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Overview

FreeCell is a logic puzzle in the form of a solitaire card game. It is unlike most solitaire games, however, in that there is no luck involved after the initial shuffle. There are no hidden cards; they are all dealt face up at the start of the game. It is believed (although not proven) that every game is winnable.

Playing the Game

FreeCell is similar to other solitaire games you may have played.   You play red cards on black cards and black cards on red cards. The object of the game is to move all the cards to the home cells, piling up cards of the same suit starting with the ace.

To Start a New Game
▶   From the Game menu, choose New Game. Or press F2. A new game will be chosen for you at random.

To Select a Specific Game
▶   From the Game menu, choose Select Game.   Or press F3. Then enter the game number of the specific game you want to play.

To Move a Card
▶   Click the card you want to move. It will be highlighted. Then click the area to which you want to move the card. The card will move to that area. To cancel a move, click again on the highlighted card.

To Reveal a Partially Hidden Card
▶   Click the card with the right mouse button.

To Move a Stack of Cards
▶   You can move a stack of cards from one column to another if there are enough free cells open. To move a stack, click the bottom card in the stack; then click the column that you want to move the stack to.

To Quickly Move a Card to a Free Cell
▶   Double-click the card you want to move to a free cell.

Rules of the Game

This section describes the rules of FreeCell.

Area and Objective

- The FreeCell game area consists of the <u>home cells</u>, <u>free cells</u>, and the deck of cards, which is dealt face-up at the beginning of the game.
- The object of the game is to move all the cards to the home cells, using the free cells as placeholders. To win, you must make four stacks of cards on the home cells: one for each suit, with the ace on the bottom and each card stacked in order of rank.

Legal Moves

There are three legal moves in FreeCell:

1. You can move any card from the bottom of a column to an empty free cell.
2. You can move any card from a free cell or from the bottom of a column to a home cell if that card is one greater in rank than the card in the home cell, and of the same suit. For example, you can move a four of clubs onto a three of clubs in a home cell. Aces can always be moved to an empty home cell.

   At the end of each move, FreeCell will transfer unneeded cards to the home cells.   A card is unneeded if there are no lower-rank cards of the opposite color left in the playing area.

3. You can move a card from a free cell or from the bottom of a column to the bottom of another column as long as the rank of the card is one less than the rank of the card you will place it on, and the colors of the cards are different. For example, you can move a black three onto a red four. Any card can be moved to an empty column.

Winning

- You win when you have moved all the cards from the columns to the home cells.

Losing

- You lose if there are no more legal moves. When there is only one legal move remaining, the title bar in the FreeCell window will flash to warn you. When you lose a game, you can try the same <u>game number</u> again without affecting the statistics. To try the same game again, choose Restart Game from the Game menu.

Strategy and Hints

This section contains helpful hints for playing FreeCell successfully.
Winning at FreeCell requires patience. A common mistake is to make a move just because it is possible, and then to realize that it cuts off another move.

- Spend the first few games becoming familiar with all the moves. Be sure you understand how moving a stack of cards works, and what the limitations are.
- Study the deck carefully before you make your first move. Look for trouble spots like aces hidden at the tops of columns, or both red sevens stacked behind three kings.
- Use your <u>free cells</u> carefully. There are only four. Try to keep them unoccupied as much as possible.
- When you are first learning FreeCell, it may be helpful to get messages that tell you when you have made an invalid move. To get messages, choose Messages from the Options menu.

Game Menu Commands

New Game
Deals a new game of FreeCell. Picks the game number at random.

Select Game
Lets you pick a specific game of FreeCell and deals it.

Restart Game
Redeals the current game of FreeCell.

Exit
Exits FreeCell. You can exit at any time, even in the middle of a game.

Options Menu Commands

Statistics
Shows you your wins, losses, and streaks.

Messages
Turns the messages for invalid moves on or off. If Messages is checked, you will receive messages when you attempt an invalid move.

Keyboard Commands

This section contains information about the keyboard commands in FreeCell. Remember to turn on NUM LOCK to use the numeric keypad.

Free Cells
To select a particular card in the free cells, press the 0 key repeatedly to cycle through them.

Columns
The eight columns are numbered 1-8. To select the bottom card or a stack of cards, press the column number.

Home Cells
You can transfer a card to a home cell by selecting the card and pressing 9.

Revealing Hidden Cards
To flip through all cards in a column, type the column number once to select it and again to cancel the move.

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