

The KBackgammon Handbook

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	How to use the Board	2
3	Backgammon Engines	4
3.1	The Offline Engine	4
3.2	The FIBS Engine	4
3.3	The GNU Backgammon Engine	4
4	Game options	6
5	Menu Reference/Keyboard Shortcuts	7
5.1	Game Menu	7
5.2	Move Menu	7
5.3	Command Menu	8
5.4	Settings Menu	8
5.5	Help Menu	8
5.6	Default Shortcuts	9
6	Credits and License	10
A	Installation	11
A.1	How to obtain KBackgammon	11
A.2	Compilation and Installation	11

List of Tables

5.2	Key bindings	9
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Abstract

KBackgammon is a graphical backgammon program for KDE. It supports backgammon games with other players, games against computer engines like GNU bg and even on-line games on the [First Internet Backgammon Server](#).

Chapter 1

Introduction

KBackgammon is a graphical backgammon program. The objective of backgammon is to move your checkers off the board before your opponent does. While the rules of backgammon are moderately difficult (the most difficult part apparently being the initial positioning of the checkers), this document does not try to teach these rules: please refer to the Web, a book, or (probably best) a friend for this.

KBackgammon offers you a graphical backgammon board that can be used almost entirely by using the mouse (although textual commands are also available and it should be possible to play backgammon without the mouse, too). Therefore, KBackgammon is easy to use and allows you to concentrate on the important aspects of playing backgammon.

In order to play backgammon, you usually need an opponent. KBackgammon offers you to play against hundreds of different opponents of various strength on the [First Internet Backgammon Server](#). If you prefer, you may also use the [Offline Engine](#) which allows you to play against yourself or friends that are with you at your computer.

In the near future KBackgammon will allow you to play against [GNU Backgammon](#), which is a powerful backgammon program that usually runs without a graphical frontend. It plays on FIBS with a rating of about 2000 (which is quite high).

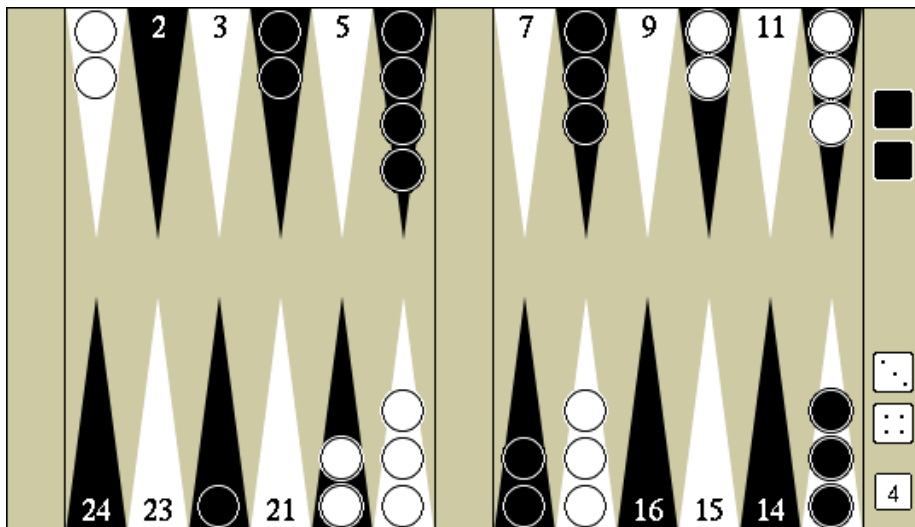
Additionally, plans are on the way that will allow games over the Internet between two KBackgammon programs (and their respective users). Finally, the architecture of KBackgammon is quite open and it is possible to include support for other engines easily (if you are interested in this, please contact the author).

Chapter 2

How to use the Board

KBackgammon is centered around a graphical backgammon board. This board consists of the checkers, the dice, and the cube. All these game elements can be conveniently manipulated with the mouse.

The following image shows a typical game situation with the white player moving from 1 to 24 and the black player moving from 24 to 1. Currently, the white player owns the cube and has just rolled 3 and 4.



If it is their turn, players can roll the dice by double clicking on the squares representing the dice or by using the corresponding menu entry or toolbar icon (if the toolbar is visible and rolling has been included in the toolbar).

If they own the cube, players can double the cube by either double clicking on the square representing the cube or by using the corresponding menu entry or toolbar icon (if the toolbar is visible and the cube has been included in the toolbar).

The KBackgammon Handbook

If it is their turn to move, players can move checkers by clicking on them and moving the mouse pointer to the desired location (while holding the mouse button continuously pressed). This is called dragging the checker. Depending on the selection made in the current [engine's configuration](#), the move will be finished once the maximum number of checkers has been moved (this may be anywhere between 1 and 4 checkers, although it will usually be 2 checkers).

In addition to dragging the checkers, the board offers a feature called *short move feature*. If this has been enabled in the board's configuration menu, checkers can be moved by simply clicking on them. The board will then automatically make the shortest move possible away from the current field. If the short move feature [is enabled](#), it may be set to single or double click. This option is very useful for users of touchpads that are sometimes difficult to use for dragging.

Finally, the board has a certain smartness: it will only accept moves that are allowed (based on the current dice). While the [offline engine](#) allows this to be switched off (for the Edit Mode), this is usually very helpful for inexperienced users (and advanced players will probably never notice this). This feature can also be used to cancel a move in progress: just drop it over an illegal field.

Chapter 3

Backgammon Engines

KBackgammon is built around the backgammon board, which doesn't know anything about how to play backgammon. The whole infrastructure (rolling the dice, etc.) that allows backgammon games is handled by backgammon engines.

3.1 The Offline Engine

The offline engine Open Board allows you to play against yourself, or probably more fun, another person sitting with you.

