

Dr. Black Jack Help Contents

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Overview

Stretch limousines and classic Silver Clouds are parked along the parapet. The doorman beckons and you enter a vast expanse of palatial carpeting and crystal chandeliers. Before you reach your destination of green velvet you are offered complimentary drinks three times, but something else is on your mind: counting cards to beat the dealer.

Welcome to the world of Dr. Black Jack! This isn't just a computerized version of blackjack. It's a school where the stern and pirate-like Dr. Black Jack teaches his methods for beating a game that has lead many a person to ruin. In fact, Dr. Black Jack suggests you limit your wagers to the bits and bytes within your home computer. When your losses stack up in this game, all you need to do is reset the game. When your losses stack up in a casino, you might need to reset your life.

So, safe and snug within your own computerized casino, let Dr. Black Jack describe his two favorite systems. If you choose Learn Basic Strategy and Learn Counting Strategy from the Options menu, Dr. Black Jack will coach you as you play.

Have fun! Dr. Black Jack is just arriving now. He drives a 1964 Avanti, listens only to Dave Brubeck while on the road, hasn't missed Carnival in Rio since 1959, only crosses the Atlantic by ship, and keeps a Bentley in Luxembourg for use while gaming on the Continent.

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Playing the Game

Knowing how to play the card game of blackjack gives you the fundamentals for playing in the computerized world of Dr. Black Jack. The object is to hold two or more cards whose ranks equal either a perfect score of 21, or as near to 21 as possible without going over. All play is against the dealer. If you get nearer to 21 than the dealer, you win the hand.

The dealer gives each player two cards, both face up. The dealer gives himself two cards, one face up and one face down. The uncertainty of blackjack comes from not knowing the rank of the dealer's hole card, and from not knowing what card you will get if you ask to be hit. So remember, you can always ask to stay, because you definitely don't want to bust. Other options for smart play and a fun game are to double down, split, or buy insurance.

The casino

Veteran blackjack players won't need much help. But for newcomers, what follows is a tour of Dr. Black Jack's casino. Under casino rules, bets are placed before the cards are dealt.

- The Bet window displays the amount of your bet. Unless you change it, the window shows the house minimum of 10 units.
- The +10 button: Click to increase the size of your bet. The more you click, the more you bet.
- The -10 button: Click to decrease the size of your bet. This is where prudence kicks in.
- The Deal button: Click to begin a hand.
- The Hit button: Click to receive an additional card.
- The Stay button: Click to stay with the cards you have.
- The Double button: Click to double down.
- The Split button: Click to split your hand.
- The Result window displays who won (it cheers for you, not the dealer).
- The Session Winnings window keeps a running total of your wins or losses.
- The Longterm Winnings window keeps a running total of the current and previous games.
- The Count window tracks the appearance of high and low ranked cards according to the Dr. Black Jack method. Count is described further in the Strategies and Hints section.
- The True Count window displays the card count from the Count window, divided by the number of decks left in the Shoe window. True Count is described further in the Strategies and Hints section.
- The Shoe window is the long thin window above the playing table. The vertical slats represent the number of cards remaining in the shoe. The window resizes itself depending on how many decks you've chosen.

To begin play

- ▶ Click the Deal button.
You can also press F2, or choose Deal from the File menu.

To change players

- ▶ From the Game menu, choose Change Player.
A dialog box is displayed where you can type in the name of the new player. The longterm winnings of the current player will be saved.

To shuffle the cards

- ▶ From the Game menu, choose Shuffle.
This resets the Count and True Count windows to zero.

To reset the your winnings

- ▶ From the Game menu, choose Reset Winnings.

This resets your winnings (or losses) in both the Session Winnings window and the Longterm Winnings window.

To change the number of decks in play

- From the Options menu, choose Number of Decks and then choose to play with 1, 2, or 4 decks.

Casinos have been using four decks ever since the first card-counting books were published in the early 1960s.

To change the style of the cards

- From the Options menu, choose Card Style and then choose the style you want. This is best done at the beginning of a hand while the dealer still has one card face down, so you can see your choices.

