President

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How to Play

President is a simple card game that can be played against the computer, or against other people over the Internet.   Here's how to play:

Setup
The game has five players, each starting with ten cards.   The object of the game is to get rid of all of your cards as fast as possible.   The first player to get rid of all of his or her cards becomes   "President".   The next player to get rid of their cards becomes "Vice President".   The third player finished becomes "Neutral", the fourth "Vice-Loser", and the last player left becomes the "Loser".

Controls
When you have the lead, you can play a single card, a pair, three-of-a-kind, or four-of-a-kind.   Your cards will always be displayed on the bottom of the screen.   **Left-click** on a card to select it.   Once you have selected the card(s) you wish to play, click anywhere on the main screen.   Your selected cards will shoot over into the play area.   You can also **right-click** on a single card to instantly play it, which saves you the trouble of moving the mouse and clicking on the screen.   Lastly, you can **double-click** on a card, which instantly plays it and all other cards of the same value in your hand (for example, all sixes.)

General Play
Once a player has led, the next player must follow with the same number of cards (i.e., a single if a single was led, a pair if a pair was led, etc.), of the same or higher value.   For example, if the lead is a pair of fives, you need to follow with a pair of fives, a pair of sixes, or any other pair higher than five.   If you don't have any cards that you can play, or you wish to save your cards for later, you can pass by clicking on the **PASS** button.

Skipping
If a player plays the same value as the current upcard, then the next player is skipped.   So if player 1 plays a ten, and player 2 plays another ten, then player 3 gets skipped, and it becomes player 4's turn.

The Role of the Two
Most importantly, a two can be used to stop the play and get the lead at any time.   Play a two any time you wish to stop the play and get the lead.   Also, a single two can stop any number of upcards.   Therefore, if the current upcards are three aces, a single two will stop that play and give you the lead.

The Start of a New Game
After the first game has been played, the players are sorted into President, VP, Neutral, Vice-Loser and Loser based on how they finished.   After the cards are dealt for the next game, the computer will automatically trade the President's two worst cards for the Loser's two best cards.   Also, the Vice-President will trade his or her worst card for the Vice-Loser's best card.

Strategy

Although President is a simple game, there is ample opportunity for strategy.

Twos, Kings, and Aces are obviously crucial to your success.   If you don't have a lot of these cards at the beginning of a hand, you may wish to hold on to them by passing early in the game.

Don't split pairs, three-of-a-kinds, or four-of-a-kinds if you can help it.   When you have the lead, you can play these all at once, getting rid of multiple cards at once, and making it harder for your opponents to follow your lead.

Lastly, if you have a two and one other card, play the two.   You'll get the lead, and then you can play your last card, going out easily.

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Playing Over the Internet

You can play President for free over the Internet, with up to four other players.

In order to do this, one player runs the President Server program (included free in the standard President distribution), and the other players connect to the server.   The server program can run forever, if you like, and will handle a large number of players joining in and dropping out throughout the day.

The Server will also create a waiting list, so if there is already a game in progress, other players can line up for the next game.   Any unfilled positions in a network game will be filled by AI players.

Requirements
In order to run over the Internet, you need a WINSOCK-type connection to the Internet.   This is the standard Internet interface for Win 3.1, Win NT, and Win 95.   Any speed modem or Internet connection should be fine.   We've tested with 14400, 28800, and T3 connections.

Running a Server
Running a President Server is really easy.   Make sure you're connected to the Internet, and run the program.   It will ask you for a port number (between 5000 and 32000), as well as a few other parameters, like the time between games, and the time allotted to each player to make a play.   Once these parameters are entered, the server will run continually, waiting for new players, running games, and displaying information about the current status.   Since the server is handling all of the players, you should run it on the fastest machine available.

The Server can handle about 30 players total at one time, which means five players and roughly twenty-five waiting players.   Because of this heavy load, be sure to give the Server the most processing power you can.   This means turning off any screen savers or other programs that will run along with the Server.

