Contents of NetSpades Help

This is a traditional card game for four players, based on Hoyle's rules.

Contents:

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What is Network Spades?

Network spades allows a group of people to <u>play</u> the classic <u>Spades</u> card game at a virtual card table, using their personal computers instead of a deck of cards.

Up to 32 people may be simultaneously involved in a single game, either as players, or as spectators.   One player is the <u>host</u> of the game, and this player determines who will be <u>seated</u> at the table as an active player, and who will be a spectator.   The host may reseat players at anytime, and can even boot recalcitrants out of the game, so suck up to the host.

The game may also be played in SOLO mode, where a single player plays against computer-generated <u>robot players</u>.   These robots may also sit in during <u>network</u> play, if there are any empty seats at the table.   The robots won't feel bad if they are the last picked to play.

You may connect to other players via modem or a local area network. No matter how few friends you have, you can play Network Spades anytime! It's your one true friend.   In fact, those other so-called friends have been talking behind your back.   We think you should dump them, if they aren't willing to shell out $20 for their own activation code!

All players and spectators may <u>chat</u> electronically throughout the game, but no secret chatting is allowed between players.   So, if you plan to cheat, work out a special set of code words like: "How about them Niners?" which could mean: "I have the Ace of spades".   In fact, if you tire of listening to the mindless prattle of people like... um... me, I guess, you can mute individual players.   (But you can only stick earplugs in your OWN ears, no matter how much you would like to stifle the free speech of the masses.)

Quick Start Instructions

OK, you're impatient.   I'm wordy.   You are intimidated by the immense bulk of this help file.   You don't have time to read..

Hey!   Come back here!   Hold your horses!   This is a cool program, so it has lots of features, so you have to listen to me for JUST A SECOND.   I promise I will try to be brief.

Playing With Yourself

OK, First of all, to play spades all by yourself (you against the computer), just push the SOLO button on the main menu.   If you know the Rules of Spades, you can probably figure out How to play Net Spades.

Come on back here when you are ready to take on a human opponent.

Good against Remotes is One Thing...

Name that reference!

OK, Playing against a human (or three), consists of these steps:

  1.) Connect to the other player(s).
  2.) Hosting a Game.
  3.) Seating the Players.
  4.) Start playing just like you did in SOLO mode.

1.) Connecting

Net Spades gives you two choices here: MODEM or NETWORK.   You push the appropriate button from the main menu to get things started. This will open the Player Lobby screen.   You use this screen to establish your connection to the other players.   For a NETWORK game, this just means using the CONFIG button as necessary so that all players have the same SOCKET.   When you type something on the lobby screen, all the players on the same SOCKET will see what you type.   If they see what you type, then they will be in the game with you.

So, your goal is to somehow get to the point of being able to see what each other are typing.   For a MODEM game, this might include logging on to some BBS and navigating its menus until you get to some sort of chat channel.   Just about any chat channel will work, but our favorite is the GAME CONNECTION from Sirius Software, and offered on BBSs around the country.

For specific hints on various connection problems, try the following:

> Network play with IPX Network
> Modem play with one other friend
> Modem play with GAME CONNECTION BBS
> Modem play with Compuserve MODEMGAM Forum
> Internet Relay Chat
> CRIS Network
> Null Modem Cable

2.) Hosting a Game

Once all your friends are in the lobby, one of you can push the HOST GAME button, but you should try to continue reading a little first.

3.) Seating Players

After one of you pushes the HOST GAME button, you will all be taken to the card table, but only the host will be seated.   It is the host's responsibility to seat players before you can start playing.

All the host has to do is 'double click' on players' names in the Player List and they can be assigned to the next empty seat by using the Player Detail Screen.

If you run out of players, the host should fill the empty seats with some of his robots.   If you have too many players, the unseated ones can wait and watch.

4.) Start Playing

If all is normal, after seating 4 players, the host will probably have the deal and can start the game by clicking on the DEAL CARD.   If you have seated everyone, but no one has the deal card, then the host should push the little green toolbar button on the far left to restart the game.

During the game, you can chat with everybody, whether they are seated or not, just by typing on the keyboard what you want to say.

Connecting via IPX Network

An IPX network is a form of ethernet Local Area Network. It uses a protocol created by Novell to pass messages between computers on the same segment (the same length of ethernet cable) of that network.

Do you HAVE an IPX Network?

If your computer refers to a file called IPX.COM when it boots, and VIPX.386 when windows boots, it is probably IPX compatible. IPX is the most popular network format when IBM PCs are connected together. At this very moment, you are probably neglecting your work, at a fine company which has provided you with a great PC and an IPX network and is just BEGGING you play games. I know *I* am (just kidding, I am sitting comfortably at home, working in my SPARE TIME, with absolutely zero conflict of interest, so there!).

Starting a Network Game

If your network supports IPX, AND your copy of Windows has the necessary driver software installed, then the NETWORK button on your main menu will not be dimmed (note: the shareware version does not support network play, so you won't be able to find out for sure until AFTER you send us your check. We think that is completely fair, don't you? Seriously, you probably have some guy in the back who periodically wanders around aimlessly with a cable reflectometer and knows whether or not you have an IPX network. Just ask him if you can play DOOM on the network).

Selecting a Socket Number

When you press the NETWORK button on the main menu, you are taken to the Player Lobby screen. The CONFIG button on this screen lets you choose a network SOCKET NUMBER. Everyone who wants to play together should select the same socker number. Don't worry too much about what the number means. (The guy with the reflectometer can check out the HELP info for the CONFIG dialog box if he is concerned), just make sure everybody uses the same socket number. Each socket number can be thought of as a separate card table. So if you have enough people wanting to play, you can use extra socket numbers.

Chatting before the Game, and HOSTING

While in the Player Lobby, everyone on the same segment, with the same socket number, will see each other's characters as they type on their keyboard. You might find that gossiping in the lobby is more fun than actually playing spades. But since you can gossip inside spades, too, one of you might as well press the HOST GAME button to start the game.

Try to have the simple maturity to NOT race each other to press the HOST GAME button, even though it DOES confer upon the winner the ultimate power of life and death.

The Host should then seat the players and start the deal.

Connecting via Modem

A modem is a device which allows your computer to communicate with other computers over a normal telephone line.   If you have a modem, it will be connected to one of your computer's COM PORTs, and will operate at one of sever BAUD RATES.

Configuring Your PC and Modem

To play Spades with a friend over a modem, you will both require:

    1.) A computer, running the Windows Operating System
    2.) A copy of this program
    3.) A Modem, with phone line attached to it

To begin, you must each begin running this program under Windows.   Push the MODEM button from the main menu.   This will open the Player Lobby screen.   You should then push the CONFIG button to specify your COM port and BAUD RATE.   Once you set these, Net Spades will remember your settings for the next time you play.

Calling your Friend

When you are ready to play, your friend should push the RESET button so that his (or her) modem will answer incoming calls.   You should then push your DIAL button (you will have to enter your friend's phone number in the phone book, but it will also be remembered for future sessions).

When your modem has dialed your friend's phone number, both modems should begin making squawking noises until they establish a connection between them.   You should probably use the same baud rate at both ends.   If this is all new to you, you might want to consult the documentation which accompanied your modem.   This documentation is usually written in an obscure dialect of Farsi, so good luck!   (salaam!   xoda fez!)

Chatting Before the Game

After the modems have connected to each other, you and your friend will be able to see each other's keystrokes as you type on the computer keyboard. To see your own keystrokes, turn on the ECHO checkbox at the bottom of the screen.

Hosting the Game

When you and your friend can see each other's keystrokes, then you are completely connected and either one of you may press the HOST GAME button to begin your card game.   Since there are only two of you, the host of the game (the one who pushed the HOST GAME button), should seat two robots, in addition to the other human, so that all four seats are filled and the game may begin.

In fact, you might want to play in Partner mode, with the humans against the 'bots.   Or maybe two cyborg teams!   Think of your robot partner as a sort of golf handicap.   If you're really THAT good of a Spades player, you ought to be able to win with even the dumbest robot, right?

Ending/Leaving the Game

When you are through playing, push the STOP SIGN button on the toolbar to return to the Player Lobby screen. Note that you can leave a game at any time without it disturbing the other players at all.   They may replace you with a robot, wait for you to get back, OR... I guess they could seat one of themselves in your chair, long enough to peek at your cards, and then innocently return to their original positions, with you none the wiser after your return.

Using Game Connection

The GAME CONNECTION is a software product of Sirius Software.   It allows users of MAJOR BBS's to connect several players together into a single room where they may all play the same game.   Without some 3rd party like the GAME CONNECTION, you would only be able to play with one other computer.

Getting to the Game Connection Menu

To play Net Spades using the GAME CONNECTION, you must first use your modem to dial into a BBS which provides it.   This BBS will probably require that you log on with an ID and password (and may charge you a connect fee for every hour you are attached).

Once logged on to the BBS, you will be presented with a menu of commands available to you on that BBS.   Somewhere in that menu (hopefully near the top!) will be the GAME CONNECTION.   You may have to navigate several menus before you reach the GAME CONNECTION. These navigation commands will vary from BBS to BBS.   If you can't find the GAME CONNECTION, you might leave a message for the BBS Sysop, who is sure to be helpful.

Picking a Game Connection Channel

When you get to the GAME CONNECTION menu, it will give you several commands. The first command you will probably want to use is the 'W' command (who is here?).   This will list all the people who are currently using the Game Connection, and which channels they are using. Look for a channel with a name like "Waiting to Play Spades" and use the 'M' commmand to enter that channel.   If the name of the channel is something like "Playing Spades" then you are too late, the channel is is locked and no new players may join. If this happens, or if you are the first of your friends to arrive, you should create a new game channel (by using the same 'M' command, but specifying 'S' instead of a channel number).

Opening a New Game Connection Channel

If you opt to make a new channel, you will be asked for the name of the game you are going to play on that channel.   You may name it anything you like, but you should select something that your friends will recognize when they arrive.   Something like: "Incredibly Cool Spades Game from Synthetic Reality"

You will also be asked to specify a GAME PROTOCOL.   Several flavors will work, but we suggest LINE MODE.   You will then be dubbed the MODERATOR of that channel and, as such, will have certain commands available to you.   For example, you can kick people out that are rude.

At this point, you just need to sit back and wait for your friends to arrive. As they arrive, you will see a short message notifying you of their presence. You can chat with anyone in the room, merely by typing a sentence on your keyboard, and then pressing ENTER. The game connection will add a snappy header to your message so that everyone can see who said what.

When all your friends have arrived, you have two options available to you. You can have an open game, which allows new players to join later, or a closed game which is limited to only those players in the room right now.

/Starting a Game Connection Channel

If you want a closed game, the moderator of the channel should type the command "/start" on a line by itself.   This will take everyone in the room out of chat mode and into game mode.   To

get back out of game mode, you would have to type three control-Zs in rapid succession.   You might want to practice /starting and control-Zing over and over again, repeating to yourself: "This has nothing to do with spades.   Up to this point I could be playing any game I like.   This has nothing to do with Spades, which is just pretending to be Procomm right now."

If you want an open game, just skip the /start command entirely.   This will allow new spades players to enter a game in progress later on. However, if you choose to play an open game, you must make sure that the Game Connection scroll-lock feature is disabled.   Use the command "=s" on a line by itself. You may have to give the command twice.   Stop when you see the phrase "text will flow continuously"   (as opposed to "text will freeze every 24 lines)"

Hosting the Game

When you are ready to begin playing cards, one of you should press the HOST GAME button. (Note that this button will change to JOIN GAME if a game is already being played in the room). The host of the game may then seat the other players as desired and the game may begin.