To learn basic strategy

- From the Options menu, choose Learn Basic Strategy. A check mark is displayed next to the command when Learn Basic Strategy is in operation and you get tips while you play. You can turn off Learn Basic Strategy by choosing the command again.

To learn counting strategy

- From the Options menu, choose Learn Counting Strategy. A check mark is displayed next to the command when Learn Counting Strategy is in operation. To learn about counting strategy while you play, you must also choose Learn Basic Strategy. You can turn off Learn Counting Strategy by choosing the command again.

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Rules of the Game

Since Dr. Black Jack prefers casino play, casino rules are used in his electronic world.

- Bets are placed before any cards are dealt.
- The value of a hand is the total of the ranks of the cards in the hand.
- Aces can be ranked as 1 or 11, depending on your hand. For example, six, four, and an ace are worth 21. Seven, four, and an ace are worth 12 (if the ace is counted as 11, your score goes over 21 and you bust).
- A blackjack, or natural, is an ace and a face card in the first two cards dealt. It is worth 21, and wins the bet at once, unless the dealer is also dealt a blackjack.
- You can draw as many cards as you wish. If your hand is worth more than 21, you lose the hand and your bet. If your hand is worth less than 21, and more than the dealer's hand, you win.
- The dealer must draw a card if he's holding a value of 16 or under.
- The dealer must stay if he's holding a value of 17 or over.
- In the case of a tie, no one wins and it's called a push.
- Blackjacks are paid off at one and a half times the bet.
- You can buy insurance against a blackjack by the dealer when the dealer shows an ace.
- If you are dealt two cards of equal rank, you can choose the Split button to split them, and play each as a separate hand. The exception is aces: Split aces get one more card (two total), and then the dealer plays.
- You can double down on any hand. If you double down, you double your bet and receive just one more card.

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Scoring

Dr. Black Jack has a scoring system much like a real casino: How much, if anything, did you win? The computer compares your session winnings to your previous games, and lets you know if you set a record. The game records your highest session winnings in its Hall of Fame.

To see the highest scores

- From the Game menu, choose High Scores.

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Strategy and Hints

This section contains helpful hints for playing Dr. Black Jack successfully. It is appropriate that Dr. Black Jack uses a computer to teach you his basic strategy and counting strategy, because computers have a long history with blackjack.

Dr. Black Jack's Basic Strategy

Don't worry about memorizing all the card-specific rules listed below. By choosing Learn Basic Strategy from the Options menu, Dr. Black Jack is at your side, reminding you of his rules and telling you what to do.

Dr. Black Jack gives his advice based on whether your hand is hard or soft. Notice that the advice for a hard hand is more conservative than it is for a soft hand. This is logical because a hard hand isn't flexible, while a soft hand is (you have the flexibility of counting the ace as a 1 instead of an 11 if you draw too high a card on your hit, and are less likely to bust).

Let's take a closer look at Dr. Black Jack's basic strategies for playing with four decks. When playing with other than four decks, Dr. Black Jack alters his basic strategy.

- Stay with the following hands:
HARD
17 or higher vs. Dealer 7 or higher
12 or higher vs. Dealer 4-6
13 or higher vs. Dealer 2-3
SOFT
19 or higher vs. Any dealer card
18 or higher vs. Dealer 2-8
- Hit with the following hands:
HARD
16 or lower vs. Dealer 7 or higher
12 or lower vs. Dealer 2-3
11 or lower vs. Dealer 4-6
SOFT
18 or lower vs. Dealer 9 or higher
17 or lower vs. Any dealer card
- Double down with the following hands:
HARD
11 vs. Dealer 10 or lower
10 vs. Dealer 9 or lower
9 vs. Dealer 3-6
SOFT
13-18 vs. Dealer 5-6
15-18 vs. Dealer 4
17-18 vs. Dealer 3
- Split with the following hands:
Aces or 8s vs. any Dealer card
9s vs. Dealer 9, 8, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2
7s vs. Dealer 7 or lower
6s vs. Dealer 3-6
3s or 2s vs. Dealer 4-7

Dr. Black Jack's Counting Strategy

Here's how Dr. Black Jack counts cards:

- Upon shuffling the deck, the count is zero.

