

Cardtable FAQ and notes for Shadowfist on-line play

Version 0.2

20 July 2003

FAQ compiled by Stefan Vincent. You may reproduce and distribute this document in printed or electronic format, provided that no fee is charged for such services. Cardtable is copyright Ryan Casey, under the GPL.

What is Cardtable?

Cardtable is a free, open-source program distributed under the GPL for playing two-player card games online. Cardtable includes a feature called Deckbuilder to construct decks from card databases (In older versions of Cardtable, Deckbuilder was a separate program. FYI in case you run across someone using an old version.)

Cardtable displays card images and lets you manipulate cards and stacks of cards (moving, flipping, rotating) on a virtual table. It doesn't include any smarts about the rules, nor does it care if you move your opponent's cards, so you'll still need to know the rules and play courteously. (i.e., don't cheat :)

Terms and Acronyms

CDF is card definition file. This is the master database of cards. Internally it's the same format as a deck file (CTD), except that the "number" parameter for each card is set to 0. The Deckbuilder part of Cardtable can open files with CDF or CTD extensions as card definition files.

CTD is Cardtable deck file. This is a deck listing; it contains entries for only those cards in this deck, and the number of each. Once you save a deck file, it's independent of changes to the master CDF. (which means you have to recreate your deck if the CDF changes, such as when images are added. Sorry—I'll try to come up with some kind of update utility, but don't wait for it :)

Setting Up Cardtable

First, you need to install the program. Get the Windows installer from <http://go.to/cardtable>. Version 1.12.1 is the stable release, 1.13 beta is the latest release. You and your opponent should use the same version. Run the installer and accept the default directory (it will create C:\cardtable and populate it). There is no uninstaller, but there doesn't appear to be a need—if you want to uninstall, delete C:\cardtable, but first move any files you want to keep, such as .CTDs.

Next, download the files for the game you want to play. You and your opponent must both download these files. Typically, you'll get a CDF or CTD with the database of cards (some folks distribute multiple CDFs for individual sets, I prefer to stick everything into one sorted file), plus a ton of card images. It's very important that these files end up in the right subdirectories, Cardtable is very picky about that. Usually the zip file is set up to unzip to the proper directories as long as you choose to unzip to "C:\\" but it doesn't hurt to make sure that everything ends up where the readme says it should.

There is another format called a "gamezip" file that contains all of this stuff, and resides in C:\cardtable\games. Theoretically it doesn't need to be unzipped to work, so the files can't end up in the wrong spots, but I haven't messed with it yet.

For Shadowfist, this is where everything goes:

```
C:\cardtable
  \backs
    [all card back gifs go here for all games, no subfolders!]
  \cards
    \shadowfist
      \<set name>
        [one directory for each set, contains the gifs for that set]
      \generic
        [generic "template" card images go here]
    \counters
      [counter images go here]
  \decks
    [counter "decks" can go here, or in the shadowfist subdirectory. doesn't matter]
    \shadowfist
      [deck lists .CTDs go here]
  \data
    \shadowfist
      [master card file .CDF goes here]
  \playmat
    [background images go here. Actually, the program doesn't seem to care where these go]
```

I looked at some other game files, and it seems that there are lots of ways to set up counters. This is how I set it up, and it works for me :) Cardtable prior to 1.13 does not have built-in counters, so you have to load counter "decks" for any counters. Version 1.13 adds the ability to put a counter directly on a card, but no free-floating counters allowed, so even with 1.13 you'll still need to load a counter "deck" to keep track of Power.

Card images must be .gif at 63 by 87 pixels. Anything larger than that gets cropped to that size. The image can include the border if you want, or not — Cardtable can add a colored border by changing the setting in the CDF. I include the black border in the images and don't use the "software" border.

Building and Editing Decks

You and your opponent each need deck files (CTDs) to play. Some sample deck files are included in the download package, but you'll want to make your own eventually. First, start Cardtable by double-clicking cardtable.exe.

The Cardtable starting screen.