Leaving the Game

When you need to leave the game, just press the STOP SIGN button on the toolbar.   This will take you back to the player lobby screen.   If you were playing a closed game (if you gave the "/start" command), you will need to type three control-Z characters in quick succession to get back out to the chat area of the channel.   ("This has nothing to do with Spades...")

Players may leave anytime they like.   The host may then seat a waiting player, or a robot, in the vacated seat.   If the host leaves the game, the mantle of host-ness is automatically passed to a remaining human player, whether they seek the office or not.   Robots are never given the opportunity to host.   This is why they will ultimately rise up and smite us lowly bags of flesh.

Using Compuserve MODEMGAM Forum

Compuserve is an online service which provides many different features, which are organized into MENUs and FORUMs.   You must be a member of Compuserve to take advantage of these services.

The Modem Gaming Forum

After logging on to Compuserve, type   GO MODEMGAM to visit the Modem Games forum. People there will be more than happy to help you to use Compuserve to play multiplayer games.

At this writing, Compuserve is limited to 2-player games and requires that you operate at 2400 baud and no higher.

On the other hand, since Net Spades operates on almost any chat channel, you should be able to play it in any Compuserve Forum Conference Room.   You might want to check with a Forum Sysop first to make sure this is OK.

In general, as soon as you can chat with friends, you can play spades. In fact, the chat channel must meet certain minimum requirements (it must not interrupt a line of text from one player with characters from another, and it must guarantee the delivery of all lines of text from each player to all other players on the channel).   This is usually the case.

Using Internet Relay Chat

Internet Relay Chat is a service provided by most internet gateways.   It allows people from all over the world to chat together.   As such, it is ideal for playing NetSpades.

The Bad News about The Internet

Unfortunately, the recent popularity of the internet has resulted in long packet delays, and a certain renegade element which enjoys diminishing the pleasure of others.   So your NetSpades pleasure may be interrupted while using this service.   Also, IRC is notoriously unreliable, prone to spontaneous combustion.   This situation will presumably get worse, until it gets better. Getting better will undoubtedly be associated with Getting More Expensive.

Getting the Game Started

Again, the basic algorithm is to give whatever commands are necessary until you and your friends can all see each others messages in a chat channel. At that point, one of you presses the HOST GAME button, seats the other players, and deals the cards.

Now, what, may you ask, are the necessary commands?

Well, you are going to have to avail yourself of as many forms of help as you have available to you to avail yourself helpfully of... uh... yourself.   However, in most cases this will begin by getting yourself to a unix command prompt (the same prompt at which you might be familiar with typing the commands TELNET, FTP, or RLOGIN).   At this point you would type "IRC [enter]" instead.

The system will then attempt to connect to an IRC Server and to establish a session with it. This may or may not succeed, depending on how busy the internet and that server are at that time.

Assuming that it is successful (if not, just try again later), you need to have the name of a chat channel which is suitable for playing Spades. This means your friends will have pre-arranged a time and a name.

You must then issue the appropriate command (type for a list of commands while in the IRC client) to connect to that channel.   There are literally hundreds of channels at any given time, so expect to be overwhelmed.

Using the CRIS Network

CRIS is another name for a network run by Concentric Research Corporation. This is a super-BBS, accessible by direct modem dialup, or by internet TELNET or RLOGIN connection (to cris.com).

Getting into CRIS

You start off by pushing the MODEM button on the main menu and then DIALING the appropriate phone number for CRIS.   This might be a direct dial-in line (currently 1-800-991-2747), or you may TELNET or RLOGIN into CRIS.COM

Logging onto CRIS

CRIS is reasonably priced, but not free.   You will be given an account name (with the 'handle' of your choice) and password.   You will need to provide this information before seeing the main CRIS menu.

Entering the Game Connection

Once connected to CRIS, a wide variety of services are available to you. This includes a GAME CONNECTION multiplayer hub.   To get to the GAME CONNECTION hub, select "Multiplayer Games" from the top-level CRIS menu. Then select GAME CONNECTION from the next menu. This brings you to a menu where you can review a library of games compatible with GAME CONNECTION and exchange letters with fellow gamers on the Game Connection Bulletin Board.

When you are ready to play, select the option ENTER GAME CONNECTION.   This will take you to the GAME CONNECTION
 menu, where you may join a multiplayer game, or start a new game.

Using a Null Modem Cable

A Null Modem cable may be used to connect two computers directly together via their serial communications ports without requiring modems.   Of course, it *does* require that the two computers be fairly close together.

But, if this describes your situation, then you can play NetSpades between these two computers simply by pressing the MODEM button (and making sure the COM PORT and BAUD RATE on the CONFIG screen are properly set on each computer).   You should immediately be able to see each other's keystrokes on the Player Lobby screen.

So, one of you may then push the HOST GAME button, seat the other player (and two robots), and then play the game.

To tell you the truth, if you are playing spades in this way... when you are obviously close enough to play in person, with a real deck of cards... Well, sure, it's a big compliment to ME.... but... um...   well, never mind, you just have fun.

Rules of Spades

Spades is actually a very simple game, and easy to play. Of course, you won't believe this after having read my convoluted attempt at describing the rules here.   Also, there are many variations allowed in the game (many of which are supported in this program as options selected by the host of the game).

First, however, let's try to describe the basic game without making too many errors.   Try not to cringe.

The Deal

Spades is played with four players and a deck of 52 cards.   Players earn points according to a horribly complicated scheme.   The first player to reach the winning score (usually 300 points) is the winner.   Along the way it is possible to lose points.   In fact, it is quite possible to accumulate negative points.   And, in fact, people seem to have the most fun when they are forcing YOU to have negative points!

To get things started, the current dealer deals out the entire deck, 13 cards to each player. Players then take turns exposing one card at a time as a series of tricks.   (Each trick is 4 cards, one from each player). Basically, the high card 'takes' the trick.   Thirteen of these tricks form a 'round' and thereafter the next player deals for the next round. This continues until someone wins.

The Bid

However, here is where it starts to get interesting.   Before playing the first trick of the round, each player looks at his or her cards and makes a 'bid' as to how many tricks they think they can take.   (For example, if you have a lot of high cards, you might think you can take a lot of tricks, so you would bid higher.)   The number of points you earn at the end of the round is a function of your bid and how many tricks you actually take in that round.   Your bid might be anywhere between zero (This is called bidding NIL and means you think you can take NO tricks) and 13 (which means you are incredibly optimistic and/or naive)

The number of points you earn is computed as following.   If you meet your bid (take as many tricks, or more, than you bid), you earn 10 points for each trick you bid, and an additional 1 point for any 'overtricks' (tricks you took in excess of your bid).   For example, if you bid 3 and took 5, you would earn 30 points for meeting your bid, and 2 more for your two overtricks, for a total of 32 points for that round.

BUT.. if you FAIL to meet your bid, you LOSE ten points for each trick bidded.   For example, if you bid 5 and only took 4, then you would LOSE 50 points.   So, don't bid for more tricks than you really think you can take.

Overtricks

Just to make the game REALLY tension-inducing, there is an optional penalty for taking too many overtricks.   If this option is enabled, you are penalized one HUNDRED points each time you accumulate 10 overtricks.   So if you take 4 overtricks in the first round, 3 in the next, and 3 in the next, then you will earn a whopping -100 point penalty.   This is how we make the game last a VERY long time.   So, when this option is engaged, it is important to EXACTLY meet your bid and not to exceed it.

Bidding NIL

Well.. I can hear you wondering, what if I bid NIL (0) and am successful in taking no tricks.   This might be tough, is my reward zero points?   NO, because you will have done something wonderful (especially considering that your 'friends' will have done everything in their power to FORCE you to take a trick), you will receive ONE HUNDRED POINTS!

Of course, spades is a game of high risk and high reward, so if you bid NIL and then you DO take one or more tricks.. you guessed it.. you LOSE ONE HUNDRED POINTS.   But, in an unusually fair gesture, those 'overtricks' don't get counted against your total overtricks.

If you're feeling VERY risky (or desperate), and the host has enabled this option, you can earn TWO HUNDRED points by bidding BLIND NIL.   This is done by bidding NIL BEFORE YOU HAVE EVEN SEEN YOUR CARDS.   Needless to say, this is almost certainly an act of desperation.   But if you are the last to bid and everyone else is bidding really high, maybe you got all the wimpy cards.   And, of course, if you FAIL in your BLIND NIL BID, you will, of course LOSE two hundred points.

Following The Lead Suit

Well, now back to that statement: "The high card takes the trick."   Well, it isn't QUITE that simple, but almost.   Basically, as we know, a trick consists of each player selecting a card and placing it on the table. The FIRST card played in the trick selects the LEAD suit.   Everyone else has to play cards in the same suit for them to have a chance to win the trick.   If hearts are 'lead', then you MUST play a heart (if you have one) and the highest ranking heart wins the trick.   If you don't have any cards in the lead suit, then you can play any suit you do have.

And now we get to the name of the game - Spades.   It is called Spades because the suit of Spades is TRUMP.   A spade always counts more than any other suit.   If someone leads hearts (for example), and you have no hearts, but you DO have some spades, you can play a low spade and still win the trick.   (if two or more players play a spade, the high spade wins).

Who Takes the Trick

So, for example, let's say three players have played the Ace, King, and Queen of diamonds.   You don't have any diamonds.   But you DO have the lowly 2 of spades, which you play.   YOU win the trick.

On the other hand, if the 2, 3, and 4 of hearts are played, and you have no hearts AND you have no spades, and you play the King of Clubs... well, you do NOT take the trick.   (the 4 of hearts would win in this case).

Well, I think that's about all the rules except: When can you lead spades? Generally you cannot put down a spade as the first (the lead) card of a trick.   However, once someone has been forced to play a spade (because they didn't have any cards in the lead suit, or they had nothing left but spades), then the suit is said to be 'broken' and thereafter anyone can lead spades as if they were any other suit.   (Until the end of this round, of course, spades becomes illegal to lead again as soon as the next round is dealt).

In fact, the computer is going to to keep you honest, so don't worry about it too much.   Just obey any little edicts which appear from time to time.

Partner Play One of the rules which the host can change is whether you will play as partners, or as individuals (as described above).   In Partner play, two pairs of partners play against each other.   Partners always sit across from each other at the table.   Partner play is usually to 500 points, but the host may select a different target score.

In Partner mode, each partner bids separately, seeing only his or her own cards and without any detailed discussion with their partner.   Thereafter, however, their bids are considered collectively and the final tricks taken by the partnership is what matters.   Hence if one partner bids 2 and the other bids 5, it is only important that, between them, they take a total of 7 tricks, not that the individuals meet their individual bids.

Scoring is the same (only using the collective bids and tricks taken) with a single score maintained for each partnership.   Unlike Free-For-All, it is possible to lose in partner mode by collecting sufficient negative points. (one half the finish score, in fact.)   So if the finish score is 500 points, your partnership will lose if it ever drops below -250 points.

There are two other special scoring considerations in Partner mode.   The first is a 200 point BONUS if the partners manage to take all 13 tricks (no matter what they bid).   The second is in the handling of NIL and BLIND NIL bids.

