# The Nimble Engine: A Deep Dive into Level 2 Synergies and Spright Combo Theory

## I. The "Nimble" Archetype: An Engine of Emergent Advantage

### Introduction: Defining the "Nimble" Identity

In the vast card pool of the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game, the "Nimble" series of monsters represents a unique case study in archetypal evolution. Unlike cohesive strategies supported by dedicated Spell and Trap cards, "Nimble" is not a self-contained archetype but rather a loose collection of monsters, predominantly Level 2, released across more than a decade of the game's history.1 Its modern competitive identity is not derived from a shared theme or a unified playstyle, but is an emergent property born from the sheer power of two key members—Nimble Beaver and Nimble Angler—when integrated with external, generic Level 2 support. For the purpose of this strategic analysis, cards from other trading card games that share the "Nimble" moniker, such as Ragavan, Nimble Pilferer from Magic: The Gathering, are irrelevant and will be disregarded.2 The focus remains exclusively on the Yu-Gi-Oh! cards and their function within that game's competitive framework.

### The Roster: A Generational Divide

An examination of the full "Nimble" roster reveals a significant divide in design philosophy, separating the cards into two distinct categories: modern combo pieces and legacy battle-focused monsters. This distinction is critical for understanding why only a select few "Nimble" cards see play.

#### Modern Combo Pieces

These are the cards that form the core of the modern Nimble engine. Their effects are proactive and designed to generate significant field presence to enable Extra Deck summons.

* **Nimble Beaver**: As the engine's primary starter, Nimble Beaver's strength lies in its simple yet powerful on-summon effect. When Normal Summoned, it can Special Summon one Level 3 or lower "Nimble" monster from the Deck or Graveyard. This one-card starter immediately places two Level 2 monsters on the field, serving as the foundational play for all subsequent combos.4
* **Nimble Angler**: The engine's explosive payoff, Nimble Angler's effect triggers when it is sent from the hand or Deck to the Graveyard. Upon activation, it Special Summons up to two Level 3 or lower "Nimble" monsters from the Deck (except another Nimble Angler). This ability to swarm the field is the main source of the engine's card advantage and is the central goal of most combo lines.6
* **Nimble Sunfish**: A more niche but situationally relevant card, Nimble Sunfish has an effect that triggers when it is destroyed by battle. It allows the player to send one Fish monster from their Deck to the Graveyard, which can be used to trigger Nimble Angler's effect, and then Special Summon another Nimble Sunfish from the Deck. While slower than modern methods, it provides a way to access the engine's core payoff through combat interaction.6

#### Legacy Cards

These older "Nimble" monsters reflect a bygone era of Yu-Gi-Oh! design, where effects were often reactive and triggered by battle. Their mechanics are too slow and inconsistent for the modern competitive environment.

* **Nimble Momonga** & **Nimble Musasabi**: These cards are prime examples of the older design philosophy. Nimble Momonga gains Life Points and summons more copies of itself from the Deck in face-down Defense Position when destroyed by battle.6 Nimble Musasabi inflicts minor burn damage and summons copies of itself to the opponent's field when destroyed by battle.1 Both effects are entirely dependent on the opponent's actions and are far too passive for a combo-oriented strategy.
* **Super-Nimble Mega Hamster**: This Level 4 FLIP monster represents an even older game mechanic. Its effect to Special Summon a Level 3 or lower Beast monster from the Deck in face-down Defense Position is powerful in a vacuum but is fundamentally reliant on being set for a turn and then flipped, making it far too slow and vulnerable to removal to be a reliable combo starter.1

The "Nimble" name itself is ultimately a label of convenience rather than a signifier of mechanical cohesion. There are no support cards that mention the "Nimble" archetype, and the synergy between its members is not universal. The engine's power is not derived from being a "Nimble" deck, but from the highly specific and potent interaction between Beaver and Angler. Their shared Level 2 status and proactive summoning effects allow them to function as a compact, efficient "Level 2 Spam Engine," a resource that is highly valued by other, more powerful archetypes that can leverage a field of small monsters.

