Absolute Backgammon Manual

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Game Design Philosophy

Absolute Backgammon has been designed with the following in mind:

- make it as real as possible
- make it as easy to use as possible
- make it enjoyable to play
- make it attractive to the eye
- let the player play the game the way they want rather than force them to adapt.
- make it a challenge for the experienced players as well as enjoyable for the novice
- make it a good learning tool for all players
- give the player the options and features they desire
- do all of the above while keeping the interface out of your face

The game has many options and features to accomplice all of that. Most will be explained in the next few pages.

Game Layout

On the top you will find the game title. If the game is in demo mode, it will be displayed there also.

Below the title you will see the board with the pieces already setup for you.

Below the board, on the left, is the area where messages are displayed during the game. If speech is turned on, most of them are spoken also.

To the right of the message area is the button area. During game play, relevant buttons will be displayed. You can play the game using just the buttons. However, there are alternate ways to play without using the buttons. If you are primarily using the buttons, you are not using the best/easiest ways to play the game. The **Basic Play Instructions** section will explain how.

At the very beginning of a game, the **Help** button will be displayed. The first time you use the game, the Help button could be very helpful. Try it.

The farthest right button is the Info… button (OS X only). If you press it, a drawer opens showing more buttons and information. Press it again, the drawer will close. It will either open below the board or above the board. Its location depends on where, in the display area, you have the board positioned. If it is on top and you want it on the bottom, position the board higher, then close and reopen the drawer.

Preferences…

While you can play the game without ever changing any of the features and options the game provides, I think you will find the game much more enjoyable if you go to Preferences… then set the features and options to suit you.

You get there by selecting the Absolute Backgammon menu, then select Preferences… Once you are there, you will see 4 tabs: Backgammon, Move, Sound and Misc. Click on each tab to see what features of the game can be changed. These will be discussed later.

Game Menus

At the very top of your display are the game menus. The 7 menus give you many more things you can select during game play such as to switch direction of play, piece colors and to save an unfinished game.

Appendix – included in the appendix are:

- Backgammon Rules
- Downloading and Using Other Board Styles
- FAQ (frequently asked questions)
- Registration Information
- Voice Play Instructions
- Backgammon Glossary
- Playing Against Another Person

- Game Features

Basic Play Instructions

Note: Click is short for saying press the mouse button once.

Please use **Preferences** and examine **the menus** to see the many options provided in the game.

Direction of Play and Piece Color - at the start of the game, in one of the upper corners of the board, you will see 2 pieces on the 24 row. This is your piece color. If the 2 pieces are in the left corner, you move clockwise - bearing off from the bottom left. If the 2 pieces are on the right side, you move counter clockwise and bearoff from the bottom right.

Your tray is on the bottom left in you are moving clockwise. It is on the bottom right if you are moving counter clockwise. It is next to the 1 row, if you have the row numbers displayed.

Your dice are always on the right side of the board.

Below the board you will see buttons that can be used to play the game. With these you can play games but there are faster/different ways of doing many things.

General Play Summary

There are many ways to **roll the dice:**
- click on one of the dice in the bottom tray
- select the Roll button
- click somewhere in the board
- press the + key
- press the space bar

Select a piece to move by clicking on the piece to be moved (don't hold the mouse button down)

Select the destination by clicking on the row you want your piece on

Double your opponent by clicking on the Cube or by selecting the Pass Cube button

Bear-off a piece by putting it in your tray

Take back a move using one of the following methods:
- click on the Take Back Move button
- click in the center of the bar
- command-z
- shift-click
- right-click (Ctrl-click)
- select Undo Move in the Edit menu

De-select a piece by clicking on the row the piece came from or by clicking anywhere that is not a row. The Bar is a good place.

Can't use both dice - click on the dice to continue play or press the Done button

Select **Show Possible Moves** to have the game show which moves are possible as you move the cursor over the pieces. It can be selected in Preferences/Move tab.

Piece Move Methods:

There are several possible ways to move pieces, selectable using Preferences. You can select from the following methods:

- **Drag Pieces** - drag the pieces,
- **Select One Only** - click to pick up a piece then click to release
- **Select Multiple** – like "Select One Only" but this method allows multiple pieces to be picked up at once.
- **Easy Moves** - click where you want the piece to move to.
- **Click On Piece - largest 1st** - click on the piece you want to move
- **Click On Piece - left 1st** - click on the piece you want to move
- You can also move the pieces using just your voice (with Voice Recognition turned on).

At the end of the game, the Easy Moves method can be used with all move methods to put pieces in the tray.

Note: You can **pick up more than 1 piece** at a time by selecting the Move tab in Preferences, then selecting **"Select Multiple"** in Preferences... If selected, to put a piece down, make sure that it is not over another piece, unless it is the next available slot. If not, it will think you are trying to pick up another piece.

Miscellaneous:

P key can be used to display the pipcount

R key can be used to display the rolls left

C key can be use to give advice on the doubling cube

S key displays suggested moves

M key makes the number 1 suggested move ("best move") with the option to accept it or not

I key performs instant replay of the computer's move

W key gives a guess at who is winning the game (same as Status button)

L key followed by a number from 1 to 9 adjusts the sound volume in the game.

Command-U key can be used to undo the last turn for both players (select before rolling your dice or passing the cube)

+ key can roll the dice

Space bar can be used for several things:

- to roll the dice
- substitute for clicking on the Done button
- substitute for clicking after your turn is finished (assumes that you have Click After Move selected)

Command-G - saves a picture of the board in the application folder -- "BoardScreenShot"

Command-P - prints the rolls and moves for the game

Tutor Mode

The Tutor mode is primarily for beginning players. It can be selected in Preferences/Tutor tab.