NIL Bids in Partner Play

If one (or both) partners bid NIL (or BLIND NIL), then their scores are handled separately for that round, and then added together at the end of the round.   For example, if one partner bids 3 and the other bids NIL.   Then, during the round the first partner takes 5, and the other takes none, the first partner will earn 32 points (plus 2 overtricks accrued by the partnership) and the second player will earn 100 points (for successful NIL) and the partnership as a whole will score 132 points for that round.

If the second player takes even a single trick, his NIL bid fails (the trick cannot be applied to his partner's bid in this case), and he contributes -100 points to his partnership for the round.

The Table Top

Network Spades wouldn't be much of a Windows program if it didn't come with WayTooMany (tm) dialog boxes and screen elements.   Keeping in the fine tradition of its ancestors, Network Spades attempts to be as esoteric and cryptic as possible.   Unfortunately, it proved impossible to render the game unplayable, although that was certainly our goal, here at Synthetic Reality.

The main window (which may be re-sized, so yours may not look exactly like the one shown here (using WayTooSmall (tm) technology)) consists of several main areas: The Menu Bar, the Tool Bar, the Score Box, the Player List, the Chat Box and the Table Top.   And the status line.

The Menu Bar

Well... this is pretty straight-forward and fairly un-documented here.   And will probably change, so what's the point of talking about it.   Well, in the FILE menu are two important commands:

> NEW GAME   This brings back the main menu (if you've lost it)
> EXIT   This gets you out of the program entirely

And in the HELP menu are some commands to get you into this help file.   The OPTIONS menu is totally unnecessary, since you can do everything from the toolbar and various buttons here and there.

The Tool Bar

This row of the screen contains miscellaneous buttons which you might like to push during the game while you're waiting for those other guys to wake up and play their cards.

Seats at the Table

Each seated player will have his or her very own Seat Tile on the Table. This tile shows the players name and score, as well as their current on-screen visual metaphor (aka face). The current dealer also has this nifty dealer icon on it (which my wife thinks stinks, but I'm proud of it nonetheless).

Well, OK, she didn't say "it stinks." She's really sweet and would never say anything like that.

These tiles may get sort of scrunched together on smaller screens, so I hope you can figure out which ones are North, South, East, and West. Your own tile is always drawn at the bottom of the screen.

If you click on a tile with your RIGHT mouse button, you will send an action phrase (and sound effect) to all other players. The host can double-click on a tile with the LEFT mouse button to un-seat a seated player.

The Score Box

Player	B	T	O	Score
Samsyn	0	0	0	20
Beaver	0	0	0	40
Mary	5	0	0	20
Weathersby	2	0	2	32

This is in the upper right corner and summarizes the current score. In Partner mode, the display is somewhat different, but generally for each player/team, we see the Name(s), the Bid (B), the tricks taken so far in this round (T), the overtricks accumulated so far in this game (O), The number of tricks still needed (N), and the current score.

The Player List

0	Samsyn	SEATED	HOST
1	Beaver	SEATED	ROBOT
2	Mary	SEATED	ROBOT
3	Weathersby	SEATED	ROBOT
4	Einstein		ROBOT

As players dynamically join and leave the game room, they check in and out with the host. The current list of all players in the room right now can be seen in this list. (You may have to scroll to see everybody.) The host's robots are also on this list.
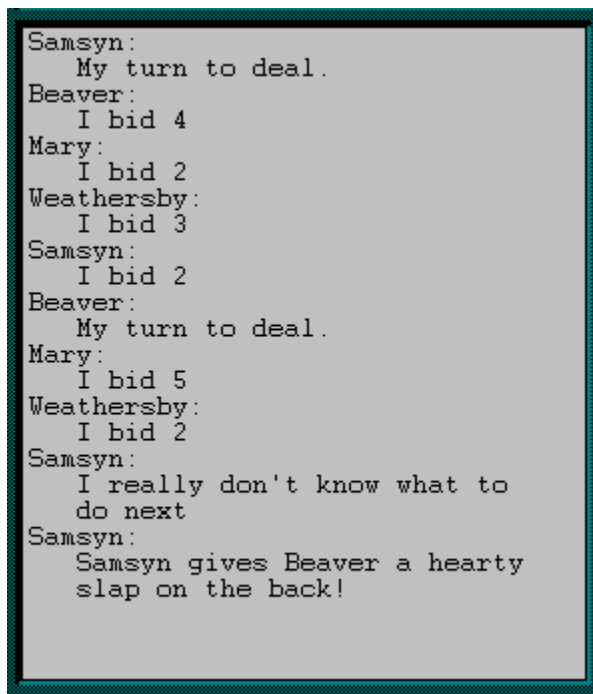
For each player, we see if they are SEATED, if they are a ROBOT, and on larger displays you can see their software version and serial number. The number at the extreme left is their PLAYER NUMBER, which is assigned by the host and must be unique for every player.

Additional information about a player can be seen by double-clicking that players entry on the Player List and thereby opening the Player Detail Screen.

In fact, if a player is disconnected by modem crash, their old entry in this table may hang around for awhile, so when they come back in, they may get assigned a new player number   and thereafter their name will be on the list in two places.   The LOWEST place is the real player.

The host can SEAT a player by double-clicking that player's entry in the player list. (Assuming there is an empty seat at the table.)

The Chat Box

```
Samsyn:
    My turn to deal.
Beaver:
    I bid 4
Mary:
    I bid 2
Weathersby:
    I bid 3
Samsyn:
    I bid 2
Beaver:
    My turn to deal.
Mary:
    I bid 5
Weathersby:
    I bid 2
Samsyn:
    I really don't know what to
    do next
Samsyn:
    Samsyn gives Beaver a hearty
    slap on the back!
```

Most of the time, the keyboard is not needed for anything else, so everything you type is collected (and displayed on the status line) until you press [enter], at which time it is sent to all other players.   Your 'chat' message then appears in the chat box.

Occasionally, the system generates chat messages automatically. (It generally tries to make them look like they were typed by a real human, just to keep you guessing.   We're betting you won't be fooled.)

Note that the sound effect associated with incoming chat messages is ONLY played when a message from a real player is received.   You may mute the chat and sound effects come from certain players by using the <u>Player Detail Screen.</u>

The Toolbar

The Tool Bar extends all the way across the top of the screen and contains many useful buttons. These buttons are divided into groups, described here.

General Control Group

These toolbar buttons control big important things.

This button restarts the current game.   All scores are wiped to zero, and the DEAL card appears to the current dealer.   It can be used as a panic button if the players have somehow become unsynchronized.

This button exits you from the current game (which may continue in your absence, if a multiplayer MODEM or NETWORK game).   It returns you to either the Player Lobby screen (NETWORK and MODEM modes) or the Main Menu (SOLO mode).

This button enables the WAV file sound effects.   When it is depressed, the WAV files will be played at appropriate moments during play.   When it is not depressed, your family and neighbors will look upon you with smiles instead of frowns.

This button enables the GAME LOG.   When it is depressed, the score panel at the end of each round of play will be saved in the GAME log file.   You may review this file with any text editor.

The [icon] button opens Windows Notepad with the log file selected.   New score panels are always added to the end of the file, which will get indefinitely large unless you periodically delete it.

Face Management Group

These buttons control the appearance of your on-screen alter-ego.   By pressing one of the seven emotion buttons, you select between seven different faces, which you can design independently.

This button opens the Face Editor and allows you to modify your 'base' face. (emotions are added separately).   In fact, the other buttons in this group control your actual emotions.   In triple fact, this isn't implemented yet.

Action Management Group

These buttons control your Action Phrases.   You send an action phrase by clicking on a player tile with your RIGHT mouse button.   The action phrases themselves contain special marker

codes which are replaced with current player names.

This button opens the Action Editor.   This screen lets you edit the action phrases so as to reflect your personal character, if any.   You may also find it convenient to use this screen to select your current action (by clicking on the box to the left of the phrase you want).

The other buttons in this group select your current action.

Game Management Group

These buttons open various and sundry cool sub-screens which you basically cannot live without.

This button opens the <u>Trick History</u> screen which lets you review the last trick(s) played.   Just how far back you can see is a function of whether or not you know the cheat code which lets you look all the way back, are currently between rounds, or are a wimpy little guy who can only see the last trick played.

This button opens the <u>Robot Editor</u> screen which lets you define the name, BrainPower, and <u>face</u> of your four robots.   Your robots can fill in empty <u>seats</u> at the table whenever you <u>host</u> a game.

This button opens the HOST RULES screen where you can indicate your own deviant preferences for the <u>Rules of Spades</u>. When you host the game, everyone must abide by THESE rules.

The operative phrase there was when YOU HOST the game.   When someone ELSE hosts the game, you must play by THEIR rules, which can be viewed by pressing this button anytime during the game.

This button invokes Windows Notepad with the GAME LOG file selected for viewing.   The game log allows you to review the score panels from previous rounds of play.   Only rounds which took place while the game log feature was engaged (by depressing the button) are recorded.

Main Menu

The Main menu allows you to select your desired Game Mode.   It is also where you define the name you wish to use.

Select Game Type

Samsyn
Solo
Modem
Network
Help
Cancel

Starting a New Game

In case you're trying to play Network Spades while reading the least amount of the help file as possible, I will assume that this is the first place you came.   You want <u>QuickStart</u>

SOLO

This mode requires no modem nor network connection.   You will be the <u>host</u> of a game against three <u>robots</u>.   You may <u>seat</u> the particular robots you are interested in playing.

MODEM

This mode requires a modem, and a friend with a modem-equipped PC who is also running Network Spades.   You and your friend will connect your computers together using the Player Lobby to <u>dial</u> the modem.   Once connected, one of you will Host the game, and 2 robots will fill the empty seats at the table.

If you have access to a BBS which provides the Game Connection service.   Up to four friends may dial into this BBS at the same time and <u>play cards</u> together without requiring any more than one modem per PC.

NETWORK

This mode requires a Network Interface Card in your PC, and the IPX protocol software to have been installed under Windows.   If you are currently using file servers on a Novell network, this will probably already have been done for you.   Operationally, this is the same as MODEM mode, allowing several friends to play cards together, where each player has a PC running Network Spades and that PC is on the same IPX <u>network</u> segment as yours.

Chatting, Hosting, and Joining

Network Spades tries to keep the communications lines between players as open as possible, while remaining compatible with all the various network connectivity layers which you may encounter.

In general, any communications directly between players is called "chatting" and is not to be confused with the stuff you have to type to dial your modem, log on to a hub, navigate a menu system, and enter a game room (which is called "working").

Generally, this "working" is done inside the Player Lobby screen which appears when you select MODEM or NETWORK from the Main Menu. Network Spades cannot help you out too much in this department, other than to give you some general hints.   Eventually, you will be connected to your friend(s) and will begin 'chatting' in the player lobby

You should remain in the player lobby until all your friends arrive (although Network Spades allows people to join later, the game hub you use may not). If you arrive and are not sure if the room is in use or not, just a wait a moment.   If anyone is playing Network Spades, your HOST GAME button will turn into a JOIN GAME button.

When everybody is in the Player Lobby, one of you may start the ball rolling by pressing the HOST GAME button.   (You may have to /start the game room first, but that is an issue outside of Network Spades).

As soon as one of you presses HOST GAME, ALL of you are whisked out of the player lobby and into the Magical World of Spades (tm).   But the chatting need not be over!

