

# Mother

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**Semester and class:** Spring 2024 GAMES-UT 150 001

**Logline:** Make the right choices and push your luck in order to achieve the highest score possible.

**Summary:** In this puzzle game, you play as a witch who creates giant kaijus to take revenge on the people who have wronged her. Birth your kaijus through the meticulous manipulation of mysterious and peculiar kaiju fragments that, when arranged in a particular way, spring to life. Swap and burn to create the strongest kaiju army possible.

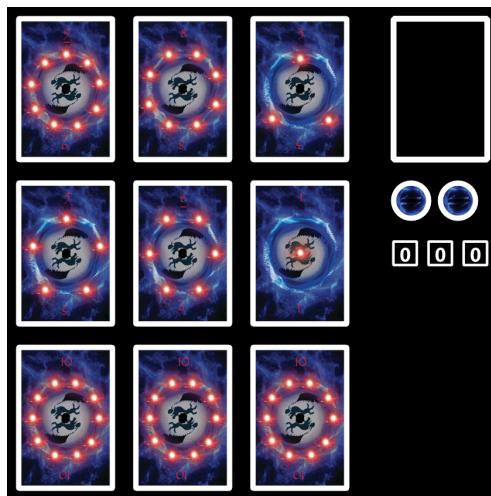
## Materials:

- Custom deck
  - Cards numbered 1-13 (4 of each, 52 total)
- 2 custom chips
- 3 D10 dice
- Score card

## Rules:

### Setup

Make sure the deck is sufficiently shuffled before placing it face-down. Right below the deck, place the 2 chips such that the blue sides are facing up. Below that, place the 3 D10s such that '0' is facing up on all of them. These dice will be used to record the player's total kaiju power. Draw 9 cards from the deck and place them face-up in a 3 by 3 field going top to bottom, left to right.



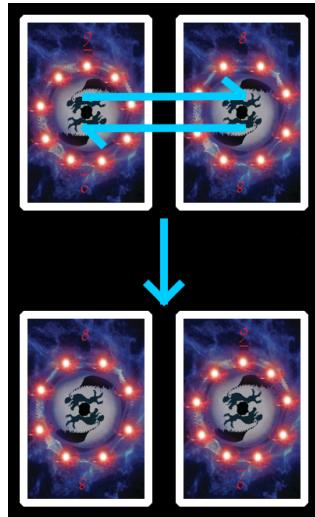
## Objective

Reach for the highest amount of total kaiju power possible through forming as many paths of increasing card value with as long a length each as possible before the deck runs out.

## How to Play

### Swap

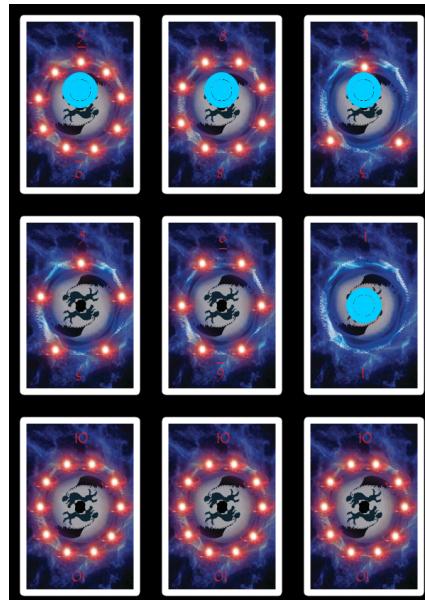
The player may flip over a blue chip to the white side to swap 2 adjacent cards on the field, not counting diagonals.



This is not possible if there are no blue chips.