- Each time a three, four, five, or six card is played, increase your count by one.
- Each time a ten or face card is played, decrease your count by one.
- Don't count the two, seven, eight, and nine cards as they are considered neutral.

The logical base for the counting system is the more low cards played, the higher the positive count. So, a positive count means that low cards have been played out of the deck, leaving high-ranked cards remaining in the deck. Conversely, a negative count indicates that more high-ranked cards have been played out of the deck, leaving low-ranked cards remaining in the deck. A lot of 10 value cards remaining favors the player, primarily because the dealer must hit on 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and is more likely to bust.

Card counters use the positive or negative count of the deck, along with basic strategy, to guide them in placing bets.

The Count and True Count Windows

Dr. Black Jack makes it easy for you. He counts and shows the current tally in the Count window. The count is only updated between hands. Next to the Count window is the True Count window. The true count is determined by dividing the count by the number of decks left to play. For example, if there are three decks left, a count of -3 would show in the True Count window as a -1.

As you become more confident, you can choose Show Count from the Options menu to turn off the Count and True Count windows. But even when they are turned off, the doctor is counting in the background.

Dr. Black Jack's Rules for Avoiding Detection

Once you've learned how to count, you might want to place some bets based on the positive and negative state of the cards. But before Dr. Black Jack entrusts you with his five-point strategy for placing bets, he wants to underscore the importance of not getting caught counting. If you do, you will be escorted out of the casino. Here are Dr. Black Jack's rules for avoiding detection.

- Bet only in units of 10, 20, and 40 (whether the units are bottle caps or casino chips). You don't want to go from a \$10 hand to a \$200 hand and then back to a \$10 hand. Patterns like that are noticed by everyone.
- Raise and lower bets in sequential units. If you are at 10, and want to increase your bet on a positive count, raise it first to 20. Never go directly from 10 to 40. The same is true when decreasing your betting position.
- Shift positions slowly. For example, if the count has turned negative, but you just won the last hand, don't reduce your bet until you lose a hand. Dealers and pit bosses are used to seeing suckers believe they are launching themselves onto a winning streak. Only counters and other intelligent players, hunker back after a win.

Dr. Black Jack's Five-Point Strategy for Betting on the Count

- 1 If the true count is positive and you just won, increase your 10 or 20 unit bet. Remember to increase sequentially. Never jump from a 10 unit bet to a 40.
- 2 If the true count is positive and you just lost, increase your 10 unit bet. A modest increase after a loss will blend in with what suckers do to recoup their losses.
- 3 If the true count is positive and you just lost, leave your 20 or 40 unit bet unchanged. Increasing a bet after a loss is a tip-off to the dealer that you are counting.
- 4 If the true count is negative and you just won, leave your 20 or 40 unit bet unchanged. Remember that retreating after a win might give you away as a counter.
- 5 If the true count is negative and you just lost, decrease your bet. Not even a pit boss would fault you for doing that.

A Few Words About Insurance

Some of Dr. Black Jack's best friends are major names with Lloyd's of London, but when it comes to blackjack, he thinks dealer insurance is mostly a sucker's game. Dr. Black Jack says: Never buy insurance unless you are counting and the true count is +2 or better.

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How to Play

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Game Menu Commands

This section contains information about Game menu commands in Dr. Black Jack.

Deal

Deals a new hand.

You can also click on the Deal button below the playing table, or press F2.

Change Player

Lets you change to a different player, or add a new player.

Dr. Black Jack will remember the previous player's winnings.

Shuffle

Returns all the played cards to the deck in play, shuffles, and resets the Count and True Count windows to zero.

High Scores

Displays the High Scores table.

Reset Winnings

Resets the numbers in the Session Winnings window and Longterm Winnings window to zero.

Exit

Quits Dr. Black Jack. You can quit at any time, even in the middle of a game.