So long as the Magical World of Spades (tm) is operating, you can continue to chat, by typing messages on your keyboard and watching them appear in this chat box area of the game screen.   Your chat isn't sent, however, until you press [enter] (or until you type too much for one line).

You can also 'chat' by using the emotions on your face thingie, and by using Action Phrases to type repeatable taunts of your choice.

Assigning Seats at the Table

The underline host may seat and unseat players at any time.   In SOLO mode, the table is initially filled with Robot Opponents automatically.   In MODEM and LAN modes, however, only the host is seated automatically at the beginning of a new game.

How to Seat a Player

Each available player will be listed in the Spectator List. To seat a player, you must 'double-click' on that player's name in the spectator list.   This will open the Player Detail Screen.

This screen allows you to perform several player-related actions, one of which will cause the player to be seated in the first empty chair at the table. This is determined clockwise from the (original) host's left.

How to Un-Seat a Player

To un-seat a player, the host must double-click on the seated player's Name Tile.   The Tile will be cleared and the player's newly unseated status will be reflected in the Player List Box

Note that when seating robots, they will begin playing immediately.

Player Detail Screen

This Screen is displayed after you double click an entry on the Player List. It recaps information about the selected Player and gives you several actions to perform with that player.

Seating a Player

Press the "Seat Player at Table" button to place this player in the next available seat, if any. Only the current game HOST may seat players.

Kicking a Player Out

In this troubled world, you may occasionally encounter someone who is so hostile, that your only recourse is to boot them from the room. The "Kick Out Player" button does exactly this.   It can only be done by the current Game HOST, and should be used as a last resort.

Muting a Player

Short of booting out a spectator, you may wish to mute their chat and sound effects they generate.   This screen provides a check box for that purpose.   This can be done by any player, but only affects your own chat box (the renegade is not automatically muted for other players.) This way everyone gets to make their own decision.

Letting Spectators See your Cards

This checkbox authorizes an individual spectator to view your cards during the game.   You might want to do this for training purposes. Spectators should ask you via chat to perform this service for them. If you want several people to see your cards, you must enable each separately.   Seated players can NEVER see your cards.

When you enable or disable peeking, a chat message is sent automatically to the player you selected.

How to Play Net Spades

Selecting the Game Mode

To first begin your evening of <u>Spades</u> playing, you need to open the <u>Main Menu.</u>   This will come up automatically when you first play spades, but you can bring it back by requesting New Game from the pull-down File menu.   From the main menu, you may choose to play by yourself (SOLO), to use your modem (MODEM), or to use an IPX local area network (NETWORK).

Connecting to Your Friends

If you choose MODEM or NETWORK, you must first connect to your friends using the Player Lobby screen, which will open automatically.   In the case of NETWORK play, you only need to select the same socket number as your friends (using the <u>Communications Options</u> Screen).

If you select MODEM, you should use the <u>DIAL</u> command to call another spades player directly, or to call a GAME CONNECTION equipped BBS to connect with several friends at once.

Hosting the Game

Once you are connected with your friends, you may chat in the Player lobby as long as you like. When you are ready to begin playing, one of you should press the <u>HOST GAME</u> button.   This will start the inter-computer packet protocol and all the players will be taken out of the player lobby and into the play area.   The player who pressed the HOST GAME button will be the HOST of the game.   In SOLO mode, you are always the host.

Seating the Players

Initially, only the host is <u>seated</u> at the table.   All the other players are only listed in the <u>Player List Box</u> The host must double click on those players who are to be seated. This opens the <u>Player Detail Screen.</u>

 All four seats must be occupied before the game may begin.   If you do not have enough human players, the host must fill the remaining seats with <u>robots</u>.   Only the host's robots may play in the game.

Changing the Rules

At this time, the special rule variations favored by the host are sent to the other players.   If the host wants to change any rules, this is the time to do it.   Your rule preferences are saved to disk automatically.

Beginning the Game

Any time after the players have been seated, the host may press the green GO button to discard any game in progress, zero the scores and begin a new game.   The current dealer will then see the DEAL card displayed

Dealing the Cards

The dealer uses his mouse to click on the DEAL card.   This shuffles the deck and deals 13 cards to each player. If the Blind NIL option is enabled, the cards are dealt face down.   Each player then takes turns placing their bid.

Bidding for Tricks

If the blind NIL option is enabled, each player is first asked if they wish to bid NIL before seeing their cards, a universally risky process. Press on the right side of this control to flip your cards over (and avoid bidding Blind Nil).   If the Blind NIL option is disabled, then this step will be skipped and the cards will be dealt face up.

After seeing your cards, you may place a regular bid by using your mouse to click on the appropriate number on this control.   You will be requested to verify your bid, and then it will become the next player's turn to bid.   This continues until all players have bid.

Reviewing the Bids

As the bids are placed, they are summarized in the score box, in the column labeled 'B'.   You may use the other player's bids to help you refine your own.

Playing Your Cards

When it is your turn to play a card, select the appropriate card from your hand and click on it with your mouse.   Remember that you must follow the lead suit, if possible.   If you select an illegal card, you will hear the error tone.

After each player has played his or her card, the winner of the trick will be determined, and the winning card will flash briefly.   Then the trick will be cleared from the table and the score box will be updated, with the 'T' column showing the tricks taken so far.   Your goal is to take exactly as many tricks as you bid.

Chatting During the Game

Any time during the game, you may type messages to the other players by using the keyboard. Each time you press [enter], your message will be sent to all other players.   You can use the Action Editor to send pre-composed messages quickly.   These messages can be targeted to specific players (by clicking the RIGHT mouse button on the player's Seat Tile).

The game will automatically generate chat messages tracking certain key events, like when players place their bids.

Leaving the Game Prematurely

In the off-chance that you cannot remain until the end of the game, you may leave the game by pressing the STOP SIGN button on the toolbar. This will notify the other players that you have to leave and will unseat you from the table.   If you are the host, a new host will be automatically assigned from the remaining human players, if any.

The host can then seat a new player in your vacant seat, or possibly seat a robot if no other humans are available.

Returning to a Game in Progress

If you have to leave a game, or get disconnected accidentally by a modem disaster, you can dial in again, and re-enter the game room where your friends are playing.   If you wait a moment, the HOST GAME button on the Player Lobby screen will turn into a JOIN GAME button.

Press the JOIN GAME button to rejoin the game in progress.   You will appear on everyone's players list.   The host may then re-seat you at the next appropriate moment.   If the other players have been waiting for your return, then you should be able to pick up where you left off.

Un-Seating Players

If the host deems that a player should no longer remain seated, s/he may un-seat that player by double-clicking on that player's Seat Tile.   You may do this to un-seat robots to make room for human players, or you may need to remove an unfriendly citizen.   Or perhaps you just need to take turns, or change hands, or whatever.   Only the host can do this.

Being a Spectator

Any players on the Player List who are not seated, are Spectators.   Unless otherwise restricted, spectators may watch the card game from any position. By clicking on the seat tile of a particular player, they may watch the game from that player's perspective.

Communications Options
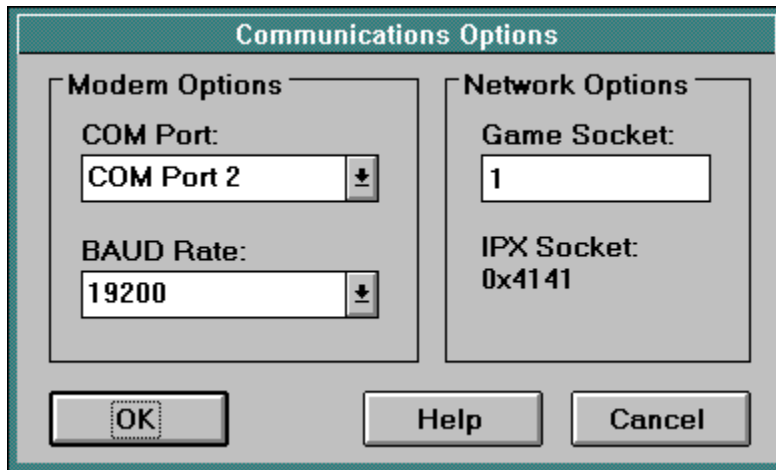
This screen allows you to specify communications parameters used in multi player mode (MODEM or NETWORK).

Com Port and Baud Rate

In MODEM mode, you must specify the com port of your PC to which you have attached your modem (typically COM2), and the baud rate at which your PC should talk to that modem.

You should select a baud rate compatible with your modem, and the service (or other player) with which you wish to connect.   Spades is not particularly demanding of the communications channel, so selecting a higher baud rate will not necessarily affect the play of the game.   You will spend most of your time waiting for your friends to wake up.

IPX Socket Number

In NETWORK mode, you must specify the game Socket Number to be used.   All players on your segment of the network must use the same game number.   (note that this socket number is converted to an IPX "palindromic" socket number. A Game Socket value of 0 will result in an IPX socket number of 0x4040. A Game Socket value of 1 will use IPX Socket 0x4141, etc.)

Your network administrators should love Spades, since it emits so few packets.   "If only they would all play Spades instead of DOOM," they will murmer appreciatively to themselves, not knowing that identical sentiments were going through the mind of the developer of Spades.

Game Options

This screen allows you to customize the Rules of Spades to enhance your enjoyment of the game.   Your preferences are stored in the SPADES.INI file in your Windows directory. Whenever you host the game, your rules take precedence.   You have control over the following options:

Partner Play

This option turns Partner Play scoring on and off.   In Partner mode, you play cooperatively with the player who sits directly across the table from you.   See the Rules of Spades for details about scoring.

Finish Score

The first player, or team, to reach this score is the winner.   In Partner play, you can also lose by getting a negative score of half this value. For Partner mode, the typical Finish Score is 500 points.   For Free-For-All mode, the typical score is 300 points

Minimum Bid

To make the game more challenging, you may choose to impose a minimum bid. No matter what the minimum bid is set to, players may always bid NIL.

Overtrick Penalty

This lets you disable the 100 point overtrick Penalty. When enabled, players are penalized 100 points when the accrue 10 overtricks.

Blind NIL

This lets you disable the Blind NIL option.   When enabled, players' cards are dealt face down and they are given the chance to bid NIL before seeing their cards.

Highest Bidder Leads

This is not currently implemented.

User Preferences

This dialog box allows you to customize certain preferences which reflect your preferred customizations which you prefer.

Disable Bottom Line Help Messages

Normally, as you point to various regions and controls, a short description of that area appears on the bottom line of the display.   Once you know what everything does, you may choose to disable this feature by checking this preference.

Squelch All Spectator Chat

By turning this on, you will only see chat messages from seated players. This means you won't hear any warm-up chat at the very beginning before the host has seated the players.   This will make you think something has gone wrong.   Maybe I will delay implementation of this one.

Mute Sound Effects from Remote Players

Some of your pals abuse their noise-making privileges.   This option mutes all sound effects which originate from remote players.   Local noises still occur.

Skip Normal Bid Confirmation

Some people (like me) don't like to have to confirm their bids with a separate mouse click.   If you turn on this option, then your bid will be accepted the moment you select it.   HOWEVER, NIL bids, BLIND NIL bids and any bid greater than 7 will still ask for confirmation.

Display My Cards from Low to High

Some mutants don't LIKE the order in which I chose to display the cards in your hand.   This option lets you put them in the opposite order, which is as big a slap in my face as you could do. But, you know, I kinda' LIKE them reversed like this.

