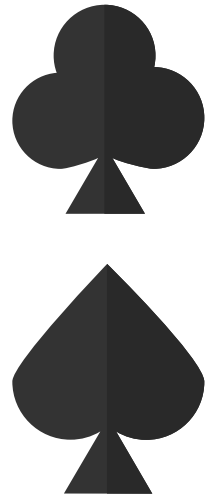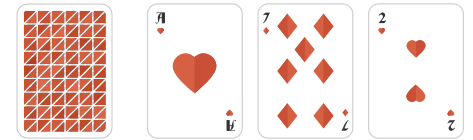# A WAR OF SUITS

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GAME601
Game Modification

A War of Suits is a revamped version of the classic card game, War. Two players will lead an army of either the red or black cards to fight their opponent. On each turn, players will send one of their cards into battle, hoping to beat the value of their opponent's card. There are many twists and turns when doubles are played against one another, or when an ace shows up to reverse the course of action. The winner of the game is determined by the total score of the players' victory piles calculated at the end.

SETUP:

All you need to play A War of Suits is a standard 52 playing card deck (no jokers). Divide the cards by color into two face down decks. All red cards, diamonds and hearts, in one deck, and all black cards, clubs and spades, in the other. Players choose which color army they would like to be, and place the corresponding deck face down in front of them. Make sure each deck has 26 cards and is well shuffled.

Each player starts by drawing the top three cards of their deck to make up their hand, keeping these cards hidden from the other player. Reference *Fig1.* for clarification.

RULES OF PLAY:

In each round, the players will place a single card from their hand onto the battlefield. Cards must be played simultaneously, so players should countdown and declare when they both agree they are ready to play their cards.

The higher value card will win the battle. The cards values are determined by their numerical value. In play, Jacks are worth 11 points, Queens are worth 12, Kings are worth 13, and aces are worth 1 point.

In *Fig2.*, we see that the red side has played a 7, while the black side has played a Jack. The Jack is worth 11 points, which trumps the 7, meaning the black side wins this round. The black side gets to collect all cards on the battlefield and add them to their victory pile off to the side.

At the end of each turn, once victory cards are collected, players must draw cards from their deck to replenish their hand. Their hand must always consist of three cards unless there are no cards left to draw from.

HEAD TO HEAD

If two cards of the same number or face are played on the battlefield, each side must bring in reinforcements. This means that both players must place the remaining cards in their hand onto the battlefield, and whichever player has the highest total of points will win the battle and collect all cards on the battlefield for their victory pile.

If both sides play their reinforcement cards, and their point totals are still the same amount, each player will draw the top card of their deck and add it to their total. Continue this until one player has more points and can claim the victory.
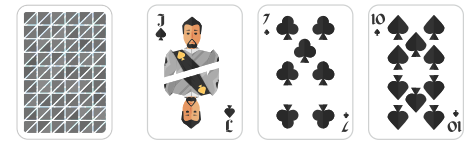
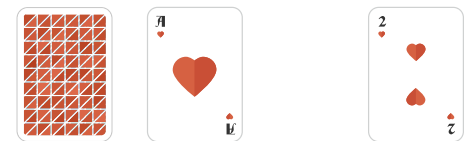

Fig1.

BATTLEFIELD

Fig2.

In *Fig3.*, both sides have played a 7 card. Since they match, these cards must call in their back up troops. The remaining two cards in each of the players hands are brought to the battlefield, and the total of all three cards on each side is calculated. In this case, the black side's cards total up to 28 points, with the Jack providing 11 points. The red side's total only adds up to 10 points, because the Ace is only worth 1 point in play. This means that the black team would win the war, and collect all six cards on the battlefield for their own victory pile.

ACES

Although Aces are only worth 1 point in play, they have a special ability. Aces act as peace treaties, and can stop the battle from going any further. Aces can be played anytime a player is about to lose a battle. If their opponent's card value is higher than their own on the battlefield, an Ace can be played to claim all cards. An Ace can also be used stop a head to head combat if matching cards are played. But the Ace must be played before the players put their reinforcements on the field for it to have effect.

The only way to stop an Ace's effect is by playing another Ace on top of it. Whichever side plays the last Ace of the round wins the battle and collects all played cards.