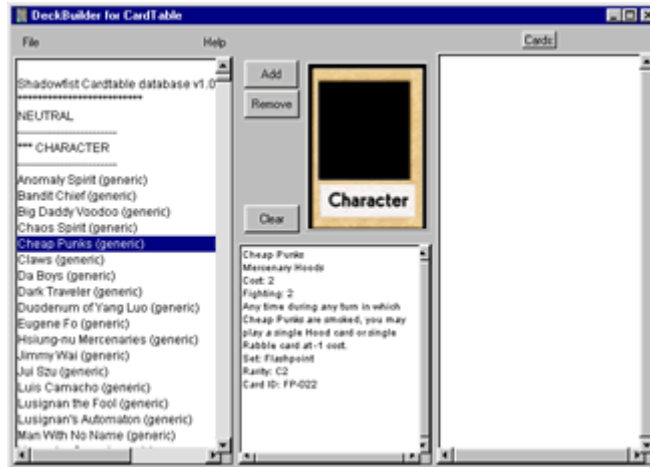
You can change the colors of each of the three main areas (table, your hand, opponent's hand), or load images to use for the background. Drag the small red squares on the borders between the areas to resize them.

To make a new deck, choose File-->Deckbuilder. You'll see the empty Deckbuilder window open.



First, you need to specify the card definition file you'll use to build the deck. In Deckbuilder, choose File-->Data File, highlight the .CDF, and click "open". You'll see the card listing appear on the left side. The set name appears in parenthesis after the card title (actually, it's the name of the subdirectory where the images are located, but in theory if they're named properly that's the same thing)

Deckbuilder after the CDF has been loaded:



When you highlight a card in the database on the left, you'll see that card's image and info appear in the middle. To add it to your deck, click "Add" (click multiple times if you want more than one). If you highlight a line that isn't a card (like a separator line), you'll still see the last card you highlighted. If you click "Add" in that situation, nothing gets added to your deck, but there's no warning message either.

A running total of the number of cards in the deck is displayed on the right side, above the deck list.

To remove a card from the deck, highlight it on the right side, then click remove.

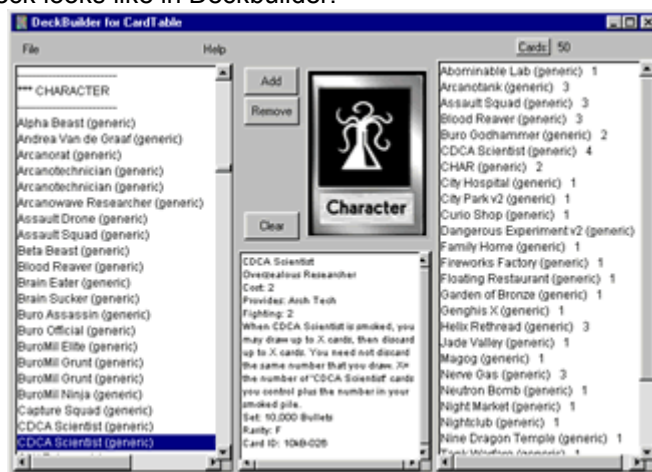
Clear wipes the entire deck list (no undo!).

File-->Save Deck and File-->Load Deck do what they say :) Note that loading a deck causes it to be used as the database! So if you want to edit an existing deck, first load the deck, then open the CDF file as above.

Save Deck Description writes a simple deck list to a text file [title (set) number], in the order it appears in the listing.

Help: there is no help file, as far as I can tell. This FAQ is about as close as you'll get.

