

Prototyping, GAME601

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Improving the card game War

“War” played with a hand of two cards instead of just one. The players choose to play one or both card, with the highest play winning the round taking the opponents cards. The goal is to take all of your opponent’s cards

Rules:

- A standard card deck is shuffled and delt into two piles.
- Each player draws two cards
- The players chose to play either one card from their hand, or both cards
- The cards are placed down simultaneously, and the higher card wins. If two cards are played by one player, they are counted as a sum
- Aces count at 14 (1 higher than a king)
- The winning player puts the cards at the bottom of their deck

I had my siblings play several rounds and determined this was a better rule set than drawing two cards at the beginning of the turn and discarding one of unplayed (this drawing two new cards every turn). I considered how aces should work, and if they should work as trump cards (one ace only beng beaten by a pair of aces) but determined that could cause problems with game length, or determine the winner by who gets the most aces. My playtesters liked a simple method of tie breaking by playing one extra card.

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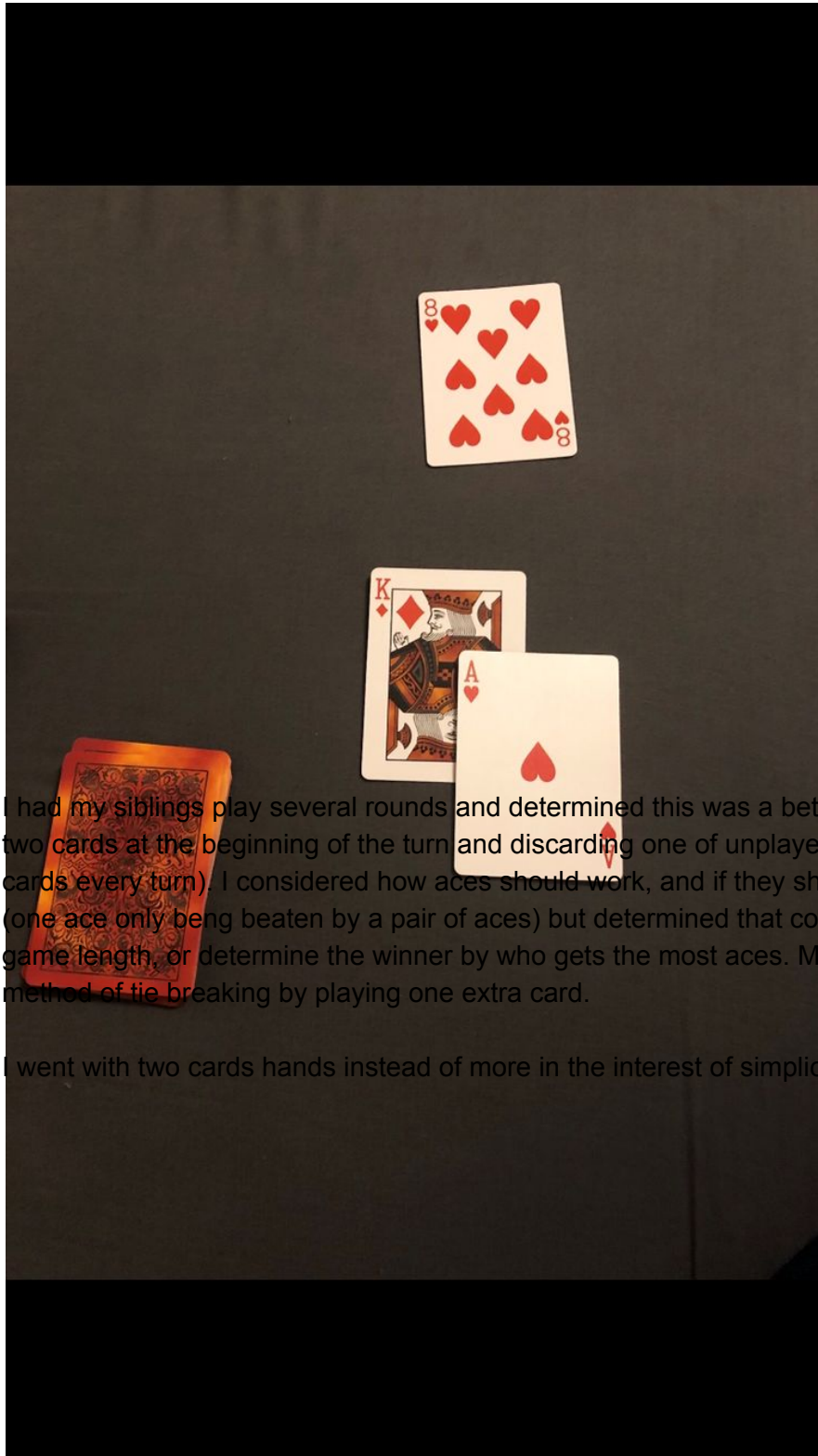
- In case of a tie, players place down either the remaining card from their hand or draw one from their deck and sum it with their played cards. Repeat until tie is broken
- The winner is the player who takes all of the cards into their deck

Development and testing:

After considering doing larger hands per turn, I decided on two to make the smallest changes first and too keep the feel of the game similar.

