Version 1.0

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Contents

Perfect Fit Game Rules

   Perfect Fit is a four player game.   It is played on a 12x12 board.   Players start out with five random game pieces.   Two starter pieces are also placed in the center of the board.   The object is to score as many points as possible by placing game pieces on the game board so that as many sides as possible will match the pieces already on the board.   Mismatches are not allowed.   All plays must match at least one side.   if a player is unable to legally place a piece, he must pass his turn. Whenever a piece is played, a new one is drawn to maintain a hand of five pieces. The game ends when all four players pass consecutively. The player with the highest score is the winner.

   Scoring is as follows:

1 side.........	1 point
2 side.........	3 points
3-side.........	7 points
4 side.........	15 points (a Perfect Fit)
Pass...........	no points awarded

   You, the human player, are player one.   The computer will control players two thru four.   Player one will always have the first move.
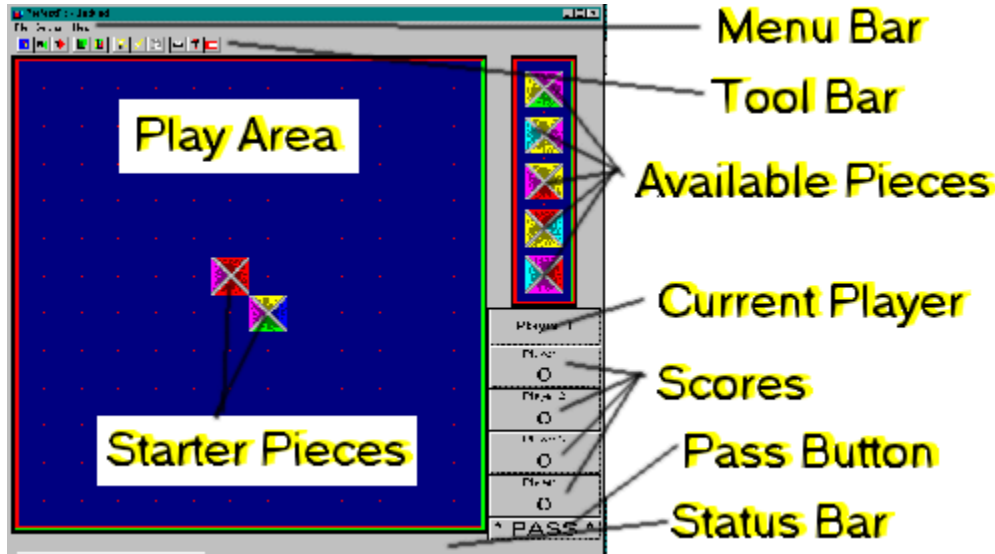
A Perfect Fit game piece is a square piece with with a different color or pattern, randomly selected from a set, on each side.

Game Board

Above is a picture of the Perfect Fit game window with all areas labeled,   This picture was taken using the default board and default piece designs.   It will be different if different components have been selected.

To select a piece from your hand,   left-click on it.   A selection arrow will appear in the space to the left of the piece.

To rotate a piece, right-click on it   Before a piece can be placed on the board, it must be rotated to the proper "orientation" to match what's already on the board.

To play the selected piece to the board, left-click on the desired location on the board.   If the move is valid, the piece will appear there and the computer players will take their turns.   If the piece as oriented can't be placed at the selected location, you'll hear a buzzer noise (if sound is turned on) and nothing will happen.   You won't lose your turn or be penalized for attempting a bad move.

If you can't find a good move, you'll have to pass by clicking on the large PASS button.

Whenever a player passes, a red P is displayed in his score window until his next valid move.   When all four players pass, the game will automatically end.

Menu Bar

File Settings Help

The menu selections will be described in order: For menu selections which can be accessed directly from the tool bar, the icon will also be shown.

File... New Game --
Starts a new game.   Current game is discarded.

