

The Freeciv Strategy Game

World Domination

The Andy Empire is at the zenith of its power when a fleet of raiders from Johnia lands on its coasts. Passville, and Regentstown succumb to the wild force of warrior hordes; the capital, Freonia, can only be rescued by a massive arms race, and a counter assault. While these two parties are fighting, a third party seizes its opportunity: while the Andy-Johnian conflict is at its fiercest, a message from the Lizians arrives, announcing that they have just won the game via a peaceful approach by flying to Alpha-Centauri. It would seem that investing in research and development does pay...

Welcome to the world of Freeciv, the free version of the classic strategy game, Civilization, which has fascinated whole generations of world conquerors and founding fathers.

The idea of the game is easily explained. The goal of Freeciv is no less than achieving world domination – either by military or technological advances. Each player starts off with two settlers and a guide in the year 4000 BC. The idea is to found a settlement with this society, to build up an infrastructure, introduce trade and research and to keep your nose in front of the other players.

Installing Freeciv on SuSE

Red Hat users can just start playing, but SuSE users, will first need to install *freeciv*. The SuSE work menu allows you to perform this step quickly:

- In the Work menu select *install software package / Games / Tactics and Strategy / CIVclient*. This menu also contains the *CIVserver* option, but in fact it does not matter which option you choose, as both programs are part of the *freeciv* package. Those who have already updated to SuSE 8.2 will discover that the installation menu item has now moved to *install software package / Games / Tactics and Strategy / Freeciv (Strategy Game)*.
- Enter your *root* password in the dialog box that then appears and click *OK*.

Wanted: Amateur politicians and part-time rulers for responsible position as head of state. In Freeciv, the classic role-playing game, you can head the transition of a civilization from a nomadic tribe to a world power.

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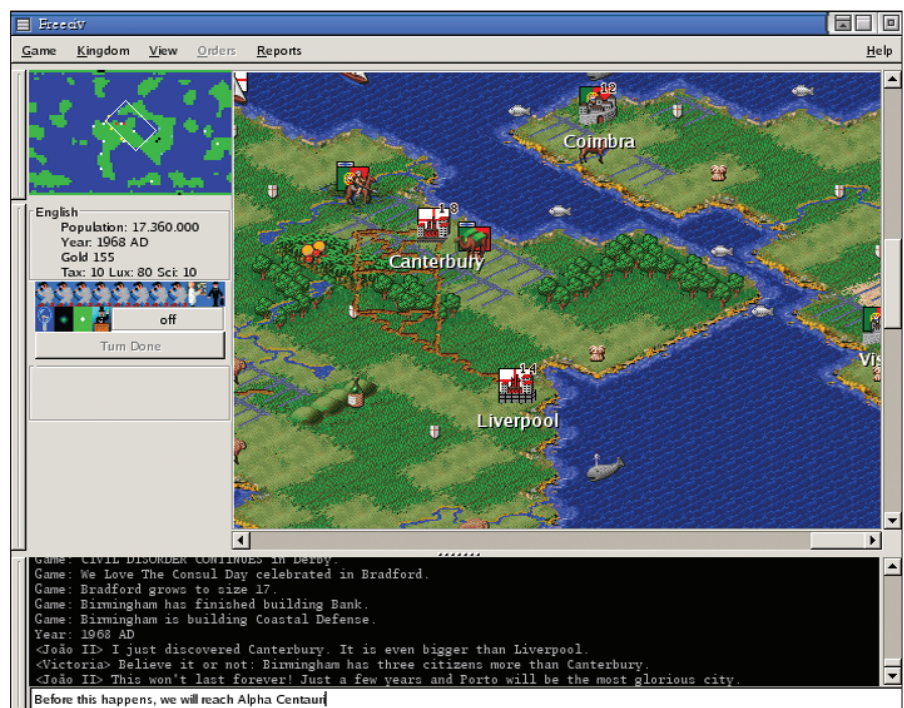


Figure 1: The Freeciv Client interface. An advanced game with a large area of explored territory

- You will be prompted to insert CD number 2. After doing so, click on *OK* to start installing the game. The YaST2 software installation module terminates automatically after installing the software.

SuSE users will then find the newly installed programs in the *Games / Tactics and Strategy* area of the KDE menu. *civworld* is also installed on SuSE 8.2. This program allows you to design your own Freeciv worlds.

Starting & Playing the Game

Freeciv comprises two distinct programs: *civserver* handles the game operations and organization; *civclient* provides the players with a GUI and transmits their commands and moves to the server.

The *freeciv* menu item launches the Freeciv client, which will initially prompt you for a server connection. You can either attach to a game server in the local network, or on the Internet, or you can launch a server on your own machine.