3.2 The FIBS Engine

FIBS is the 'First Internet Backgammon Server', a 24-hour international online community of backgammon players of all ages and experience from Beginner to Experts.

As well as playing the game, FIBS allows you to save games, chat with other players, and has a complex rating system.

There is also a large [website](#) well worth some of your time, if you are a backgammon fan.

3.3 The GNU Backgammon Engine

The GNUbg engine does not yet exist (although it already has an entry in the Engine menu). Therefore, the remainder of this section should be taken with a grain of salt.

The KBackgammon Handbook

Use of the GNUbg engine requires a working installation of the actual GNUbg program. KBackgammon then starts GNUbg in the background and communicates with it. All this is transparent to the user (i.e. it is hidden from the user) and all interaction with GNUbg is through the GUI elements of KBackgammon.

If there are other enhancements that can help using GNUbg from KBackgammon, please contact the author of KBackgammon (or better: send a patch). Some of the more advanced features will probably be position analysis and save/restore functions. However, playing is the most pressing issue.

The one thing that will never happen is a combination of the GNUbg and the FIBS engine! Using computer programs to enhance user ratings is cheating!

Chapter 4

Game options

The options to KBackgammon are set by selecting Settings → Configure KBackgammon... from the menubar. This will bring up a dialog box.

Chapter 5

Menu Reference/Keyboard Shortcuts

The following sections briefly describe each menubar option.

5.1 Game Menu

Game → **New (Ctrl+N)** Start a new game. This item opens a dialog to enter the nicknames of both players.

Game → **Print... (Ctrl+P)** Print a picture of the board.

Game → **Quit (Ctrl+Q)** Quit and close KBackgammon

5.2 Move Menu

Move → **Undo (Ctrl+Z)** Undo the last move you made.

Move → **Redo (Ctrl+Shift+Z)** If you have previously undone a move, you can redo it here.

Move → **Redisplay** Redraw the board.

Move → **Roll Dice (Ctrl+R)** As you may expect, roll the dice.

Move → **End Turn** Let the other player know you have finished moving.

Move → **Double Cube** Offer the opponent player during the course of a game (just before you roll the dice) to continue the game at twice the current stakes. If the opponent rejects this offer, you win the game.

Move → **Engine** Choose from the various game engines (Open Board, FIBS, GNU Backgammon, Next Generation) here.

5.3 Command Menu

This menu has different items depending on the chosen game engine.

Open Board engine

Command → **New Game** Start a new game. This item opens a dialog to enter the nicknames of both players.

Command → **Edit Mode** In this mode the board accepts moves that are not allowed (based on the current dice).

Command → **Swap Colors** Swap the colors of the checkers between player 1 and player 2.

5.4 Settings Menu

Settings → **Show Menubar (Ctrl+M)** Toggle on and off the menubar.

Settings → **Toolbars** → **Main (KBackgammon)** Toggle the Main Toolbar

Settings → **Toolbars** → **Command Characters (KBackgammon)** Toggle the Command Toolbar

Settings → **Show Statusbar** Toggle on and off the statusbar.

Settings → **Save Settings** Saves the current settings to become the default for KBackgammon.

Settings → **Configure Shortcuts...** Opens a dialog for changing the key bindings. Using this option you can change the standard key shortcut for KBackgammon's commands or create new ones.

Settings → **Configure Toolbars...** Opens a dialog for configuring the toolbar. You can add and remove toolbuttons for KBackgammon's commands with this option.

Settings → **Configure KBackgammon...** Opens a dialog for changing some options for KBackgammon.

5.5 Help Menu

KBackgammon has a standard KDE Help as described below, with one addition:

Help → **Backgammon on the Web** Opens the websites of FIBS Home, Backgammon Rules, or KBackgammon in Konqueror.

The KBackgammon Handbook

The standard KDE Help entries are:

Help → **KBackgammon Handbook (F1)** Invokes the KDE Help system starting at the KBackgammon help pages. (this document).

Help → **What's This? (Shift+F1)** Changes the mouse cursor to a combination arrow and question mark. Clicking on items within KBackgammon will open a help window (if one exists for the particular item) explaining the item's function.

Help → **Report Bug...** Opens the Bug report dialog where you can report a bug or request a 'wishlist' feature.

Help → **About KBackgammon** This will display version and author information.

Help → **About KDE** This displays the KDE version and other basic information.

5.6 Default Shortcuts

The following tables show you the default shortcuts of KBackgammon.

Key Combo	Action
Ctrl+N	New Game
Ctrl+R	Roll Dice
Ctrl+P	Print Game
Ctrl+Q	Quit KBackgammon
F1	Help Contents
Shift+F1	What's This? Help
Ctrl+M	Show Menubar
Ctrl+Z	Undo move
Ctrl+Shift+Z	Redo previously undone move

Table 5.2: Key bindings

These shortcuts can be changed by selecting Settings → Configure Shortcuts from the menubar.

Chapter 6

Credits and License

KBackgammon

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Documentation copyright 2000 Jens Hoefkens jens@hoefkens.com

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Appendix A

Installation

A.1 How to obtain KBackgammon

KBackgammon is part of the KDE project <http://www.kde.org/> .

KBackgammon can be found in the kdegames package on <ftp://ftp.kde.org/pub/kde/> , the main FTP site of the KDE project.

The home page of KBackgammon is located at <http://backgammon.sourceforge.net>. It will usually contain the most up-to-date information the program available.

A.2 Compilation and Installation

In order to compile and install KBackgammon on your system, type the following in the base directory of the KBackgammon distribution:

```
% ./configure
% make
% make install
```

Since KBackgammon uses **autoconf** and **automake** you should have no trouble compiling it. Should you run into problems please report them to the KDE mailing lists.