Here's what a finished deck looks like in Deckbuilder:



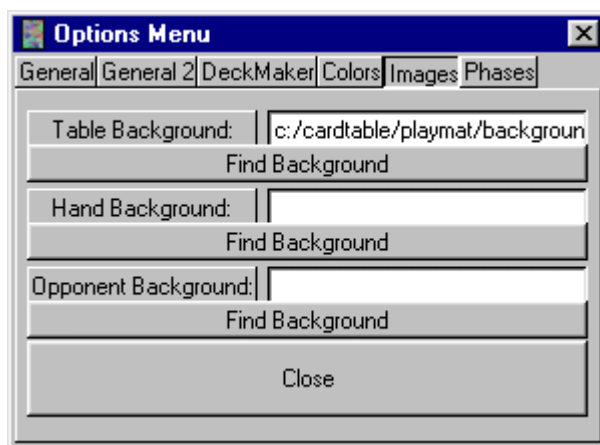
Q: Why does it say (generic) for the set name?

A: Cardtable assumes that the name of the folder that contains the card images is the name of the set those images are from. Hence, everything right now says "generic"—when the huge set of thumbnails are all available, this will work right.

When your deck is done, save it File-->Save Deck, then File-->Exit to close Deckbuilder.

Loading a Background Image (Playmat)

Choose Options from the menu bar, then click the Images tab.



Click "Find Background", then specify the file you want to use as a background image. You can select three different files if you like, but I prefer to keep the hand areas as solid colors. Backgrounds tile, so if the image is smaller than Cardtable's play space (which is pretty large, actually), then you may get a more interesting effect than you planned on.

Here's the Shadowfist playmat supplied by Aazh. It's large, so you need to squish the other areas to see the whole thing at once:



Connecting and Starting a Game

Cardtable uses a direct client/server setup—there is no central place to find and join open games (like Battlenet). One player will be the server, and the other will connect to him/her (the client), hence the name :) Note that you can play standalone if you wish, but solitaire Shadowfist isn't much fun.

Important: don't load your decks until after you make a connection. Cardtable apparently doesn't approve of pre-loaded decks.

For the Server:

You need to know your IP address, and the port that Cardtable will use.

Port is easy, so that's first: Cardtable's default port is 7935, don't change it unless you have a problem connecting. If you need to change it, use a high number, since most low-numbered ports are already used by common networking protocols, and I don't know how to find a free port :)

IP address can be harder. It seems like just starting the Cardtable server (File-->Start Server) is all you need to do, since that shows your IP address in the pop-up window. If you're not using a router or hardware firewall, you are good to go with that address.

If you don't trust Cardtable, you can look up your IP address using winipcfg (for Win 95/98/Me) or ipconfig (WinNT/2000/XP). For winipcfg, go to Start, choose Run and type winipcfg. In the dialog box, select PPP Adapter or NDIS driver and then you'll see your IP address. For ipconfig, you need to run it from a command window, otherwise the results just flash on the screen for a half-second. Go to Start, choose Run and type cmd. Then in the DOS window, type ipconfig. It will list your IP address.

If you are behind a hardware firewall or router, your IP address for the external world is likely not what your machine thinks it is. First, you need to find out how to open a hole in your router/firewall to accept incoming traffic from the client (when I figure out how to do this, I'll post my instructions, but you'll have to check your own manuals in any case). Next, you need to find the "external" IP address—the easiest way I know is to find a website that reports IP addresses to you. I like Steve Gibson's site, www.grc.com, since it's also a good security tester. Click on Shields Up, and tell it to test your Shields (you can download the TellIP program if you like, but you don't have to). It will display your IP address and then test your security too. Or run over to a site that has cheesy Javascript detectors, like this one: http://simplythebest.net/scripts/javascript_118.html. This will be the IP address you enter in Cardtable's pop-up window.

If you have a software firewall (ZoneAlarm, etc.), set it to allow Cardtable as both client and server, so you can receive incoming traffic.

Ok, now that's set up, you can start Cardtable. Double-click `cardtable.exe` to start. Then choose File-->Start Server and click ok. A dialog box will pop up with the port number and IP address. If you're behind a router, see above for the IP address to enter. Click ok, and wait for a client to connect. The dialog box will disappear once the connection is made.

For the Client:

Get the IP address and port number from the server first (by email, chat, telephone, whatever :)

Double-click `cardtable.exe` to start. Then choose File-->Connect and type in the IP Address and port, then click ok. The dialog box will disappear once the connection is made.