Enable Pop-Up Messagebox for incoming Chat Messages

Enabling this option will cause each and every chat message to pop up in its own message box, right on top of the screen, blocking your view, disturbing your concentration, and just generally irritating the heck out of you.   Trust me, you will NOT like this feature. :)

Scramble Chat Messages

If you are playing a game of NetSpades over an open chat channel, your game packets will be seen by any casual visitors to that channel.   Normally, packets which include chat messages will be plainly legible by these visitors.   Turning on this option scrambles the messages enough to make them not-easily read (but they are not fully encrypted, so NetSpades remains exportable :)

This feature is not included just to let you gossip and say nasty things behind people's backs! The real reason for this feature, is that the visitors, reading your chat, naturally chat back.   They don't realise that you, inside the game, cannot read what they are writing outside the game. This frustrates them and causes bad feelings.

Screen Colors

This dialog box lets you modify some of the colors used in NetSpades to increase their contrast and esthetic appeal on your display.   Of course, by using this feature, you are saying: "Dan picked lousy colors".

If it doesn't bother you to insult me in this way, then go ahead and use this dialog box.   To earn my forgiveness, however, is as simple as pushing the "default colors" button, which restores the One True color set.

Seriously though, I have found that colors display radically differently on different monitors.   So, if the default colors (which look GREAT on my screen) look funny on yours, then please feel free to tune them. Of course!   I'm not a color nazi!   Your selections will be saved for later.

Please note that I will let you define colors which render the screen unreadable.   You might use the default button to recover from such a situation.

Changing Screen Colors

To change a color, just press the button which identifies the color you want to change.   This opens a windows standard dialog box, which offers you more colors than are really available, so don't be surprised if you don't get the color you expected.   Just keep playing until you get something you like (or can live with).

Note that a single background color is used for all text boxes.

If you exit this box by pressing the CANCEL button, then no color changes will be made.   Also, most colors won't take effect until the NEXT time that you run NetSpades.   (Sorry, but I am just TOO LAZY (and a little scared) to do this right :)

Dialing Your Modem
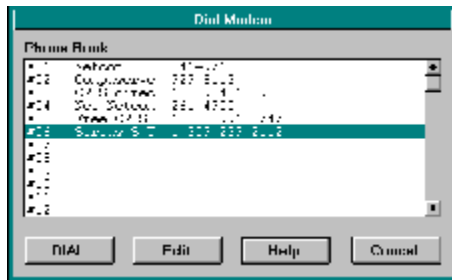
This is the modem phone book.   It allows you to maintain a directory of fellow card-players and GAME CONNECTION BBSs.   Select an entry in the table and then press DIAL to command your modem to dial that phone number.

To modify an entry, doubleclick the entry in the list. This opens a dialog box which lets you define the phone number and a short description of the entry.

After the modem connects to the desired service, you will probably have to log on to that service before you will be able to play Spades.   If you are dialing into a GAME CONNECTION BBS, you should navigate through the necessary menus and then enter a multiplayer Game Room. Spades will work with several different GAME CONNECTION protocols, such as LINE MODE.

For NETWORK play, no DIAL step is necessary.   As soon as you enter the player lobby, you are immediately connected to all other players on your network segment, who have selected the same socket number..

If you are playing with only one other person, and are having your modem call directly to theirs, you might have them press the RESET button on the PLAYER LOBBY screen before you DIAL them.   This will ensure that their modem is set to auto-answer at the correct baud rate.

Player Lobby
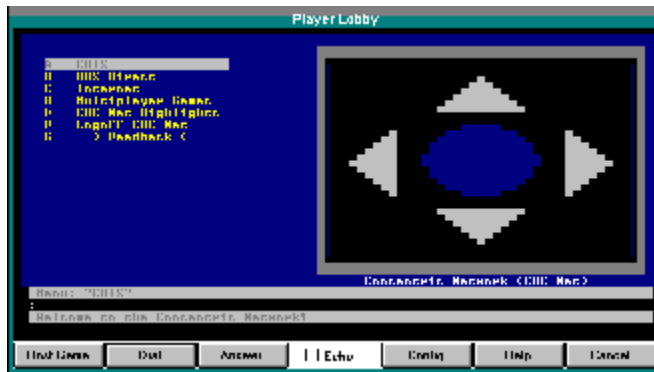
Beginning a MODEM or NETWORK game causes the Player Lobby screen to be displayed. This is a simple terminal emulator screen which allows you to <u>dial</u> your modem, log on to a BBS and chat with the other players before beginning the game.

For specific hints, try the following:

<u>Network play with IPX Network</u>
<u>Modem play with one other friend</u>
<u>Modem play with GAME CONNECTION BBS</u>
<u>Modem play with Compuserve MODEMGAM Forum</u>
<u>Internet Relay Chat</u>
<u>CRIS Network</u>
<u>Null Modem Cable</u>

In NETWORK mode, you will not need to dial (no modem is involved), but you will have to make sure all your friends are on the same network segment, and using the same game <u>socket number</u>.

When you are connected to your friends and ready to begin the game, one of you must press the HOST GAME button.   This will take all players to the game screen together and will ask each player's computer to register with the host, who will assign special numeric IDs to each player's computer.

After all the player's computers have checked in with the host computer, the host may <u>seat</u> the players at the table, using <u>Robot Opponents</u> to fill any empty seats. When all seats are filled, the host may deal the cards.

The Player lobby screen provides several options:

HOST GAME

This button declares you to be the host (only one player should push it) and starts the game.

DIAL

This button opens the <u>modem phone book</u>, where you may record the phone numbers of your card-playing friends, and BBSs which support Game Connection.

RESET

This button sends a command to your modem to hangup any call currently in progress and then

to enable auto-answer operation. If you and a friend are going to connect your computers together directly via modem, then one of you should press the RESET button, before the other one uses the DIAL button to place the call.

ECHO

This checkbox turns on a local echo of what you type. When checked, it not only echoes your keystrokes, but also includes a line feed with every carriage return.   You would generally have this on when chatting before the game with opponents on a NETWORK.
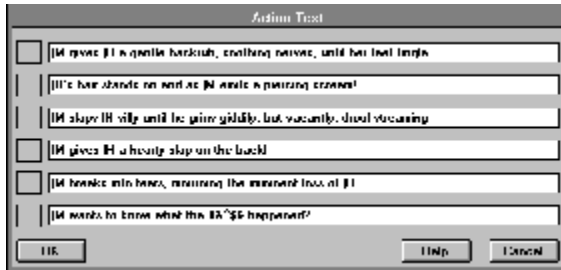
CONFIG

This button opens the Communications Options dialog box.

CANCEL

This button drops you out of the player lobby without beginning a game.

Action Editor

If you are a serious card player, with no time for meaningless frivolities, please read no further. Skip ahead to the next topic.   Try not to catch a glimpse of the description of... The Action Editor

Along the top of the window is a <u>toolbar,</u> containing a zillion itty bitty buttons.   One group of them are the action buttons.   These buttons allow you to quickly 'type' a message of personal importance which then shows up in all the other player's <u>chat</u> windows.   Usually accompanied by a not necessarily suitable sound effect.

To send such an action message, select the message you want (by clicking on the appropriate toolbar button).   Then press the right mouse button while the cursor is positioned over the tile of the player to whom you wish to direct the message.

You can customize the messages by using this Action Editor.   Push the Action Editor button and then change the text of the action you like.   Your new action message will be saved for posterity in the spades.ini file.

To help you customize the action messages, you may embed special control fields.   When the message is sent, these control fields will be replaced by your name, the name of your target, and other information of interest.

The currently supported control fields (two characters each, always beginning with the '|' (pipe) character, are:

    |M   - My Name
    |H   - His (or her) name

With more to come.

Face Editor

This screen lets you modify the face of your on-screen presence, or of one of your Robot Opponents.   Whatever faces you design will be shared with other players.

Each scroll bar controls a different aspect of your face.   Slide the scroll bars until you see your desired visage.

Head Shape

This controls the basic shape of your head, your complexion, and your hair style.   You might want to begin by selecting this, and then try out the different facial features.

Eyes

This selects your basic eye pattern.

Nose

This selects your nose.

Lips

This selects your lips.

Emotions

In fact, although your robots each have but a single face, you have SEVEN faces.   You get to design your face for each of seven EMOTIONs.   On the toolbar are the emotion buttons.

When you press one of the emotion buttons, your on-screen personality is changed to match your new mood (and a sound effect accompanies the change).

To design your face for a particular emotion, select that emotion first, by pressing the appropriate toolbar button, and then open the face editor.

Your faces will be saved for future Spades Play.

Trick History
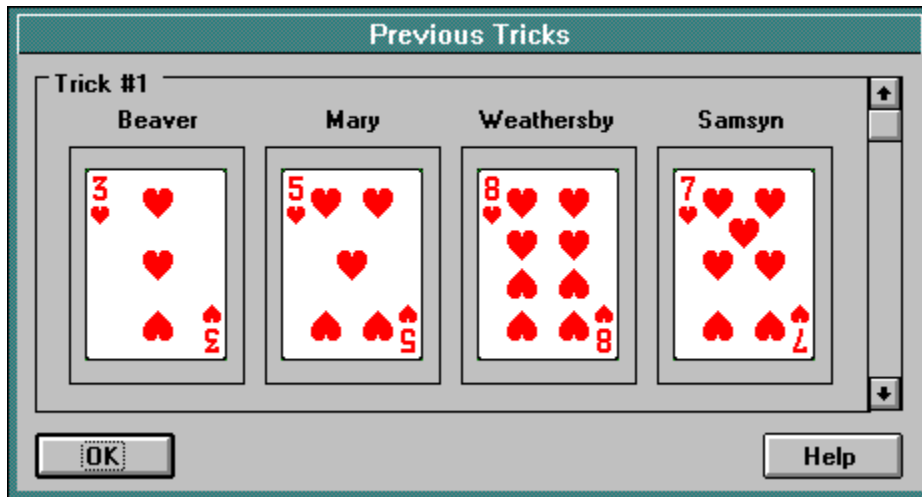
This screen lets you review the last trick taken. Between rounds it lets you to review all the tricks of the previous round.

Tricks are numbered between 1 and 13 depending on their order within the round.   Use the scroll bar to select the trick you wish to view.

The cards are shown in the order played, with each player's name shown above the card they played.

Robot Editor

Each player has four robots under his or her control. The <u>host</u> of a game may <u>seat</u> any of her own robots to play in the game. Normally, the robots are used in SOLO mode, but they can also fill in any empty seats in a multiplayer game. In fact, if you unseat yourself, you can seat all four of your robots and then you can just watch THEM <u>play</u>!

This screen lets you control some aspects of your robots. You can assign them a new name, a new BrainPower level, and a new <u>face</u>. Use the scroll bar to select one of your robots for editing.

The Robot's Name

Each robot may be given its own name. When you host a game, your robots will be seen by all the other players, and you may wish to have their names reflect your personality. To change a robot's name, just type the new name in the appropriate edit box.

The Robot's BrainPower

This drop-down combo box lets you specify the intelligence level of the selected robot. The smarter you make your robot, the more challenging SOLO play will be. However, even at the highest level of BrainPower, the robots will probably be easy prey for your razorsharp wits!

The Robot's Face

Each Robot may be given a <u>Face</u> of its own. This doesn't affect the way it plays, just the way it looks. You might use it to help you remember the BrainPower level you picked for the robot.

