

Brain Jam Help Index

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Brain Jam is shareware. You may use it guilt-free for 30 days. If after 30 days you wish to continue using Brain Jam you are encouraged to become a registered user (see [Registering and Ordering](#)).

You are allowed (and encouraged) to make copies of Brain Jam and distribute them through online or physical media or by any means whatsoever. However, all such copies must contain all of the unmodified files BRAINJAM.EXE, BRAINJAM.HLP and README.TXT, either as is or in compressed form. Parties distributing Brain Jam without meeting the above condition are guilty of copyright violation.

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Acknowledgements

Compression software for initial distribution: LHA by Yoshi

Initial playtesting: Sandy, Kato, Andrew and David

How to Play Brain Jam

The game tableau consists of three areas:

- the four **Build Stacks** at the top left
- the four **Scratch Spaces** at the top right
- eight card columns

Initially a deck is dealt face up into the card columns.

The object of the game is to move all cards onto the **Build Stacks**, starting from Aces and progressing to Kings.

You move a card by pointing to it and clicking with the left mouse button. If there is no legal destination for the card nothing will happen. If there is more than one legal destination the system will select one. You can select an alternate destination by holding down the Shift key while clicking the left mouse button.

You can move a card if it is uncovered and has a legal destination (see below). You cannot move a card that is already in a **Build Stack**.

A card can be legally moved:

- to an unoccupied **Scratch Space**
- to a **Build Stack** if the card is an Ace
- to a **Build Stack** if the next lowest card of the same suit is already there
- to an empty column
- onto the next highest card of the same suit if that card is the exposed card in its column.

Clicking the right mouse button or selecting the Backtrack menu option will run the game in reverse, one move at a time.

The game can be played from the keyboard. Column cards are played using the keys from 'a' to 'h' for the columns going from left to right. Cards in scratch spaces can be played using the keys from 'i' to 'l'. The Shift key selects alternate moves. The backspace key will run the game in reverse.

The current number of moves is displayed on the window title bar.

There are 1000 games, indexed by numbers ranging from 0 through 999. Not all games are winnable, and games are not arranged in order of difficulty. The Deal option chooses a new game at random. The Select Game... option allows you to select any game by typing its number. See Commands for more information.

When you win a game, the sequence of moves you used is saved, unless you have already won that game using a shorter sequence. See Best Scores for more information.

Commands

Game Menu

Select Game...

Prompts you for a game number between 0 and 999 and allows you to review which games you have already won.

Deal

Chooses a new game at random

Restart Game

Restarts current game

Exit

Ends this session of Brain Jam

Backtrack!

Undoes the most recent move (same as right mouse button)

Layout Menu

In some circumstances the card tableau will overflow the Brain Jam window and make it impossible to select certain cards. If you can't fix this by resizing the Brain Jam window, you can use the Squeeze and Cram layout settings

Normal

Normal layout

Squeeze

Eliminates vertical spaces and moves cards closer together

Cram

Like Squeeze, but moves entire tableau up by a half card height

Strategy

"Life is two locked boxes, each containing the other's key"

Brain Jam isn't easy. Many games are not winnable, but perhaps the most satisfying experience you can have in Brain Jam is cracking a really tough game, perhaps even a game that nobody has won before.

The good news is that up to 80% of games are winnable. The bad news is that about 20% aren't. But these percentages are better than most solitaire games. The Select Game dialog box helps you select winnable games for Games 0 through 49. Beyond that you are on your own.

In learning Brain Jam you first have to unlearn some of the rules from conventional "Solitaire". Cards may be played only on cards of the same suit, not cards of the opposite color. When there is an open column, ANY card can be placed in it, not just a King. Finally, you cannot move runs of cards; you may only move one card at a time.

