Contents

Introduction

Overview

CHAINLINK is a card Solitaire game of moderate difficulty, combining...
Skill   (yours will improves with time)
Strategy   (patience, patience...)
and Luck   (the initial shuffle)

The object of the game is to move the most cards to the Top Piles by building Chains of cards in the Tableau. The cards form a Chain if they are of the same Suit and of sequential Rank, in descending or ascending order.

Winnable?

Not all games can be won, and some can be won only on the second or third try, but on average you can win about one game out of five or six.

To be sure to (eventually) win, try to Load a game from the WinDb; you can later add your favorites to it.

Background

CHAINLINK is entirely new to the PC world, but was very popular among users of the TI-99/4A (Texas Instruments) Home Computer.

It was invented by Walt Howe, not adapted from a pre-existing game. The first version, written in TI Extended Basic, was published in 1987; I was immediately hooked. Two years later, Walt, with the help of Wayne Stith, produced an all-assembly version for the TI, and I played that much faster version for hours at a time.

I missed it so much that I asked Walt's permission to write a Windows version, and he gladly gave it to me, offering to be my beta-tester.   Walt and his wife Hope's help was invaluable in finally bringing CHAINLINK to the PC world. And another TIer, Gene Bohot, suggested I added the "WinDB" to version 1.2, to make it completely like the TI version.

Playing the Game

CHAINLINK uses a regular deck of 52 cards. When you start a New Game, all the cards are dealt face up in 13 columns of four cards each (the Tableau). At the top are the four empty Top Piles, one for each Suit.

The object of CHAINLINK is to move the most cards to the Top Piles; you uncover the cards at the bottom of the columns by building Chains of cards of the same Suit in the tableau. To form a Chain, cards must be sequential in Rank, in ascending or descending order.

To Move a Card in the Tableau
See also: Keyboard

1. **Click** the card you wish to move: it will be highlighted.
   The MousePointer of the card(s) that form a chain with it will change to a double vertical arrow.
   If you clicked the wrong card, Click it again to de-highlight it.

2. **Click** the location where you want to move the card to, or **Drag** the card to that location, then release the Mouse button.

If the move is not possible, you will hear a short low sound and, if the Messages option is checked, you will get a message. If you don't have a Sound card, you will hear a beep.

To Undo your Last Move in the Tableau
Click the Undo button (or press **U**) when the button is enabled.   Moves to the Top Piles cannot be Undone.

The button will be disabled again as soon as another card is moved, whether in the tableau or to a Top Pile. If you would like to have more control, you might try to un-check the Auto-Send to Top Option (see below, To Send Cards to the Top Piles).

To Move All the Cards in a Chain in One Sweep
Click the Follow button (or press **F**) when the button is enabled.

That function can be Undone if the last card moved has not produced an automatic Send to Top; note that only the last card in the chain will be moved back, not the whole chain.

The Follow button will remain disabled if the next card in the column does not form a chain with the card that was just moved. If it is enabled, it will be disabled again as soon as another card is moved, whether in the tableau or to a Top Pile.

To Send Cards to the Top Piles
If the Auto-Send to Top Option is checked, this function is automatic; all the cards that can be moved to the Top Piles are sent there by CHAINLINK as soon as they are uncovered, either by a move in the tableau or by a previous automatic Send to a Top Pile.

If the Auto-Send to Top option is un-checked, Piling up is done automatically only when the cards are first dealt. After that, you have a little bit more control since you can still Undo a bad move before you send the uncovered card(s) to the Top. The following applies to the un-checked option:

To Send One Card to a Top Pile:
Double-Click the card, or
1. **Click** on the card to highlight it
2. **Click** on its destination Top Pile, or   **Drag** it there and release the mouse button

To Send All possible Cads Up in One Sweep:
Click the S[end] button (or press **S**) when the button is enabled.   This button is displayed at the right of the Piles only when the Auto-Send to Top option is un-checked.

To Start a New Game
Select New Game from the Game menu, or press **F2**.   The cards will be reshuffled.

To Replay the Same Game
Select Replay from the Game menu, or press **F3**.   The cards will not be reshuffled.

Rules of the Game

You uncover the cards that can be moved to the Top Piles by building Chains of cards in the Tableau. To form a Chain, two cards must be of the same Suit, and sequential in Rank, in ascending or descending order.

Legal moves
- A card can only be moved if it is totally uncovered, i.e. at the bottom of a column.

- Any card from the bottom of a column to the bottom of another column, if they form a Chain.   Example: the 6 of Hearts over the 5 of Hearts (building up) or over the 7 of Hearts (building down).