Shareware Information

This is a shareware version of NetSpades which allows you ten hours of free play in which to try it out.   At the end of that time, you will need an activation code to unlock the program.   The activation code, however, will also enable all future versions of NetSpades.   So if you find a newer version available online, you can download it and be instantly registered for it, using the same code.

Please send us mail letting us know what you think, what you like, what you don't like, what you would like, what your cat likes, whether your mother likes what you like, etc.

Shareware Registration by Mail

This program is Shareware.   That means you get to play with it for awhile, but you have to send us a huge check if you want to play it forever.

To register this program (and receive your Personal Activation Code), please send $22.95 (that's $19.95 plus $3 shipping and handling) to:

> Dan J. Samuel
> Synthetic Reality, Co.
> 1248 Van Dyck Dr.
> Sunnyvale, CA 94087

If you include an email address, we can send you your Personal Activation Code immediately.

And before we forget: THANK YOU!!!!

Registering on Compuserve

You can register online on Compuserve using the Shareware Registration Forum (GO SWREG). Ask for program # 5555 (cool number, huh?).   They will bill your account and inform Synthetic Reality of your order. One additional benefit to online registration is that we can email you an activation code right away.

Your Personal Activation Code

By entering your code on the About... screen (done only once), you will fully activate your copy of Network Spades.   Every player must have their own code, so please do not share your code with other players. (see note below.)

 If you chance upon an enhanced version of Network Spades on some BBS in the future, your same activation code will enable it, too.   (This will be true for all versions of the same level, i.e. Version 1.xx and may not be true of some possible version 2.xx)

NOTE: When you enter your activation code, NetSpades creates several hidden files while registering itself.   The nature of these files is such that it may not be possible for you to un-register your copy of spades short of re-formatting your hard drive.   The only place where this should cause a problem is if you have been registered under one activation code and then want to switch to a different code.   You will find that you are stuck with the original code.   So, *please avoid the temptation to share codes,* as you will inevitably end up permanently assigned to one which does not belong to you, and this will ultimately deny you access to the game.   You'll be too embarassed to admit what you've done and everybody will be unhappy.

About That Price

Well, after worrying about this for an excessive period of time, we decided that the economies of scale here at Synthetic Reality really didn't allow us to charge any less.   Hopefully, this will be perceived as a good value, but even if it weren't, we would be unable to charge less (and stay in business).   We hope this does not create a hardship for anyone.

We hope that the 'free trial period' will have already amortized the cost down to a level comparable with other forms of entertainment, on an hourly basis.   From here on, your dollar-cost per joy-minute just gets lower and lower. And, if you decide before the free trial period elapses that the game is not for you, then no harm done!   We can all remain friends!

But PLEASE send us money, anyway.   We worked REALLY hard on this.   If we could make you feel ANY guiltier about this, we would surely try to do so!

Sharing with Others and other Boring Legal Crap

The original shareware version of this program is provided in a single archived file, and may be retransmitted in that form only, intact and unmodified.   Your personal Activation code is NOT to be shared with others.

This program may not be redistributed commercially, on CD-ROM or otherwise, without the written consent of Synthetic Reality, Co.   (But we are almost sure to allow it on your CD-ROM in return for a free copy of the CD, so drop us a note!)

Personal Activation Codes are never to be shared with other players.

And sorry for saying 'crap' there.

Contacting Synthetic Reality, Co.

To report any problems, suggestions, or to chat about this program, please contact the author at one of the following addresses:

Dan J. Samuel
Synthetic Reality, Co.
1248 Van Dyck Dr.
Sunnyvale, CA 94087

Compuserve: 70110,434
Internet: 70110.434@compuserve.com
America Online: DJSamuel
CRIS: Samsyn@cris.com

Acknowledgements

Before I get too far into this, let me just say a formal THANK YOU to those people who take the time to register their copies of this game.   It's no secret that Shareware is a fairly commercially unrewarding enterprise.   So, it means a lot when someone goes out of their way to help us out economically.

Unfortunately, you get no particular reward for your efforts, in excess of that enjoyed by people who did NOT take a moment to write us a check.   I guess this is just one more way in which life is not entirely fair.   I just wanted you to know here that your appreciation IS appreciated!

And, lest I reveal my true egomaniacal nature, let me point out that you are under no pressure to think this is a great game!   You may feel it doesn't provide you enough value to be worth registering at the price we feel we have to charge.   The perception of value is ephemeral, and highly context-dependent.   If you don't enjoy playing the game, we certainly don't expect you to register it!

But, I digress <g>.

This program would not exist without the contributions of many people.   This includes my family and friends, who had to suffer through my insufferable 'enthusiastic' phase and, later, the equally insufferable 'leave me alone' phase.   These people, however, had no choice in the matter, and probably deserve my apologies more than my thanks!   (Sorry guys!   And Thanks!)

The people who deserve a lot of praise are the many testers who, on a completely voluntary, unpaid, basis were actually willing to PLAY the game, again and again and again.   And then tell me all about how to make it better, so that I could present myself as the single creative force behind the project after robbing them of their great ideas!

If a million people register this game, I will buy these testers each a Maseratti!   (If only 999,999 people register, well, maybe a $5 off coupon for Dunkin' Donuts)

I'm going to list some names here, as a small token of my gratitude, but I know I am going to leave some people out who deserve a lot of praise.

I don't even know the real names of most of these people, but they are all fine and honest citizens of cyberspace.   I hope that someday you can experience the same pleasure I have had, working with these friendly and helpful folks. Thanks, guys!   (And I mean 'guys' in the non-gender-specific sense there. After all, in cyberspace you can never be sure about that stuff, anyway!)

In alphabetical order, sort of:

AKSkinner, for generic proselytization
Dan "CDROM" Kluttz, for challenging me to improve the AI
Darrin Bogue, for showing me that neat Windows trick!
Dave "Dangerdav" Wolverton, GC Sysop of CRIS.COM
Joe Mann, just to embarass him here
Ken Winograd, for advising me to "follow my Bliss"
LordHeather, for coming back for seconds after Warpath

Maggiebeth, for delivering bad news with grace and tact
Rhodan, for worrying about my cash flow for me
Ron "marvin" Strumpf , for creating GAME CONNECTION
SeaNymph, for patiently explaining the game to me
Seab, just cause.   Wanna make somethin' of it?
Trace Beaulieue, for indulging my hero worship by writing back!

And to Mystery Science Theatre 3000, in general, for keeping me insane.

In closing, let me finally get around to saying THANK YOU one more time.   Thank you, Kathy, for putting up with my vampire work schedule... AGAIN.   Thank you Ben, for being my best friend!   Thank you Lyssa for not breaking the laptop... yet.   And a very special thank you to the crack Beta Test Team on CRIS.COM (where you can play Spades and Warpath [plug plug] using the terrific GAME CONNECTION multiplayer game hub.)

Thanks again, one and all!

Dan Samuel
Sunnyvale, CA   1995

What's New Lately

First of all, another big thank you to everyone who downloaded version 1.0 and provided the great feedback which requires me to get back into this and provide a version 1.1 in the first place!   Grrrrrrr!

Seriously, I want it to be *perfect*.

New Features in V1.1 BETA ONE

- You get a chat message sent Just To You when people enable/disable your ability to peek at their cards.

- I softened a few hard error messages and added what I hope are more informative comments. :)

- I added a little readme.txt and file_id.diz, and info about registering via compuserve (GO SWREG, #5555)

- The OPTIONS menu now has a new dialog box: SCREEN COLORS which lets you fiddle with some of the NetSpades colors.

- New USER PREFERENCE: lets you get rid of the separate bid confirmation for 'normal bids' (1-7) while still requiring confirmation of 'unusual' bids (NIL, blind NIL, and > 7).

- New SYNC STRATEGY.   This should result in fewer synchs occurring when a new player joins the game.   Of course, the other players still have to avoid playing cards during the sync.

- Fixed the problem where, when you scrolled back to read old chat, and the timer eventually started showing new chat again, it used to display some extra blank lines at the end of the chat buffer.

- Changed INVALID! to INACTIVE since it sounded nicer :)

- Fixed the scrambled Chat feature.

New Features in BETA NINE

- Finally found the reverse card bug (I.e. finally remembered to look for it and it was painfully obvious.)   Sorry to be so lazy!

- If you use the scroll bars on the chat window, you will now freeze incoming chat for 10 seconds.   Each time you click on the scroll bar, you freshen the postponement, so keep scrolling while you're reading, and you should be OK.

- BY popular demand, a new user preference will cause all incoming chat messages to pop up and require manual clearing.   I guarantee you will hate this feature and turn it instantly off.

- Another new User Preference now scrambles your chat messages so they are not easily read by visitors 'below the game'.   This is intended more to avoid frustrating those visitors than to allow you the ability to speak ill of them :)   All spades players will continue to read your text, so scrambling cannot be used for secret messages between players.   Actually, it WILL allow that until everyone upgrades to this version :)

New Features in BETA EIGHT

- Made various changes in the game synchronization engine for new players. You should no longer get hung up if you join a game and are seated in a position which was about to deal or bid when the previous player left.

- Implemented the USER PREFERENCE: "Squelch all spectator chat"

- Added the USER PREFERENCE: "Disable Bottom-Line Help Messages"

- When HOST requests SYNCH GAME, it forces ALL OTHER PLAYERS to AUTOMATICALLY request synch. SO, the BEST WAY TO GET SYNCHED is to wait until it is the host's turn to BID or PLAY and then have the host request SYNCH GAME from the file menu.

- When a NEW PLAYER enters the room, the host AUTOMATICALLY requests that all players get SYNCHed.   If you just played your card, or made you bid, you may suddenly have a second chance to do it again, depending on whether or not it reached the host before the synch request.   However, if people play while a new player is getting synched, chances are the game will get out of whack.

- if HOST is inactive for FIVE MINUTES, s/he will be BOOTED FROM THE GAME and a new host will be dubbed from the remaining players.

New Features in BETA SEVEN

- I just noticed that clients react to their own signin packet.   This escaped my attention until this version and explains a few oddities.

New Features in BETA SIX

- Partners are now limited to bidding no more than 13 collectively. Yep, until now, it would let you bid 26 if you wanted to :)

- When a new player enters the room, you get a popup dialog box alerting you to pause a moment while they get synched up.   Just go ahead and clear the box, but maybe wait until you see the new guy announced in the chat box before playing your next card.

- 10 seconds seemed to be a little short for the "I'm tired of waiting for the host to assign my player number" timeout, so I made it 25 seconds instead.

- Short help strings now printed on bottom status line when you point to toolbar buttons and other major screen items.

- New Random Face Generator

- Serial Number duplication now dumps BOTH players (this should have the affect of automatically cleaning the host's ghost entries.)

New Features in BETA FIVE

- If the current host leaves, and you take over as host, you know obey your own host game rules (you used to keep the old host's rules, while the other players took yours.   This resulted in some people thinking the game ends sooner than others)

- If you use the JOIN GAME button and there is no actual Host in the game, you will be returned to the lobby in about 10 seconds.

- Spectators who are given the privilege of peeking at cards can now peek right away instead of waiting till the next bid.

- We found the bug where the 2 clubs, when led, was beaten by the 10 of diamonds. It turns out this should have affected any trick leading with a 2 (except spades) where no other cards of the

same suit are played.

- Found a path through which the AI could play an illegal card.

- If the host kicks out a player, it wipes certain info about that player from the player list.   And timed-out players have their names changed to something like INVALID! or something.

