Help File for Quincala Game Viewer version 0.9

last updated 19 September 2010

Introduction

This Java application can accept input per mouse and move the pieces on the screen according to the rules of Quincala. It currently covers Mini Quincala Knocking and the classic Quincala versions 1 and 3, with 3, 4 or 5 sizes of piece in play. The software is very close to a perfect representation of the rules: The software automatically knows which moves are legal; it also finds released pieces at the end of moves (Game 3), but you have to click on the correct white diamond to release/capture them. (Alternatively, you can use the Up or PageUp buttons to automatically release the pieces.)

To make a *move*, click on the starting diamond, thereafter on where each leg finishes. To finish a move before all moving potential is spent, you have to click again on the end of the last diamond.

The software can play pre-recorded full or part matches in form of strings of characters, so called *QSF-Strings*, e.g.
<=QSF;0.1&Quincala;35;75848446363684a696a6889977889999;0.1>

Installation

The Quincala software does not need to be "installed" like most other computer programs and it can run on most operating systems (Windows, Mac, Linux etc). As long as you have Java installed on your computer, all you need is a copy of the software saved onto your hard disk, on a CD or a USB drive. To check if you already have Java and/or to install it, please go to
 http://java.com/en/download/.
(This link is valid for Windows users: for users of other operating systems, see below "For Linux Users".)

If Java is present on your computer, the Quincala Game Viewer software can be launched by double clicking on its icon. It can run from your computers hard-drive, directly from within Dropbox (www.dropbox.com) if you subscribe to the Quincala Net Folder, from a CD or from a USB stick.

In Windows, if you like an icon on your desktop to launch it with, just right click on the software icon and select Send → to Desktop (create short-cut).

New for Version 0.9 F2 (bug fix 2 on 19 September 2010)

Stop Press: The bug fix 2 sorts out a bug that corrupted ply strings seriously in the rare case of creating a new branch from the starting position of another line. The fix introduces the behaviour that unsealed lines can be corrected from the very first ply but sealed lines will not create a branch from the starting position, rather treat an alternative first ply as a new game.

Only tested game variants with collected game scores feature in this version. More variants will be added as I make sure they are good enough. The software now loads by default to Mini Quincala Knocking Game, since that is the main beginner's version. Users can easily choose another variant using the Game menu.

I have changed the main format for QSF-Strings as of this latest version (0.9) to a format I call QSF, Quincala String Format (more below); old strings should be compatible, and will automatically be converted into the new format. This will greatly simplify the development of click-able Quincala links in html documents in the next version of the software. If an old QSF-String doesn't load or convert properly, please email it to me and I'll sort it out (<ulf at quincala.com>)

A new *action menu* is introduced, which enables the automatic input of pass (if legal), resignation and agreed draw. Note that the current position is becoming the end position when clicking on resign or draw actions, and the <u>player having the turn</u> is considered to have resigned. In the future software versions I might either only allow these two actions at the end of lines, or apply them to the end of the current line.

There is now also a *Help* menu, that aim to open on-line resources in your normal internet browser; the legal information, however, is stored locally and opens in one of the windows in the software.

I have renamed (Match-) Info to *Title* and improved the way it is presented in the input field. The title of a game/match cannot have line breaks; it is used in the *title bar* of the application, and will be used as a default text for future Quincala links, and as a one liner human identifier/link for the various branches in the future. Note that the tick box called "info" is gone; now the title is always copied if present. Thus the only way to copy a QSF-String without a title onto the clipboard is to make sure it has no title in the software. (Click the Title button and delete all text after the prefix "Title:")

When clicking in a variations/branch to a sealed (bold) line with title assigned (see below Sealed and Open Lines), the word "branch ?" or ".?" will be appended to the title. Just click the Title button and change the question marks to the correct number. Branches of branches will be numbered like so: "1.2.?" (this one means: unknown number branch of second branch of first branch of original line).

Zoom

You can *zoom* in on an area of the board by clicking on it with the <u>right</u> mouse button (now you have to enable this feature by ticking in the "Right Click Zoom" box since it is disabled by default). Repeated clicks will increase the zoom and then zoom out again. Note that you can move the central divider to reveal more of the board when zoomed in.

It can also zoom by string command by clicking View → Zoom:, e.g.
Zoom: 57;2 will zoom to coordinates 5,7 and show a minimum of 2 "squares" on all sides
Zoom: 66;2.3 will zoom to centre and display a minimum of 2.3 "squares".
Zoom: 0 will reset the zoom. There us also a menu option View → Reset Zoom

Note that the old ways of inputting this (as in "#zoom6623") is no longer supported.

Also note that in the current software version there is a limit to how deep you can zoom due to some memory issues that will hopefully be resolved in the future.

The Bars and Panels

The *title bar* at the top of the window displays information about the game variant loaded; furthermore, by clicking the Title button (on the function bar when in input/output mode) and entering a string prefixed by "Title: ", e.g. Title: *Ulf v Bob*, this information will be also displayed in

the title bar, as well as the top of the *info panel* to the right (see below).

