

Excellent Card Games

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General Instructions

Excellent Card Games has been carefully designed to be as easy to use as possible. The next few paragraphs provide a clear description of how to use the mouse, pick up cards etc, and also some of the more subtle features which you may not have noticed.

Picking up Cards

Picking up a card, or a sequence of cards, is simply a matter of positioning the mouse pointer over the card, and clicking on the left mouse button. If the pointer is directly over the card, the program will try to add that card to a foundation. If you want to pick the card up, make sure you position the pointer slightly above or below it. To pick up partial sequence, the pointer must be directly above the first card you want to pick up. Once you have picked the cards up, keep the left mouse button down whilst you move them, and then release the button when you have reached the place you want to drop them.

Foundations

Most of the solitaire games have four foundations, one for each suit, on which all the cards have to be built to win the game. Some of the games differ, but most have to be built up strictly on the order Ace, 2, 3 .. Queen, King in each suit. Once placed on a foundation, a card cannot be removed.

Revealing Cards

If you want to see a card which is partly obscured by another, position the mouse pointer over it and hold down the right mouse button. The card will temporarily be displayed. This only applies to cards that are already face-up. You wouldn't want to cheat now would you!

Yukon

Yukon has a similar layout to the old patience favourite, Klondike, being played with seven pillars of ascending size. The objective is to build up the foundations, to the right of the main play area, from Ace to King in each suit.

Any number of face-up cards from one of the main pillars can be picked up, and these can be dropped on top of another pillar providing the two joining cards build down in sequence and alternate in colour. So for example a sequence beginning with a red three can be dropped on top of a black four.

The secret to winning at Yukon is to uncover all the concealed cards as quickly as possible. A common mistake is to play off any aces, twos etc onto the foundations as they appear. DON'T! By leaving these cards where they are you have the maximum number of possible moves available. So, don't make any move unless it is essential towards exposing another face down card.

Once all the face down cards are exposed, it should be a simple matter to re-arrange the cards until you have four columns descending from King to Ace, and then all the cards can be played straight off onto the foundations.

Black Maria

Black Maria is a three player trick taking game in which the object is to AVOID capturing the Ace, King and Queen of spades, as well as any hearts. At the start of each game, your cards are dealt to the bottom of the screen, with your two computer opponents at the top left and right.

Before the game starts each player must select three cards to discard. Simply click on each of the cards and it will be played into the centre of the screen. Once all players have selected their discards, these are passed to the player to the left. You in turn will receive the discards from the player to your right.

Once the discards have been exchanged, your new cards will be displayed, and play begins. If this is your first game, it is you to lead and you can play any card. The second and third players must play a card of the same suit as the card that was led, if they can. If you can't follow in suit, you can play any card you like. A trick is won by the player who played the highest value card in the lead suit. If the trick contains any point scoring cards, the player who wins the trick scores those cards, and leads the next trick.

Point scoring cards are the high spades and all hearts. The Queen of Spades scores 13 points, the King 10 points and the Ace 7 points, whilst each heart scores 1 point.

At the end of each game, the winner is the player who has scored the least number of points. There are 43 points to be scored in each game. Remember, you score as many points winning the queen of spades as you do by capturing every single heart. Each player starts with 17 cards. The two of clubs is discarded, so the three is the lowest club.

Black Maria Strategy

Having the lead, particularly towards the end of the game, can be a serious liability. It is unusual to see many points played at the start of a game, so if you have the lead at the start it may be wise to play your high cards then, and keep your low cards till later when they will be more useful. If you don't have any of the high spades yourself, it is always a sound move to lead a low spade in the hope that one of your opponents will be forced to play his.

Choosing Discards

There are many possible strategies when choosing discards. Of greatest importance should be spades. If you have three or more low spades, the suit is relatively safe. If you have less than this you will want to pass on any high spades you have, and void yourself in your shortest suit if possible. This gives you a chance to get rid of any high spades if they are passed on to you.

A void suit is always an asset. Diamonds and clubs are often played before hearts, so having one of these void (or nearly void) can be extremely useful.

Sets of 100 points are played, with the lowest scoring player being the winner.

Baroness

The objective of Baroness is to remove all the cards by discarding pairs that add up to 13, that is 7 and 6, 8 and 5, 9 and 4, 10 and 3, Jack and two, or Queen and Ace. Kings can be discarded on their own. Suits are disregarded. Simply click on the first card to select it, then click on the second card. If the two add up to 13 they will be removed.

The cards are dealt out a row at a time by clicking on the main deck. If there are any spaces these will be filled first.

Stonewall

Named after the American General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, the Confederate General of the American Civil War this is a pretty straightforward patience game made more awkward because many key cards are not visible at the start of the game.

As with many patiences, the objective is to build up from Ace to King in each suit, whilst sequences can be build downwards in alternating colour, on the top card of each pillar.

At either side of the main pillars are two columns of eight cards. You can play these at any time, but you should use them sparingly for a better chance of winning.