### Table 1: The Nimble Monster Roster

| Card Name | Type / Attribute | Level | ATK / DEF | Effect Summary |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nimble Angler** | Fish / WATER | 2 | 600 / 100 | If sent from hand or Deck to GY: Special Summon up to 2 Level 3 or lower "Nimble" monsters from Deck (except itself).6 |
| **Nimble Beaver** | Beast / WATER | 2 | 400 / 100 | When Normal Summoned: Special Summon 1 Level 3 or lower "Nimble" monster from your Deck or GY.6 |
| **Nimble Manta** | Fish / WATER | 2 | 800 / 100 | When sent from field to GY by a card effect: Special Summon any number of "Nimble Manta" from your Deck.6 |
| **Nimble Momonga** | Beast / EARTH | 2 | 1000 / 100 | If destroyed by battle and sent to GY: Gain 1000 LP, then Special Summon any number of "Nimble Momonga" from Deck face-down.6 |
| **Nimble Sunfish** | Fish / WATER | 2 | 1000 / 100 | If destroyed by battle and sent to GY: Send 1 Fish monster from Deck to GY, then Special Summon 1 "Nimble Sunfish" from Deck.6 |
| **Super-Nimble Mega Hamster** | Beast / EARTH | 4 | 1100 / 1800 | FLIP: Special Summon 1 Level 3 or lower Beast monster from your Deck face-down.6 |

## II. Core Mechanics and the Advantage Loop

### The Starter and the Payoff

The fundamental interaction that powers the Nimble engine is a two-stage process involving its core members. The sequence begins with Nimble Beaver, which acts as the primary starter. By using the turn's single Normal Summon on Nimble Beaver, a player can immediately activate its effect to Special Summon a Nimble Angler directly from the Deck.12 This simple action converts one card from the hand into two Level 2 monsters on the field, establishing the necessary board presence for further Extra Deck plays. This initial step, however, only sets the stage; it does not yet unleash the engine's full potential.

### Unlocking the Graveyard

The true power of the Nimble engine lies dormant within Nimble Angler's text. Its most potent effect—to summon two additional "Nimble" monsters from the Deck—does not trigger when it is summoned to the field. Instead, it activates specifically when Nimble Angler is sent from the hand or, more crucially, from the Deck directly to the Graveyard.6 This activation condition means that the engine, in its most explosive form, cannot function in isolation. It requires an external "enabler," a card with an effect that can send a monster from the Deck to the Graveyard as part of its cost or effect. This dependency is the key to understanding the engine's integration into broader competitive strategies.

The core function of the Nimble engine can be understood as a highly efficient resource conversion loop. This loop transforms a minimal initial investment—a single Normal Summon—into a significant net gain of board presence and deck thinning, creating a cascade of card advantage. The process unfolds as follows:

1. **Initial State:** The player controls no monsters and has one Nimble Beaver in hand. This represents an investment of one card.
2. **Action 1 (Summon):** The player Normal Summons Nimble Beaver. Its effect activates, Special Summoning Nimble Angler from the Deck. The field now contains two monsters.
3. **Action 2 (Link Summon):** The player uses both Nimble Beaver and Nimble Angler as material to Link Summon a Link-2 monster, typically Spright Sprind. The field now contains one monster.
4. **Action 3 (Activation):** The effect of Spright Sprind is activated, sending a second copy of Nimble Angler from the Deck to the Graveyard as part of its effect.
5. **Action 4 (Payoff):** The Nimble Angler sent to the Graveyard triggers its effect, Special Summoning two additional "Nimble" monsters (e.g., two more copies of Nimble Beaver) from the Deck.
6. **Final State:** The player now controls three monsters (Spright Sprind and two Nimble Beaver). The initial investment of one card from hand has been converted into a three-monster board, and three cards have been thinned from the Deck (Nimble Angler and two Nimble Beaver). This conversion of a single action into three tangible threats on the field provides the resources necessary for extensive and powerful Extra Deck plays, representing the fundamental source of the engine's competitive viability.