If an Ace is played as the first card on the battlefield, it does not use its special ability, and is worth only one point.

In *Fig4.*, we see what could happen if the red player did not want the head to head combat to continue. Since their remaining two cards are of low value, they may not feel confident in winning the combat, so they may choose to use their Ace to overtake the battle. The red player would win and collect both sevens and the Ace for their victory pile.

DOUBLES

There are other circumstances where you may play matching cards. If a player has two matching cards in their hand, there is a way to play them together. The player must play only one of the two cards at the start of their turn, but if their point value is not high enough to win the battle, they can play their second matching card to double their total. This is only advised if the two cards are enough to match or beat the value of the opponent's card and win the round. Players cannot play a double card if their single card already beats the value of their opponents card.
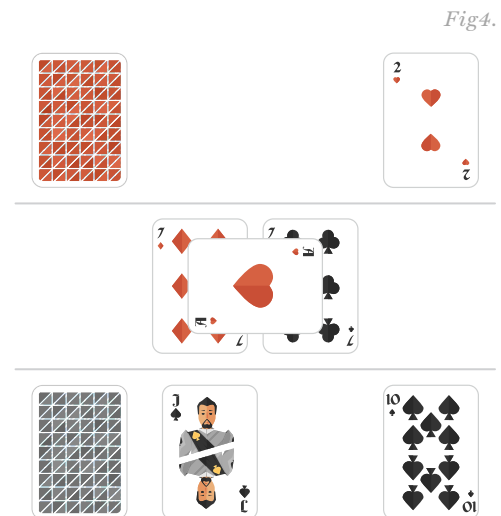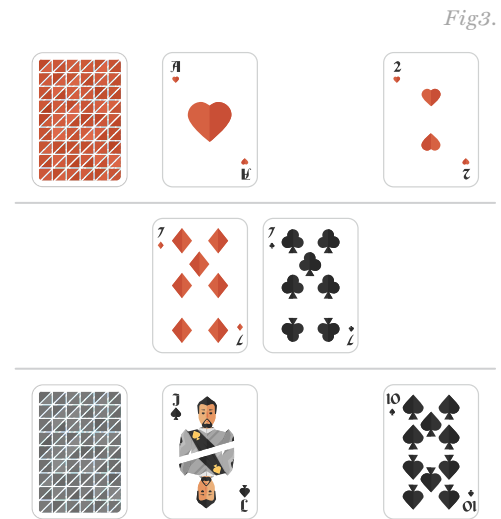

Fig3.

Fig4.

See in **Fig5.**, if the red player had two 4's in their hand, they could start the round by playing the 4 of hearts onto the battlefield. Since that would not beat the black side's 7, the red player can add their matching four to their side of the field and double their score to 8, which would beat the 7.

You can pull a similar maneuver if you have a card that matches the value of your opponents card. If you have a card in your hand that matches the card that your opponent has just played, you are allowed to play the match on your side and add it to your point total of that round. Reminder, this method can only be used if you are going to lose the battle. If your point total is already enough to win the round, you are not allowed to play a matching double card.

In **Fig6.**, the red side has played their 2 while the black side has played their 7. Obviously the black side would take the victory. But since the red player also has a 7 in their hand they are able to play that 7 against their opponent, creating a total of 9 points on their side that would win the battle.

RUNNING OUT

Oftentimes, one player will run out of cards to draw from before the other player. When this happens, continue play until one player has no cards left in their deck or in their hand. At that point, any remaining cards in the opponents deck or hand go straight to the other players victory pile.