Fast Play

Select in the Prefereces/Misc tab. All options that affect speed of play are set so that game play is the fastest. Piece Speed is set to 20, sound and speech are turned off, Auto Moves and Auto Pass are turned on, and any pauses put in the game, for timing purposes, are taken out. When de-selected ,the timing pauses are back in the game and the Piece Speed is set to 8. Other options are changed by going to Preferences... then changing them yourself.

Saving Dice Rolls to a File

If you are having a difficult time believing that the game does not favor the computer player, you can select to have the dice rolls, to be used in the game, saved to a file in the game folder -- Random Dice Rolls. Select the option in Preferences.../Misc tab. You can then view the file to see that the dice rolls are being used. This way you know that the dice are not being selected to fit the situation. If you feel that the computer still gets better dice rolls, you can also select to use the computer's dice rolls instead of your own.

Without this option being selected, dice rolls are determined by a random number generator as the dice are rolled. With it selected, the dice rolls, to be used for the whole game, are determined just before the game starts.

Help For Beginners

If you are new to backgammon, it might be helpful to do the following before starting play:

Using Preferences,

1 - Uncheck "Doubling Cube Used"
2 - Set "Skill Level" to Novice.

3 – Put the game in Tutor Mode (Go to preferences then select the Tutor tab)

Read these documents included in the same folder as the game in the appendix:

Basic Backgammon Rules explains the rules of the game. This game enforces the rules.

Backgammon Glossary explains some of the special words used in backgammon.

A good book to read would be "Backgammon For Winners" by Bill Robertie. It can be found on-line at Amazon.com and other book sellers.

Help for Easy Moves

Easy Moves was added to make the game easier to play on a laptop when a real mouse is not being used. To use it, first select it in Preferences/Move Tab. You might also want to select Automatic Moves. With Automatic Moves selected, the computer will automatically make any moves where there is no choice.

Moving a piece

Click on the row that you want a piece moved to. The dice are scanned from left to right. If the die on the left would make a valid move then it is used, if not, the right die is checked. To change the order of scanning, press and hold the control key as you click (or press the right mouse button).

You can use both dice in one move. If you want to use both of the dice on one move, but there is a piece that is the same as one of the die away, then use command-click. It will ignore the one it would normally move and look for a piece that is the distance of both dice.

Taking back a piece move

If you have moved one or more pieces, a control-click will take back the last piece moved. Control-click again to take back another.

Notes:

If a piece is entered automatically from the BAR, use Control-Click to move it back to the BAR. It will stay so that Show Best Moves or Make Best Moves can be used.

Tip

If you have a 2-button mouse, setting the right button to be control-click will make using Easy Moves easier to use.

Summary

- Click on the row you want the piece moved to
- Shift-click to take back a move
- Command-click to use both dice (only needed if there is a piece the distance of one of the dice that would normally be used)
- Shift-click to change the order of using the dice (normally left first, right second)

End Of Game Options

At the end of the game a dialog appears that tells you who won how many points, game statistics, and some options:

New Game - start a new game

Quit - quit the program

Print Game - print the details of the game just finished

Continue Game - If the game ended due to a doubling of the cube being declined or a concession, you can continue playing the same game by selecting this option. The game is scored as if it ended at this point. There is no score for the continued game.

Replay With Same Dice – selecting this will use the same dice rolls, for both players, for the next game. Gives you a chance to see if you can do better using the same dice rolls.

Replay With Opponent's Dice – selecting this will use the same dice rolls, but you get to use the computer's dice rolls and it uses yours.

Play Against Another Person

First read the **Basic Play Instructions.**

When the ***Play Against Another Person*** option is selected from the game menu, the first thing you are asked to do is enter both of your names. When it is your turn to play, the message line will display who's turn it is.

Please read in the appendix for more information.

Match Play

You can select to start a Match in the Game menu. After you select to Start a New Match, you will be requested to setup the Match.

Starting a new match saves and clears Session Stats and re-names the menu item as Match Stats.

A match ends when one of the players reaches a certain number of points, usually 11. But it can be any number you choose.

The number of points in the match is displayed as part of the window title. The score can be viewed in the Match Stats or by pressing the info... button.

Matches are normally played using the Crawford rule. The Crawford rule states that if one player reaches a score one point short of the match, neither player may offer a double in the immediately following game. This

one game without doubling is called the Crawford game. Once the Crawford game has been played, if the match has not yet been decided, the doubling cube is active again.

There is no bonus for winning more than the required number of points in match play. The sole goal is to win the match, and the size of the victory doesn't matter.

When Match Play is selected the first time, the backgammon options are set for standard Match Play rules as follows:

Cube is turned on
Automatic doubles is set to 0
Beaver option is turned off
Jacoby rule is turned off
Backgammons are allowed
Who Rolls First is set to the higher dice rolled

After a match is started, preferences can be changed for the backgammon options. They will be effective (in Match Play), until they are changed.

Preferences… Items

Backgammon tab

Skill Level - there are five skill levels. Just try them to see what suits you. ***Club Champ*** should give the toughest game.

Personality – use this to change the type of play from conservative to aggressive

Automatic Doubles - selects the number of automatic doubles allowed on the first roll. The cube is doubled automatically if both players roll the same die on the opening roll up the number selected times.

Who Gets First Roll... - this determines who wins/gets the first roll of the game. The normal way to play – Higher Die Rolled - is for each player to roll one die. The higher of the 2 moves first using the same dice.

Doubling Cube Used

Allows the cube to be used during play, if selected.

Jacoby Rule - a double or triple game is not allowed unless the cube was passed at least once during the game.

No Backgammons - if selected backgammons are not allowed. A backgammon will be treated as a gammon.

Beaver Allowed - this option allows the doubled player to double the cube immediately after being doubled and still retain the cube. The player must make the double before the other player rolls his dice. You are given 3 seconds to make the choice to Beaver after the computer has doubled you and you have accepted its double.

Note: The 3 second waiting period could be noticeable during play.

