

La Belle Lucie and Trefoil

La Belle Lucie is one of the classics, distinguished by its peculiar privilege of the draw. Its popularity may be measured by its many alternate names: Alexander the Great, Clover Leaf, Midnight Oil, and Three Shuffles and a Draw. Trefoil is an easier-to-win variant of La Belle Lucie.

Layout Size: Scrolling required on small screens. Medium screens may require a little scrolling on very rare occasions.

Difficulty: Careful play is required and will produce reasonably frequent wins, but many games simply are not winnable. A success rate of at least 40% is possible for La Belle Lucie.

La Belle Lucie Rules: Shuffle the deck and lay it out in 17 piles of three cards each, with the leftover card alone in an 18th pile of its own. The cards are face-up and fanned, so that all can be seen. These are the tableaux. There are also four foundation piles, which start out empty.

Top cards of tableaux are available. Tableaux build down, in suit. Empty tableau piles may not be filled. Foundations are started with Aces, then build up in suit. The goal is to move all cards to the foundations.

It is rare to win a game with the initial layout. When you are blocked, you may scoop up all the tableau cards, shuffle them, and again lay them out in piles of three (with the last pile perhaps containing two cards or one). This shuffle may be repeated the second time you become blocked, but may not be done more than those two times.

After the final shuffle, you may select any card in the tableau (whether it is available or not) and bring it to the front of its pile, or play it on another pile. This is the privilege of the draw, which you may only do once.

(See picture: La Belle Lucie. Three Aces are fortunately available, and may be played to the foundations immediately, along with the 2 of Diamonds. Then the 10 of Hearts could be played to the Jack, allowing the 4 and 3 of Clubs to be played on the exposed 5 of Clubs. This in turn exposes the 2 of Hearts and 3 of Diamonds, allowing a series of Hearts and Diamonds to be played to the foundations.)

Trefoil Rules: The same as for La Belle Lucie, with these exceptions: The foundations begin with the Aces already in place; and there are only 16 tableaux, which start out with exactly three cards each.

(See picture: Trefoil. The 2's and 3's of Hearts and Spades may be played to the foundations. After that, a good approach might be to play the 8 of Hearts onto the 9, then the Queen and Jack of Spades onto the King. Then the 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, and 3 of Diamonds may be moved to the 9, and so on.)

On the Screen: Solitaire Till Dawn will lay out the cards for you. Click the hand to gather the cards, shuffle, and redeal them. The number displayed on the hand is the number of remaining shuffles you may perform. After the final shuffle, you may draw simply by dragging any tableau card out of its pile and dropping it onto its destination. The draw is possible only when the rules permit: at other times, an attempt to draw a card will have no effect except for a warning beep.

Traditionally, the tableaux in La Belle Lucie and Trefoil should be fanned sideways, with a slight curve as if you had been holding each like a poker hand before laying it on the table. We have had to take liberties in putting La Belle Lucie on the screen because of limited room. Players using real cards also find that La Belle Lucie's fans, while pretty, can sometimes crowd each other.