

How to Play Solitaire *a complete beginner's guide*

Solitaire (Klondike) is the one-player card game Windows shipped with since 1990. This two-page guide walks through setup, legal moves, both draw modes, and the seven beginner habits that win more games.

Setup

Shuffle a standard 52-card deck (no Jokers). Deal 28 cards into seven tableau columns: 1 card in column 1, 2 in column 2, up to 7 in column 7. Only the top card of each column is face up. The remaining 24 cards form the **stock**. An empty **waste** slot sits next to the stock. Above the tableau, four **foundations** start empty — one per suit.

The goal

Move all 52 cards to the four foundation piles. Each foundation is built upward from Ace to King in one suit. The game is won the moment the last King lands.

Legal moves

- 1 Tableau to tableau:** one rank lower, opposite color. Black 5 onto red 6 ✓. Same color is illegal.
- 2 Multi-card moves:** a valid descending, alternating-color run moves as a single unit.
- 3 Empty columns:** only a King (or a run starting with a King) may fill an empty tableau column.
- 4 To a foundation:** same suit, one rank higher than what's there. A foundation starts with an Ace.
- 5 Stock to waste:** tap the stock to flip cards into the waste. The top waste card is always playable.
- 6 Recycle:** when the stock empties, flip the waste back into a fresh stock and cycle through again.

Draw 1 vs Draw 3

	DRAW 1	DRAW 3
Cards turned per draw	1	3 (top card playable)
Typical human win rate	40–45%	10–20%
Recycle cost (scored)	0 points	–20 points per recycle
Best for	New players, quick wins	Strategic, competitive play

Seven beginner mistakes *and the move that actually wins*

Every beginner loses winnable games for the same handful of reasons. Left: the habit to drop. Right: the move that wins.

✗ **promote Aces and 2s the moment you see them.**

✓ keep low cards on the tableau as parking spots until the board's shape is clear.

✗ **freeze when no tableau move is obvious.**

✓ draw from the stock — it's free progress and usually unlocks the next move.

✗ **play only the obvious move.**

✓ plan two or three moves ahead. The best first move is the one that unlocks a chain.

✗ **shuffle tableau columns for no reason.**

✓ move with purpose — every move should expose a face-down card or set up the next one.

✗ **empty a column without a King ready to fill it.**

✓ treat an empty column as leverage — only fill it with a King that opens more downstream moves.

✗ **race one suit to the King.**

✓ build foundations roughly evenly — you often need a mid-rank card back as a parking spot.

✗ **restart when a move goes wrong.**

✓ use Undo — it's free, unlimited, and the fastest way to learn a line.

Odds of winning

CONDITION	WIN RATE
Turn 1, thoughtful play (all cards visible)	~82% (theoretical ceiling)
Turn 1, normal hidden-card play	~43%
Turn 3, normal hidden-card play	~11%
Experienced human, Turn 1	30–40% (in practice)

Not every deal is winnable. If a board feels impossible, it may genuinely be impossible — roughly 1 in 5 Klondike deals cannot be won regardless of play.