## III. The Premier Partnership: Integration with the Spright Archetype

### Inherent Synergy: The Level 2 Connection

The partnership between the Nimble engine and the "Spright" archetype is one of the most natural and potent synergies in modern Yu-Gi-Oh!. The foundation of this relationship is simple: every main deck "Spright" monster possesses an inherent ability to be Special Summoned from the hand if the player controls any Level 2 monster.13 The Nimble engine, by its very nature, excels at producing these Level 2 bodies with unparalleled efficiency. A single Nimble Beaver can establish the prerequisite for an entire hand of Spright monsters to be summoned, turning a modest opening into an overwhelming board presence.

### The Key Enabler: Spright Sprind

While the general Level 2 synergy is strong, the specific card that elevates the partnership to an elite competitive level is the Link-2 monster, Spright Sprind. Its effect allows the player to send one Level 2 monster from their Deck to the Graveyard.12 This effect aligns perfectly with the activation condition of Nimble Angler. Spright Sprind is not merely a good card in the strategy; it is the central pillar upon which the entire combo rests. By Link Summoning Sprind using the initial Nimble Beaver and Nimble Angler, the player can immediately activate Sprind to send a second Angler from the Deck to the Graveyard, triggering its effect and flooding the board with two more Nimble monsters. This interaction is the engine's ignition, transforming a standard setup into an explosive swarm.

### The Key Extender: Gigantic Spright

Once the Nimble engine, enabled by Spright Sprind, has populated the field with Level 2 monsters, the Rank 2 Xyz monster Gigantic Spright takes over as the primary extender. Using two Level 2 monsters (often Spright Sprind and a Nimble Beaver), a player can summon Gigantic Spright and activate its effect to Special Summon any Level 2 monster directly from the Deck.12 This provides a crucial pivot point in the combo, allowing the player to access key pieces from other synergistic engines, such as Swap Frog, or to search for a core Spright monster like Spright Blue to continue extending their plays. Furthermore, Gigantic Spright possesses a critical defensive effect: after it resolves, both players are locked into only being able to Special Summon Level, Rank, and Link 2 monsters for the rest of the turn. This proactively neutralizes high-Level, high-impact "board breaker" hand traps like Nibiru, the Primal Being, protecting the player's investment and ensuring their combo can proceed uninterrupted.14

The relationship between these cards is so seamless and precise that it transcends mere coincidence. Nimble Angler was released in 2012, and for many years its powerful effect was difficult to trigger reliably from the Deck.17 The much later release of Spright Sprind, with an effect that provides the exact condition needed to activate Angler, suggests a deliberate design philosophy. New archetypes are not always created in a vacuum; they are sometimes designed to intentionally interact with and revitalize older, underutilized cards. Spright Sprind acts as the modern key that unlocks the decade-old potential of Nimble Angler, creating a powerful symbiotic relationship where the new archetype provides the trigger and the old engine provides the explosive payoff.

## IV. Core Combo Lines: A Visual Guide to Field Construction

The following combo paths are structured with clear, sequential steps to facilitate understanding and are designed to be easily translatable to a visual canvas format.

### Primary Combo Path: The 1-Card "Nimble Beaver" to Full Board

This is the most common and powerful opening play for the deck, converting a single Nimble Beaver into a multi-interruption end board.