Offer Concessions. – if selected, during game play, if the computer determines that it has lost the game it will offer a concession. If you accept

you will win the game for the number of points offered, otherwise the game will continue. The computer will only concede if it is a running game.

5 Max on a Row – with this selected no more than 5 pieces can be on a row and any one time. Not standard backgammon.

Move tab

Show Possible Moves – after you roll the dice, as you move the cursor over your pieces, markers will show up next to rows that can be moved to.

Automatic Moves – if only one move is possible, the move will be made automatically for you.

Automatic Pass - play is automatically passed to your opponent when you can not make any moves. The message "You can't make any moves" is displayed.

Smart Piece Placement – if not selected, a piece has to be exactly over a row to put the piece down. With it selected, the area is widened plus the game tries to figure out what you intended to do if the piece is not exactly over the row. When selected, it should make playing easier. As far as I know, there is no reason to not have it selected.

Piece Movement Speed - adjusts the speed of piece movement. Higher numbers are faster.

Time Delay After Dice Roll (seconds) – This allows a time delay after the computer's dice are rolled so that is slows things down, giving you some time before the computer makes its moves.

Click After Moves - with this selected you must click once after the move has been completed to pass the play to the other player. You can take back your moves by clicking on BAR.

You can select to have this active for you or the computer or both.

Piece Move Method - each method has its advantages and disadvantages. I

recommend that you try each for awhile to see which you like best.

- **Drag Pieces** – click and hold down the mouse button to select a piece, then, while holding the mouse button down, drag the piece to the row you want to put it on. Then release the mouse button.
- **Select One Only** – click over a piece to select it, then release the mouse button. Move the cursor to the row you want the piece on, then click the mouse button again to release the piece.
- **Select Multiple** – using this method, you can pick up as many pieces as you have dice to move (up to 4 with doubles). This makes game play much faster and more natural. However, until you learn how to use it correctly it can be more difficult to put a piece down. It is recommended that you first learn how to use the game without this option selected.
- **Easy Moves** – see the explanation of this move method towards the beginning of the manual. This method is active when bearing off pieces when using other methods. It makes it much quicker to bear off at the end of the game. You can click inside your tray to roll the dice, then click again to move a piece into the tray. Try it, it is great!

  Click on Piece move methods – In the game folder/English Information is a document explaining these move methods.

Sound tab

Sounds On

This causes sampled sounds for the dice roll and the piece movement to be turned on or off during game play.

Speech On

Most messages displayed on the message line, on the bottom left side of the board, are spoken by the built-in speech facility

Voice – there are many voices built into OS X. Bruce and Kathy are two normal sounding voices.

Speak Piece Placement Error Messages – if you tend to make a lot of placement errors and find the messages annoying, then de-select this option.

Speech Recognition – the game can be played entirely using your voice. Please read the instructions included in the game folder and the appendix.

Dice Sound Length – select from a short dice sound and a longer dice sound.

Tutor tab

Tutor mode is especially good for beginners up to intermediate players to improve their game.

Tutor mode is selected in preferences (Preferences... can be selected in the Absolute Backgammon menu) Select Preferences then select the Tutor tab.

Tutor mode has 5 options:

Show Smiley and Frown only
Show Smiley and Frown only - stop after frown
Show Suggestions on "bad" moves only
Show Suggestions on all but "good" moves
Show Suggestions if not the "best" move

To help you understand the options, there are 3 types of moves: good moves, bad moves, and those that don't fit in those 2 categories. They would be considered okay but not the best.

Show Smiley and Frown only (no suggested moves are displayed)

- if the move is a "good" move, a yellow smiley is displayed
- if the move is a "bad" move, a red frown is displayed
- if the move is an "okay" move, nothing is displayed

Show Smiley and Frown only - stop on frown

Same as above. But will stop after a frown is displayed. This gives you the option to take back your move to play a different one or to click to pass play to your opponent. If you click on the frown, your whole turn will be undone. Or you can use the normal ways to take back moves.

Show Suggestions on "bad" moves only

When a "bad" move is made, the suggestions window/dialog will pop up. It will show what the game thinks are the 3 best moves. You have 3 choices at this point:

1 - you can select one of the moves by clicking on it. This will take back your move then move the selected move.

2 - you can do nothing by pressing the Done button. This will pass play to your opponent.

3 - you can select to take back your move by pressing the Undo button. It will undo your move, putting you at the start of your turn. This gives you the chance to make a different move after examining the suggested moves.

Show Suggestions on all but "good" moves

Same as above except it will show suggested moves on both "bad" and "okay" moves (all but good moves).

Show Suggestions if not the "best" move

Same as above except it will show suggested moves on all but moves that are the first suggested move ("best" move).

Note: Tutor Mode is not active when playing against another person.

Misc tab

Save Game On Exit – automatically saves the game when the game is quit. The game can be restarted later.

Load Game On Startup – automatically loads a saved game when the program is started.

Save Dice Rolls to the file "Random Dice Rolls" on the Desktop - if you are having a difficult time believing that the game does not favor the computer player, you can select to have the dice rolls, to be used in the game, saved to a file on your Desktop -- Random Dice Rolls. You can also be asked to be prompted to swap the dice rolls so that you will be using the computer's dice rolls. See FAQ in the appendix for more information on this.

Fast Play - all options that affect speed of play are set so that game play is the fastest. Piece Speed is set to 20, sound and speech are turned off, Auto Moves and Auto Pass are turned on, and any pauses put in the game, for timing purposes, are taken out. When de-selected ,the timing pauses are back in the game and the Piece Speed is set to 8. Other options are changed by going to Preferences... then changing them yourself.

Auto Dice Rolls – with this selected, when you are not using the doubling cube, the dice will be rolled automatically for you.

Show Pip Count – with this selected the pip count for each player will be displayed continuously on the board next to the cube.

MENU SUMMARY

Absolute Backgammon menu

About Absolute Backgammon

Preferences…

See above for the descriptions of the preferences items.