File... Load Game --

Restores a previously saved game

File,,. Save Game --

Saves the current game for completion later

File... Load Board --

Loads a new board component file.   The board on screen will be updated immediately to the new board image and the game will be restarted.   The loaded board will become the new default and will be loaded automatically next time Perfect Fit is run unless the board file can't be found (in which case the default will be used).   Before using this function, be sure to read the section on Using 256 Color Components.

File... Load Pieces --

Loads a new game piece component file.   The pieces on screen will be updated immediately to the new piece image and the game will be restarted.   The loaded pieces will become the new default and will be loaded automatically next time Perfect Fit is run unless the piece file can't be found (in which case the default will be used).   Before using this function, be sure to read the section on Using 256 Color Components.

File... Load Default Board

Loads the default board component.   The screen will be updated immediately and a new game will be restarted.
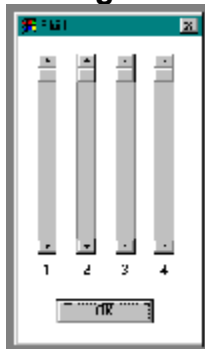
File... Load Default Pieces

Loads the default piece component.   The screen will be updated immediately and the game will be restarted

File... Exit --

Exits PerfectFit

Settings... Player Skill

Displays a skill setting dialog box as shown on the left.   The settings are controlled with the four "scroll bars."   The higher the slider, the more intelligent the player.

Sliders two, three, and four control players two, three, and four respectively.   Slider one controls the "intelligence" of the advisor helping you whenever you ask for a suggestion or ask him to automatically make a move for you.   You'll probably want to keep this setting on maximum.   Press the OK button when you're finished adjusting the settings.   These settings are automatically saved and restored the next time you start Perfect Fit.

Settings... Sounds

Displays a sound control box as pictured to the left.   The Play Intro/End Waves selection controls whether the introductory music and the ending sounds will be played.   Play Human Move Waves determines whether or not the rotating and dropping sounds will be played as you make your move.   The Play Computer Move Waves selection determines whether or not the piece dropping sounds will be played whenever a computer opponent makes a move.   In all cases, a check mark in the box indicates that the sounds will be played.

Help... Suggest Move --

Your computer advisor will determine your best move to the best of his intelligence (see above), select a tile and flash its suggested placement on the game board.   It's up to you to orient the piece, if needed, to make it fit properly and then place the piece in the recommended place.   Of course, you don't have to follow the advisor's suggestion.

Help... Make Move --

Your computer advisor will automatically determine the best move to the best of his intelligence (see above) and make the move for you.   After selecting Make Move, your move will be made and the game will immediately proceed to the next player.   You don't have a chance to approve or take back the move with this selection.

Help... About Perfect Fit --

Displays a dialog box indicating the version and serial numbers or your Perfect Fit game.

Help... On-Line Manual --

Selecting On-Line Manual simply brings up this help screen.

Tool Bar

The Tool Bar icons are shortcuts to some of the menu items.   For simplicity, I'll simply illustrate the complete tool bar for reference then list each icon and the menu entry it refers to.   Complete details can be found under the proper menu entry and can be easily gotten to by clicking on the icon.

File... New Game

File... Save Game

File... Load Game

File... Load Board

File... Load Pieces

Help... Suggest Move

Help... Make Move

Help... Online Manual

Help... About Perfect Fit

File... Exit

Status Bar

Whenever the mouse cursor is over a menu selection, the Status Bar will display a more detailed description of the menu selection's function.

Using 256 Color Components

Perfect Fit currently has limited support for 256-color components when used with some Windows graphics configurations.

If you're running Windows in True Color mode (16 bit color or better), everything will work fine.   You'll be able to load any board component and any game piece component at the same time without unusual colors.

