Cribbage Help Index

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Fun with Cribbage

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Overview
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When Sir John Suckling created cribbage in the 17th century, little did he know how popular cribbage would become in the centuries to follow. Part of the appeal of the game is that the rules offer a variety of ways for the two players to score points.   There is the strong competition to out smart your opponent when playing the cards, along with the suspense of finding out the starter card to add value to your hand.

The Crib

After the cards have been dealt, the player & computer select 2 cards each to make up the crib.   The crib is always the dealer's and is not looked at until the hands have been played out.   If the player is the dealer, the four cards will appear in the upper right hand corner of the cribbage window.   After both players hands have been scored the dealer scores all points contained in the crib, combined with the starter.

The Starter

After both players have discarded into the crib, the pone then cuts the deck and the top card is turned face up.   This turned up card is called the Starter, and is not used during the playing of the hands.   It is counted however, with each hand and the "Crib" on the final count.   If the Starter card is a JACK, the dealer is given two points.

Object of the Game

The object of the game is to be the first player to reach 121 points. The current point totals are shown in two different ways. The values are shown in the "Computer's Score" and "Player's Score" score box.   These same values are also represented as pegged values on the cribbage board. The computer's pegs are yellow and the player's pegs are blue.   The pegs always go up the outside and down the inside. If the winner reaches 121 before the opponent gets 91, this is called a skunk and is considered as two games won (and double the money). If the opponent doesn't reach 61 this is considered a Double Skunk and is quadruple(four times the money). The players obtain points by forming various counting combinations as pairs, triplets, fours, sequences and fifteens.   Combinations can be formed when playing the cards, or when counting the hands and crib in conjunction with the starter card.

How to Play
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Starting the Game

The game starts by deciding who is to deal first.   The player picks a point to cut in the deck of cards and is given that card.   The computer cuts the remaining cards in half and takes that card.   The lower of the two cards is the first dealer.   If the player decides to play more than one game, the loser of the last game always deals first.

Playing the Cards

Pone starts by playing any card from his hand. The player selects a card by clicking on it with the mouse, or pointing to it by using the arrow keys and pressing enter.   The computer plays it's card automatically.   The value of the played card is appears in the "Current Play Total".   The value of a card is based on its numerical value, with all face cards valued as ten and Aces valued as one.   The players take turns playing a card from their hands as long as the "Current Play Total" does not exceed 31.   Points may be taken along the way for such things as pairs, triplets, fours, sequences and fifteens.   When one player cannot play a card without going over 31, the other player receives a point for a GO and must play for as long as he can play cards that do not exceed 31.   After each 31 has been reached, the played cards are removed and play begins again at zero.   Upon completion of playing the cards, the last player to play a card receives a point for the last card.

Counting the Hands

After the playing of the cards has been completed, the hands are counted using the starter as if it were a fifth card.   The scoring begins with the pone counting his hand first.   The dealer then counts his hand followed with the scoring of the crib.   It should be noted that the same cards in a hand can be used over and over again to form different scoring combinations.

Scoring
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Points are made in one of two ways, by the playing of the hands and with the
counting of the hands.   The players play out their hands as explained in
Playing the Cards, then pick up their hands to obtain additional points
through the various combinations contained in the hand.

Points
Here are the point values that can be obtained through either the play of the
hands or through the actual counting on the hands:
- Fifteens   2   points
- Pairs   2 points
- Triplets   6 points
- Fours   12 points
- Sequences   1 point for each card

Here are the additional points that are given when Playing the Cards:
- GO or Last Card 1 point
- 31   2 points

Here are the points that also can be used when counting the hands:
- Flush   4 or 5 points
- Nobs   1 point

How were those points made?
When the computer counts up the hands for you, the cards are shown in a
window with the starter card on the left hand side and how many points this
hand makes up.   If you are not sure how these points were made, click on
the "Explain points" button for a detailed explanation showing each possible
point.

Strategy and Hints
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A large part of the game of cribbage is luck.   Just getting dealt good hands or cutting a good <u>starter</u> card for your hand or crib.   However, the most important part of cribbage is in making decisions to help your score and lower that of the computer.

Selecting cards for the crib

When selecting cards for your crib, you should pick cards that could possibly help in scoring.   When selecting cards for the computers crib, you should try to pick cards that would prevent the computer from scoring any points.

Playing the cards

When playing the cards you should always be aware of the "Current Play Total" and never miss an opportunity to make <u>15</u> or <u>31</u>.   Pay attention to the possibility of a <u>sequence</u> at any time, and do not make it easy for the computer to create one.   Always try and anticipate what the computer might do, this might be hard at first, but will become easy with experience.

Evolution of this Program

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How Greg & I got started playing against each other.

One day while Greg & I were working, the power to our building went out. We were told that it would probably take a few hours to restore the electricity.   So I pulled out a deck of cards and asked Greg if he knew how to play cribbage.   Without a cribbage board we played a few games and I found out how much better he was at keeping good cards while he found out how good I was at pegging every available point.   Many 4 letter words (some 5 letter words of which our favorite was "slime!") were exchanged that day.