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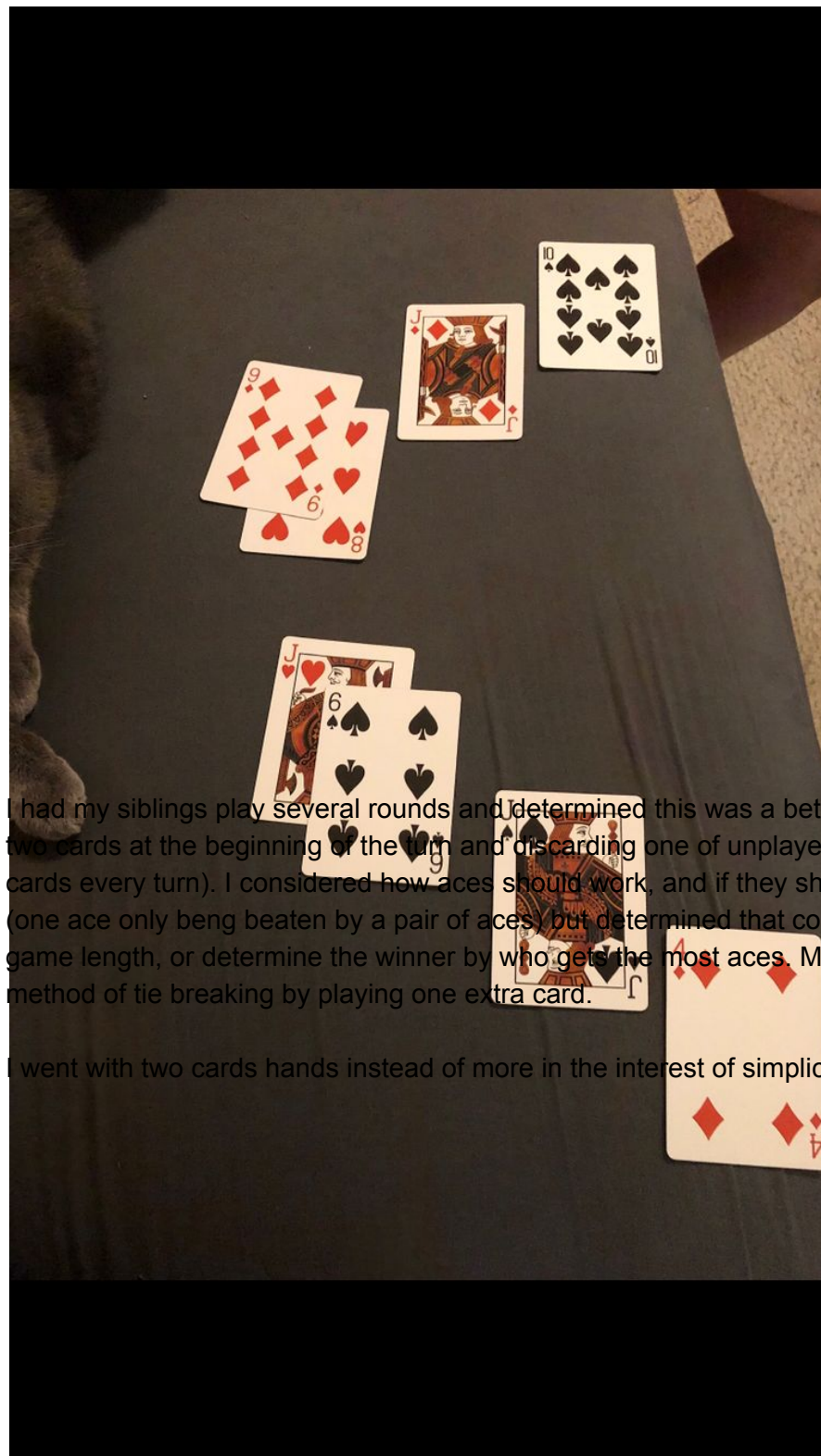
At first we were concerned that players would always play both cards, but after exploring and thinking about optimally you want to lose as few cards as possible per turn, many rounds were the players “getting rid of” low cards.