If you're running Windows in 256-color (8-bit) mode, you'll only be able to load either a 256-color board component or a 256-color game piece component, but not both (actually, you can -- but the resulting color mishmash is a disaster).   The other component must be the default 16-color component.   You should also be able to load a custom component designed using only the 16 default system colors as one component   followed by a 256-color component as the other.   Please remember, though, that the color palette of the last component loaded is the one that's used. Loading the 16-color component after the 256-color component will invalidate the 256-color components palette and may cause color problems.

If you're running Windows in 16-color (4-bit) mode, only the default components and components drawn with the 16 system default colors will appear correctly.   All 256-color components or components that use non-system colors will have unusual colors.

Designing Components

General Overview

Perfect Fit uses two different and independent components.   One component defines the game board, while the other defines the playing pieces.   All component definitions are in the Windows .BMP bitmap file format.   However, the suffix for bitmap files to be used as game board components must be .BRD and playing piece bitmap files must end in .PCS.   If your paint program will only recognize the .BMP suffix for bitmaps, you'll have to rename the files as you go between Perfect Fit and the paint program.

Although both are bitmaps, there are some major differences in how the components are drawn.   I'll go over each type separately.

Board Component File
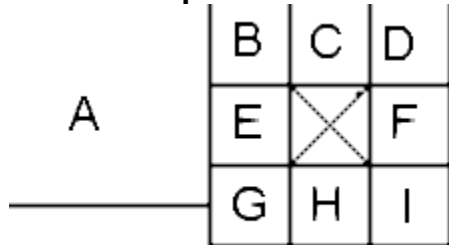
File TPLBOARD.BMP is a "template" file for board design.   All necessary areas are outlined.   Above is a representation of that template.

When a game board is drawn, pieces B thru I are used for the borders (both around the playing area and around the reserve pieces).   Pieces B, D, G, and I are used for their respective corners.   Pieces C, E, F, and H are "tiled" -- used repeatedly end to end -- to form their respective sides,   Piece A is tiled to form the inside of the play area.

Game Piece Component File
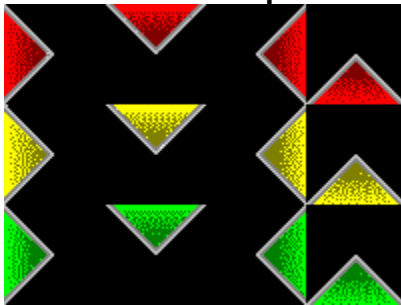
A template file for game pieces can be found in file TPLPIECS.BMP.   Above is a small section of the completed template for the default pieces.

Each piece type, red for instance,   has four sections: a left, a top, a right, and a bottom.   Whenever a game piece is randomly generated, a random left, a random top, a random right, and a random bottom are added together to form the completed piece. All the space between the sections must be black so that the sections combine properly

into the completed piece.

There can be up to 20 piece types in the piece file.   When you're finished painting the pieces, you must "crop" the file so that only the used pieces are saved in the bitmap.   Perfect Square decides how many piece types are available for a given piece component file by the vertical size of the file.   So, if you don't remove the unused piece types from the bottom of the template file you'll have some number of undrawn piece types   that will be used in playing piece assembly.

The fact that each section of a given piece type is drawn independently leads to some interesting game variations that can be created through piece component files. For instance, let's assume that in the red piece type above, the top and bottom sections were blue instead.   Since a top and bottom must always match, this one piece type brings two colors into the game -- red and blue == which must match. However, when a piece containing a red section is rotated in the reserve pieces box, the red changes to blue.   Likewise, blue will turn to red when rotated.   This can make for some very difficult games, since you've got to figure out what each piece will turn into upon rotation while looking for moves.

Another interesting game type is the matching of variations on a theme rather than exact matches.   For instance, if the piece sections contained letters of the alphabet   rather than colors and each section of a piece contained its letter in a different font, you'd then have to match letters and ignore the font.   This concept will also work with, for example,   items that begin with A (Apple, Arrow),   B (Bee, Berry),etc.   to form interesting spelling, phonics, or arithmetic educational playing pieces.
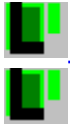
Strategy

Perfect Fit can be played with several levels of strategy.   The most direct is to just look for the move that provides the most points on each turn.   If several possible moves provide the same point value, pick one of them at random.