1. **Normal Summon Nimble Beaver.**
   * *Action:* Use your Normal Summon for the turn on Nimble Beaver.
2. **Activate Nimble Beaver's effect.**
   * *Reaction:* Upon a successful summon, Beaver's effect activates. Special Summon one Nimble Angler from your Deck in Attack Position.12
   * *Field State:* Nimble Beaver + Nimble Angler.
3. **Link Summon Spright Sprind.**
   * *Action:* Use Nimble Beaver and Nimble Angler as Link Material.
   * *Result:* Summon Spright Sprind to an Extra Monster Zone.
4. **Activate Spright Sprind's effect.**
   * *Reaction:* Upon a successful summon, Sprind's effect activates. Send one Nimble Angler from your Deck to the Graveyard.12
5. **Activate Nimble Angler's effect in the Graveyard.**
   * *Reaction:* The Nimble Angler sent to the GY triggers. Special Summon two Nimble Beaver from your Deck in Defense Position.12
   * *Field State:* Spright Sprind + two Nimble Beaver.
6. **Xyz Summon Gigantic Spright.**
   * *Action:* Use Spright Sprind and one Nimble Beaver as Xyz Material.
   * *Result:* Summon Gigantic Spright in Attack Position.
7. **Activate Gigantic Spright's effect.**
   * *Action:* Detach one material (typically Spright Sprind) from Gigantic Spright.
   * *Result:* Special Summon one Spright Blue from your Deck.16
   * *Note:* Both players are now locked into Special Summoning only Level/Rank/Link 2 monsters for the rest of the turn.14
8. **Activate Spright Blue's effect.**
   * *Reaction:* Upon being Special Summoned, Blue's effect activates. Add one Spright Jet from your Deck to your hand.
9. **Special Summon Spright Jet.**
   * *Action:* Since you control a Level 2 monster (Gigantic Spright), you can Special Summon Spright Jet from your hand.
10. **Activate Spright Jet's effect.**
    * *Reaction:* Upon being Special Summoned, Jet's effect activates. Add one Spright Starter or Spright Double Cross from your Deck to your hand.
11. **End Board Construction.**
    * *Action:* You now have multiple Level 2 monsters on the field. From here, you can pivot to various end boards depending on your hand and matchup. A common TCG-legal line is detailed in the next section.

### TCG-Legal Adaptation (Post-Spright Elf Ban)

With Spright Elf banned in the TCG, the combo lines have been adapted to end on a different suite of interruptions. Continuing from Step 10 above:

1. **Special Summon Spright Red and/or Spright Carrot.**
   * *Action:* If you have them in hand, Special Summon them using their own effects. If not, proceed to the next step.
2. **Link Summon I:P Masquerena.**
   * *Action:* Use Spright Blue and Spright Jet as Link Material to summon I:P Masquerena.12
3. **Set Backrow and Pass.**
   * *Action:* Set the Spright Starter or Spright Double Cross you searched earlier. Your turn ends.
   * *Final Field State:* Gigantic Spright + one Nimble Beaver + I:P Masquerena + a set Spell/Trap. During the opponent's turn, you can use Spright Starter to summon Spright Red or Carrot for an additional negate. You can use I:P Masquerena's effect to Link Summon a disruptive monster like S:P Little Knight or Knightmare Unicorn.12

### Alternate Starter: The "Swap Frog" Line

This line demonstrates the deck's flexibility, allowing it to start combos even without Nimble Beaver.

1. **Activate Swap Frog's effect in hand.**
   * *Action:* Discard one Nimble Angler from your hand to Special Summon Swap Frog.20
2. **Activate Nimble Angler's effect in the Graveyard.**
   * *Reaction:* The discarded Angler triggers, Special Summoning two Nimble Beaver from your Deck.
3. **Activate Swap Frog's on-summon effect.**
   * *Reaction:* Send one Ronintoadin from your Deck to the Graveyard.
4. **Proceed with Combo.**
   * *Result:* You now have three Level 2 monsters on the field (Swap Frog and two Nimble Beaver) and have set up your Graveyard. From here, you can proceed with the standard combo lines, such as making Gigantic Spright and continuing your plays.

### Playing Through Disruption

While explosive, the primary Nimble Beaver combo is linear, presenting several key points of failure that an opponent can exploit. Understanding these chokepoints is crucial for both piloting the deck and playing against it.