You can move runs of cards if there are enough scratch spaces to do so. For example, suppose that one column has a 9-8-7 sequence of a suit at the bottom, while another column has a 10 of the same suit at the bottom. Further suppose that there are two empty scratch spaces, or two empty columns, or an empty scratch space and an empty column. Then the 7 and 8 can be moved into the free spaces, the 9 can go on the 10, and then the 8 and 7 can be moved onto the 9, leaving a 10-9-8-7. This type of maneuver is reminiscent of the famous Towers of Hanoi puzzle, especially if the run is several cards long.

When you click on a card the program moves it for you. Remember that you can choose an alternate destination by pressing the Shift key.

A beginning player will often try to free the Aces and low cards and put them on the Build Piles. The result is often that the scratch spaces are filled up and there are no more moves.

A sounder approach is to start sorting cards to create runs of the same suit, "harvesting" the Aces and lower cards as the opportunity arises. But you can't overdo this either, because eventually the tableau clogs up with most columns having runs at the bottom.

One strategy that often works is to try to eliminate one column of cards altogether by placing all of its cards on other columns, or in the scratch spaces or build piles. The free column not only acts as an extra scratch space, but also as a place to put a run that has been built up elsewhere, as long as there are sufficient free spaces to transfer the run.

Successful play in Brain Jam appears to result not from any one doctrine, but from an ability to balance several strategies. Often you must play a game several times before you get a sense of where the connections and bottlenecks are. Only then can you work out a winning series of moves.

The early and middle moves in a game are the most important. Usually there is a "turning point" after which the game can be completed as long as you are paying attention. In analysing a successful game you will often see that everything almost trivially hinges on building up one or two runs and clearing out one or two columns until they are empty; the hard part is figuring out which runs and columns to concentrate on.

For more information on strategy and solutions, see [Brain Jam Newsletter](#).

For some sample solutions, see [Best Scores](#).

Best Scores

Your "score" for a game is just the number of moves it took you to complete it. As in golf, the lower the score the better.

You can review your scores/solutions by choosing the Select Games option under the Games menu. For each game you have already won, the solution for the game will appear in the lower right area of the dialog box when you type in (or highlight in the list box) the game number.

A solution is encoded as a series of letters. Each letter corresponds to one move. The letters correspond to columns and scratch spaces, and denote which card was moved. The letters 'a' through 'h' correspond to the eight card columns, going from left to right. The letters 'i' through 'l' correspond to the Scratch Spaces, from left to right. Upper case letters have the same meaning as the lower case letters, except that the "alternate move" was selected by using the Shift key.

Brain Jam saves solutions in a file called BRAINJAM.SOL in the Brain Jam directory. You should not attempt to modify this file; results will be unpredictable if you do. You are encouraged to send in your BRAINJAM.SOL file (See [Submitting your Best Scores](#) for instructions). Best overall solutions will be published in the [Brain Jam Newsletter](#).

Please do not send printouts of the BRAINJAM.SOL file; only disk-based copies will be processed.

For some sample solutions check out [Sample Solutions](#).

Sample Solutions

A solution is encoded as a series of letters. Each letter corresponds to one move. The letters correspond to columns and scratch spaces, and denote which card was moved. The letters 'a' through 'h' correspond to the eight card columns, going from left to right. The letters 'i' through 'l' correspond to the Scratch Spaces, from left to right. Upper case letters have the same meaning as the lower case letters, except that the "alternate move" was selected by using the Shift key.

Here are sample solutions for 8 games (you can use these as "hints" if you are stumped):

Game 000:

```
ddeegdbbbbBbdladddff
fiaaalaahhhhkiffccc
ccclbbbGGglgggddlCc
cghhceaaahhkbbfffee
ljiddgg
```

Game 001:

```
ddddehhggffffffjhhjhl
aabb1bkbbbbb1jAAAala
aaaaaaaajkkbggaacccc
cafjkeeeccccdddaf
diedljhhkhgbb
```

Game 002:

```
bggggghhhgCcljcccggg
jiccciekeeeeddaaake
Fffakaaaaaccccceflb
bcbbfffddddjjeaaa
aabbhhhkcfhhbiggggg
```