In this version of Perfect Fit, the computer players use this type of strategy. However, when set to maximum intelligence, they apply it without error.   Therefore, it's difficult to beat the computer if you only use this strategy.   If you play a perfect game, whether or not you win will be a matter of luck.   To win consistently against a maximum-intelligence computer opponent, you've got to use a plan-ahead strategy.

The first level of plan-ahead strategy is to, whenever you have to make a single-match move, pick one that forms a corner that you can use for a double-match move on your next turn -- if someone doesn't beat you to it.   There are usually many single-match moves to choose from, so you should be able to employ this strategy often.   Even if many of your planned spots get taken, you'll still get some of them.

A way to improve the chances of your planned double-match corner to remain free is to look for moves that produce two possible double-match moves for your next turn.   There's less chance that your opponents will be able to grab them both.

Once you've found or created a double-match move, you may want to gamble with it a bit.   You might be able to convert it into a triple-match move for your next turn by playing the appropriate piece this turn.   Of course, it's always possible that an opponent will steal your newly-created triple-match spot.

The same type of conversion can be made from triple-match to four-match "Perfect Fit" moves.   If you see a triple-match move that can be converted to a useful Perfect Fit move, you should do the conversion rather than taking the triple-match move.   Perfect Fit matches are very hard to come by "naturally", so your custom-designed one will probably be safe from your competitors -- but of course there aren't any guarantees!
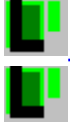
Hardware Requirements

Perfect Fit should run on any computer capable of running Microsoft Windows 3.1, which is the required operating system.   Sound support requires any Windows-compatible sound card.   The optimum resolution for Perfect Fit is 1024x768.   Currently, higher resolutions will not provide a nearly full-screen display.   Lower resolutions will work properly, but will not provide the best graphics quality.   The default piece and board components will work fine with 4-bit (16-color) graphics.   To use either a custom board or custom pieces. 8-bit (256-color) graphics is required.   To use both a custom board and custom pieces, a 24--bit (True Color) graphics card is required.
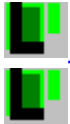
Registration Information

The registration fee for Perfect Fit is $20 US.   Payment must be in US funds. Canadian checks are acceptable.   However, European registrations must be accompanied by payment in either US currency or a check drawn on a US bank. Eurocheques or checks drawn on overseas banks can't be accepted.

When you register, you will receive a registered copy of the latest version of Perfect Fit without the "annoyance" screens.   The version that you receive will probably be later than the shareware version, since I intend to release the latest and greatest only to registered users.

Once registered, you can purchase component library disks as they become available.   The current cost is $3 per disk.   Beginning with this product, all shipments will be on 3.5" high density disks unless 5.25" disks are requested. Neither the game nor the library disks will be available on low-density disks of either size.

Upgrades will be available to registered users inexpensively.   The exact price will be determined by the number of disks required for the upgrade, since much of the upgrade fee goes toward producing and shipping the disks.

Non-registered users will be on their own to find and acquire any upgrades to the shareware version or any component libraries that they may want.   I will not under any circumstances ship disks to non-registered users!

Registered users of any of my other products (currently Mah Jongg -V-G-A-, Mah Jongg / Windows, Laser!, and TrainSIM) can register Perfect Fit and have all privileges of registration for the "preferred customer" price of $14.   If you request this discount registration, please include the name and serial number of the game that you've already registered.   To be sure that only registered users are taking advantage of this offer, I will verify all registration claims and return all questionable discount registrations.
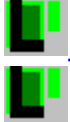
Technical Support

If you have any comments on Perfect fit or suggestions for future releases, I'd be glad to hear them.   If you'd like a reply, please include a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

If you have any problems or questions concerning Perfect Fit, I'll be glad to try to answer them.   Non-registered users absolutely must cover my expense of the support by including a stamped, self-addressed envelope.   I repeat: I will not reply to questions from non-registered users without a SASE!   I don't believe it's fair to expect the registered users to literally pay for tech support for non-registered users.