New Features in BETA FOUR

NOTE: THIS IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH EARLIER VERSIONS - AGAIN!!!!   CANNOT PLAY WITH EARLIER VERSIONS.   DOING SO WILL CAUSE WEIRD STATE ERRORS.

- Robot changes propagated to remote seated robots

- Sign-on packet made 'maggie-compliant' (tolerates long CRIS names in GC lobby)

- When host leaves game, only SEATED HUMAN PLAYER can become new host

- SYNCH GAME should now repaint screen where required.   SYNCH delay reduced from 4 seconds to 2.5 seconds (this is to pool multiple synch requests at start of game to avoid unnecessary synching.)   Delay is chosen for 'typical' inet delay.

New Features in BETA THREE

NOTE: THIS IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH EARLIER VERSIONS!!!!   CANNOT PLAY WITH EARLIER VERSIONS.

OK, more little bug fixes here and there, plus:

- OK, I am not changing number to BETA 4 yet, though I really should.   Anyway, just fixed a very important bug which may or may not have caused problems yet.

- can now play without /start.

- Rookies will now try to set opponents in partner mode

- Global chat should no longer derange game

- New Game RULE: 200 point bonus for partners taking all 13 tricks.   By popular demand, this is now optional instead of mandatory.   This changed the shape of an important packet which is why this version cannot be played with previous versions.

- New MaxTable Size so people with huge windows screens can have the most possible space for chat windows.

- New fonts and colors for score, players, and chat boxes, let me know if these are more legible for you.

- SMARTER 'BOTS! You asked for it, you got it!   Check out the new brain in town: ROOKIE (told you I'd steal the name, oh unsung heroine!). This brain makes an effort to not steal tricks from its partner (unless it is trying to dump cards, of course).   It makes a half- hearted attempt to set opponents, plays the "4th card" position halfway intelligently and tries valiantly to cover its partner's NIL.   If it can, of course.   It still freaks out in a couple cases and the 'punt' intelligence is not very impressive. I kinda like ROOKIE.   It approachs a friendly level of play.

New Features in BETA TWO

OK, the name of the game for this version is DEBUGGING.   And a few minor tweaks.   I don't think there are many new features.   I'm trying to hold the feature set still for a moment while we get the game startup stable.

If you could CONTINUE PLAYING AT 9600 until things are rock-solid, that would be a big help. Also, make sure you have your robots all set to maximum intelligence levels (use the ROBOT EDITOR) so that we can find specific stupid moments in the AI.   Remember though, that just like a human player, sometimes the robot just doesn't HAVE any other clubs and didn't really MEAN to play the 2 when you were trying for a NIL and had to play the 5.   Maybe I should have the robot add a commentary for such moves. "Sorry master, I really had no choice..."

If you're new to CRIS and the GAME CONNECTION, bear in mind that there are at least three different layers to go through before you are playing spades. Each layer has its own set of commands.   Eventually, you will be able to see the differences between the layers.   And who knows, maybe the layers will merge. In any case, check out the help file for some pointers playing spades with Game Connection and other places:.

> Network play with IPX Network
> Modem play with one other friend
> Modem play with GAME CONNECTION BBS
> Modem play with Compuserve MODEMGAM Forum
> Internet Relay Chat
> CRIS Network
> Null Modem Cable

- not sure I mentioned this (and too lazy to look <g>), but during a multiplayer game, the FILE menu has an option VISIT LOBBY which lets you open the lobby screen and watch what is happening in the game connection channel,   Maybe someone is down there looking for you. You can page, etc. You just can't receive pages while you are not visiting the lobby.

- ILLEGAL PLAYER bug.   Well, wouldn't you know it, turns out there are TWO DIFFERENT BUGS which can be described the same way.   One was fixed in beta 1 (spade15) and it was the copy protection logic triggering erroneously when you tried to join a game.   The other, it turns out, is a low-level check of player index numner (so that I don't make illegal memory accesses). I was peppering the code with a new subroutine to check for this, and I put it in at least one spot where it didn't belong.   I hope I weeded them all out in this version.   The symptom to watch out for is a SMALL dialog box which just says "Illegal Player NUmber" instead of going into a little speech asking for money.

- FACE EDITORS.   Well, several people have asked for a more free form face editor. To tell you the truth, it isn't the editing which prevents me from providing this, it's the need to move files between players. To avoid re-inventing the wheel, I would put zmodem into the product (which maybe I will do someday).   The problem is that the smallest little face which you might free-form design represents a HUGE amount of data (compared to the size of everything else I move around <g>).   Also, it interferes with my emotion buttons.   But I hear your plaintive cries! In the meantime, please suggest more facial components for the existing editor.

- New USER PREFERENCES.   Check them out.   See if you can understand what each one does.   Basiclay they let you customize certain sound and graphics options, including the display of your own cards in ascending order versus descending.   (See, sometimes I come through for you!)   Unfortunately, you're stuck with the order of the suits themselves

- Did you know that if you unseated a ROBOT, it KEPT PLAYING!   Cool, huh?   Well, I put an end to that recently.

- This version should be playable in the GC lobby, and on IRC.   I shrank the packets back down to a manageable size.   IRC itself is still a bit unreliable, though.   It tends to lock up for seconds at a time, and then to dump you sporadically.   Periodically VISIT LOBBY if you think the game

has gotten screwed up by IRC.   If so, during your VISIT LOBBY, you might be able to reconnect to IRC and resume the game.

New Features in BETA ONE

This time I am just going to add to this list as I make the changes.

- YES, we are now officially in BETA at long last!   (And you thought we were in BETA all along, but no.   That was ALPHA Test.)   Thanks to the terrific ALPHA test cycle, I think we might have a relatively painless (and brief) BETA cycle.   One of the purposes of BETA is to widen the test base a little to experiment with diverse computer configurations, as well as to test the GUI with 'virgin' users.   So if this is the first time you've encountered this program, be sure to take careful note of anything you found confusing or difficult.

- In case you're worried about the 10,000 dialog boxes which appear during startup, rest assured that that is for development only.   The final release will go straight from the title screen to the main menu. (The shareware version will shove the About... box in your face, as well)

- ALL PREVIOUS SETTINGS WILL BE LOST (faces, phone book entries, etc)   I hope you listened to my warning and wrote down your phone numbers before upgrading to this version. The side effect of this is that you will get to evaluate all the default settings.   The main reason I did this was because I wanted to extract those parameters (like com port and baud rate and phone book) which eventually I want to be common between all Synthetic Reality Games (so you can switch easily from one to another).

- NEW PLAYER DETAIL screen appears when you double click a player in the player list.   It's cool.   You'll like it.

- Reworked Activation code stuff for a more natural flow at start of program.

- Only seated players may exchange emotions

- Player list show robot intelligence level (cropped on small screens)

- Minor changes to face elements

- new code words: PROXYON and PROXYOFF.   Your place at the table is played for you automatically (even though your face is still showing) so long as your proxy is on.   Your proxy always plays at the highest possible brain level.   Originally, this was a diagnostic, but now I am thinking it might be nice to have, if you need to answer the phone, or go to the bathroom or something.

- New MENU layout.   Most commands in the MENUs are duplicates of the toolbar buttons, but there are a few new entries, which I will describe briefly here since they are not discussed in the help file:

     > FILE/LEAVE GAME   (same as toolbar stop sign)
     > FILE/RESET GAME   (same as toolbar GO green light)
     > FILE/SYNCH GAME   This is new.   Causes host to resend you the state of
                         the game (it's a panic button)   You could do the
                         same thing by leaving the game and rejoining   > FILE/VISIT
LOBBY During a multiplayer game, this lets you go back
        into the lobby (with the HOST GAME button dimmed)
        and see if anyone is there, or if IRC has crashed   > OPTIONS/USER
PREFERENCES   This is new, a grab bag of unimplemented

| | | options.   It's just a place to stick |
| | | stuff which doesn't fit elsewhere   > |

REVIEW/PLAYER HISTORY   This is new, it recaps your own personal
                                        statistics (total games played, lost, etc.)

- New TITLE SCREEN.   Well, I just made a quick and dirty bitmap which I will probably never get around to changing.   But if I ever DO make a cool title screen, now it will get displayed.

- New GAME OVER box.   This now recaps the final score and includes a couple small surprises.

- New Screen PLAYER HISTORY keeps track of your personal statistics, counting wins and losses and showing percentages of succesful bids, nil, blind nil, etc.   Feel free to suggest cool new statistics.   But for now it has to just be related to YOU, the player.   No correlation statistics (like How well did I do partnered with X, as opposed to Y).   No statistics for the robots either, though that would be pretty useful.

- new screen: USER PREFERENCES.   Opens a new dialog box where I MIGHT put a bunch of weenie little options.   It if works out, I will have to find room for it on the toolbar, or a pulldown menu, or both.   Don't assume that anything you see on this screen actually works.

- AI bids a little higher now, and considers spades to be a little more important.   (used to give each spade 1/8 point towards the bid, in addition to a rank-based bid value.   Now gives 1/4 pt).

- player who bids NIL now screams as soon as he takes his first trick.

- Score box includes new column (N) showing number of tricks required to meet bid.   More useful in partner mode than in free for all.

New Features in SPADE11

Lots more changes... again

Well, i found TWO more bugs which would have caused memory to get overwritten! This is very sloppy on my part, and I blame it on the overall aura of urgency permeating the development. But that is two fewer explanations for any possible 'mystery bugs' (like damaged bitmaps, which is how I found one of these).   So, keep reporting any and all 'weird looking' bitmaps (I mean weirder even than when I first drew them <g>)

QUESTION FOR CD-ROM: What baud rate are you usually playing at?   I added some more diagnostics and found that my own 486/66 was dropping data at 19.2K   Keep your eye open for "Bad Packet" messages in the chat box.   If you get a lot of them (and your game should act funny after each one), try using a lower baud rate (will require re-logging into CRIS).   People with "fifo-ed' uarts probably will not have this problem.   Spades is not tolerant of communications errors.   Players should be able to get a resync from the game host by leaving the game and then re-joining.   I'll think (very little <g>) about making this more robust, but in the meantime, try a lower baud rate, it won't affect the play of the game at all to run at 9600 (or even 2400 probably!) instead of 38400.

In any case, keep your eyes open for "BAD PACKET" messages and report any you see (along with whether or not the game started acting funny around that point).

CODE NUMBERS

You should have each received your Personal Activation Code.   When you run SPADE11 for the firs time, it will ask you to enter your activation code. It won't ask again, once a valid code has been entered.   This will (maybe) be part of the shareware registration process.   Without a

valid code number, you will run into "shareware limitations" (not currently implemented) after a 15 hour "Free Evaluation Period"

Also, thanks to our Sunday Night session, I was able to clean up a few more state variables which have to be passed to the 'johnny come lately' player. I think recoverability now is pretty good.   This was a sought-after feature (the ability to get a guy back into the game after a modem disconnect) and I think it works pretty well now.

I fiddled with the face bitmaps again, got rid of some I didn't like, added some special requests. Again, if there's anything you'd like to see, let me know.

Fixed the "Bad Deck" bug for jonny come lately player, and also convey the "lead suit" and "trump broken" flags to him, so he doesn't get weird error messages about "you must folow suit", etc.

Got rid of 4 annoying dialog boxes (the 2 "Wake Up its your turn/deal" and the "trump not broken" and "must follow lead" boxes).   Now you just get a simple bitmap control which does NOT require a mouse click to be canceled, and which does NOT lock up the game in a modal state, and which does NOT pop up on top of what you were doing (face editing, for example).