### Create

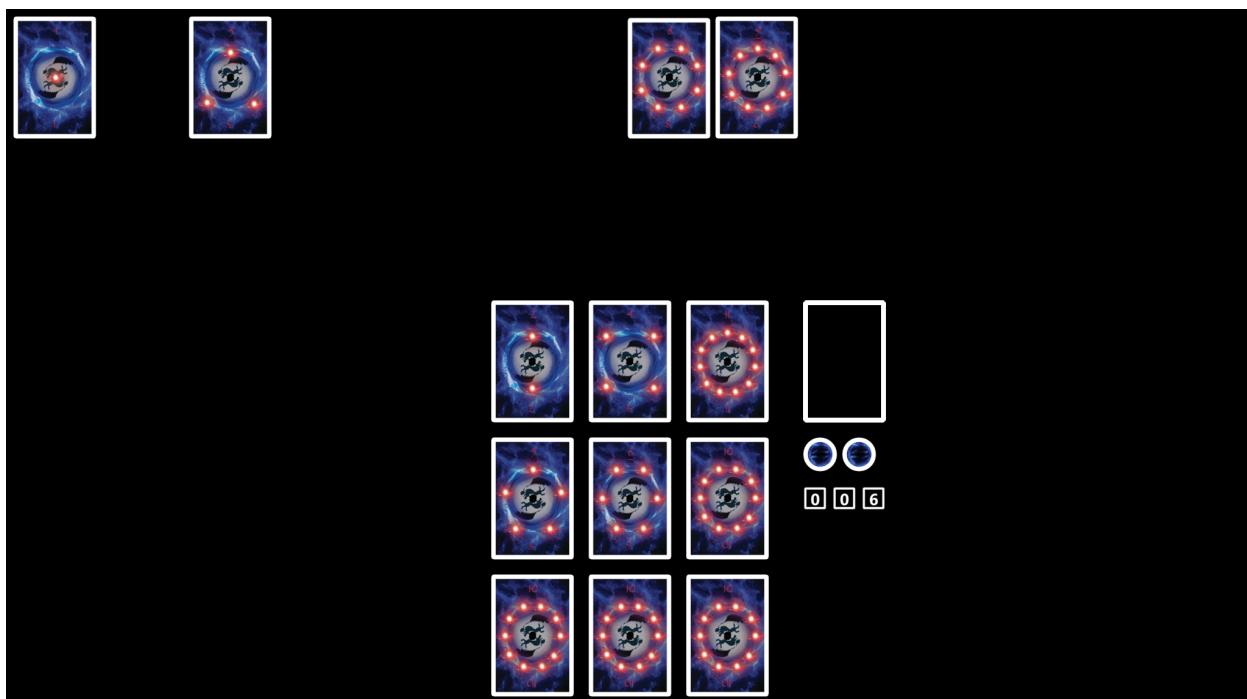
To create a kaiju, trace a path on the field of increasing card value, not counting diagonals.



The longer the path, the bigger the kaiju and the more kaiju power it will add to the player's total kaiju power. Refer to the table below in adding kaiju power:

Number of Cards in the Path	Kaiju Power
1	1
2	2
3	4
4	6
5	9
6	12
7	16
8	20
9	30

Add to the total kaiju power. Then, remove all cards in the path from the field and set them aside. Replace them with new face-up cards drawn from the deck going top to bottom, left to right. Lastly, flip over any white chips such that they are blue again.