I don't officially provide telephone support and therefore don't publish my telephone number.   If you manage to track me down and manage to get   me on the phone, I'll be glad to talk to you.   However, I will not return phone calls -- collect or otherwise!!   I must also warn you that I can be quite difficult to get in contact with, so you may want to send your question by mail even if you plan to try a phone call. Your answer just might arrive by mail before you're able to get it by phone!

I currently subscribe to America Online as username R Balewski.   I can't guarantee that this will be a tech support point for all time, but I'm currently quite happy with the service and have no plans to cancel it.   I'm usually on a few times a week, so your E-Mail should be answered promptly.
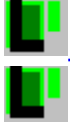
Permission to Copy

You have my permission to redistribute the Shareware version of Perfect Fit provided that:

1. You must include all files

2. You must not charge more than $5 per disk for duplication & packaging

3. You must label Perfect Fit in all catalogs, on all disks, and on all packaging materials, as Shareware.   Your packaging must also include the fact that the user is buying only the disk and packaging and not the software and that use of the software beyond a 30-day trial is allowed only after registration.

Any shareware distributors that want a "from-the-author" copy of Perfect Fit must make the request on their company letterhead and must include a blank, formatted disk along with a stamped, self-addressed return mailer.   If you'd prefer, enclose a $3 check to cover my costs and I'll provide the mailer, disk, and shipping.   However, I will absolutely not send a disk at my expense.   You the shareware dealer will probably profit from this game far more than I will, so the least you can do is pay the expense of getting a copy.

Disclaimer & Warranty
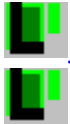
Possible Enhancements

This is a list of ideas for new features I have for future versions of Perfect Fit.   If you have any other thoughts on what I can add to improve the game, I'd love to hear them!

Please note that this is an "ideas" list only.   I make no promise or guarantee that any of them will make it into the next version, nor that there will even be a next version.   That entirely depends on registrations.   If it's financially worth my while to upgrade Perfect Fit, I most certainly will.   On the other hand, if nobody seems to like this game (and I measure "like" by "registrations"), I can't afford to spend the time on an upgrade.   I'll be too busy working on a new and hopefully more profitable product.

=> Support for loading a 256-color piece component and a 256-color board component at the same time on a 256-color system

=> Random "Magic Squares" which move each round.   Placing a tile on the magic square will give 2X, 3X, or 4X point value for that move, or a free turn depending on the magic square hit.

=> Player names rather than just "Player 1", etc.

=> Multiple player ability.   User can select and name any players as Human and any as Computer.   Humans will play as now whenever their turn comes up.

=> Remote players.   Any players can be set up as Remote from either a Modem or Network.   Remote players will behave like computer players, but will be controlled by the person playing at the other end of the comm link.

=> Better computer player strategy

=> User customizable and savable players.   With the new types of strategy introduced, you'll be able to design a player -- how good he is on the various strategies and to what degree he tries to apply each strategy.   These players can then be saved, shared, and played against later.

=> User customizable sounds.   A dialog box will let you select whatever wave file you want for any of the game "events."

Please note that these enhancements will probably wind up in a registered version of Perfect Fit first and make it to the shareware version much later, if ever. Registered users will also be able to upgrade to future versions with even more enhancements inexpensively.   This is consistent with my current policy which places the latest & greatest versions of my software in the hands of those who deserve it and made it possible -- the registered users.   And since other users didn't feel the game was worth using and registering, they probably wouldn't be interested in upgrades anyway.