Game 003:

```
gggggagcbbbb1fiejd
ddiddjdjhhikhhljCC
CclkjccddiaaaakdEEE
eeebbbgggggggbbefff
aajffffcchhhbbbega
jfikld
```

Game 004:

```
cfffaaafddd1ddcbcfj
iccDcjleeeegg1gggb
bbbhjhhbbgghaakgilh
aabbccccdddfh
```

Game 006:

```
hgbbgcecbgggffffffaa
aacB1lbbbb1ikeeecccc
ckiaaaaahhhhhhhlagg
geed1ccddhdaddehbb
hffik
```

Game 007:

```
gcciccccg1gkffffff
ljeeeeebbbb1HHhhff
fhhaaaakiaaadd1dbbb
```

bbahhbeggggfdjlc
kdi

Game 008:

ddccDclccckjh
blbbiddleeig
fggffdddgkeee
jeehhhhhhhk
dfggccag

Why not all Games are Winnable

Each of the 1000 Brain Jam games is generated by shuffling the deck and dealing, simulating what happens when you play the game with a real deck. The only difference is that you can replay a given layout anytime you want.

The problem with this is that you end up with some games that aren't winnable, although you don't know in advance which games can be won and which cannot.

Statistically, we believe that up to 80% of the 1000 games are winnable, which is a pretty good percentage for solitaire-type games.

But some players still find this demotivating -- why work on a puzzle when you don't even know there is a solution?

Here's the story:

1. we didn't have the resources to find a 1000 winnable games.
2. even if we did, we would probably have ended up throwing out several games which *are* winnable but which we weren't smart enough to win.
3. we had no idea how to prove that a game isn't winnable.

The bottom line:

1. The distribution of winnable games in computer Brain Jam is the same as in playing the game manually
2. All levels of difficulty (up to impossible) are present.

The more you play Brain Jam the more you know that there is nothing better than winning a *really* tough game, a game that you've been playing for the past few days, a game that you *knew* must be winnable and that you've finally wrestled into the ground. By not artificially selecting games for you beforehand, we know that we'll have left in just that sort of game.

The Brain Jam Newsletter

The Brain Jam Newsletter is published periodically, at least four times per year.

Primarily the Newsletter is the "journal of record" of best scores for the 1000 games in Brain Jam. Players are encouraged to send in their BRAINJAM.SOL files (see [Submitting your Best Scores](#)). Best overall solutions for each game will be published. The newsletter also contains articles on subjects relating to Brain Jam, such as new version announcements, strategy, and commentary. Players are welcome to submit letters and articles to the newsletter.

The newsletter is distributed on 3.5" floppy disk in electronic form.

For information on obtaining the Newsletter, see [Ordering](#)

Registration and Ordering

Orders, registrations, BRAINJAM.SOL files, fan mail, hate mail, article submissions, bug reports, suggestions, and all other correspondence should be addressed to:

Brain Jam Publications
P.O. Box 62024
1448 Lawrence Ave. East, #19
North York, Ontario
Canada M4A 2W1

To order or register, please select the "File" menu of this Help window and then "Print Topic" to print this form. Then fill out the form, enclose payment and send to the above address.

(Please print clearly)

BJ1.9

Name _____
Street Address _____
Municipality, State/Province _____
Country, Postal Code/Zip _____
Email address (if any) _____

Please circle the item(s) you are ordering and the money amount(s). Prices are subject to change without notice. See also [Explanation of Order Items](#).

ITEM	USA	Canada	U.K.	Outside US/Canada/UK
Registration	5.00(US)	6.00(Cdn)	4.00(£)	6.00(US*)
Newsletter (4 issues)	15.00(US)	18.00(Cdn)	12.00(£)	18.00(US*)
Newsletter (1 issue)	5.00(US)	6.00(Cdn)	4.00(£)	6.00(US*)
Registered version	5.00(US)	6.00(Cdn)	4.00(£)	6.00(US*)

Amount enclosed: _____

Please pay with a check, or money order, postal money order, or cash(at your own risk). Allow three to four weeks before receiving your order. Write your return address clearly on the envelope.