The *menu bar* just underneath the title bar provides an easy means of controlling the application. Game variants that are not yet tested properly are written within brackets in the menu.

The *board panel* to the left is where the game itself appears. Left click enters moves (or precisely: "navigates the complete game tree in a forward direction"), and right click can be enabled to control the zoom (keep right clicking in order to return to normal zoom!).

The *info panel* is the area to the right of the board. Currently it shows information about the entire line and the entered *match-title*, and it details the nature of a break of the immunity or freedom rules. The legal information is also displayed here when pressing the **§©!** button.

The *divider* between the board panel and the info panel can be moved by dragging it; it can also be collapsed to either side by clicking the small triangles at the top. Once dragged, it forgets where is the exact middle, unfortunately, but finds it again if you resize the whole application again ...

The *function bar* at the bottom of the window has two modes (*navigation* and *output/input*) that you can toggle by clicking the Fn button in its left corner. In the navigation mode, the function bar also contains the *status bar* that shows information about the current status of the match and the turn.

The Buttons

Options check box

The **Options** check box reveals or hides the possible legal move choices in the current game.
Short cut: Alt + O

Right Click Zoom check box

The **Right Click Zoom** check box toggles if you can zoom in on the board with right clicks; it is currently only available on the classic board.
Short cut: Alt + K

Tool Tips check box

The **Tool Tips** check box enables the pop-up messages that endeavour to explain all the buttons when you place the mouse pointer over them. Note that those pop-up messages sometimes "block" the button itself, making it difficult to get the software to register mouse clicks. If that is a problem, just un-check the Tool Tips check box.
Short cut: Alt + T

Releasing Handles check box

The **Releasing Handles** check box determines if the green lines between releasing agents and released pieces are shown (Quincala Games 3 - 5 only)
Short cut: Alt + H

"Fn" button

"**Fn**" is the *function button*. It toggles between the 2 modes of the *function bar* at the bottom of the screen:
1)   Navigation mode
2)   QSF-String import/export mode
Short cut: Alt + F

Left and Right buttons

The **Left and Right** buttons (arrow buttons on the function bar when in navigation mode) step through the current line*, right* being the direction to represent *forward* in the game score.
Short cut: Alt + Left and Alt + Right

Previous and Next buttons

The **Previous and Next** buttons (arrow left or right with a line at the end) bring you to the beginning of the *example* (the position of the 'x' in the string) or a branch, or to the the beginning or the end of the loaded string. Possibility to add *bookmarks* to jump back to might be added in the future.
Short cut: Alt + PageUp and Alt + PageDown

R button

The **R** button rotates the board 90° clockwise; two clicks flip the board to as seen by Black player. (The current classic Quincala board has this functionality in the corners of the board frame as well; any corner you click on will become the bottom left corner!)
Short cut: Alt + R

Turn Number box

By typing the turn number in the **Turn Number Box** and pressing Enter, the current line will load the position at the beginning of that turn (if present).

§©! button

The **§©!** button toggles the display of legal information and terms of use in the info panel. Press this button again to hide the text.
Short cut: Alt + Q

Copy button

The **Copy** button automatically puts a *QSF-String*, a string of characters that represent the current position in the loaded line, on the clipboard. This can then be pasted into emails or chat window for correspondence or into any text editor for saving. The format of the QSF-String is determined by the selected copy mode (see below). Beware that tool-tips can sometimes block the action of this button, so make sure you get a confirmation dialogue ("A QSF String has been copied to the clipboard").
Short cut: Alt + C

Copy modes:

The copy modes determine how the copied QSF-String will be constructed, and for what purpose it is most useful. Currently there are:

score

This copy mode outputs a QSF-String of the entire line that will start at the very beginning of the line – this is suitable for played matches and demonstration games.

~pos~

This copy mode also outputs a QSF-String of the entire line; however this QSF-String will load to the current position - suitable for a game variation/branch or example move.

~pos |

This copy mode outputs a QSF-String that will load to the current position WITHOUT future moves - suitable for showing a real world or legal *position.*

wrap check box

Ticking this check box will wrap the copied QSF-String if it is longer than 55 characters. This makes long QSF-Strings a bit more user-friendly. Note that this feature is not fully tested on all operating systems and text editors, so please un-tick if you have problems (and tell Ulf about it!)

Paste button

The **Paste** button imports any QSF string that has been copied on to the clipboard. It accepts line breaks and even forwarded/replied to characters from emails (e.g. in long QSF-Strings copied from emails or wrapped QSF-Strings).
Short cut: Alt + V

Title button (formerly the Info button)

The **Title** button allows you to enter and edit the one line information about the match or line, like the date and the players' names etc. (The preferred date format is "YYYY-MM-DD", same as XML date format but different from PGN date format for chess; it sorts the same alphabetically and chronologically.) This information appears on the title bar and on the second line in the info panel.