WINNING:

After play is finished, each player will calculate the point total of their victory pile. In scoring, each number card is worth 1 point, and each face card and Ace are worth 2 points. Whichever player has the higher score is the winner.
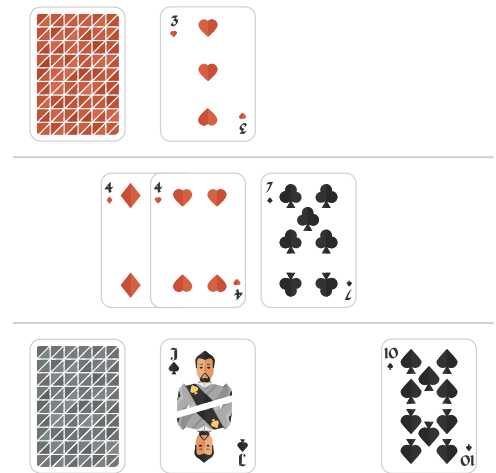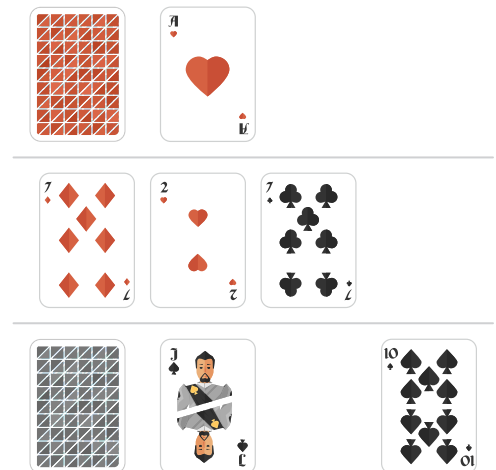
Fig5.

Fig6.

DESIGN PROCESS STATEMENT

The card game War is extremely basic and passive. It relies entirely on luck and chance, giving players no opportunity to make decisions themselves or to play strategically. By the end of the game, there is no sense of accomplishment since all of the outcomes are totally randomized. Because of all that, it makes the game very boring, and players often grow tired of it after only one round of play. In order to "fix" War, we need to make it more interactive. People play games to be involved and make choices with purpose, to strive for a goal and face a certain level of struggle.

In the classic style of the game, players' only possible action is to turn over the top card of their deck. They have no impact on the order of the deck, and they do not have any knowledge about the card that they are about to draw. I knew I wanted the player to have more say in what card they play on the battlefield, so I decided they would hold a hand of three cards to give them a choice. They can then decide if they want to play the highest card they have available, or hold onto their more powerful cards for later use. There is still a factor of luck involved, since players do not know what card their opponent will play against them. But now there is a level of control that the player feels they have over the outcome of the game, making them more excited to be involved in play.

The main rule of War is that when two matching value cards are played against one another, war is declared and more cards are played as a result. I wanted to maintain that aspect of the game, so matching cards still have an important role in my modified version, with some additional caveats. I considered other ways that matching cards could be played to increase a player's chance of winning, and the possibility that they could now have two matching cards in their hand. The rules grew naturally from recognizing the new circumstances that having a hand of cards created. Giving the player more freedom and more room to make choices meant building a bigger vaster structure that can handle every single scenario. Adding these rules also helps immerse the players deeper into the game, by creating additional challenges for players to focus on so the game is no longer stagnant.

One thing I wanted to avoid with this redesign is I did not want the game to only require one strategy to win. If all the player had to do was play the highest value card in their hand to win every time, that would make the game as mindless as it was originally. I tested different strategies, trying to play only the highest card versus the card of middle value in the player's hand. And in the end, both methods had the potential of garnering the most points. Part of the results still rely on the shuffle of your deck, but if you hold onto certain cards and make conscious choices of playing high or low cards, it can very much affect your chances of winning the game.

The biggest difficulty I faced in modifying this game was keeping track of all the different combinations that can be made with the cards. I had to come up with specific rules for certain circumstances that may or may not even happen in someone's gameplay, but because it is possible, it has to be addressed by the rules. If a player finds themselves in a situation that they do not know the answer to, the game structure must have a solution to show them how to proceed, otherwise the game is still broken. This was where playtesting became very important in my process. Many events that I did not even consider before would pop up when I would test my rules, and I had to make adjustments as I went along in order for the game to work correctly. At one point I considered having all the face cards be equal in value to streamline things, but this only made things more complicated. In practicing the game, I would still play as if Kings trumped Queens and Queens trumped Jacks, since that was what felt most natural. I decided to scrap the rule since it would ruin the flow and could make things unreasonably difficult for players.