Your prospects will also be improved if you postpone playing a card to a foundation until the move is essential. Try to clear all the cards from one particular pillar rather than removing one from each. Once a space opens up this can prove extremely useful.

Frustration!

To win this simple game all you have to do is arrange the Kings, Queens and Jacks around the edges of a 4 by 4 square grid.

The game is played in two phases. In the first you pick up cards from the deck one at a time and place them onto the grid. If the card is a King, Queen or Jack, it MUST be placed around the outside of the grid. The acceptable positions will be highlighted with a tick. Once you have filled the grid with sixteen cards, the second phase of the game starts during which you must remove as many waste cards as you can. Cards with a face value of 10, or pairs of cards the add up to 10, can be removed. To remove a pair of cards, simply click on the first card with the left mouse button and the click on the second. When you have removed all the cards possible, you begin placing the cards into the grid again.

The game ends if there are no cards that can be removed once the grid is full, or if there is no empty space available for a King, Queen or Jack.

Of course, Frustration! involves a certain amount of luck in order to win, but there is a definite strategy that can increase your chances of winning each game. When you are forced to play to one of the outside squares, always choose the one that has the least probability of being filled. For example if two Queens have already come out, but no Kings have yet been played, there is twice the chance that a King will be the next card.

With careful play, it should be possible to win approximately one game from every six. Frustrating, huh!

Preferences

Excellent Card Games offers a wide range of preferences to customise the game to your liking. All preferences settings are automatically stored on disk for the next time you play, along with your game scores and wallpaper.

Choose the Preferences menu and one of the following options to alter the game settings.

Players

Games

Load Player

Create Player

Load Player

A new player can be loaded up at any time. Each player file stores the player's scores and game preferences including wallpaper.

Player's scores and preferences are stored to disk in .PRF files. The default file is CARDS1.PRF but if you create a new player a separate file will be used. The filename is made up of the first eight characters of the player's name, excluding spaces and punctuation.

Create Player

To create a new player, simply enter the player name and a new .PRF file will be created. This will contain all the current preferences settings, but the scores will be reset to zero.

Player Preferences

Player preferences allows you to change then name of your player and your opponents, or to reset all the scores to zero.

Game Preferences

The games preferences dialog offers a range of settings. Choose one of the following options for more details:

Welcome

Moving Cards

Options

Speed

Card Backs

Wallpaper

Welcome

When the program is first loaded, a welcome message may be displayed. Three options are available.

None skips the welcome message altogether, loading the current player.

Current Player automatically loads the current player again, displaying a short welcome message.

Choose Player allows you to choose any player to load.

Wallpaper

To select a new wallpaper simply locate the BMP file you require and select the display option your prefer. Wallpaper may either be tiled, centred or stretched to fill the entire screen. You may also choose a background colour, to use instead of wallpaper or in conjunction with a centred image.

In order for a wallpaper image to be displayed rather than a background colour, you must also check the wallpaper box from the list of options.

If you have a restricted amount of memory you may prefer to use a small, tiled image rather than a full screen (or stretched) image which will take up a lot more memory.

Moving Cards

Three options are available to change how cards will be displayed when they are picked up and moved.

- Display All Cards** displays the full images for all cards that are being moved.
- Display Top Card** displays the full images of the top card only.
- Outline Dragging** draws only the outline for each card, giving a much quicker display.

Options

Cycle Through Cards automatically cycles through the card back images, displaying a different back design for each new game.

Return Card on Error attempting to drop a card in an invalid location will return the card to its original position, rather than continuing to hold it.

Animation turn off animation for quicker dealing and play.

Sound Effects turns sound effects on or off.

Wallpaper check this to display a background image rather than a blank colour.

Handle Cards by Centre cards will be automatically centred when you pick them up.

Speed

Use the slider bar on the right hand side of the screen to alter the general game speed. This affects the speed at which cards are dealt and the length of time for which speech bubbles will be displayed. Move the bar to the top of the slider for a faster speed, or towards the bottom to slow down.

Other preferences selections will also affect the speed, as will the overall speed of your computer. A slow computer will be slower still if you display full screen wallpaper, and you may prefer to have the speed at a high setting to compensate for this.

Card Backs

Click on one of the images in the bottom right hand corner to select a new card back, or select the [Cycle Through Cards](#) option to change designs every game.

Tower Software

Excellent Card Games is the first in a series of card and board games for Windows. For a free printed catalogue containing up-to-date information on all our games, phone, write, e-mail or fax to...

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Shareware

Excellent Card Games is shareware. That means you can try it out for 30 days, but after that time you should discontinue using it or purchase the full version. The full version removes all license notices and reminders, and comes complete with full colour packaging, together with a free copy of our next shareware game.

To order, send a cheque for £14.99 to

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Overseas orders are accepted but payment must be in pounds sterling. Most major banks will provide a pounds sterling cheque or EuroCheque.

Compuserve members can register Excellent Card Games online. Just GO SWREG. The Compuserve registration cost is \$24.95.