- Any card from the bottom of a column to a Top Pile if it is of the Same Suit and next in Rank in ascending order.   Example: the 6 of Hearts over the 5 of Hearts.
   (If the Auto-Send to Top Option is checked, this move is done automatically by CHAINLINK).

Top Piles
The Top Piles are built from the Ace up to the King, one for each Suit.

If the Auto-Send to Top Option is checked, this is done automatically by CHAINLINK.

Aces and Kings
The Ace always has a value of one, and can only be placed over a 2 (if Auto-Send to Top is un-checked) or on a Top Pile.

The King can only be placed over a Queen, or into an empty column. If it helps your strategy, you can always move a King from the top of a column back over its Queen to make room for another King.

Empty Columns
Only Kings can be moved to empty columns.

Moving Columns
Columns cannot be moved as a block, only as Chains.
Example: if you have an ascending chain from the 4 of Clubs up to the 7 of Clubs and the 3 of Clubs becomes available at the bottom of another column, you cannot move the whole chain over the 3 of Clubs.   You will first need to uncover the 8 of Clubs by playing other cards, then build a chain from the 8 down to the 4, and finally build another chain from the 3 up to the 8.

Winning the Game
You win the game when all cards have been sent to the Top Piles. CHAINLINK and MyCat will congratulate you accordingly, and the Statistics will be updated to include the game you just won.

Losing the Game
CHAINLINK checks for all possible moves after each card move, and will say "SORRY..." when no more useful move can be made.   See Hints for more detail on how CHAINLINK evaluates a move as useful or not.

<u>Statistics</u> will not be updated until you start a New Game or Replay one, because all is not necessarily lost... If the Undo button is enabled, you can still Click it to revert to a possibly better situation.

Hints

Because the CHAINLINK Tableau can be confusing,CHAINLINK can help you find a card that you need but have difficulty locating in the tableau.

It can also help you see all the useful moves that can be made at any time.

To Find a Card
Click the W[here]? button, or press **W**. A small picture will appear at upper right, with squares containing the 13 Ranks and the four Suits: Click the Rank and Suit of the card you wish to find, and it will be briefly flashed in the Tableau.

To get   Move Hints
Click the Hints button, or press **H** (when the button is enabled).
You are allowed only two Hints per game; the number of remaining Hints is written on the button.   When you have used your two Hints, the button will remain disabled until you start a New Game or Replay the same Game.

Useful Moves
All the tableau cards that can be moved will be flashed in sequence, from left to right, together with the location where they can be moved to:

- If the card can form a chain with another card in the Tableau, the other card will also flash.

- If the Auto-Send to Top option is un-checked and the card can be moved to a Top Pile, the pile will also flash.

- If the card is a King and there is at least one empty column, the first empty column will also flash.

Legal, but rarely Useful:
CHAINLINK will often flash a Legal move and count it as Useful, even if moving one card over the other will not create any other useful move... this is because it checks only the last cards in the columns, not the cards under them (or under a chain of cards).

There are two exceptions: The following moves   will be flashed as Legal when you Click the Hints button, but will be be not counted as Useful, except in the rare situations described below.   Otherwise, if such moves are the only possible ones left to you, you will get the "SORRY, NO MORE USEFUL MOVE" notice.

- Two cards alone in a column
  The move will be counted as Useful ONLY IF there are more Kings at bottom of columns than there are empty columns available: making the Move will create an empty column for a King,

- One card alone in a column and a descending Chain that occupies a whole column.
  Will also be counted as Useful if it can make room for a King (as above) or, if the topmost card is not a King, if that card could be chained with another card at the bottom of a column when you move the column over the single card.

Strategy

- Study the tableau as soon as you start a game: some deals create impossible situations right from the start.

8 ♦
10 ♦
7 ♣
9 ♦

  Example: You can get a column that contains, from top to bottom, the 8 of Diamonds, the 10 of Diamonds, the 7 of Clubs and the 9 of Diamonds: you know right away that the game cannot be won because the 9 of Diamonds can only be moved over the 8 or the 10 of Diamonds, which are both under it... You can still try to Send as many cards as possible to the Top to improve your Statistics.

- When you move a card, look for any situation that would create an impossible situation as described above. There are times when you cannot avoid creating such a situation: do it if it means that you can send more cards to the Top Piles, even if you will not win the game.

The following notes are just suggestions, and might not always work to your advantage: always study the tableau carefully before each move.

- Try to build the low cards in descending order (3 on a 4, then 2 on the 3): they will be more easily available when the time comes to Send them to the Top Piles.