Note that it is perfectly acceptable to run one game of President on a machine that is also running the Server.   Also, you can run multiple servers on a single machine, although we recommend against it unless you have a very fast machine with lots of memory (32 Meg and up).   We don't recommend running more than four servers per machine.

President works best over a native Internet connection, but it has been run over America On-Line.   Note that the flow of data through AOL may be a bit slower than a native Internet connection.

Connecting to a Server
Most of the time, you won't need to run a server - you'll be connected to one that is already running.   To do this, simply choose *Play An Internet Game* from the FILE menu of President, and enter the information about where the server is (IP address or hostname, as well as a port number).   Once you enter in the information, the program will send information about you (including your player name, score, and total games played, as well as your picture) to the server.   Then you'll either join a game, or wait for the current game to finish.

Talking to Other Players
During a game, you can send messages to the other players in the game.   Simply click

on the picture of the person you wish to talk to.   Enter the message you wish to send in the box provided, and hit return.   Your message will immediately be sent to the other player.   When a player sends you a message, an envelope will appear over his or her picture. To read your mail, simply click on the envelope.

Pictures
When you use one of the pictures that comes with President, it saves a lot of time. Since everyone already has those pictures, there is no need to send them to everyone. However, if you wish to use your own picture, feel free - the game will send a copy of your picture to all of the other players.   It slows the start of the first game down a bit, but it only happens once.   You may want to make sure your picture is relatively small, too.   Images larger than 50 or 100K tend to take a long time to transmit.   Lastly, if you find yourself playing against someone who has a really cool picture, you can always grab a permanent copy of it by using the menu item under the NETWORK menu.

Once your picture has been sent to a Server, it will be kept on disk permanently (unless it's a very busy Server, with lots of different players connecting and disconnecting, in which case it may get purged eventually).   Likewise, when you play against someone who is using their own picture, a copy of their picture is stored on your hard drive, under the NETPICS directory under President.

The benefits of this are obvious - if you play against the same people who use the same pictures, the pictures don't need to be sent, and the game starts very quickly.

Trouble-Shooting
If you have serious problems playing over the Internet, let us know.   Internet configurations vary widely from computer to computer, so when you contact us, be sure to include information about which Operating System you are using, and if it's Windows 3.1, which TCP/IP package you have installed.

If you experience a lockup of a game that has been running fine, you might want to have everyone disconnect from the server, and then reconnect a minute later.

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Configuring Your Player Information

Each player in President has a name and a picture to identify themselves with.   We have included a number of public domain images that you can use, although you can certainly use any BMP file you wish.

When you first run the game, you must enter your name and choose a picture.   From that point on, every time you run President, you will use that name and picture.   If you wish to change either the name or the picture, or to set up another player on the same machine, choose the *Change Player Info* item (found under the FILE menu).

Each player configured will have his or her own set of statistics, including number of games played and current lifetime rating.

A note on the included images:

We believe all of the images included with President to be public domain.   If you are aware of a copyright violation with one of our images, please contact us as soon as possible.   Our web page is http://www.netmart.com/lostshaker

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Scoring

At the end of each game, the players are given points for their ending positions:

4 points for finishing as President.
3 points for finishing as Vice-President.
2 points for finishing as Neutral.
1 point for finishing as Vice-Loser.
0 points for finishing as Loser.

The total number of points a player has earned both over his or her lifetime, and during this session of play are kept.   A rating is determined by dividing the total points by the number of games played.   That number is then interpreted exactly as many colleges do: as a Grade Point Average.   The following list shows the conversion of (Score / GamesPlayed) to a letter grade:

GPA = TotalScore / GamesPlayed

```
If GPA >= 4 Then
        LetterGrade = "A"
ElseIf GPA >= 3.75 Then
        LetterGrade = "A-"
ElseIf GPA >= 3.25 Then
        LetterGrade = "B+"
ElseIf GPA >= 3 Then
        LetterGrade = "B"
ElseIf GPA >= 2.75 Then
        LetterGrade = "B-"
ElseIf GPA >= 2.25 Then
        LetterGrade = "C+"
ElseIf GPA >= 2 Then
        LetterGrade = "C"
ElseIf GPA >= 1.75 Then
        LetterGrade = "C-"
ElseIf GPA >= 1.25 Then
        LetterGrade = "D+"
ElseIf GPA >= 1 Then
        LetterGrade = "D"
Else
        LetterGrade = "D-"
End If
```

Playing Locally

Playing Locally means playing against four computer opponents on your computer.

