

Agnes

1 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Hard

Duration: Medium

Build four foundations up by suit from a randomly chosen base rank.

SETUP

- 1 player with a standard 52-card deck.
- Deal 1 card to set the foundation base rank.
- Deal 28 cards in a 7-column staircase, all face-up.

SCORING

- Win by moving all 52 cards to foundations.
- Partial score counts cards placed on foundations.

Tip: Find and play the other three base-rank cards as quickly as possible.

ON YOUR TURN

- Build tableau columns down in alternating colours.
- Move cards or sequences to foundations (up by suit).
- Deal 7 reserve cards from stock when no moves remain.

Agnes is a challenging solitaire card game with two main variants: Agnes Bernauer and Agnes Sorel. In the most common version (Agnes Bernauer), cards are dealt in a staircase tableau and built down in alternating colours, while foundations are built up by suit from a randomly determined starting rank. The game is notable for its reserve row mechanic and below-average win rate.

Objective

Build all four foundations up by suit in sequence, wrapping from King to Ace if necessary, starting from the base card rank determined at the beginning of the game.

Setup

1. **Players:** 1 player (solitaire).
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck.
3. **Foundation base:** Deal one card face-up to the first foundation. Its rank becomes the base rank for all four foundations.
4. **Tableau:** Deal 28 cards into 7 columns in a staircase pattern: 1 card in column 1, 2 in column 2, and so on up to 7 in column 7, all face-up.
5. **Reserve:** The remaining cards form the stock, which is dealt in batches of 7 to a reserve row below the tableau.

Gameplay

1. **Tableau building:** Build down on tableau columns in alternating colours (red on black, black on red). Sequences wrap from Ace down to King if needed.
2. **Moving groups:** Packed sequences of cards in alternating colour may be moved as a unit to another tableau column.
3. **Foundation building:** Build up by suit on foundations from the base rank, wrapping from King to Ace as needed.
4. **Reserve:** When stuck, deal 7 cards from the stock to a reserve row (one below each tableau column). Reserve cards are available for play to the tableau or foundations.
5. **Empty columns:** An empty tableau column may only be filled with a card of the rank one below the foundation base rank.

Scoring

1. **Win condition:** Successfully move all 52 cards to the four foundations.
2. **Partial score:** Count the number of cards successfully placed on foundations if the game stalls.
3. **Win rate:** Agnes Bernauer has a relatively low win rate, estimated around 1 in 30 games.

Variations

- **Agnes Sorel:** A simpler variant where tableau building is by suit colour (red on red, black on black) rather than alternating colour.
- **Agnes with redeals:** Some versions allow gathering and redealing the reserve for additional chances.

Tips and Strategies

- Examine the entire layout before making your first move; early choices heavily influence the outcome.
- Prioritise uncovering and playing cards of the foundation base rank to start all four foundation piles.
- Keep tableau columns free for rearranging sequences; an empty column is extremely valuable.

Tips & Strategy

Focus on finding and playing the other three cards matching the foundation base rank. Maintain empty columns for manoeuvring. Plan moves around the reserve deals since you cannot choose which cards appear.

The reserve deals are predetermined once the deck is shuffled, so experienced players sometimes plan around which cards will likely appear in future reserve rows.