- Try to build the high cards in ascending order (Jack on a 10, then Queen on the Jack, then King on the Queen): the King will then be easily available as soon as a column becomes empty.

- If the possible move implies only two cards, do not chain them until you are sure that it will advance the game at that stage.
  Example: If moving a card onto another would uncover a card that cannot be moved right away (either on the tableau or to a Top Pile), leave both cards alone for the time being; a third (and fourth...) card might be uncovered later that would make a longer chain.

- Try to build the longest chains possible.
  Example 1:   If all the cards from the 3 to the 8 of Clubs are uncovered, build a chain from the lowest card (3 up to the 8) or from the highest one (8 down to the 3).   To remain on the safe side, leave the last card alone until moving it would advance the game at this point. You later might uncover another card that will make that chain longer.
  Example 2:   If the 7, 8 and 9 of Clubs are uncovered, move the middle card (the 8) over the 7 or the 9, but don't complete the chain until you are sure that it uncovers another card that can be moved right away too.

Statistics

You can view the CHAINLINK Statistics at any time by Selecting Statistics from the Game Menu.   They are saved to CHAINLNK.INI when you exit CHAINLINK.

For Statistics purposes, all games, New or Replay, count as a different Game. The same applies to the WinDb stats.

Contents

The Statistics window tells you how many games you have Played and Won during this Session, and in Total (from the time you installed CHAINLINK, or since you Cleared the Statistics).

In addition, the Total stats show percentages for the number of cards that were sent to the Piles, in three broad sections (0-17, 18-34, 35-52 cards).

Distinct Statistics (Played and Won) are kept for games loaded from WinDb, but they concern only the current session. They are not kept in CHAINLNK.INI, and are not added to the Total.

Updating

Since a CHAINLINK game is not considered lost even if the "SORRY..." note is displayed (you can still Undo your last move in many games), the Statistics are not updated until you start a New Game, Load a Game from WinDb, or Replay the current game.

With three exceptions:
- If the current game is Won, the Statistics are updated right away, so looking up the Stats at this point should be more rewarding...

- If you Exit CHAINLINK while the "SORRY..." note is displayed, CHAINLINK will consider that you accept the loss and will update the Statistics accordingly upon exiting (Stats will not be updated if you exit while a game is still in progress).

- If you Load a game from WinDb immediately after starting, the first game will be automatically lost.

Clearing

Click the Clear button; you will be asked to confirm.   All values (Session and Total) are immediately reset to zero.

Keyboard

CHAINLINK uses a unique 'Card Selector' (a red frame) to indicate the currently selected card. Use the four arrow keys to move within the Tableau and to move the cards, press the keys corresponding to Buttons or Functions to perform other actions.   With some practice, it is as fast as using the Mouse.

Moving the Cards
↑

Make the Card Selector appear at its current location.   If the selected card is not highlighted, also makes it disappear.

← →

Move the Card Selector towards the Left or the Right; if the Selector is not visible, makes it appear.   If a card is highlighted and can be dropped over the card currently selected, the Selector will turn yellow.

↓
   or   **[Enter]**
Perform a Mouse-Click action on the currently Selected card:
• if no card is currently highlighted, highlights the card;
• if a card is highlighted, moves it over the currently Selected card;
• if the Auto-Send to Top   Option is not checked, moves the currently Selected card to a Top Pile if it is also highlighted.

Buttons
They can be Clicked by pressing the first letter of their caption (no need to also press the Alt key); a keypress works only if its corresponding button is enabled (not greyed).

U   Undo (your last move in the Tableau)
F   Follow Suit (move all cards in a Chain in one sweep in the Tableau)
W   Where? (open the Where? function to find a card in the Tableau)
H   Hints (show all Legal Moves)
S   Send (send all possible cards to the Top Piles in one sweep). The Send button
          appears only if the Auto-Send to Top Option is Not checked.

Functions
F1   Help (this file)
F2   New Game
F3   Replay the Same Game
F5   Load a Random winnable Game from WinDb

Game Menu

New Game   F2
   Starts a New Game; the cards will be reshuffled.

Replay   F3
   Restarts the Same Game; the cards will not be reshuffled.

Statistics...
   Shows the <u>Statistics</u> window.

Exit
   Exits CHAINLINK.

NOTE: If you Select any item (except Statistics) when a game is still in progress, i.e. not Won or considered lost (the "SORRY..." note is displayed), you will be asked to Confirm the selection.

WinDb Menu

What is WinDb?

It can be very frustrating to play and play and never win... so CHAINLINK comes with a starting database of 20 winnable games, that range from very easy to very hard.