There are a number of Artificial Intelligence personalities included with President, each with it's own playing style and level of difficulty.   You can choose to play a single personality type, or a random mix of the available types by using the Options screen.

There are other options on the Options screen that apply to local play.   For example, you can tell the computer to pass you automatically when you can't play.   Also, you can speed the computer players up to finish a game as quickly as possible, once you are out of the game.

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Artificial Intelligence

One of the cool things about President (in our opinions) is the fact that there are multiple, distinct AI personalities you can play against. Each personality is coded in a file that ends with **.RUL**, which are readable text files, so you can look at the strategy each player uses, if you wish.

You can also write your own RUL files, for use on your own computer, or for trading with your friends.

RUL Files

RUL files tend to be pretty small, but they can hold lots of information about how a computer player should play. Detailed information about writing your own RUL files is included in the file RULES.DOC, which is a Microsoft Word 6.0 document. If you don't have Word, drop us a line via our web page, and we'll work out the details of mailing you a printed version of the file. Our web page is http://www.netmart.com/lostshaker.

Debugging AI Personalities

To help you debug your AI personality, we have included an integrated debugger in the game itself. To use it, simply choose the *AI Debug Window* from the VIEW menu. This will bring up a window with detailed information about the rule being considered, all of the player's cards, game variables, etc. There are check boxes next to each player. To debug a particular player, make sure the corresponding check box is filled. To skip debugging a particular player, clear the check box.

The CONTINUE button allows you to step through a RUL file's rules, one after the other. Each time you click on CONTINUE, the program will evaluate the next rule in the appropriate RUL file, displaying all information associated with the rule. Note that all of the game's variables (which are used when evaluating a rule) are displayed at the bottom of the AI Debug Screen. When a variable is used in the rule, it is highlighted. When a variable is FALSE (and therefore causes the rule to fail), it is *italicized*.

The CLOSE button can be used at any time to continue with the game without any further debugging.

All AI Games

One additional tool provided to help you test your AI personalities is the All AI Game. Located under the FILE menu, this will run a number of games of computer players against each other, with all of the cards face up.

Deciding Which AI Personalities To Play Against

Use the Options screen to control the AI Personality you will play against in either local games or ALL AI games. You can specify one particular personality, or a random mix. If you choose Random Mix, you can further restrict which personalities you will use by Configuring the AI, via the button on the Options screen. When you move an AI Personality from the "Play Against" box to the "Don't Play Against" box, you are actually renaming the corresponding RUL file into a RUD file. The file still exists, but since it is not called a RUL file, it isn't read in when the program first starts. You must restart President in order to use your new settings when you rename the files in this manner.

Technical Support

Although President has been thoroughly tested using a wide variety of configurations, the sheer number of possible configurations makes it impossible to absolutely guarantee that it is error-free.   If you find a bug, please contact us with information about what you were doing, what kind of machine and operating system you were using, as well as any other information you think might be helpful.   You can contact us through our web page:

http://www.netmart.com/lostshaker

Known Problems:
There are currently no known problems with President or President Server.

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Acknowledgments/Tech Info

Technical Info
President and President Server were written in a combination of Visual Basic 3.0 and C.   I decided to use this combination since VB has great debugging tools built right in, and, of course, C gives us high speed and the ability to do some of the tricky things like the TCP/IP stuff.

