**Features**

When the game is started, the main menu prompts the player to press B to play basic mode or P to play poker mode. After B or P is pressed, the game advances to the start screen for the chosen mode. This displays the player’s current points, instructions for the current mode, and the cost of playing one round, which is 20 points or 10% of the player’s current points, whichever is higher. The player starts with 100 points, and can press Enter to play a round or Q to quit. Quitting displays the player’s final points as well as the maximum points achieved during the game.

In basic mode, the player is presented with a 5-by-5 grid of random characters chosen from a set of 12 unique characters. The columns are rapidly shifting downward, with new random characters inserted at the top. When the player presses Space, the leftmost moving column stops. After all the columns are stopped, the player is granted points for the longest sequence of matching characters in each row. The score from the current round is displayed, and the player is prompted to press C to continue. When C is pressed, the game returns to the start screen, from which the player can choose to play another round or quit, as long as they have sufficient points to play another round. Otherwise, the game quits when C is pressed.

In poker mode, the player is presented with a hand of 5 cards. The cards in the hand are rapidly changing, and when the player presses Space, the leftmost changing card is dealt, i.e. it stops changing. Once all 5 cards are dealt, the player is prompted to either select a card to re-deal using the keys 1-5 or press 0 to stop re-dealing. The player has 5 chances to re-deal any card they choose, and when they select one, it begins rapidly changing again. When the player subsequently presses Space, a new card is dealt from the deck, i.e it stops changing. After 5 re-deals have occurred, or the player presses 0, the player’s hand is scored based on the best poker hand it contains. The score and the name of the hand achieved are displayed, and the player is prompted to press C to continue. When C is pressed, the game returns to the start screen or quits if insufficient points remain, as in basic mode.

**Notes on design decisions**

In basic mode, the columns do not actually rotate, they simply shift downward as a new random character is added to the top. This was deemed simpler to implement than rotating longer pre-generated columns, while still providing the appearance of rotation and a similarly random result.

The cost of playing is proportional to the player’s current points to ensure this cost does not become insignificant as soon as a moderately high score is achieved. This also means that as the player gains more points, they must achieve better sequences or hands to balance out the cost of playing.

The lowest payouts are set lower than the minimum cost of playing, so that in order to avoid losing the player must achieve sequences or hands better than the minimum.

When the player quits, the maximum number of points the player achieved during the game is displayed as well as their final points, so the player can see whether or not they exited at the optimal point in the game.