Options Menu Commands

This section contains information about the Options menu commands in Dr. Black Jack.

Definitions

Gives you definitions of types of hands and counts.

Number of Decks

Lets you choose 1, 2, or 4 decks.

Card Style

Lets you choose a pattern for your deck.

Learn Basic Strategy

Gives you a chance to learn Dr. Black Jack's basic strategy while he watches your every move and offers tips.

A check mark is displayed beside the command name when Learn Basic Strategy is turned on. You can turn off Learn Basic Strategy by choosing the command again.

Learn Counting Strategy

Gives you a chance to learn Dr. Black Jack's counting strategy while he watches your every move and offers tips.

A check mark is displayed beside the command name when Learn Counting Strategy is turned on. To learn about counting strategy while you play, you must also choose Learn Basic Strategy. You can turn off Learn Counting Strategy by choosing the command again.

Show Count

Turns on and off the numbers in the Count and True Count windows.

A check mark is displayed beside the command name when Show Count is turned on.

Sound

Turns game sounds on and off.

A check mark is displayed beside the command name when the sound is turned on.

ranks

Determine the numerical value of a hand. An ace can have a rank of 1 or 11, as the player wishes. King, queen, jack, and ten have the rank of 10. Every other card has the rank of its individual value. For example, a two has the rank of 2, a nine is worth 9.

stay

Decision to not ask for an additional card but to stay with the cards already in hand.

bust

When the ranks of the cards in a hand exceed 21. A player loses the bet on a bust, even if the dealer also has a bust.

units

This term is used to show the relationship of one bet to another. In some cases Dr. Black Jack advises you to double the size of your bet by increasing from 10 units to 20 units. It is up to the player to decide whether those units are bottle caps or \$100 casino chips.

hit

Request an additional card.

hole card

The dealer's face-down card.

hard hand

A hand in which there are no aces, or in which there is an ace that is being counted as 1.

soft hand

A hand in which aces are counted as 11. A soft hand offers the flexibility of counting the ace as a 1 if you take a hit and draw a high card.

double down

Double your bet and ask for just one additional card. You need to be quite confident to double down.

split

Possible only when your first two cards are of equal rank, for example two sevens. The complete rules for playing a split are found in the Rules of the Game section but the basic procedure is that you split one hand in two. One of the newly split hands must be played completely before you can play the second.

insurance

An option for a side bet that is offered whenever the dealer's face-up card is an ace. Your original bet, which was placed before any of the cards were dealt, continues. The side bet is on whether the dealer's hole card will have a value of 10, giving the dealer a natural blackjack. Your insurance side bet in Dr. Black Jack is half the size of your regular bet. The insurance bet pays off at 2 to 1. If you win the insurance bet (the dealer has a blackjack) and you lose your hand (you don't have a blackjack), you are even for the hand.

smart play

Dr. Black Jack learned the intricacies of the game as a child on long train trips from Paris to Istanbul. The dealer was his aunt, who recovered and restored Egyptian mummies, and who devoted her life to tracking down and preserving ancient books. Once, as she and her young companion sat on a pyramid and watched the sun set over the Egyptian desert, she broke into tears. She was remembering the Roman emperor who first ordered the burning of the half million ancient volumes of the Great Library of Alexandria. It was a tragedy that had not diminished in her mind even 17 centuries later.

history

Computers, much to the chagrin of casino owners, have long been associated with counting cards in blackjack. In fact, you could say that computers and card counting grew up together. Back in the early 1950s, some mathematical whizzes at the U.S. Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland used their off hours and their clanking calculators to do an exhaustive study on the odds of the game. This work, by Roger Baldwin, Wilbert Cantey, Herbert Maisel, and James McDermott, was published in 1956 in the obscure *Journal of the American Statistical Association* and might have gone unnoticed had it not been for Professor Edward O. Thorp. Thorp was intrigued by the research and brought more horsepower to bear using an early IBM 704 mainframe at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1963, Thorp published *Beat the Dealer*, which inspired more books and more methods, and led frightened casinos to adopt the four-deck game in an attempt to frustrate counters.