Chatting: after the connection is made

The white window below the two hand windows is a log of communications between you and your opponent (and also messages from the program, like end of turn or errors). To verify you're connected, type something in the very bottom text box, then press enter. You and your opponent should see it in the log window.

You can save the data in the chat log by opening the Options Menu and clicking 'Save Chat'.

Troubleshooting the Connection

I'm not much help here. I found a note in a readme file like so:

If the message "Sending xxxxx..." or "Receiving xxxxx..." appears, you should clear the table and reload both decks.

I haven't yet seen that error yet myself.

Loading Decks

Choose File--> Deck Select, and choose your deck from the list. It will load the entire deck into your hand area. You'll have to move it out to the table manually. Your opponent should also load his/her deck, and then you're ready to play.

Controls and Commands

Note: any time you are manipulating a stack of cards or a single card, make sure your cursor is over the card image before you press any keys. Otherwise you may not grab what you think you are grabbing. You don't have to click it, although that doesn't seem to hurt.

Note: the commands appear to be case sensitive—if caps lock is on, they don't necessarily work.

Note: hold down modifier keys (ctrl, etc.) before you click!

Terms:

"Drag" means to click and hold the mouse button . You knew that, right?

"Stack" means any bunch of cards that are touching by at least 1 pixel. (this can be really frustrating :)

After you've started Cardtable and connected with your opponent, choose File-->Deck Select to bring in a deck. Choose the .ctd file and click "open". The entire deck lands face-down in your hand area. To move the stack out to the table, hover your cursor over it, then hold down ctrl and drag the deck out. (ctrl-drag works to move any stack of cards, not just in this case)

To shuffle the deck, hover your mouse over it, then press and hold ctrl-s, then also press c (3-key combo, but you have to press ctrl-s first). It also works if you let go of s and then very very quickly press c, but you must hold ctrl the whole time. You'll see a series of horizontal red lines move down across the deck, letting you know it shuffled.

To draw cards, drag off the top of the deck (you'll only get one card from the top of the stack this way—if you want to move the whole thing, remember to ctrl-drag) to your hand area.

If you're like me and you end up with a bunch of cards overlapping in your hand window, you can fan them out horizontally—hover your cursor over them, then press h. When you fan, it moves the cards to the first clear space on the right, so you might need to scroll over to find them :) You can also do this with right click, Arrange Cards-->Stack-->Horizontal

You can flip a card over by pressing f, or by right clicking, choose Flip-->Card (or Stack, whichever you wanted). The key combo to flip a stack is ctrl-f. Obviously you need to flip over the cards in your hand. Your opponent can't see the face-up cards in your hand area. Note: remember to flip your Feng Shui Sites face-down again before you move them from your hand to the table, to keep them secret.

Note: after they're on the table, there doesn't appear to be a way to see what your own face-down cards are without flipping them over. If your opponent trusts you, you can pull it back to your hand area, flip it over, then flip it back down and put it back. But just try to remember what they are, that's good practice anyway :)

If your stacks get messy, hover and press s to straighten. Note that a stack is defined as any tiny bit of the card touching another, so make sure that cards you don't want to straighten aren't touching any that you do. And also note that counters loaded as a deck (see below) count as cards too, so they'll be straightened along with any cards under them.

I slide States underneath the subject, but with the bottom showing since there aren't any titles or art in the images to clue you in yet. If you end up with a big pile and want to see what's where, hover and press n to bring the next card up to the top (the next one down in the stack), or press p to take the one from the bottom and put it on top. It's a good way to cycle quickly through your smoked or toasted pile, for example.

I'm keeping the toasted pile face up here, it's one less thing to do. Put yours face down or up as you like.

To turn a card, hover and press r (or right click, Rotate-->Card) to rotate 90° right. ctrl-r to turn a whole stack at once. You can rotate again, so the possible states are 0, 90, 180 (useful if you take control of someone else's card) and 270. You can also rotate left if you like with shift-r (ctrl-shift-r for a stack).