The Window's Caption tells you the record number of the game, and how many tries you have attempted it so far. Special <u>Statistics</u> are kept for those games.

Each time you win a Normal game, you can add it to the database.   But beware of it size... <grin>.

---

load Random Game   F5

This loads a game at random from WinDB.   It will not load a game that you have already played during the current session, unless you have played them all once.   So the more games you have in WinDb, the less chances you have of playing the same game twice.

NOTE: If you Select this item when a game is still in progress, i.e. not Won or considered lost (the "SORRY..." note is displayed), you will be asked to Confirm the selection.

load by Number

If you like a particular game, write down its record number (displayed in the Window's caption), then use this menu item to play it.   Same NOTE as above.

Save this game to WinDb

This item is enabled only when you have won a Normal game.   Select it to add the game you just won to the WinDb database; CHAINLINK will display its record number.

Options Menu

Each option choice is saved to CHAINLNK.INI as soon as you change it.

Sounds

Toggles the Sounds On or Off; default is On.

If you don't have a Sound Card but this option is checked, you will hear only Beeps; fortunately for your ears, the cards being sent to the Top Piles and the Winning Cat will not beep...

Messages

Toggles the messages for invalid moves On or Off; default is On.

If this option is checked, you will receive a message when you attempt an invalid move; this is useful when you are still learning how to play.

Fast Speed

Toggles the Speed from Fast to slightly slower, for very fast machines; default is Fast On.

Auto-Send to Top

Toggles the Automatic (by CHAINLINK) Sending Cards to the Top Piles function On or Off; default is On.

Un-checking this option gives you a little bit more control over the game: See Playing the Game, To Send Cards to the Top Piles.

Card Style...
Image

Since CHAINLINK displays 13 columns in its tableau, the Windows basic cards had to be reduced by one third, and the normal cards are hard to see.   So I offer a bigger style, called TI-99/4A because that is how they were drawn in the original game written for that wonderful, but low resolution, little computer.   As it is much easier to use, it is the default style.

Deck

There are two deck styles, that are both animated when you Win: a Sunny Tropical Island, and Neko, a.k.a. MyCat.   The default style is the Cat, of course...

Shareware Information

CHAINLINK, ver. 1.2
© 1997, Lucie Dorais (MyCat Software)
TI-99/4A version © 1987, Walt Howe

CHAINLINK's Shareware version is not crippled in any way, except for the nagging screen upon opening and closing it.   I prefer you to have the full package, and decide if you wish to register or not. Also, being mostly house bound due to illness, I try to avoid trips to the Post Office to mail a complete version...

30-DayTrial period
You can play CHAINLINK for 30 days after its installation, plenty of time to get addicted.   It will stop running when the trial period is over, but will still show the nagging screen so you can enter the registration number if you got one.

Registration
CHAINLINK's price is only $15 US ($15 Cdn if you live in Canada and pay by cheque or money order).   To register online on CompuServe, Go SWREG and select item #14442.

Please make all cheques, money orders or bank drafts payable to Lucie Dorais, not to MyCat Software.

When you Register
You will receive a unique Registration number, which can be entered in the nagging screen by Clicking the Register NOW button.

To Contact MyCat Software
Lucie Dorais
603 - 222 Guigues
Ottawa, Ont.
K1N 5J2
Canada

Compuserve: 76440,623
E-mail: 76440.623@compuserve.com
                  ldorais@cyberus.ca
                  l.dorais@genie.com
Web: http://www.cyberus.ca/~ldorais/index.htm

Glossary

Chain

To form a Chain, cards must be of the same Suit and sequential in Rank, in Descending (for ex. 5 to 2) or Ascending (for ex. 10 to King) or order.

Highlighted Card

A card that is ready to be moved.   Highlight a card by Clicking it or, if you use the Keyboard and the Card Selector is visible, by pressing the Down Arrow key.   De-Highlight by Clicking it again or, if using the Keyboard, by pressing the Down Arrow key again (the Highlighted Card must also be currently Selected).

Normal game

Loaded by Selecting **New** in the Game menu, or by pressing **F2** (by opposition to a game loaded from WinDb).

Rank

The numeric value associated with a card.

Selected Card

If you use the Keyboard and the Card Selector is Visible, the card around which the Selector is positioned.

Suit

The four groups: Spades, Diamonds,   Clubs, Hearts.

Tableau

The main part of the game, where you build the Chains up or down. It has 13 columns.

Top Piles

The final resting places for the cards, at the top of CHAINLINK. They are built from the Ace up to the King.