

Accordion

Also called “Idle Year” — consider that a warning! This game can be as mindless or as intricate as you feel like making it. But if you play mindlessly, be prepared to lose, a lot.

Layout Size: Fits on a small screen with scrolling rarely required.

Difficulty: Accordion is a difficult game to win. It took us 25 years to win our first game; but when we finally found a good strategy (suggested by a won game that one of our customers sent in!) we began to win about one-third of our games. Morehead and Mott-Smith (see the Bibliography) give the odds of winning at 1 in 100, but we disagree: with good strategy wins are frequent, and without it wins are almost unheard of!

Rules: Begin with the complete deck in your hand. Make piles by dealing out cards face up in a row, one card to a pile. Any pile can be picked up and moved onto the pile to its left, or the pile third to its left, provided the top cards of the piles match in either suit or rank. You must move entire piles, never partial piles. When you move a pile in the middle of the row, leaving an empty space, just shift all the other piles in to fill it. The goal is to finish the game with all the cards in one pile.

(See picture: Accordion. The 2C can be moved onto the KC, then the 2S onto the 2C, finally allowing the AD onto the 3D. Note that moving the 2S first would block any further moves.)

There are no rules about when you must deal, or when you must move piles. When dealing, lay out as many new cards as you feel like working with. Then move them about until you're out of moves, or until you think you'd profit from dealing a few more new cards. If you like, you may lay out all 52 cards at once, then study the layout until you find the best possible solution.

On the Screen: Solitaire Till Dawn will start you out with the first two cards, and will automatically shift piles to fill in empty spaces. Deal by clicking on the hand. The hand in Accordion is unusual because, as you deal, it moves to stay at the right end of the layout. If you find it hard to chase the hand with the mouse, remember that you can also deal by typing `^D`.

At the start of each game there is a button next to the hand, labeled “Deal All.” Clicking this button will automatically deal out all 52 cards. The button vanishes if you deal in any other way.