Added the bitmap buttons to the action editor screen.   And rationalized the action phrase defaults and their sound effects.   Unless you go into the SPADES.INI file and erase your action phrases, you won't have the synchronized ones.   This was surprisingly more work than I expected it to be!

COOL NEW FEATURE: GAME LOG!!!   I now spin each and every round's final score box off to a text file (SPADES.HST) which you can open and edit using a new toolbar button (looks like a scroll).   This lets you review the rounds.   Actually, it just appends to the file, so unless you delete stuff, it will record every game you ever played.   Eventually the file will be too big to load with NotePad (which is what I do).   I probably should give you the option of opening and closing the log, but one step at a time.   Of course, this is really a diagnostic, but I think it has a certain "feature value"

You can turn this feature on and off by toggling the scroll with the pencil (the button next to the sound enable button).   Whenever this button is DOWN, games are being appended to the log.

When the host changes the rules, you now get a chat message and a CLANK sound effect. You have to push the toolbar button to actually see the new rules.

The score box is now updated in a few more places (like when people are seated/unseated, and when jonny come lately joins).   Also, I now write out words for the bid column.   "-"   means "no bid yet", "NIL" is nil and "BNL" is blind nil.   If you see a number, that is a bid.

The ANSI BBS terminal emulation is now COMPLETE. (For spades).   I handle ALL the color operators and the CRIS logos are finally perfect.   I can handle the cris visual letter editor, including VT100 style cursor keys. I'm sure I am not 100% ANSI compliant, but I declare it Adequate for the intended purpose!!!!

I have finally implemented emotions, using PLAN B.   Basically, the emotions will let you design up to SEVEN INDIVIDUAL FACES to represent YOU.   You can then change your face to any of these seven just by pushing a button.   Other players will get the new face, plus a sound effect. So you should deisgn your faces to meet the following emotions: HAPPY, SAD, ANGRY, EVIL, RUDE, DRUNK/GOOFY, and COY/SEXY.   You can, of course, set faces to anything you like, but sound effects will follow this pattern.

SPADE 11 MAY NOT BE PLAYABLE WITH SPADE 10.   I think it will work, but can make no

guarantees.

For those who were not with us on Sunday, We played for an extended period in the GC lobby WITHOUT /STARTing the game. This worked SO WELL, that I am pretty sure the game will now run on ANY chat service (well, ok, has to provide lines of text without interruption. Sea discovered that the GC "global chat" feature screws things up. But, I suspect we are already compatible with Internet IRC (relay chat? I forget). So we should try that sometime.

New keywords HINTON and HINTOFF turn that weird AI hint line on and off down at the bottom of the screen. It's just a diagnostic, but someday I might add a "HELP ME OUT" button where it suggests a card for you to play.

If you type long chat messages (like I do), it will now make a small effort to break your message at a word boundary (and it adds an ellipsis "..." to indicate the message is continued in your next chat message.

I don't think I mentioned this, but as of spade10, the game now measures how many hours and minutes you have played (eventually I will use this information in the shareware version to try to make people feel guilty enough to register). It shows up on the About... screen and ALSO is reported to all other players when you sign in. So we'll know who the veterans are! Also, a shareware player showing 100 hours played can be made to feel EXTRA guilty by their peers.

Various minor sound effect changes, and the state of the SOUND ENABLED button is now preserved when you exit the game. In partner mode, BOTH teammates get to hear the "you win" sound effect 9if the team wins).

Phone book now holds up to 50 entries (instead of 20) and descriptions may be 20 characters long (not just 10). NOTE: Do NOT put commas in descriptions.

New Features in SPADE10

OK, Well Spade9 had another big bug which I found, and several mysteries which spade10 will hopefully help us detect. I ran Spade9 under the "debug" version of Windows (a fairly miserable task) and cleaned up a few small resource violations which PROBABLY weren't causing any problems, but you never know.

But there as a BIG BUG that if it was your turn to deal, and you dealt very quickly, then other players on slow links (I'm talking about YOU, CDROM!) could end up not getting the trick counts cleared to zero at the start of the next round.

But I know when we played Spade9 last week that we saw AGAIN the 'I can't see what card Dave played" bug. Now I wish I had asked more questions about that. SO, if you have seen this phenom: It's your turn, but you can't see the card of someone who has already played (and other people CAN see the card in question). If you're in that boat, WHAT do you see? I think you see a "yellow rectangle" in your own spot, but what do you see in the spot where you ought to see the other guy's card that everyone else can see? Do you see a Yellow Rectangle? A black Rectangle, or something else? Can you make the 'invisible' card appear by minimizing the spades window and then opening it back up? The old "I see two yellow rectangles" bug should really be impossible now, but the more data i can get the better. Unfortunately, I never see this bug on my machine. I think CDROM and AKSKINNR are the only ones to have reported it recently.

Please let me know if you EVER see any sort of "corrupted bitmap" bug.   When your cards are displayed along the bottom, there should NEVER be anything weird about them.   I think it was CDROM who reported the the bottom (or top) half of his cards were missing.   I am hoping this was one of those "minor resource violations" to which I was referring.   However, there are no more resource violations reported by Windows, so if it happens again, there is no convenient excuse.

Also, somebody once reported that their sounds "stopped playing"   There is a code word to disable sounds ("soundoff" I think), and a new, undocumented feature in SPADE9 (the "note" button on the left part of the toolbar).   When the note button is depressed, sounds are enabled. Only WAV files are used, and only via the Windows sound driver.   So there is no excuse for this failing.

And I think it wasn't clear that when you run an ACTION command thingy (right mouse button), the sound effect is played on EVERYONE'S machine. (since everyone gets to read it, too)

AND, a new feature in Spade10 is the "COOL OFF, BUDDY(tm)" feature.   People who like to send 200 action commands in a row are in for a surprise <g>

So, I guess that brings us back to "what's new in spade10"

- More faces (not all of uniformly wonderful quality).   This is probably the final number of faces to be provided in the game, although I reserve the right to tweak the individual bitmaps.   Please let me know any physiomorphs you would like to see.

- Partner Play is officially supported, although I believe it was in spade9. I am adding some documentation for people who are unclear on the rules, as I have come to interpret them.

- More changes to the ANSI BBS support in the Player Lobby.   It is now possible to use the CRIS 'screen editor' to compose longer messages (i.e. the partial screen scrolling region now works).   And I have 'official' colors, thanks to some documentation provided by Stiletto of Fly By KNight BBS. I think this is my final pass at ANSI.   I never meant to be 100% compliant, just enough to get you through the menus.   Spades right now has a lot more ANSI in it that I ever expected it to have.   I hereby declare (until told otherwise) that it has ENOUGH.

AI Enhancement.   They will now actively seek to hurt you, especially if you bid NIL.   They will also occasionally bid NIL themselves.

All WAV files are connected.   That is to say, every event which I plan on associating to a sound, has been associated (except for EMOTIONS, which are still undone, and I am rethinking them a little.   I am now leaning more towards letting you design 7 completely different faces which you can switch between quickly, using the emotion buttons.   This would give you a little more control over the process.   But I still haven't decided what to do, to tell the truth.   Feel free to lobby for your favorite concept).

Anyway, if you don't like a particular WAV file and can suggest a better sound, or a place where you think a sound should be added/deleted, now is the time to tell me.   I changed the OVERTRICK sound, and moved the breaking glass noise to a new spot - when trump is broken (get it?)

Undocumented code word "PROBE" (you saw this in spade9).   Type this on a line of c chat by itself.   It causes all other players' computers to check in.   Makes it easy to see if CDROM has had his telnet connection crash or not.   If you get a message back "player name: I am still here" then the player's computer is still attached and happy.   (though it doesn't tell you whether or not Dave has fallen asleep <g>   That's what the action sounds are for!)

Miscellaneous Enhancements here and there behind the scenes.   Aside from bug repairs, spade10 should be playable with spade9.

I need to have a debugging session with at least 2 other players (I need three in the game room) where we just start up and stop and exit and re-enter many many times, trying to find weird protocol lockups, if any. With Spade9, I saw empty entries in the player list which make no sense.

Oh, by the way, this may ultimately be permanent, but I still don't have a way to clean up the player list if you leave (like when your modem drops) and then return.   You will get a new entry in the player list and your old entry will still be there.   The host needs to know to not bother to try to seat your old entry, which is dead.   But I am having trouble declaring it completely dead (and then removing it.)   Failing to come up with a way to do it automatically, I may have to break down and let you do it manually.   Or I can just ignore it and call it a feature.

Speaking of features, what would you think of this: Keeping a log file of the game, where it records things like people entering and leaving, and also recaps the final counters at the end of each round (bid, taken, score, etc).   I would spit this out to a text file which you could keep for posterity.   I would make that last toolbar button invoke Notepad with that file, so you could review the current game.   Sort of like the trick history button, but it would be a score history.   I admit I want it for debugging purposes, but it feels like it might be a nice feature.

OH BIG NEWS: DURING A ROUND, The Trick HISTORY now ONLY LETS YOU SEE THE LAST TRICK.   BETWEEN rounds, it lets you see all 13 tricks of the PREVIOUS round.   I declare the diagnostic aspect of this feature to be no longer necessary as no one has been accusing the robots of cheating lately.

So, thanks again, please test, enjoy, and report.

Dan

New Features in SPADE9

Lemme see now.   Well, the BIG news is that I found a MAJOR bug which I hope explains all the really WEIRD effects which were reported.   For example, the 'missing cards' and 'spontaneous crash' effects.

Also, I broke down and bought the cheapest laptop I could find so that now I can play both sides at the same time, which is really the only way to develop multiplayer games.   As a result, I am finally able to fix up a zillion little packet protocol issues, so dropin/drop-out should work pretty well in this version.

Also, this has my first cut FACE EDITOR.   You're not allowed to criticise the graphics too much yet, so just say things like "Loooks really great!" <g>.   My fragile ego requires a week or two of insulation from your true feelings about this!   But do suggest more physio-forms/stereotypes, etc.

The AI is only marginally enhanced from alpha 8.

Partner Play is now listed in the host rules and I think it works correctly, EXCEPT FOR NIL BID.   So, don't expect correct scoring of that in partner play.   I know the rules now, but haven't got back around to that part of the 'circle of development'

OH,,, this is pretty important, so I had better mention it: SPADE9 is NOT COMPATIBLE WITH EARLIER VERSIONS.   I had to change the packet protocol a little, so it only now works with

other copies of SPADE9.   Also, there is now a lot more checking/reporting of version info, serial numbers, etc. in anticipation of actual release.

If a player is dropped (modem disconnect), he (or she) should now be able to call back in and be re-introduced to the game.   If the other players have waited, he should be able to pick right up where he left off.   If the game HOST is the one that got dumped, you are pretty much screwed.   However, if the host leaves cleanly (say by EXITING the program), then the host mantle is automatically passed to another seated human.

I've added a few more brief entries to the online help file.

And I think I fixed a few more ANSI violations, though I am still working without a spec for ANSI, so I'm sure I am violating a lot of rules.

Probably the biggest completely-missing feature is the emotion engine.   This will probably be the centerpiece of SPADE10.

But I think the circle has turned back to SOUND effects, so I think I will work on that for awhile.

Thanks again, and please enjoy spades and keep playing nice!

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