It was not easy to reach this point, but I believe I have definitely improved the gameplay of War with my revamped version. A War of Suits is far more engaging than the standard game, with more opportunities for strategy and considering your options before taking action. When you win the game, you know you had a hand in your victory and it wasn't based all in luck like before. It is much more fun to play, and I will now be adopting it as my own personal way of playing War in the future.
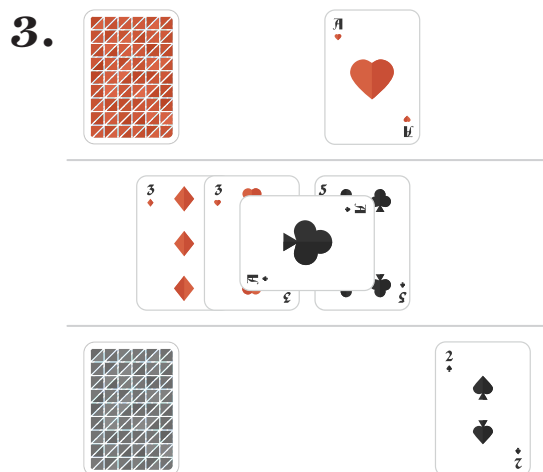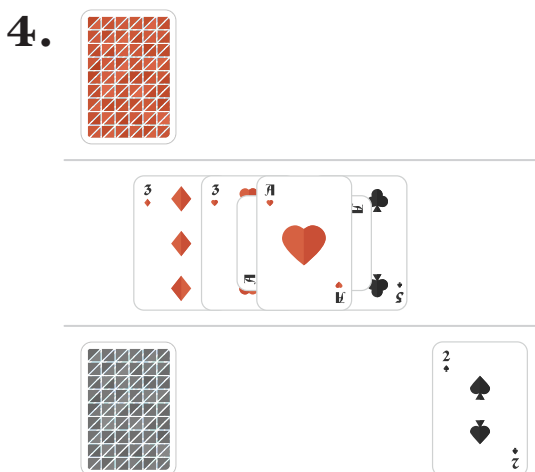

GAMEPLAY EXAMPLE:

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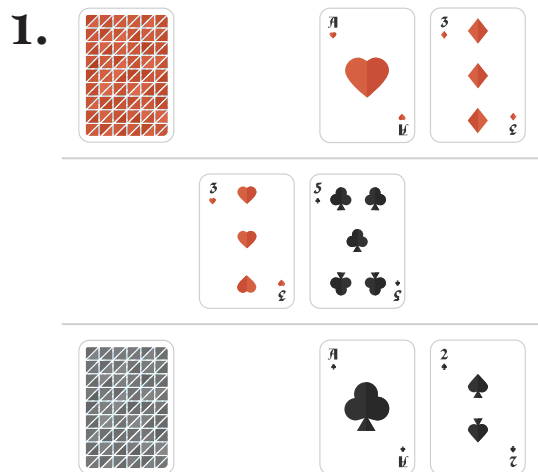
Red plays 3 of Hearts
Black plays 5 of Clubs
5 is higher than 3, Black will win

2.
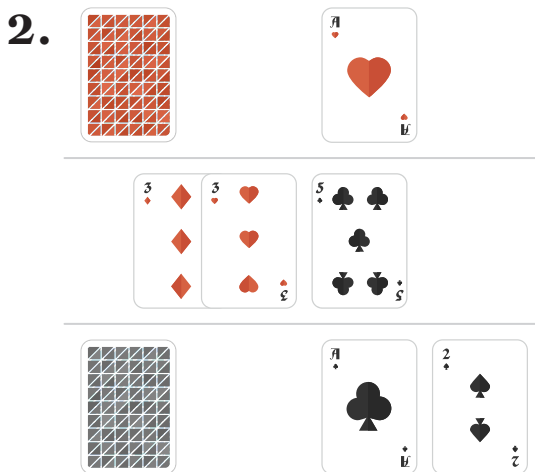
Red adds 3 of Diamonds to the field as a pair
with 3 of Hearts, Red now has 6 points total
6 is higher than 5, Red will win

3.

Black adds Ace of Clubs to the field to block
Red's win, Black will win

4.

Red adds Ace of Hearts to the field to block
Black's win, Black has no further moves
Red wins this round, collects all five cards on
the field, places them in victory pile