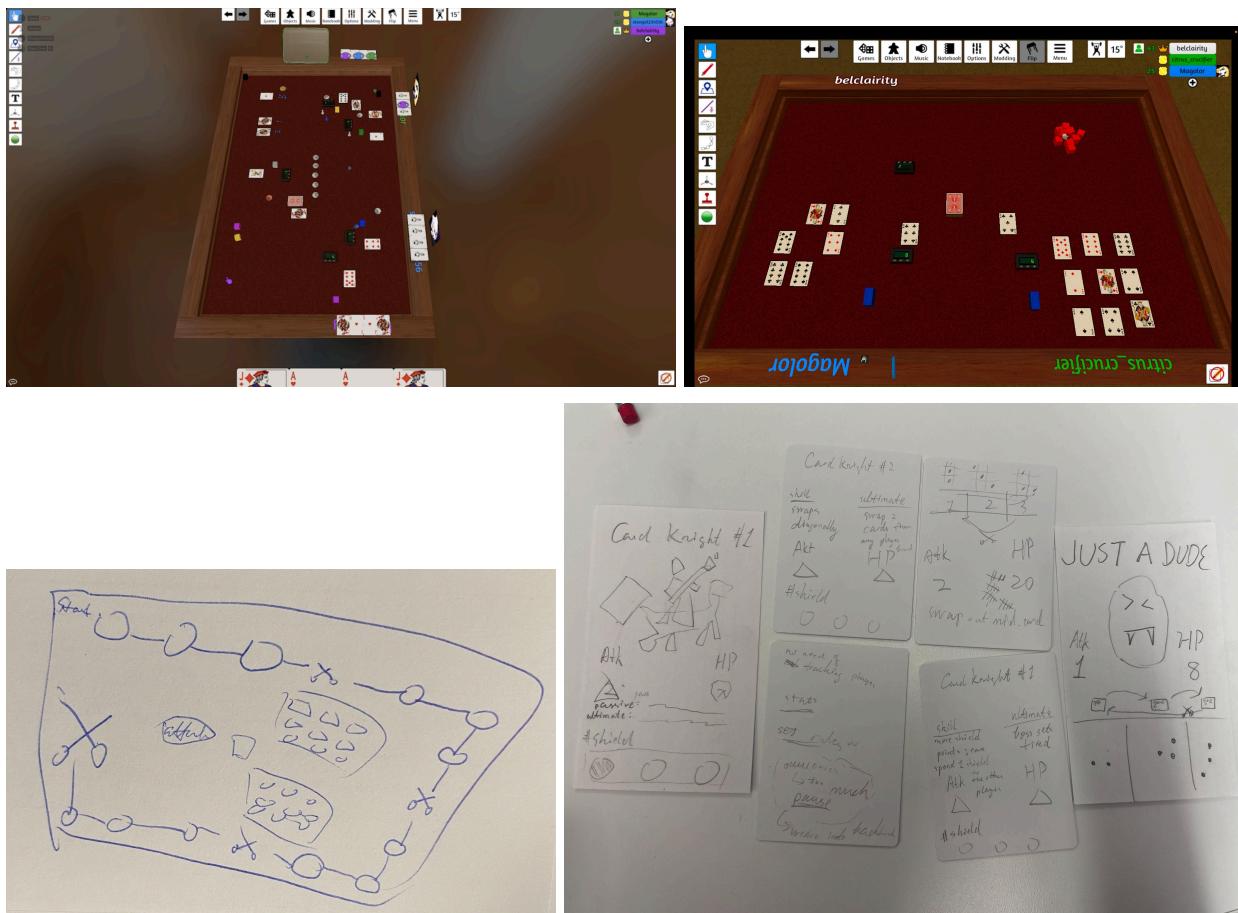
## Burn

When the player is not in the process of swapping or creating, they can select a row, column, or diagonal of 3 cards on the field to set aside and replace with face-up, drawn cards from the deck. There is no limit to how many times the player can do this.

## Game End

The game ends the instant there is an empty slot on the field and no card in the deck to fill it.

## Documentation Images





### Process Summary:

For this project, we had to develop a game with the themes of fantasy and tokusatsu in mind. Initially, we thought of creating a 4-player co-op game. The game was to be centered around a series of battles of increasing difficulty to convey a sense of progression similar to that in fantasy media. There was to be a deck of unique events for the players to draw from between these battles to evoke a sense of uncertainty and discovery. We wanted to use the combat of the game to bring out the themes of tokusatsu. The players would be the “heroes” and the enemies the “villains.” The combat was to be turn-based, aside from the ultimates of every player, which can be used at will. This was to create the feeling of spontaneity and excitement commonly associated with tokusatsu. Each player was to be of a unique class similar to those in role-playing games.

Things were going alright until we encountered a flaw inherent in co-op games: the incentive for the most experienced player to play the entire game by themselves. We quickly remedied this by forming a shuffled deck of action cards and having each player draw from this deck and hide their hand from one another without the ability to communicate what is in their hand. We had hoped that this restraint on communication would solve the issue without making

the game too awkward. We would soon encounter a much more severe flaw that would force us to start from scratch: AI in tabletop games.

We would soon realize how difficult it is to implement AI seamlessly in a tabletop game. Specifically, we were stumped by the issue of deciding moves and targets for the enemies. We had chosen to lean into probability. However, this was a tabletop game and not a video game. Whereas in a video game where probability is handled automatically by the computer, in a tabletop game like ours, it had to be done entirely manually through the rolling of dice and such methods. We quickly saw how awkward and clunky enemy turns were due to the sheer amount of times the dice had to be rolled. There was also the question of who would be rolling the dice. We realized that in a realistic scenario, no player is going to find enjoyment in deciding the moves and targets of the enemy. Having a player whose exclusive job is to roll the dice for the enemy is also out of the question without meaningful decisions to be made on the enemy's side, as that player would certainly not want to play the game for long. Even if we were to give meaningful choices to the player playing as the enemy, there would still be the problem of the targeting becoming predictable and bland as they would always be attacking the players who are the priority targets, such as the healer and such. The way to remedy this was to make all the "heroes" in the game more or less the same, which is a direction we adamantly did not want to go in.

We were sent back to square one and there were only a few days until the first in-class playtest. That was when we thought of another idea for the game. It was to be a single-player game and for two reasons:

1. It would be easy to playtest.
2. It would circumvent the issue in co-op games where it is ideal for the most experienced player to play the entire game themselves.

The game was to be centered around a 3 by 3 field of randomly drawn cards which the player would manipulate to both parry enemy attacks while preparing their own counterattack. Because the enemy had a predetermined series of moves they would execute and there was only one player, enemy AI would no longer be an issue.

But single-player games are not without their own problems. We were told by the Professor that a game has to be extremely fun for someone to want to sit down and play by themselves. We then decided to simply make the single-player game into a two-player game by adding another player and having the enemy hit both players with each attack to avoid the earlier issue of targeting for the enemy. From here, there was a split in the group. One side had wanted to focus on further polishing the combat, the core of the game, to make it more fun. Another side had wanted to add on extra things around the core to make the whole game feel like more of an adventure. The latter prevailed and we got to work on making the occurrences outside of the combat more interesting. Unfortunately, the issue of the most experienced player playing the entire game also reintroduced itself, but we thought that it would be fine and that the Professor would let us get away with it, as we had convinced ourselves that it would be too unreasonable to expect every co-op game to not have this issue.

Sadly, there was no such luck. The Professor called us out during our final in-class playtest and also suggested that we burn off all the excess things of our game and focus only on the core, which we eventually developed into our final game. When we asked him about how we would incorporate the two themes we were given at the start of the project, he suggested presenting the player as a witch who creates kaijus. The simplicity of the solution was alarming, as none of us knew that we had such leeway in incorporating the themes into our game.