*ORDERS FROM OUTSIDE US/CANADA/U.K.: if paying by cheque not drawn on a US or Canadian bank please compute the amount in the last column in US dollars AND THEN CONVERT TO YOUR OWN CURRENCY AT CURRENT EXCHANGE RATES. Please make payment in your own currency. DO NOT SEND PAYMENT IN US OR CANADIAN DOLLARS unless your cheque is drawn on a US or Canadian bank.

Where did you get Brain Jam? (circle one) friend - online service - BBS - shareware disk

If other than "friend" please specify name of source _____

Explanation of Order Items

This topic explain the various items on the order form. Please read this section carefully.

Registration legitimizes your use of Brain Jam. You will also receive instructions on how to disable the "nag" screen that appears when you exit the program.

The Brain Jam Newsletter is described in the [Brain Jam Newsletter](#) topic.

When you order a single issue of the Newsletter, you will receive the most recent issue, unless you specify otherwise.

When you register and order the registered version you will get a registered copy of the latest version of Brain Jam.

All orders (except "registration only") are shipped on a 3.5" floppy disk., and include the latest shareware version.

Brain Jam can be registered through the Compuserve Shareware Registration service. Use GO SWREG and look for ID 1471.

To return to the order form, click on [Registration and Ordering](#).

Submitting your Best Scores

The BRAINJAM.SOL file, which is in the same directory as BRAINJAM.EXE, is a record of all the games you have won. You can send in your BRAINJAM.SOL file and if any of your solutions are the best submitted they will be published in the Brain Jam Newsletter, along with your name which, if you like, can be a pseudonym, nickname, the name of a group, or anonymous.

If you wish to submit a BRAINJAM.SOL file, simply copy it to either a 3.5" or 5.25" diskette and send to:

Brain Jam Publications
P.O. Box 62024
1448 Lawrence Ave. East, #19
North York, Ontario
Canada M4A 2W1

A 3.5" diskette is preferable because it is more robust and can be sent in an ordinary envelope. No purchase is necessary. Please write the desired name or pseudonym clearly on the diskette label.

Submitted disks will not be returned, and become the property of Brain Jam Publications.

Please do not send BRAINJAM.SOL files through email - they are usually mangled in one way or another and cannot be electronically processed.

Where to find the latest version of Brain Jam

This version of Brain Jam was released in January 1995.

New releases of Brain Jam are posted to the WINFUN and GAMERS forums on Compuserve, and are also distributed to various shareware vendors.

Brain Jam can be registered through the Compuserve Shareware Registration service. Use GO SWREG and look for ID 1471.

Where to find us

In Cyberspace:

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Compatibility and Troubleshooting

This software has been tested extensively only on Windows 3.1.

Some features may not work exactly as intended if this program is run on other operating systems such as Windows NT, Windows 95 and OS/2. In particular, it is likely that the card set displayed will not look like that on Windows 3.1. This is because Brain Jam normally uses the card deck from 16-bit Microsoft Solitaire, which may not be available on other operating systems.

Game Selection Dialog Box

The Game Selection dialog box allows you to type in the number of the game you wish to play. There are 1000 games, numbered from 0 to 999. You can also select a game from the list box, or by selecting one of the Next or Previous buttons.

The list box in the lower left of the dialog box shows all games between 0 and 999. Following each game number is one of the following:

- a) your best score for that game (i.e. the number of moves in your shortest solution so far)
- b) the word "winnable" if the game is one of the known winnable games in the first 50.
- c) a question mark, indicating that you have not previously won that game.

The lower right corner of the dialog box shows further information on the winnability of the highlighted game. For games between 0 and 49, the ones that are known to be winnable are indicated. If you have already won a game, your best (shortest) solution so far is shown in the lower right corner of the dialog box. Sample solutions (and how to decode them) are shown for six games in [Best Scores](#).

Not all games are winnable. However, it is conjectured that overall almost 80% of games are winnable. For an up to date list of winnable games see [The Brain Jam Newsletter](#).