Credits – gives credit to people that have made significant contributions with language translations and new board styles

File Menu

Language - the game supports several languages. Select the desired language using the menu.

Load New Board… - use this to find and load other board styles. There are many attractive boards styles (skins/themes) that can be used with the game. Use the Help menu to explain how and to take you to the web page where you can view and download the board styles. Once you download and un-archive (or unstuff) the board style, you can drag and drop the folder over the current board to use the new one. Or you should be able to just open the folder then double-click the board file to use it.

Load/Restart Game - loads a previously saved game that was saved using ***Save Game*** as "SavedGame". Play is resumed at the place the game was saved.

Restart Saved Game - loads a previously saved game. Play is resumed at the place the game was saved.

Load Saved Game… - allows you to find and load a previously saved game. Play is resumed at the place the game was saved.

Save Game - saves the current game as "SavedGame" allowing the game to be loaded and resumed at a later time.

Save Game As... - saves the current game allowing the game to be loaded and resumed at a later time. Allows the game to be saved using any name.

Print Game... - use this to print a history of the currently displayed game. If you want to print a complete game, select the Print Game button at the end of the game.

Save Board Picture To a File - selecting this will capture a picture of the board then save it to the location you choose. The name of the file is BoardScreenShot. Very helpful when you want to show me a situation in the game.

Quit - quits the game.

Edit Menu

Undo Roll/Move/Cube/Last Turn – select to undo the last action. There are other ways to do the same things. They are explained in different areas of the manual.

Game Menu

New Game – will ask you to concede the game to start a new game. If you press the shift key before selecting the Game menu/New Game, it ends the current game, starting a new game.

New Session - the same as the ***New Game*** selection except the session scores are reset.

Start A New Match/End Match Play – starts a new match. Brings up a dialog where you can enter the details for the match. If a match is already started the menu changes to End Match Play. When selected match play will end with the data for the match being saved for continuation later.

Continue Last Match – if a match was not finished, you can continue the match by selecting this.

Concede/Resign Game... - allows the player to concede the game. The number of points lost will depend on the value of the cube and the board situation at the time of the concession. You will be asked if you accept the loss and the number of points that you will loose. If you accept you will loose the points displayed. If you don't accept the game will continue.

Play Against Another Person/Play against the Computer Opponent - this mode allows you to play with another person on the same computer. Play is similar to playing against the computer except that you share the mouse. When a player is finished moving, the board is rotated 180 degrees so that each player is playing as though they were playing on a real board.

Each player can select their direction of play. If you want to change the direction of play, do it during your turn. Next time it is your turn, the new direction will be used again.

Actions Menu

Change Sound Level… - use this to change the sound level for the dice, cube, and pieces. Note: This does not affect the sound level of the speech or other sounds on your computer.

Black Game Background – select this or press the Z key to toggle the black background on or off.

Switch Play Direction - reverses the direction of play. Moves the piece trays to the other end of the board, changes the direction of play and reverses the pieces appropriately. You might want to switch direction and colors once in a while so you don't get fixed on one color and direction. When you play with other people (or games) you don't always get the direction or color you want.

Switch Piece Colors - swaps your piece color with your opponents.

Swap Sides – selecting this is the same as turning the board around 180 degrees. The computer will be playing your pieces and you will be playing its pieces.

Enter Manual Dice – selecting this, when it is your turn, will bring up a dialog where you can select your dice roll.

Setup Board - this allows you to set up any board situation you want by placing pieces where you want them, selecting the dice to be rolled, choosing who is to get the roll, and selecting who has the cube and its value.

Setup Board – Clear First - this is the same as the Setup Board option except it clears the board of all pieces. In many situations it is easier to clear the board when setting up a special situation.

Undo Last Turn – undoes your opponent's and your last turn. This must be selected when it is your turn, before you have done anything. You can also take back the last turn using the Edit menu/Undo Last Turn

Stats Menu

Enter Your Name – allows you to change either player's name.

Game Stats – displays statistics for the current game.

Session Stats – displays statistics for the current session. Changes to Match Stats when a match is being played.

Running Scores - displays statistics accumulated since they were last reset or since you started playing the game.

Dice Rolls Distribution – Yours – displays the distribution of dices rolls since you started playing the game.

Dice Rolls Distribution – Computer's - displays the distribution of dices rolls since you started playing the game.

Help Menu

Gives help on various topics and takes you to several game related web sites.

Registration **menu**

These menu items are used to obtain information on registering/ordering the game. See the appendix for registration information.

Appendix

Basic Backgammon Rules

Most any book on backgammon has the rules explained in the back of the book. If the following rules don't make complete sense, I recommend finding a book on backgammon for an alternate description of the rules.

This game enforces all rules.

Objective

The objective of the game is to bear off all of your pieces from the board before your opponent does, or, if using a doubling cube, to force the other player to lose by declining a double of the cube.

Piece Movement

1. Direction of play is from your opponent's innerboard to your innerboard. At the start of the game, in one of the upper corners of the board, you will see 2 pieces on the 24 row. This is your piece color. If the 2 pieces are in the left corner, you move clockwise - bearing off from the bottom left. If the 2 pieces are on the right side, you move counter clockwise and bearoff from the bottom right.

2. Play of the pieces is governed by two dice, thrown onto the board. One move for each die. If both dice are the same (doubles), then play consists of four moves of the number thrown.

3. The first play goes to the player making the highest opening throw. The opening throw is made with each player throwing a single die, with the winner using the number on both his own and his opponent's die for the first play.

4. The play of the pieces consists of:

a. Moving a piece the exact number of points indicated by the number of pips (dots) on a die. Either one piece for each die can be moved or all dice can be used to move one piece. Or any combination if doubles are thrown.

b. Bearing off a piece from your innerboard. This can only be done if you have no pieces outside of your innerboard or on the Bar.

