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Rules

The game of dots is actually quite simple to learn. The game is requires two players (one, both or neither may be played by the computer). The game proceeds with each player alternating moves, drawing lines between the dots on the playing area. By drawing the fourth line of a square formed by four dots, a player claims that dot, and gets to make another move. A turn ends when you make a move that does not complete a square.

Lines may be drawn either horizontally or vertically, between neighboring dots. Diagonal moves are not allowed, nor are moves between non-neighboring dots. In the examples below, Figure A depicts a legal move, while B and C are illegal.

Figure A   Figure B   Figure C
Right   Wrong   Wrong
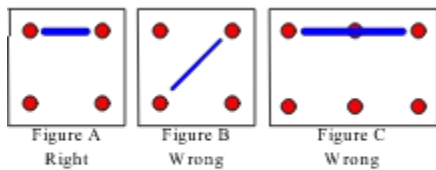
Lines are drawn in the current player color, and when a square is claimed, a circle is drawn in the middle of the square to mark it as claimed. When the last square is claimed, the player with the most squares wins.

How to Play Dots

When the program starts, it is ready to play. You are player one, and the computer is player two. Make a move by clicking on (selecting) the dot you want to draw from, and then clicking the destination dot. Selecting a dot will draw a circle around it. When you choose the second dot, the circles will be erased and a line will be drawn between them.

If you make an illegal move, either by choosing an inappropriate destination dot, trying to make a move that has already been made, or by reselecting the initial dot, the computer will make a small beep noise. This indicates that the move was not acceptable, and you should make another move. The order of dot selection does not matter. A line drawn from dot A to dot B is the same, regardless of which dot was selected first.

Clicking and holding the mouse button will allow you to drag the dot selector around the screen. The dot will only be selected when you release the mouse button. If you have accidentally selected the wrong dot, simply click on that dot again to start over.

The default game is between a human player and the computer. You can change this to any setting you prefer in the Options dialog A game between two computer opponents requires no interaction from you.

During the game, the status bar at the bottom of the screen will reflect the current scores of the players and which player is currently moving. When a game is finished, the status bar will indicate which player has won.

To start a new game, choose File | New Game from the menu. If the game is over, resizing the game window will also start a new game. Resizing during a game will not cause any problems, but you should note that while the program keeps track of who claimed each square, the individual lines are not marked, and their colors will be changed during redraw.

Options

 The options dialog may be accessed from the File menu during the game. It allows you to change many of the behaviors and appearances of the program.

The first two sections are virtually identical, allowing you to choose the preferences for each player. These are:

Controller
The controller may be either Human or Computer. A computer player will move automatically, whenever its turn is up. Human controls require user input. If you want to play Human vs. Human, the players will have to hot seat unless you happen to have two mouses.

Color
The color settings determine the color of lines drawn as well as the circles used for claiming squares.

The third section of the Options dialog is for general settings, that apply to the entire game. These are:

Dots Wide
This is simply the number of dots from left to right in the game field. Use the slider to change the setting. This value can be anywhere from 6 to 24. The more dots there are, the longer and more complicated the game will be. If you are going to play with a large number of dots, consider maximizing the screen to make best use of the space available.

Dots High
Similar to Dots Wide, this is the number of dots from top to bottom of the screen. The values are in the same range as Width, but the settings do not have to be the same. You can play at 6 x 24 if you choose.

Paper Type
This is a graphic gewgaw. For those who do not like graphics, there is a None option. Otherwise, you can choose from three available paper typesloose leaf, legal and recycled. These do not affect game play at all, they just look neat.

To accept changes made to the dialog, click 'OK'. To return to the previous settings, click 'Cancel'.

Note
If you make changes to the settings in the middle of a game, the program will ask you if you want to end the current game. Basically, the changes will not take effect until the next new game starts. If you want to finish your current game before using the new settings, simply choose 'No' The settings will take effect with the next round.

Credits

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Thanks for this program go out to Chris, who, in the seventh grade, played Dots with me incessantly during German class, allowing me to hone my skills. You can thank him for making me break down the situations in the game well enough to write a credible AI for it.

This program is distributed as Shareware. Registration is a mere $5.00 (US). Don't you feel like registering?

Send a letter with your Name, Email address and $5 in US funds, cash or check to:

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(The sending of cash via the US postal system is generally discouraged because mailers have no recourse if either the mail gets lost or the addressee turns out to be a fraud. In the former case, I have no answer, but to say that it is five dollars, and probably not worth worrying about overmuch. And if you're worried about the latter, keep in mind that you already have the product.)

You can contact me, for questions, comments, bug reports or glowing praise (or whatever you feel like getting off of your chest) at:

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