved when you quit 2 Clear?, as will the size and position of the game window, and the most recent level you played. You can change or maximise the window size in the usual fashion, but it will only start up maximised if you select that option.

Registration

Registering 2 Clear? costs $15 and gives you a permanent license to use the program on any computer.

Registration removes the score limit of 600 and other restrictions on level design etc. It also stops the registration dialog popping up.   Your registration fee is valid for all future versions.

To register online, visit http://www.ultisoft.com .   You can get there by clicking on the 'Secure Online Ordering' button in the registration dialog.   You can also register by post, phone or fax - just click on the appropriate Country button and a form will appear which you can print out.   The form also has the correct phone and fax numbers for your location.

Once you have registered, you will be sent a code that will unlock all the features of 2 Clear?   Just go to the registration dialog, press the 'Enter Registration Code' button, and type in your code.   Then press the 'OK' button to confirm it, and you are registered!