5. No play can be made that lands on a row occupied by two or more of your opponents men.

6. When your play lands on a row occupied by a single piece (blot) of your opponent, the blot is "hit" and is put on the Bar for later entry into your innerboard.

7. A player having a piece on the Bar may not play other pieces until that piece has been entered from the Bar. A piece is entered from the Bar into your opponents innerboard.

8. Plays must be made for both dice if possible. Either number may be played first. If only one number can be played, and there is a choice, the higher one must be played. In other words, as much of the roll as possible must be used.

Bearing Off

For this discussion of bearing off, the row numbers are the same as the minimum number of pips required to bear off, 1 through 6.

1. As soon as a player has moved all of his pieces into his innerboard, he may start bearing off his pieces.

2. You can bear off only if you have no pieces outside of your innerboard or on the Bar.

3. A piece may be borne off a row of the same number as appears on the die.

4. A piece may be borne off from the highest occupied row if it requires less than the number on the die to bear off the board.

5. If a number is thrown for an unoccupied row, no piece below can be borne off, for that die, while any piece remains on a higher row.

Scoring

1. A **Single game** is won by the first player who bears off all his pieces or has caused his opponent to refuse a doubling of the cube.

2. A **Double game** is called a **Gammon** and is won by the player who has borne off all his pieces before his opponent has removed a piece.

3. A **Triple game** is called a **Backgammon** and is won by the player who succeeds in bearing off all his pieces before his opponent has borne off a piece, and still has pieces in the winner's innerboard or on the Bar.

Doubling Cube

The doubling cube allows the stakes to be doubled during game play by the player that "owns" the cube, or by either player the first time it is used.

The cube has values 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 and 64 printed on the 6 sides of the cube.

The cube starts in the middle of the board with the side with 64 facing up, being "owned" by neither player. At the start of the game the 64 stands for 1.

When either player wishes to double the stakes during game play, he places the side up that doubles the bet and places it on the opponents side of the board. If the double is accepted by the other player then the stakes have been doubled with the other player "owning" the cube, being the only one that can next redouble. If he declines then the game ends immediately with the value of the cube being what it was before the double.

At the end of the game the points won is determined by the value of the cube times 1 for a single game, 2 for a double game, or 3 for a triple game.

Downloading and Using Other Board Styles

Other board styles can be used by downloading them, then loading the new board style into the game.

How to find the other board styles

There are many other board styles and sizes that can be used with the game, with more to come in the future. These can be found on my other boards web page by selecting the "Go To Other Boards Web Page" menu item in the Help menu.

After you have downloaded the new board style, please read the Read-me file, that is included with the board, for the rights and restrictions on using the board.

How to use the new boards that you have downloaded

After you download the new board style, you will first need to un-archive the file (if it wasn't done automatically), then put/drag the un-archived file where you want it. The game folder is a good place. See below for more on un-archiving the downloaded file. Once you have the new board style folder where you want to keep it. Startup the game, then drag the un-archived folder over the game, then let go. The new board style should appear instantly.

Or you can select Load New Board... in the File menu. Then find it using the open file dialog.

Whenever the game is re-started, the last board style used in the game will be used (provided the board file has not been moved).

Un-archiving the download

When files are sent over the internet they usually need to be put into a different format so they are smaller and so several files can be combined into just one file. This is called archiving or compressing the files/folder.

The current standard for OS X is the zip format. The file will have .zip after its name (if your computer is set to show the suffixes). The standard previous to OS X was the .sit format. Stuffit was used to compress and de-compress the files.

To use the downloaded file, it needs to be put back to the way it was before it was archived. After you download the new board style, you will see a file with the .zip extension. An example is turkishInlaidBoard.zip. To unarchive the file, if it wasn't done automatically, you should be able to just double-click the file. The result, in this case, will be a folder named Turkish Inlaid Board f. This is what you need to use. Once you have this folder, you can trash the .zip file that was download.

With OS X, if the file does not un-archive automatically and it doesn't un-archive when double-clicked on, move the cursor over the file then Ctrl-click. This will bring up a menu. Select "Open With". When the second menu appears, select Archive Utility. This will un-archive the file.

Summary

1 - go to the site
2 - download the new board style
3 - un-archive the file (if it is not done automatically)
4 - move the resulting board style folder to its permanent location.
5 - start the game
6 - drag and drop the board style folder on the game (over the game board)
7 - continue playing the game or try another board style

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

For help with your questions, please check the game Preferences and Help menu in the game. There are many options that can be used to make the game play the way you want it to. Also, if you are using OS X, press the Info… button to have access to additional information about the game.

If you don't find the answer or option you are looking for in Preferences, in the Help

menu or below, don't hesitate to contact me at absoluteGammon@aol.com. Preferences... can be selected in the Absolute Backgammon menu.

Are the rolls of the dice random or does the computer "cheat"?

Yes! They are random in all circumstances and skill levels and No, the computer doesn't cheat. The dice are not biased toward either player. If you still doubt it, you can, in Preferences.../Misc tab, select to save the dice rolls to the file "Random Dice Rolls". This file contains the dice rolls to be used for the game. Since they are created in advance, with this option selected, there is no way the computer could select the rolls to favor the computer in a particular situation. This along with the statistics you can view using the Stats menu, should convince anyone, with a basic understanding of statistics, that the dice rolls are random and do not favor either player.

If you still think the computer gets better dice rolls, you can select to be prompted at the start of each new game to use the computer's dice rolls, instead of your own. Once selected, it will prompt at the start of the next game. You must have the game set so the highest roll plays first, not winner of the last game. If you select this option and are at the start of a new game, you can select Game/New Game to be prompted.

Can I pick up more than 1 piece at one?

Yes you can. In Preferences, select the Move tab, then select **Select Multiple** in Piece Move Method.

I am used to dragging a piece rather than clicking to pick it up then clicking to put it down. Can I change the game so that I can drag the pieces?