Learn OS/2???

Yes, we were told one day to learn to program OS/2 & PM.   We decided that we needed a project to keep us focused and at the same time make our programming mistakes on a program that didn't really matter to our jobs. Cribbage was the obvious choice.

We decided to draw the cards ourselves on the fly so that we could re-size the window and still have all of the cards in the correct postion and relative size in the window.   What a bad idea that was!

Windows 3.0

Who knew that Microsoft would push Windows?   We didn't, our company didn't, and now we had this great cribbage game that didn't work under MS-Windows.

The conversion begins...

I started by creating bitmaps for all of the cards.   We knew that bitmaps were the way to go now (It was impossible to even attempt to draw a face card only by coordinates and vectors).   The only code that we were able to save was for shuffling the deck of cards and counting up the points that a hand made up.

Much of the code got re-written, remembering all of the mistakes from the OS/2 version,   and then we finished it.   It has been floating around our company for about a year now so I think we even did enough quality assurance on it.

Then Microsoft released the "Windows Entertainment Pack" which contained a file called CARDS.DLL.   Since our .EXE was over 250K because of the bitmaps of all of the cards, we decided to use CARDS.DLL for drawing the cards and managed to reduce the size of the .EXE considerably.

Now what we have left is an excellent version of cribbage that is good enough to be a learning tool and also fun enough for the expert at the game.

Starter

The "Starter" is the card that is turned up after the players have discarded their crib cards. This card is included when counting the points for the hands and the crib.   It appears in the lower left hand corner of the cribbage window.

Pairs

Pairs consists of any 2 of a kind.

For example:

Points:

2 for a pair of 7's

Triplets

Triplets consists of any three of a kind.

For example:

Points:
2 points for a pair of 7's (7 of spades, 7 of hearts)
2 points for a pair of 7's (7 of spades, 7 of clubs)
2 points for a pair of 7's (7 of hearts, 7 of clubs)

Fours

Fours consists of any four of a kind.

For example:

Points:
2 points for a pair of 7's (7 of spades, 7 of hearts)
2 points for a pair of 7's (7 of spades, 7 of clubs)
2 points for a pair of 7's (7 of hearts, 7 of clubs)
2 points for a pair of 7's (7 of diamonds, 7 of hearts)
2 points for a pair of 7's (7 of diamonds, 7 of clubs)
2 points for a pair of 7's (7 of diamonds, 7 of spades)

Sequences

Sequences consists of any runs of 3 or more.   When playing out the cards, the order is NOT important and a sequence cannot carry over after a player reaches 31 or after a "GO".

(Aces are always low.)

For example:

or:
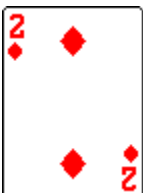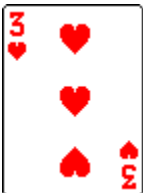
Points:

3 points for a run of 3 cards (7 of spades, 8 of clubs, 9 of hearts)
4 points for a run of 4 cards (ace of spades, 2 of clubs, 3 of diamonds, 4 of hearts)

Note: A duplicate card will break the sequence when playing the cards, but will count as separate runs and pairs when counting the hands.

Fifteens

Fifteens consists of total of 15 when adding up the value of any number of cards.
For example:

or:

Points:
2 points for a total of 15 (7 of spades, 8 of hearts)
2 points for a total of 15 (Jack of hearts, 4 of clubs, ace of spades)

Pone

The "Pone" is the player who did
NOT deal the current hand.

Go

A "GO" is given to the player who comes closest to 31 when playing the cards. This player is given 1 point, and the playing starts over at 0 with the other player starting by playing a card.

Last Card

The player that plays the last card when playing the cards, is always given one point, except for when the last card makes 31 in which case he receives 2 points.
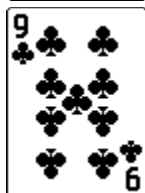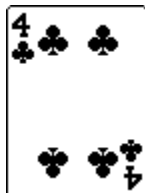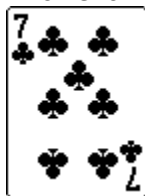
31

When playing the cards, if a player hits 31 exactly, that player receives 2 points.   The playing then starts over at 0, with the other player starting by playing a card.

Flush

A flush occurs when all of the cards in a hand are of the same suit.
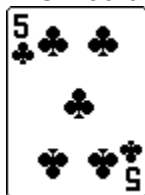
The four cards in the following hand count as 4 points.

For example:

The four cards in the hand plus the starter card, count as 5 points.
For example if the starter card was the 5 of clubs (with the hand above),
this would score as 5 points

Only a five card flush can be scored in the crib.

Nobs

When the counting hand contains a JACK the same suit as the starter card, this is called NOBS and counts one point.

For example:

Starter Card

Card in hand