

The Partner Game — Mirror Mode (2–8 Players)

Multiplayer ledgering through anti-chiral parity. Reads as a real game manual. No background theory required.

Materials

- Up to 8 standard decks of playing cards (52 + 2 Jokers each). One deck per player.
- Four 4x4 Station mats (printable) or any flat surface.
- Countdown track and move counters (printable).
- Pencils/tokens for contradiction markers.

Global Setup

- Seat players in a circle. Each declares a primary direction: N, E, S, W, NE, NW, SE, SW.
- Alternate chirality around the circle: Chiral (C), Anti■Chiral (A), C, A, ...
- Each player shuffles their own deck and draws up to 8 cards (hand limit = 8).
- Each player lays a 4x4 Station face down. Draw pile remains next to the Station.

Universal Rules of Play

- Turn order proceeds clockwise.
- On your turn, you may play exactly one card from hand to your 4x4 Station, observing anti■chiral constraints with neighbors.
- Hand limit: 8 cards at all times. If a draw or effect would exceed 8, you must first play or discard to remain at 8.
- Number cards (2–10) are tokens. Place along rows/columns so that colors alternate (red/black) and suit lanes obey: ♦ straight lanes; ♣ diagonals/triads; ♥ intersections; ♠ apex/corner closures.
- Face cards: Jack (J) resolves one local contradiction (witness); Queen (Q) permits a second number placement this turn, both lawful; King (K) reflects a row/column (swap row↔column or mirror a diagonal).
- Ace (A) is a root: may be used as 1 or 11, but never both simultaneously.
- Jokers are global gates. One use per Joker. When played, all players may immediately remove one contradiction marker from their Stations.
- If you cannot make a legal play, announce a Stall. The Stall Timer starts at you (see Stall & Countdown).

Anti■Chiral Constraint

You must build opposite to your neighbors' parity and lanes.

- Color: If the right neighbor's last placed card was Red, your next placement must be Black; and vice-versa.
- Suit lane: If the left neighbor advanced a ♦ lane, your next placement may not be ♦ in a straight lane; prefer ♣ diagonals or ♥ intersections.
- Value flow: If a neighbor advanced upward (e.g., 5→6), you must advance downward in your placement lane (e.g., 7→6), unless using Q to chain lawful steps.

Quick visual key

Neighbor last play: You must play: Red (♥/♦) Black (♣/♠) Black (♣/♠) Red (♥/♦) Straight ♦ lane Diagonal ♣ or intersection ♥ Diagonal ♣ lane Straight ♦ or apex ♠ Up-step (n→n+1) Down-step (m→m-1), unless Q allows two-step chain

Stall, Deck Exhaustion, and Annihilation Countdown

- If the shared flow stalls at your turn (no legal play from your hand of ≤ 8), announce Stall. Place the Stall marker at your seat.
- Play continues around the ring. When it returns to you, you have one final chance to save your ledger with a legal play (including Joker).
- If you succeed, remove the Stall marker; play continues. If you fail, your ledger collapses and the global Annihilation Countdown (10 turns) begins.
- Deck exhaustion: If any player's draw pile is empty, they must resolve remaining hand cards into lawful plays before their next turn ends. If impossible, a Stall is triggered at their seat.
- Annihilation Countdown: Place the counter at 10. Each full round (all players take a turn) reduces it by 1. If it reaches 0 before global closure, everyone loses.

2 Players — Head-to-Head Reflection

Natural analog: Binary star balance.

Behaviors:

- You may only place cards anti-color to your rival's last play.
- You may not repeat your rival's suit lane; choose a different lane type.
- First to force a Stall on the opponent wins, unless the rival saves on their return.

Win/Closure:

- Immediate win if rival fails their save after a Stall.
- Global win if both Stations close contradiction-free within the same round.

3 Players — Triad Cycle

Natural analog: Triatomic bond closure.

Behaviors:

- You must remain anti-chiral to both neighbors; use J to clear one contradiction per cycle.
- Q enables a two-step chain only if both neighbors approve (nod rule).

Win/Closure:

- Survive cyclic tension; if any ledger collapses, Countdown starts.
- Triad win if all three Stations close within one round.

4 Players — Square Symmetry

Natural analog: Tetrahedral closure.

Behaviors:

- Diagonal partners stabilize; coordinate face plays (J/Q/K) on alternating turns.
- Adjacent players act as disruptors; prepare K to reflect lanes.

Win/Closure:

- Win if diagonally opposite pairs close simultaneously.
- If a single ledger collapses, Countdown starts; remaining three must close before zero.

5 Players — Pentagonal Instability

Natural analog: Capsid nucleation.

Behaviors:

- Parity shifts clockwise each round; update your anti-chiral requirement with the shift.
- One player per round holds the Strain token and must play first; if they Stall, double penalty (Countdown -2).

Win/Closure:

- Win by distributing strain fairly and closing within 5 cycles.
- Loss if two strain Stalls occur before any closure.

6 Players — Hexagonal Dual Lattice

Natural analog: Honeycomb packing.

Behaviors:

- Split into inner/outer ring roles; alternate lawful plays between rings.
- Jokers affect both rings; coordinate timing to maximize contradiction removal.

Win/Closure:

- Win when both rings close in the same round.
- If one ring collapses, the other has two rounds to force closure.

7 Players — Heptagonal Strain

Natural analog: Protein fold with one permanent kink.

Behaviors:

- Each round one seat holds the Kink; that player must play two legal cards or take a Stall.
- Neighbors may donate one legal move (discard from hand) to help the Kink seat.

Win/Closure:

- Win if Kink rotates fully once with no collapse and closure achieved.
- Loss if Kink Stalls twice before full rotation.

8 Players — Octagonal Closure

Natural analog: E8 parity ring.

Behaviors:

- Exact alternation of chirality around the table. Each seat has one opposite partner and one orthogonal disruptor.
- Plan Q chains to synchronize opposite pairs; reserve Jokers for ring-wide contradiction sweeps.

Win/Closure:

- Global closure required: all eight Stations must close within the same round.
- If any single ledger collapses during Countdown, all lose.

Outside Sets (>8 Players)

For groups larger than 8, create a mirrored outside set. Link sets at any shared face (same rank/suit). Each set plays by the same rules; global closure requires all linked sets to close within a single Countdown window.

Strategy Notes

- Hand compression: Aim to keep 5–7 cards; 8 is risk. Use J early to shed contradictions.
- Face choreography: Time J/Q/K across the ring to sweep contradictions before Countdown.
- Joker discipline: One per deck, two total. Treat as global assets, not personal escapes.
- Save windows: If a neighbor stalls, consider sacrificing a move to create their save path; your survival may depend on theirs.