* **Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring on Nimble Beaver:** If the opponent negates the effect of Nimble Beaver to summon from the Deck, the combo immediately ends unless the player has another Level 2 monster or a "Spright" monster in hand to extend.
* **Effect Veiler or Infinite Impermanence on Nimble Beaver:** Similar to Ash Blossom, this stops the initial summon from the Deck and halts the combo without an extender.
* **Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring on Spright Sprind:** This is a critical chokepoint. Negating Sprind's effect to send Angler to the Graveyard prevents the swarm effect, leaving the player with only Sprind on the field and significantly reducing the combo's ceiling.21

The strength of the Nimble combo is therefore not in its inherent resilience, but in its capacity to bait interaction. Committing the Normal Summon to Nimble Beaver forces the opponent to reveal their hand traps. If they do not have a response, the player gains a massive advantage. If they do respond, the player loses their primary combo line but gains critical information about the opponent's defensive resources, allowing them to pivot to a more conservative secondary play with any remaining cards in hand.

## V. The End Goal: Deconstructing the Optimal End Board

The objective of the Nimble-Spright combo is to construct a board with multiple layers of interaction, designed to systematically dismantle the opponent's plays during their turn. Following the ban of Spright Elf, the strategy has evolved from relying on a single, powerful omni-negate to utilizing a more diverse and reactive suite of disruptions.

### Layers of Interruption

A typical TCG-legal end board aims to establish several of the following interactive pieces:

* **Monster Negation:** Spright Red serves as the primary monster effect negation. As a Quick Effect, it can Tribute another Level, Rank, or Link 2 monster you control to negate a monster effect and, if the Tributed monster was a Rank or Link 2, destroy it.13 This is often summoned during the opponent's turn via Spright Starter.
* **Spell/Trap Negation:** Spright Carrot functions identically to Spright Red but negates Spell and Trap Cards instead. The choice between searching a starter for Red or Carrot depends on the matchup.13
* **Omni-Negation (Frog Variant):** When the Frog engine is included and the combo is successful, Toadally Awesome provides a powerful omni-negate. By sending an Aqua monster from hand or field to the GY, it can negate the activation of any card or effect and set that card to your field. It also generates resources during the Standby Phase.14
* **Opponent's Turn Disruption:** I:P Masquerena is a cornerstone of the modern end board. During the opponent's Main Phase, her Quick Effect allows you to immediately Link Summon using monsters you control. This is typically used to summon S:P Little Knight for non-targeting banishing of two cards (one on field, one in either GY) or Knightmare Unicorn for non-targeting removal that shuffles a card into the Deck.12
* **Targeted Removal/Theft:** A set Spright Double Cross is an incredibly versatile Trap Card. It can target a monster on the field or in either GY and then either attach it to your Rank 2 monster as material, steal control of it if your Link-2 monster points to it, or Special Summon it from a GY to a zone your Link-2 monster points to.13
* **Non-Targeting Removal:** A searched Spright Smashers provides a powerful form of removal. This Quick-Play Spell allows you to Tribute a Level/Rank/Link 2 monster to banish a card your opponent controls without targeting it.14

This strategic evolution was a direct consequence of the banlist. Before Spright Elf was forbidden, the primary goal was often to establish a loop with Toadally Awesome. Spright Elf's ability to revive a Level 2 monster from the Graveyard during the opponent's turn meant it could bring back a Frog, which could then be used as cost for Toadally Awesome's negate, effectively making the omni-negate live every turn.16 The loss of Elf broke this oppressive loop, forcing the deck to adapt. This led to the current strategic focus on a more diversified board. Instead of relying on one catch-all answer, the modern Spright pilot must correctly identify threats and deploy the appropriate form of interaction from their varied toolkit, making the deck more complex and rewarding to master.

## VI. Expanding the Ecosystem: Tertiary Synergies

The core Nimble-Spright engine is highly modular, allowing for the integration of smaller "packages" of cards from other archetypes to augment its capabilities. The two most prominent are the Melffy and Frog engines.