I chose to keep it 16 bit rather than go with VB 4.0 (or 5.0, for that matter) for a couple of reasons.   Number one, there are still a few souls out there that haven't upgraded, and I think they should be able to play a nice game along with the rest of us.   Second, the total file size of a 32 bit program would be massive.   I estimate at least an extra two to three meg of disk space simply by converting to 32 bit.   Not really worth the effort, if you ask me.   Lastly, there's not really any reason to go 32 bit with a program like this.   Speed isn't <u>that</u> crucial on a card game, although you obviously want to keep things moving along as fast as possible.   In this case, the argument for 32 bit is pretty flimsy.

The card displaying routines are freeware, and I highly recommend them to anyone wanting to write a VB-based card game.   The package is called QCARD, originally written by Stephen Murphy, with card backs by Daniel Di Bacco.   My thanks to both of these gentlemen.   By the way, if anyone knows how I can get a hold of Mr. Murphy, please drop me a line via our web page.

Our sound editing program is CoolEdit, and, although we didn't do too much graphics work for President, I highly recommend Paint Shop Pro for general graphics work, and, of course, the fantastic **free** POV-Ray 3.0 ray tracing program.

Miscellaneous
If you enjoy this game, please visit our web page.   It's located at http://www.netmart.com/lostshaker.   On it you'll find new RUL files (which add new AI personalities you can play against to the game), other games we publish, as well as the winners of our monthly artificial intelligence contest.

The Monthly Artificial Intelligence Contest
The contest is open to any registered owner of the game.   Each month, we'll look at all of the submitted entries, and conduct a tournament of AI players.   Each RUL file will be given 1000 games to prove it's mettle, and the winner (based solely on the ranking for those 1000 games) will be posted on our web page for everyone to marvel at.   A Most-Interesting-Personality prize will also be given, with the winner also getting put on the web page.   To enter, just e-mail us your entry (in text or in a ZIP-ped file), along with any relevant information we should know.   We'll notify the winner by e-mail.

Thank Yous
First of all, thanks to all of our customers.   We hope you enjoy playing as much as we enjoyed writing this.

Special Thanks to Bob, Kathy, and Brian Cole.   Your patience while tracking down bugs, and your creativity with your suggestions of how to improve the game, were fantastic. Thanks again.

Thanks to John Cutter, who, although I've never spoken to him, inspired me with his excellent game *Poker Challenge*.   His openness and frankness in his help file gave me a couple of crucial ideas and leads.

And last, thanks (again) to Mary Anne, for play testing and listening to me babble about the game for weeks on end, all the while pretending to be interested.   Your encouragement and support was fantastic, as usual.

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Registering President

The registration fee for President is $24.95, and there are several easy ways to do it.

Register By Check or Money Order
You can register by sending a check or money order, made out to
"Lost Shaker Productions, Inc" directly:

> Lost Shaker Productions, Inc.
> 317 S. Division
> Suite 45
> Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Register By Credit Card
You can register by credit card, either by fax, e-mail, or by using a secure or
non-secure web browser through PsL, a very reputable shareware ordering house.
They accept Mastercard, Visa, American Express and Discover.

Web-Based Ordering
If you want to order via the web, just go to our web page - we have a link directly to
PsL's ordering page.   Our web page is http://www.netmart.com/lostshaker.

FAX Ordering
If you wish to order by FAX, please use the following phone number: 1-713-524-6398.
Be sure to print clearly, and include your phone number in case of questions.   This
number is ONLY for orders.   If you have any other questions, please contact us via
our e-mail or web page.

E-Mail Ordering
If you wish to order by e-mail, mail to 30144@pslweb.com.   Again, this is ONLY
for orders.   If you have any other questions, please contact us via our e-mail or
web page.

Important!
However you order, **be sure to include your Registration Code**.   You can get your
Registration Code using the REGISTER menu in the game.   The code to unlock
your game will be sent to you usually within a day (via e-mail or regular mail).

**Also, when ordering, be sure to include the Product Number.   Our product number is
30144.   You must include this number, although it is taken care of automatically
when ordering from our web page.**