I had my sibling play test for me. They originally tried a version where you discard your cards at the end for your turn and draw two more, making each round a mini gamble with little carry over besides the number of cards in your deck. They seemed to have fun, but ultimately I corrected them because my intention was to add more tragedy to the game, and I wanted there to be a more immediate consequence to deciding to keep a card instead of playing it.

We decided on a simple method of tie breaking to keep with the intention of small changes and low complexity.

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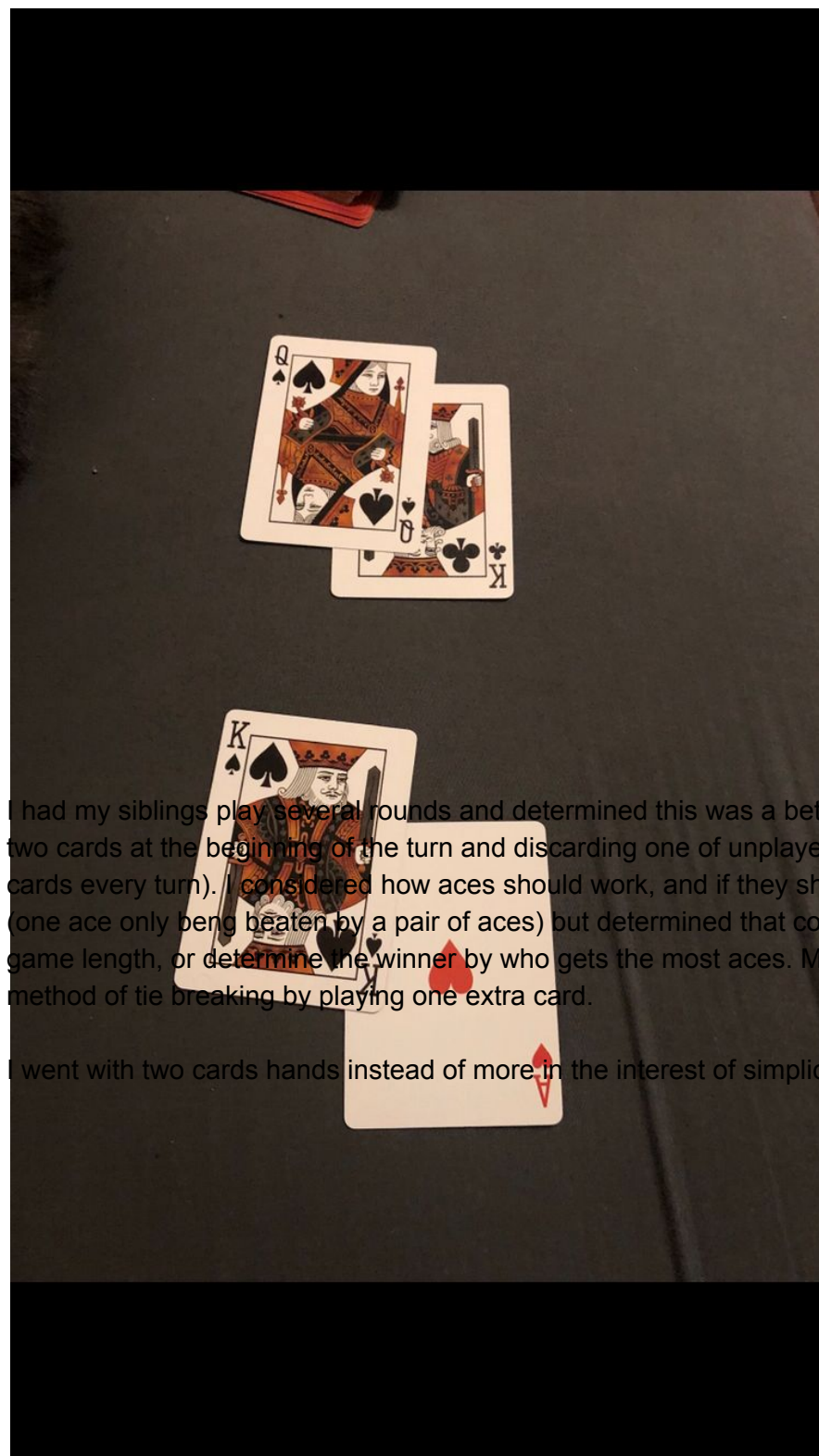
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The resulting game still has a large factor of chance and gambling, but as my siblings followed different strategies their resulting decks would have different outcomes, showing that they now had some control over the outcome of the game.

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