

# Zarcana rules

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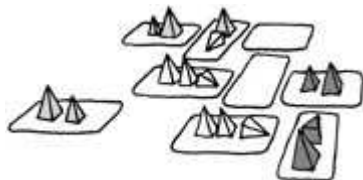
## What you need:

- One stash of Icehouse pieces per player
- Additional equipment:
  - Ryan Hackel's Zarcana deck
- 2 to 4 players (best with 4)
- about 60 minutes

## On your turn:

- Place a small pyramid (if none)
- Use a card from hand
- Use a card you occupy
- Reorient any/all pyramids
- Draw up to 3 cards
- Discard your hand
- Pass
- Declare final round

## OVERVIEW



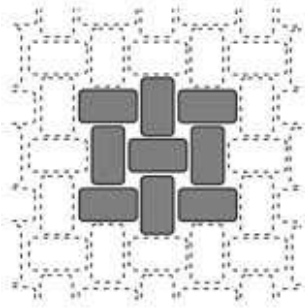
Zarcana is a game of war, journeys, growth, life, and death. Your icehouse pyramids spread out across a world composed of cards. You move these pyramids across the board, trying to occupy valuable cards. The board can change, grow and shrink, so be prepared to defend your holdings, invade enemy territory, and colonize new lands. You will also have a hand of cards, drawn from the deck. Each card has an ability, and you can make use of the cards you occupy on the board in addition to the cards in your hand. Use them wisely. Whoever occupies the most valuable set of cards on the board will be the winner, when the end of the game is finally declared.

## BASICS

Each player has a stash of fifteen pyramids -- five small, five medium, and five large, of one color. All these pyramids start off the board. You can bring your pyramids onto the board by various means; but you can't have more than fifteen pyramids on the board, because that's all you have. By the same token, you can't have more than five small pyramids on the board, and so on. The fifteen pyramids in your set are it.

It's also possible for your pyramids to be destroyed. When a pyramid is destroyed, you just take it back off the board, into your stash of unplayed pieces. You can bring it back into play later.

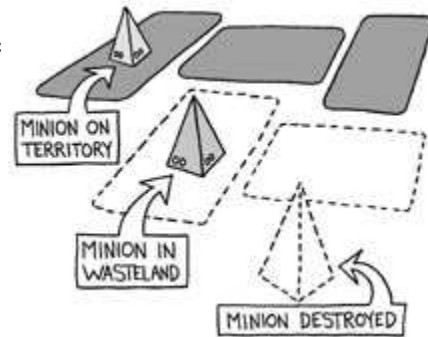
The board is made of cards; you can imagine it as a grid, with cards in each space. Pyramids on the board sit on cards. Initially, there are nine cards, in a three-by-three grid, but more cards can be placed later; the board can grow in any direction. Cards can also be removed from the board and discarded. The board can therefore develop holes, or even split completely in half. *The*



*horizontal-vertical tile pattern in these diagrams isn't really important. It's just aesthetically pleasing. It also helps remind players that cards do not touch diagonally; cards are considered to be next to each other only if they lay edge-to-edge.*

In actual fact, a pyramid on the board doesn't have to sit on a card. A pyramid can sit in an empty grid space. Such a pyramid is considered to be "in the wasteland" -- it's on the board, but outside the fertile territory of the cards. However, pyramids can only inhabit wasteland spaces which are next to at least one card. If a pyramid is somehow caught in a wasteland space which is not adjacent to any cards at all, the pyramid is immediately destroyed.

When a pyramid is on the board, its orientation is important. A pyramid can be standing up (pointing upward), or it can be lying down, pointing in one of the four cardinal directions. Pyramids cannot point diagonally.



More than one pyramid can share a space. Even pyramids owned by different players can sit on the same space. However, there is generally a population limit of three pyramids on a single card (or wasteland space). If a space has three pyramids on it, you can't put another there.

Certain Special cards let you violate this rule. For example, the ability of *Move Without Limits* lets you move a pyramid into a space, ignoring the population limit. If you get four or more pyramids in a space, you can leave them there as long as you like. There's no rule against *leaving* more than three pyramids in a space, only on *placing* new pyramids there.

Each player starts with a hand of three cards. There is generally a limit of six cards in your hand. If you add new cards to your hand, you may not take so many as to push you over the hand limit. You must stop at six.