Yes you can. In Preferences, select the Move tab, then select **Drag Pieces** in Piece Move Method.

I am used to playing the game with my tray on the right (counter-clockwise

movement), instead of on the left (clockwise). Can I change the direction of play?

Yes you can. In the Actions menu, select **Switch Direction of Play.**

Piece movement is too slow for me. Can I make the pieces move faster?

Yes you can. In Preferences, select the Move tab, then change the speed by selecting a a different **Piece Speed**. Higher numbers are faster.

When I have no valid move, after I roll the dice, why doesn't the computer pass the play to the computer player automatically?

It will if you select the **Automatic Pass** option. In Preferences, select the Move tab, then select "Automatic Pass". When selected, after you roll the dice, play will be passed to the computer if there are no valid moves.

Sometimes, especially when bearing pieces off into the tray, there is only one possible move. Can I have the computer make the move for me.

Yes you can, by selecting the **Automatic Moves** option. In Preferences, select the Move tab, then select Automatic Moves. When selected, any time there is only one possible move, the computer will make it for you.

I don't want to see the green markers that show where a piece can be moved. Can I turn this off?

Yes you can. In Preferences, select the Move tab, then de-select Show Possible Moves.

After I make all of the moves, play passes to the computer automatically. I would like to be able to make the whole move, examine it, then have the option to take back all or part of it. Can I do this?

Yes you can. In Preferences, select the Move tab, then select **Click After Your Move** in the Click After Moves Options.

Sometimes the computer moves too fast for me to see what dice were rolled and what moves were made. How can I find out what happened?

You can see what the computer's dice were by looking in the tray at the top of the board. You can see what moves were made by using **Instant Replay**. Instant replay will take back the moves then do them again. In OS X, press the Info... button then press the Instant Replay button. In both OS X and OS 8/9, you can press the I key to activate the Instant Replay.

You can also reduce the Piece Speed to slow down piece movement. Use Preferences/Move tab/Piece Speed to adjust the speed.

What are Rolls Left?

Your pip count gives you the minimum sum of your rolls required to get all of your pieces off the board. While comparing your pip count with your opponents, gives an idea where you stand against the computer, it is not that accurate in the later stages of a running game. Rolls Left is an estimate of the number of rolls required to get all of your pieces off the board (assuming none of your pieces get sent to the bar). It is a much better indicator of who is ahead in the later stages of a running game.

I would like to use keyboard shortcuts instead of pressing buttons. Is this possible?

Yes, for some actions/features. Here is a list of keyboard shortcuts:

P -- Pip count (same as Pip count button)
R -- Rolls left (same as Rolls Left button)
I -- Instant Replay (same as Instant Replay button)
C -- Cube advice (same as Cube Advice button)
+ -- rolls the dice (same as Roll button)
S -- suggested moves (same as Suggestions button)

W -- status (same as Status button)
Space Bar
-- rolls the dice
-- simulates the Done button
Command-G – saves a picture of the board to the game folder
Command-P – prints the details of the game
Command-U - undoes the last turn for both players (must be used before the dice are rolled)
Check out the menus for menu shortcuts

I don't want any sounds or speech, can I turn them off?

Yes you can. In Preferences, select the Sound tab, then de-select **Sound On** and **Speech On**.

The game does not have my language. Is it possible to add another language?

Yes it is. The game is designed to add other languages. If you would like to translate the game messages, menus, buttons, help and other text to another language, I would be happy to work with you to do that. Please contact me at absolutegammon@aol.com. Keep in mind that I am only fluent in English.

Registration Information

Instructions for Registering/Purchasing The Game

The password to make your demo version fully functional is **$25 USD**.

If you are reading this, you most likely have a demo version of the game. If you don't or want to make sure you have the latest version of the game, you can download it from:

www.bestbackgammon.com/absolute/

You have 3 ways to order the password to the demo of the game:

1 - print out the Registration form using the Registration menu in the game, then mail it to me at the address below.

2 - go to my web site (see above), then order using **PayPal** (easiest if you already have a PayPal account). If you don't have a PayPal and don't want one, it is easier to use the services mentioned below.

3 - go to my web site, then order using **Kagi** or **Digibuy** (these orders are $2 more since they charge me about $4 per order for processing). These are services that process orders for many shareware authors.

When you order, make sure to include the version number from the game and the 3 letter ID. You can get both of these using the Registration menu in the game. Make sure they are from the computer that you are going to use to play the game. If you have a 2nd computer, such as a laptop, I will give a password for that also. Just send me a separate email.

Please only use English when emailing or ordering. I only understand English and a little German.

Question? E-mail me at **AbsoluteGammon@aol.com**

A registered version that doesn't require a password will be emailed for $35. If you want it mailed on a CD, add $5 for S&H. Add an additional $3 for international orders to cover additional handling and postage.

International orders

If you don't pay using a credit card -- US Dollars or checks drawn on US banks are accepted. Another possibility is a Postal Money order.

If you send a check drawn on a bank other than a US bank please add $25 for processing fees.

Eurocheques cost me $25 to process. Please add $25 if you use a eurocheque.

For information or comments send an e-mail to AbsoluteGammon@aol.com or send to:

David Byrum
16181 SE Lillian Ct.
Milwaukie, OR 97267
USA

Voice Play/Speech Recognition Instructions (English only)

Absolute Backgammon has the ability to use the Speech Recognition built into OS X. This feature allows you to play the game using just your voice.

If you have success or not in using this, I would like to hear about your experience so that it might be helpful to others and in improving it in the future.

You will need a microphone. If you have a mac with a microphone built-in, you are set to go. iMacs have a microphone built-in. Look just above the screen. The little hole is the microphone. Some other macs have microphones built-in also.

Turn on speech recognition in Preferences.../Sound tab. A small window should appear in the center of the board. This displays recognized commands and move information.

You can toggle listening off and on by pressing the T key. This does not turn speech recognition off or on. It just stops it from listening and interpreting commands.