To put a damage counter on top of a card, right click, choose Add Counter-->(choose the color). The counter ends up a wee bit to the right of where your cursor is pointing. To remove it, right click the

counter, then Remove. Note that you can only add counters on top of cards. And once the counter is placed, you can't move it, all you can do is remove it and put in a new one where you want it to move to. To keep track of Power, you'll need to load the separate counter deck (see below). Also, these right-click counters are available only in Cardtable 1.13; the older (stable) version doesn't have them, so you'll be forced to use a counter deck for damage too.

After you move your deck, File-->Deck Select again and choose "counters_XXX.ctd". That will load a set of 15 counters of the indicated color. If you need more, load it again, or load a different color (or edit the file, if you want to go that far) They'll land in your hand area as usual, and the program treats them just like cards, so you can stack them, ctrl-drag the stack, etc. Ctrl-drag them out to the table somewhere before you monkey with them. I recommend using these only for Power, since they don't automatically move with other cards (you have to remember to move them as a stack), and if you shuffle the order of a stack, these get shuffled too. Use a diagonal fan to spread them out (v).

The advantage of adding counters with the right click is that they move with the cards with no further effort on your part.



Other tips:

When one of your cards is smoked, just drag it over to your smoked pile. The game won't take card of stuff like that for you. Always let the owner of the card do the dragging, just for courtesy's sake.

For "search your deck" effects, you'll have to drag your deck to your hand (ctrl-drag), flip the stack (ctrl-f), then go through it with next card (n) to find what you want. Be patient, it takes a wee bit to flip the entire stack. And as you're stepping through the cards, keep the cursor hovering over the stack so the text will pop up (about 3/4 of a second delay or so). Move the chosen card elsewhere in your hand temporarily, flip your deck back over, and ctrl-drag it back out to the table. Then, depending on the effect, you may need to flip the chosen card back over and put it on top of your deck (Shield of Pure Soul), or put it face up on the table for a bit so your opponent can see it (for "show it to your opponent" effects), or keep it in your hand.

I tried to save a game, but it didn't work in standalone mode (error message). It did work in an actual game with a client/server connection. I didn't try to reload a game yet though.

Control Summary

Remember: all commands are lowercase letters. Make sure CAPS LOCK is off.

Movement:

Drag to move a single card

Shift-drag to move a card and snap it to a stack when you let go

Control-drag to move a stack

Shift-Control-drag to move a stack and snap it to another stack when you let go

Note: shift-drag doesn't work when dragging a card/stack out of your hand onto the table. You'll have to drag it to the table first, then shift-drag it to snap it. Or just dump it nearby so it touches the stack you want to put them in, then use the s key to straighten the stack.

Note: you cannot move an arbitrary group of unrelated cards. It's single cards, or it's stacks.

Manipulating Cards

Horizontal Fan	h
Vertical Fan	v
Diagonal Fan	x
Rotate card right 90°	r
Rotate stack right 90°	Control-r
Rotate card left 90°	Shift-r
Rotate stack left 90°	Control-Shift-r
Rotate card 180°	u
Rotate stack 180°	Control-u
Flip card (face up/down)	f (also v.1.12: right click; v.1.13: double right click)
Flip stack	Control-f (also v.1.12: ctrl-right click; v.1.13: double ctrl-right click)
Next card in stack	n
Previous card in stack	p
Straighten stack	s
Shuffle stack	Control-s, then c (while still holding s)
Number of cards in stack	c

n and p commands actually change the order of the stack, you're not just looking at the next or previous cards, you're bringing a different card to the top of the stack.

Other Stuff

Clear table: control-c, then t (while still holding c), or choose Action-->Clear Table

End of Turn: control-d or click the button on the menubar (near top right corner). Since the game isn't tracking the rules, this really doesn't do anything except insert a message into the chat log.

Toss coin (coin flip): t

Dice Roll: d (set the specifics about the number of dice and number of sides in the Options menu).