Pressing this button opens an input dialogue with the prefix "Title: " (necessary in order for the software to realise that it is a title rather than something else entered). If no information is previously entered (by this button or within a loaded QSF-String), the software suggests the current date in the standard format. To enter a new title, just type at the cursor and press Enter, to amend previous title, just change it in the text field and press Enter.

NOTE: The title tag cannot have foreign characters; the software will remove them automatically – enter "Aberg" instead of "Åberg", "Karpov" instead of "Карпов". Other tags in the future will allow such characters in order to enable localised input.

Short cut: Alt + I, when happy press Enter

Sealed and Unsealed Lines

A *line* is a row of choices according to the legal options of a game, such as a complete match or an example position with or without future moves. You can navigate a line with the Left and Right buttons, but also by "clicking along" it. When you click on a choice or location that is outside the line (forward or a variation), what happens depends on the *status* of the line, indicated by the font of the text in the info panel:

Clicking to prolong or vary an *unsealed line* (indicated by <u>plain font</u> in the info panel) just changes it according to the new click, be it prolonging it (as when entering a game score) or correcting it (or when trying things out without committing). Any information attached to the line remains the same; the old line is replaced with the new one. The PageDown button will bring you back to the beginning or the branching point from a sealed line. This behaviour might change in the future when more comprehensive navigation between branches is implemented.

Clicking to prolong or vary a *sealed line* (indicated by **bold font** in the info panel) creates a new <u>unsealed</u> line as a branch. The game/match title will get the suffix "branch ?" (which you can edit by clicking the Title button), and the PageDown button will bring you back to the branching point, even if you vary this unsealed line afterwards. In the future, the software will implement navigating between lines, but for now, the old line can only be retrieved by pasting the original QSF-String again.

WARNING: If you vary a sealed line from the *starting position*, it is not considered a branch but a new game – thus all the title information is lost as well as the entire line (however, if it is sealed it is a good chance you copied it from somewhere safe).

A QSF-String always loads as a sealed line; future versions of the software will elaborate the handling of and conversion between these two types of line. For now the only way to seal an unsealed line is to copy it and then paste it. Currently the only way the sealed status is shown is by the font used in the info panel: **bold** for sealed lines and plain type for unsealed ones.

About QSF Strings and the character 'x'

(or how to start a new game and how to load a position in the middle or end of a line)

The new output and input format QSF 0.1 is changing the ways game related information is copied on to the clipboard and processed when pasted back in. It is a major step forward towards defining a really comprehensive and versatile exchange format for Quincala and other games.

Old type QuStrings should still load properly, but will be automatically converted to the new QSF format. In the future, strings of older QSF formats will load properly and easily be converted to newer QSF formats as and when they are implemented in the software.

Most users of the software do not need to know how to write QSF strings; the software takes care of creating and processing the strings. I plan to publish the QSF format on the Internet in the near future. If you would like to see the draft definition document before that, please email me on <ulf at quincala.com>.

The character 'x' in a QSF-String defines where it loads initially. This is now taken care of automatically by the Copy Modes. Further such Modes for correspondence matches and completely flat positions are planned, also output of graphic files of the board.

For Linux Users

For users of other operating systems, the link to check and/or download Java is
http://java.com/en/download/manual.jsp . Although the main build runs well on Linux (and hopefully Apple/Mac), I have made some special builds for Linux (with an extra space in the bottom right corner to enable collapsing the bottom panel), and a workaround for Maximus users (e.g. Ubuntu Netbook Remix). I'm happy to distribute these variants on request. Just email me on <ulf at quincala.com>.

Known Bugs

This is still very early days of the Quincala software; it is reasonably stable but still lacks a lot of functions.

Due to being in the middle of migrating the drawing to a specific drawing module (for now, the board image is drawn like that while the pieces are still drawn in the old way), there are some bugs relating to "two chefs doing one chef's job", the worst is when zooming, then rotating, then zooming again: then the images don't line up. I could fix it but I'd rather just transfer all the drawing into one place! For now just right click again and choose the rotation before zooming in!

The graphics are still a bit approximate: input boxes not scaling to text size, ornamental lines not joining diamonds properly, diamonds sometimes seen behind pieces etc etc – it is all fixable but not my greatest priority.

The text in the info panel can be selected with mouse or with the short cut Ctrl + A, and copies with the short cut Ctrl + C. Right clicking does not yet do anything, and the copied text seem sometimes difficult to paste - try another text editor if you experience problems.

Legal information

The software 'Quincala Game Viewer is part of the Quincala Software Project, which is aimed at playing, viewing, studying, communicating and publishing games; primarily the Quincala games, but in time any game that fits.

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The design of the (classic) Quincala board is a Registered Design, also owned by Ulf Åberg

Contact Ulf on <ulf at quincala.com>.