At least at first, it is recommended that the "Click After Your Move" option be selected (Preferences.../Move tab). This will cause the game to wait after you make your move until you either click somewhere in board or press the "Done" button (or say "Done").

Unless you have a headset to hear the game sounds, it is recommended that you turn the sound to low or turn the dice and piece sounds off. These can cause unpredictable results since the microphone can hear them.

Any other noises, such as a TV, can interfere with recognition. The quieter the better.

Since speech recognition takes a lot of computer power, you might need to increase the piece speed to compensate.

Commands

At any time, you can say "What Can I Say" to have the allowable commands to be displayed. They will stay displayed until it recognizes one of the commands.

Many of the commands are the same as the buttons displayed below the board or in dialog windows. When a command is recognized, it is displayed in the top part of the small window.

Only the commands that are different than the buttons are explained below.

Command **Result**

numbers 1 - 24 specifies a row to move a piece from and the die/distance to use
Bar (or 25) use for the from row if on the bar
Tray use to put a piece in the tray
Clear if the from row is not correct, use clear to clear the from row
Move one moves the first suggested move
Move two moves the second suggested move
Move three moves the third suggested move
Again move another piece from the same row
Quit program use this to quit the game. Close any dialog windows first
Concede game Concede the game
Status Same as button, but the "a" needs to be a long a, like in say.
Take back turn – takes back the previous turn for your opponent and you.

If you don't know what to say, look at the buttons. Just say what is on them to get the same result as pushing the button.

With my iMac, speech is recognized very accurately as far as several feet away.

Example:

At the start of your turn say "Roll"

After you roll the dice, "Move from row" will be displayed

You roll 5-3. If you want to move a piece from the 13 roll using the 5, you would say 13.

If the 13 is recognized, "Thirteen" will be displayed as the command and "Move from row 13" will be displayed below it.

Then say 5 (for the distance). The piece should move from the 13 row to the 8 row, providing it is a valid move.

If you now want to move a piece from the 24 row, you just need to say "Twenty four". Since there is only one die(3) left, the computer knows to use it. The piece should move from the 24 row to the 21 row.

If the move data shows the incorrect from row, you can say "Clear" to clear the from row.

When you first start using speech recognition, the computer might have difficulty recognizing your commands. After awhile, after it has trained you to speak the way it wants, accuracy should increase to almost 100%.

Speech Recognition won't start

If it won't start, try quitting and starting the game. If that still doesn't allow it to start, try logging out then logging in again to your user name/account.

Note:

As of OS 10.2.6, the speech recognition built into OS X has some problems that have nothing to do with how well it recognizes your voice or with Absolute Backgammon. You might experience these problems. They have to do with the System Preferences for Speech Recognition.

For example, on my machine, it wasn't recognizing speech even when I was in the area for adjusting the microphone volume, even though it was set to use the internal microphone. It didn't think it was and wasn't listening. I set it to use something else, then set it back to the internal microphone setting. It was now listening. I then clicked on Volume... to adjust the microphone level. It locked up anything to do with System Preferences. Force quitting System Preferences didn't solve the problem. At this point, logging out then logging in again helped.

I suggest that you stay away from the System Preferences/Speech/Speech Recognition tab unless you are having problems and want to see if speech recognition is working. Then, I would only select the Listening tab, then press the Volume... button, then perform the test to see if it is recognizing okay. If you can't get it to recognize any of the phrases, you might try selecting something other than the Internal Microphone, then setting it back.

Changing words/phrase

As of version 2.1, the words and phrases, that are used to play the game, are located in a STR# resources. If you know how to use ResEdit or Resorcerer, you can change them to your liking. For example, you could change "Roll" to "Roll the dice". Note, however, you can not add words or phases, just change them.

Glossary

Automatic double an option where the cube is doubled automatically if both players roll the same die on the opening roll of the game.

Back Game a strategy used when a player finds himself significantly behind in the game.

Backgammon in addition to the name of the game, it is also the result of a game in which one player removes all of his pieces before the other player has removed any pieces and has a piece in the opponents inner board or on the Bar. This results in a triple game (worth 3 times as much.)

Back Men/Pieces the two pieces that are farthest out at the start of the game (opponent's 1 point). Also called Runners.

Bar the center divider separating the inner and outer boards. Hit pieces (blots) are placed on the bar until the piece is re-entered.

Bar Point the 7 point. A strategic blocking point.

Bearing off the process of removing men from the board.

Beaver an optional rule where the doubled player can re-double the cube after being doubled. The double must be made before the other player rolls the dice. When playing against the computer you have 3 seconds to re-double.

Block a series of contiguous points that block your opponent from advancing his back men

Blocking Game a strategy where the goal is to block your opponent's back men in your home board. The best overall game strategy.

Blot a single piece on a point. A blot can be hit by an opposing piece and placed on the Bar.

Builder a piece that can be used later to make important points later in

your inner board or as part of a Block.

Combination Shot An opponent's blot that is more than six rows away from one of your pieces, and that therefore requires a roll combining numbers on both dice in order to be hit by that piece.

Come in or Come on See Re-entering.

Contact Positions on the board in which all of each player's pieces have not yet gotten past all of his opponent's pieces; it is therefore still possible for one or both players to leave a blot.

Count the position See Pip count

Cover a blot Move a second piece to a point/row holding one of your blots. You thus make the point, preventing your blot from being hit.

Crawford Rule Used in tournament play. This rule forbids a doubling of the cube for one game after an opponent wins a game that puts him within 1 point of winning the tournament.

Cube/the doubling cube. The cube is die shaped with the numbers 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 printed on the 6 sides. The cube allows the stakes to be doubled during game play by the player that "owns" the cube. The cube starts in the middle of the board with the side with 64 facing up, being "owned" by neither player. When either player wishes to double the stakes of the game during game play, he places the side up that doubles the bet and places it on the opponent's side of the board. If the double is accepted by the other player, then the stakes have been doubled with the other player "owning" the cube, being the only one that can next redouble. If he declines, then the game ends immediately with the value of the cube being what it was before the double.