Although the *Freeciv server* menu entry would suggest otherwise, SuSE users should not launch the server via this menu item, as SuSE has configured the entry incorrectly – although the server launches, you cannot access the server to start a game. However, you can launch a terminal window instead, and type *civserver* as a command. The modified prompt and the welcome message indicate that you are now accessing the command center for the Freeciv server.

The `set aifill=4` creates three computerized opponents – artificial intelligences (or AIs for short) – for you to battle against. If you want to play a solo game to get yourself into the flow, simply omit the `set aifill=` command.

Use the K menu to launch the Freeciv client and click on *Connect* in the dialog box that appears. The server settings should point to port 5555 on *localhost*.

Now type `start` at the server console. The client will first prompt you to specify a nationality and a name for your leader figure, and then start right in the middle of the game. You can then guide your units – two caravans and a guide – to scout the unknown territory and find a good spot for your future capital. Table 1 contains a list of keyboard shortcuts.

The game is divided up into rounds, with each unit having one turn per round. The units will flash to indicate that it is their turn. If none of your units are flashing, click on *Done*. Your artificial opponents will now take their turns.

Cities

Cities are the focus of civilization in Freeciv. After locating a suitable spot, you can start to convince your nomads that it might be a good idea to settle. The `b` key or the *Commands/Build city* function will do that.

You can click on your city to display an overview, containing the number of inhabitants, the area ruled by the city, its production and income figures, and lots of other statistics. The *Edit* button allows you to specify what should be produced in the next few rounds. The artefacts all serve a specific function: Barracks will increase the impact made by your warriors, grain stores will help to avoid famine and settlers can irrigate the surrounding fields and/or found new cities.

Science and Research

The scant production options available to your city are indicative of your settlers' early stage of civilization. You should not worry as there is quite a lot of research going on. [F6] or the menu item *Reports/Research* shows you what your civilization is focussing on at present. Of course, as an absolute ruler, you can dictate research projects and goals. Discoveries tend to leverage previous discoveries, and allow your settlers to

construct new buildings or units. A nation of mariners would need to concentrate research efforts on navigation.

The competition between civilizations is enormous – to succeed, you will need something more imaginative than simple temples. A world wonder is a good way to really impress your opponents.

Saving and Ending a Game

Trying to finish a game of Freeciv in one day is extremely hard going. The Freeciv server will save the game automatically every couple of hundred years game time. This allows you to restore the game at its current levels. `save name_of_game` allows you to save the game at any time, and `quit` terminates the server. To restore a saved game, call `civserver --file name_of_game`.

The Battle on the Network

If you prefer to battle it out with human opponents, again Freeciv is a good choice. Just like its commercial siblings, Freeciv is a networked game, and playing against friends across the local network, or the global Internet, is not much more complex than the solo game. Each player will need a Freeciv client (incidentally, the client is not only available for Linux, but also in Windows and MacOS X versions) with the same ver-

sion number. The next thing to decide on is who will run the server. After sorting that out, follow these steps:

- The server provider connects to the Internet and launches *civserver* in a terminal session.
- The player who launched the server needs to tell the other players the IP address, by phone, email or IRC.
- After connecting to the Internet, all your opponents, including the server provider, will need to launch their Freeciv clients.
- Players will need to enter the IP for the server in the *Connect to Freeciv server* dialog box and then click on *Connect*.
- The server shows the connected players. After everyone has connected, the server master can kick off the game using `start`. Game options can be set using the `set` command.
- And off you go. The bottom line of the main window allows you to exchange messages with other players.

Removing Obstacles

If you are having trouble connecting to the server, this may be due to firewall configuration. The server provider may need to modify their firewall configuration for the duration of the game. If you do not want to do so, you might like to try one of the Freeciv Metaservers. ■

Table 1: Keyboard Shortcuts

Shortcut	Action	Effect
[Return]	End round	Return or Enter ends a round – even if your units could still make a move.
b	Build city	Fields with cities are automatically assigned a road and will have at least one trading point.
g	Move a figure to a specific location.	You can use the mouse to choose a target for the figure to make the figure move towards that point in the next few rounds.
[Shift-d]	Disband unit.	Population control by keyboard. This unit will not cause any expense for your home city after this.
Space	no action for the current unit.	The unit will miss a round – this is useful if units are waiting for something, such as the completion of a transport vessel.
w	wait	The unit's turn will be later in this round.
[Shift-f]	Display list of cities.	Double clicking will shift the focus to a city.
s	Guard (only for military units)	The unit will guard this point and automatically challenge any attacking troops.
r	Build road; on fields already containing a road: lay down railtracks (assuming trains have been invented)	An additional trading point will be assigned to the field.
i	Build irrigation; irrigated fields can be used as arable land later.	The field will then produce an additional food unit.
m	Create a mine in a mining field, or change a territory to a forest.	The field is assigned three additional production units. However, building a mine will produce one food unit less. A forest field is assigned an additional production point.