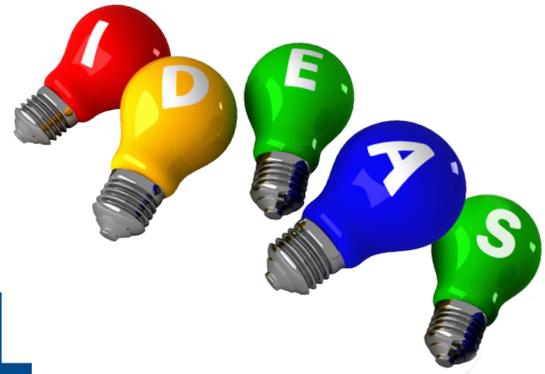


# 10 LESSONS LEARNED FROM PLAYING FREECELL



I love playing FreeCell, a solitaire game on my PC. Aside from the relaxation value of the game, though, I've extracted many life lessons through reflecting on it. Here are 10...

- 1. Know your destination.** Just like most things in life, FreeCell is neither fun nor relaxing if you don't know how to play. Before getting started, learn the basics.
- 2. Focus on the process.** For years, my strategy had been to get to the next card I needed to play, as quickly as possible (i.e., to shift cards around until a specific card became available). However, when I stopped doing that, changing my focus to efficiently assembling the cards in play, my win average skyrocketed!
- 3. Make space.** FreeCell is easier to play when you free up a column. Similarly, life and work projects move more quickly and smoothly when you've created space for them. Declutter... physically, emotionally, and mentally so that you can move projects forward.
- 4. When you're stuck, step back and look at the big picture.** Sometimes a strategy stops working; pausing at that point to look at the problem holistically may reveal a simple solution. In FreeCell, you may notice an open card to play immediately; in life, perhaps a small piece of a project can be finished completely, making space to continue work on the rest.
- 5. Don't dwell on mistakes.** Make them, learn from them, and move on. Don't let FreeCell frustrate you. However, learn from your mistakes and watch your "stats" improve.
- 6. Know when to quit.** It's typically crystal clear when there are no useful moves remaining. When you can look far enough ahead to know for certain that the ending isn't going to be positive, consider ending the game early. Why waste energy taking futile steps?
- 7. Breaks are effective.** A few moments away from an important project may give your brain creative thinking space. Don't stubbornly proceed with a project once you're exhausted.
- 8. Set time limits.** Just like most projects (and all addictions!), FreeCell can expand to fill all the space you give it. Take control, returning to your "real" project at a pre-determined time.
- 9. It's easier to change something small than something big.** Your FreeCell stats will be much more volatile when you first start tracking wins; however, with more games to compare to, your wins and losses will have much less impact on your statistical average. Similarly in life, if you've built a reputation for excellence one slip likely won't change your image. However, if you're new to the "game," each win or loss will be more noticeable.
- 10. Keep things in perspective and have fun!** FreeCell is only a game. It really doesn't matter whether you win or lose; if you get frustrated about losing, it won't be very relaxing!



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