### The Melffy Package

This package typically consists of Melffy Catty and Melffy Pinny in the Main Deck, with Melffy of the Forest and Herald of the Arc Light in the Extra Deck.25

* **Mechanic:** The combo begins by using two Level 2 monsters to Xyz Summon Melffy of the Forest. Its effect is used to add Melffy Catty from the Deck to the hand. During the End Phase, Catty can be Special Summoned from the hand. When the opponent Normal or Special Summons a monster, Catty's effect can be activated to return itself to the hand, which in turn triggers Melffy of the Forest's effect to negate the opponent's monster's effects. The Catty that returned to hand then searches for Melffy Pinny. Pinny can then be Special Summoned from the hand, and its effect allows for an immediate Synchro Summon using itself and another Melffy (like the Catty that was just searched).26
* **Payoff:** The primary target for this Synchro Summon is Herald of the Arc Light, a Level 4 Synchro Monster. This provides the board with an additional omni-negate (by Tributing itself) and a powerful floodgate effect that banishes any card sent from the hand or Main Deck to the Graveyard, crippling many popular strategies.22

### The Frog Engine Revisited

While often seen simply as a target for Gigantic Spright, the Frog engine (Swap Frog and Ronintoadin) offers additional utility.

* **Mechanic:** Swap Frog can Special Summon itself from the hand by discarding another WATER monster. This provides a way to get a Level 2 body on the field without using the Normal Summon and can simultaneously send Nimble Angler from the hand to the Graveyard to trigger its effect.20 Its primary on-field effect is to send a Level 2 or lower Aqua monster from the Deck to the GY, which is always used to set up Ronintoadin.16
* **Payoff:** The singular goal of including the Frog engine is to enable the Xyz Summon of Toadally Awesome. As one of the most powerful Rank 2 monsters ever printed, its ability to provide a reusable omni-negate and generate advantage makes it a premier boss monster for any deck that can summon it.14

The decision to include either the Melffy or Frog package is not about which is superior in a vacuum, but is a strategic choice dictated by the anticipated competitive metagame. The Frog engine's proactive and powerful omni-negate is exceptionally strong against combo-heavy decks that rely on resolving a key Spell, Trap, or monster effect to start their plays. In contrast, the Melffy engine provides a more reactive omni-negate in Herald of the Arc Light, whose true strength lies in its secondary floodgate effect. This makes the Melffy package the superior choice when facing a field of Graveyard-centric strategies. This modularity allows a skilled player to fine-tune their build, adapting the core Nimble-Spright shell to effectively counter the most prevalent threats in any given tournament environment.

## VII. Strategic Summary and Closing Analysis

### Recap of Strengths

The Nimble engine, when paired with the Spright archetype, stands as one of the most efficient advantage-generating packages in modern Yu-Gi-Oh!. Its core strengths are numerous and synergistic. The engine boasts an incredibly high ceiling, capable of converting a single card like Nimble Beaver into a board of three or more monsters. This explosive potential allows it to construct multi-layered end boards featuring a diverse array of interruptions, including monster negates, Spell/Trap negates, and various forms of removal. Furthermore, its inherent modularity allows for the seamless integration of tertiary engines like Frogs or Melffys, enabling a pilot to adapt their strategy to specific metagame challenges.

### Recap of Weaknesses

Despite its power, the engine is not without its vulnerabilities. The primary combo line is highly linear, creating predictable chokepoints that a knowledgeable opponent can exploit with well-timed hand traps. It is particularly susceptible to Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring on its key starters and Droll & Lock Bird, which can shut down its sequential searching. The engine's heavy reliance on the Graveyard for Nimble Angler's activation also makes it vulnerable to powerful floodgate effects like Dimension Shifter and Macro Cosmos.23

### Final Verdict

The Nimble engine is best understood not as a standalone deck, but as a hyper-efficient module focused on the rapid generation of Level 2 monsters. Its history serves as a compelling example of how the game's deep card pool allows for older, overlooked cards to be thrust into the competitive spotlight when the correct enablers, such as Spright Sprind, are introduced. The synergy is so potent that it redefines the competitive value of its key pieces, turning them from niche curiosities into the foundation of a top-tier strategy. The future viability of the Nimble engine will remain directly proportional to the power of new Level, Rank, and Link 2 monsters printed in the years to come, ensuring its place as a cornerstone of Level 2-centric combo theory.

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