Direct Shot An blot that is within 6 pips of an opposing piece. This blot can be hit by a number on a single die greatly increasing the chance that it will be hit.

Double See Cube.

Double Game See Gammon

Doubling Cube See Cube.

Early game The first stages of play.

End game The last stages of play.

Enter See Re-enter

Exposed Piece See blot.

Gammon A game in which one player removes all of his pieces before the opponent has removed any pieces from the board. This results in a double game (worth twice as much).

Hit A move that lands on an opponent's exposed piece (blot), thus placing that piece on the bar.

Home Board your inner board

Indirect Shot An exposed piece (blot) that can be hit only by using both of the dice. By definition it is 7 or more pips away from the opponent's piece.

Inner Board the quarter of the board where you must move all of your pieces before bearing off.

Jacoby Rule A double or triple game is not allowed unless the cube was passed at least once during the game.

Lead The difference between the pip count of the two players.

Off the Board Said of those pieces already removed from the board during the bearing off process. Once a piece is off the board it is placed in the tray and stays off for the remainder of the game.

On the Bar See Bar.

Outer Board the quarter of the board adjacent to the Inner Board.

Pips The dots that appear on the face of the die. The number of dots determines the value of the die.

Pip Count The minimum number of pips required to move all of a player's pieces off the board (assuming no blots are hit.) Can be displayed by pressing on the P key or by clicking when the cursor becomes a P when moved over the bottom of the board frame (on the right side).

Points Rows occupied by two or more pieces. A point controls that particular row, preventing an opponent from touching down on it with one of his pieces. Also, the designation of a location on the board; e.g., the 5-point.

Prime Six consecutive points you have made.

Race See Running Game.

Re-enter The process required to bring a hit man from the bar to a point in the opponent's home board. To re-enter, a player must throw a number on one of the dice that is the same as the a row that is not controlled by your opponent. All pieces on the bar must be re-entered before any other move can be made. If a player fails to throw a number that will allow a piece to re-enter, the turn is lost and the player must try again on his next turn.

Remaining Rolls the approximate number of rolls required to bear off all of their pieces.

During the later stages of a running game this gives a more accurate assessment of the game than the Pip Count.

Note: this assumes that none of your blots will be hit before bearing off. Can be displayed by pressing on the R key or by clicking when the cursor becomes a R when moved over the bottom of the board frame (on the right side).

Roll-over An optional method of play whereby each side has one chance during the game to either re-roll the dice or demand that his opponent do so.

Re-roll first roll an optional method of play whereby the winner of the first roll is permitted to accept the roll as is or to re-roll his dice using the new roll (even if it is worse).

Runners The two pieces that are farthest out at the start of the game (opponent's 1 point). Also called Back Men.

Running Game a game strategy where the player tries to get his pieces into his inner board as fast as possible. Should only use when you have a significant lead in the pip count or you have completely passed each others pieces.

Triple Game see Backgammon

Playing Against Another Person

This option allows you to play against another person using the same computer. The option was added because of requests by users. While most options and features are supported during Human Play, some are not. Please read below to see which are not:

- statistics are not added to Running Stats but game and sessions stats are kept
- can't take back turns but you can still take back moves
- for practical reasons, the Beaver option is not supported

Must be selected each time the program is started to use it.
- Select in the Game menu.
- You will be asked for your names to be used during play.
- Select the same menu item to turn off Human Play.

A new game will be started when it is selected and a new game will be started when it is ended.

Your session stats against the computer opponent will be saved then restored when Human Play is ended or the program is quit. During Human Play, the session stats reflect the stats since Human play was selected.

Each player can select which direction they want to play using the Actions menu -- clockwise or counterclockwise

Each play can also pick their method of moving pieces.

Absolute Backgammon Features

- Play against the Computer
- Play against another person on the same computer
- Can play a Match against the computer
- 5 skill levels
- A Tutor mode to help you improve your game
- Many attractive board styles to pick from
- 3 personalities: Normal, Aggressive, or Conservative
- Supports English, German, French, Spanish, Dutch and Italian
- Choice of 5 methods to move the pieces
- Can use the Speech Recognition built into OS X to play a game
- Fast computer play
- Piece movement is animated - pieces DON'T just appear in the new location
- Can pick up multiple pieces at once
- Easily take back as many moves and doubles of the cube as you wish
- Use the voices built into OS 8/9/X
- Digitized sound effects
- Gives suggestions for moves
- Gives Doubling Cube Advice
- Save your game to finish later
- Switch board direction and colors
- Setup any board situation.
- Helpful messages during play using speech & text
- Select from several beautiful board styles and sizes
- Add comments when saving a game for later recall
- Concede games
- Change the speed of piece movement
- Select number of automatic doubles
- Beaver option supported
- Jacoby rule optional
- Option to not allow backgammons
- Option to have winner roll first
- Easily (1 click) display pip counts and remaining rolls for both players
- Automatic Rolls of the dice for faster play
- Choice of shorter dice sound for faster play
- Instant replay of computer's last move
- Option to show possible moves when a piece is picked up or when a piece is passed over
- Select to pick up either 1 piece at a time or multiple pieces
- Keeps game and sessions statistics as well as running/cumulative statistics.
- Option to automatically make moves for you if there is no choice.

- Can take advantage of a 2 button mouse.
- Can print the details of the game
- Can save a picture of the board during play
- Can choose to have the dice, to be used in the game, saved to a file before the game starts
- Can select to use the computer's dice rolls instead of yours (for those that think the computer gets better dice rolls)
- Can select to continue a game that has ended due to the doubling cube being declined or the game being resigned/conceded
- Can enter dice rolls manually
- Plus more...