Once again, there are certain Special cards that let you violate this rule. For example, the ability of *Draw Four Cards* lets you draw four cards from the deck, no matter how many you have in your hand already. Again, you can *stay* over the hand limit without using any special abilities. The hand limit says that you can't *acquire* any new cards when you have six or more already.

Various rules and abilities allow you to draw cards from the deck, or discard them to the discard pile. If you need to draw cards and there are none left, reshuffle the discard pile to form a new deck, and draw from there. This can happen more

than once in a game. (It is certain to happen at least once. See the section on ending the game.)

## THE CARDS

The deck contains two types of cards, Common and Special. The Common cards are one of four basic types: Grow or Clone, Move, Attack, and Build. There are ten cards of each type (numbered 1-10), and an additional 4 Wild cards for each type (each 11).

There are thirty Special cards, each with a value ranging from zero to 21, and each has an unusual ability outside those of the Common cards.

The abilities of all these cards are described in detail later on. For now, know that you can use card abilities two ways: by playing a card from your hand, or by having a pyramid on the board use the ability of the card it's sitting on. When you play a card from your hand, it's discarded. But you can use a card on the board turn after turn after turn... as long as you have a pyramid on it.

In fact, it's more accurate to say that a *pyramid* uses a card ability. When you play a card from your hand, indicate the pyramid that's using the ability of that card. When you use a card on the board, indicate which of the pyramids on the card is using that ability.

## SETUP

Everyone gets a stash of fifteen pyramids. Shuffle the deck and lay out nine cards in a three-by-three grid. Then deal three cards to each player. Leave the rest of the deck face-down, within everyone's reach, and make space for a discard pile as well. Now decide who will go first. Roll dice, cut the deck, play rock-scissors-paper, play Fluxx -- whatever is your tradition.

## PLAYING

On your turn, you have eight options. You can do exactly one of them.

- Place a small pyramid on any card territory, standing up. You can only do this if you have no pyramids at all on the board. *This will usually be your first move, but it may happen later in the game if all your pyramids are killed. Note: the population limit applies here, so you can't put the pyramid on a card that already has three or more pyramids on it.*
- Select a pyramid to use the ability of a card played from your hand. *You play the card and pick a pyramid to use it. The card is then discarded.*
- Select a pyramid to use the ability of the card it occupies. *Just pick a pyramid and say that it's using the card it's sitting on.*

- Reorient any or all of your pyramids. *This is the only option that lets you affect all your pyramids in play, instead of picking just one of them. You can orient each pyramid however you like -- standing, or pointing in any of the four directions.*
- Draw up to three cards. *Remember, you can only have six cards in your hand, so if you already have four, you can only draw two.*
- Discard your entire hand. *...but you can't draw new cards on the same turn.*
- Pass, and do nothing. *Occasionally this is useful.*
- Declare the final round of the game. You can only do this if the deck has been used up and reshuffled. Once someone declares the final round, everyone gets one more turn. *This means whoever declares the final round gets the very last turn. After that, the game is over; count up the score and see who won.*



*Remember that you can only use one option per turn. If you decide to draw cards, you can't play a card on the same turn. If you discard, you can't also draw. If you declare the final round of the game, you can't do anything else on that turn.*

## SCORING AND WINNING

The goal is to have the highest score at the end of the game. You score points for each card on the board that your pyramids occupy by yourself. If two players have pyramids on the same card, *neither* gets points for it. You do not get any points for cards in your hand.

The value of a card is its number. Numbered Common cards score their own number, from one to ten. Any Wild card scores eleven. A Special card scores its number, from zero to twenty-one.

The game ends after someone declares the final round (see the Turn Options section above). Nobody can declare the final round until the deck has been used up and reshuffled, so there's a certain minimum length to a Zarcana game. However, there's no maximum length; if nobody decides to end the game, it keeps going. The deck could be reshuffled a second time, or even more. *If, at the end of a game, two or more players are tied, those players share the win. Alternatively, if you can't bare the thought of a tie in Zarcana, try this optional rule: of the tied players, whoever solely occupies the highest ranked card (usually a Special card) wins the game.*

Naturally, you will want to end the game as soon as you are sitting on more points than anyone else. But remember: once you declare the last round, everyone gets one more turn. They will probably spend those turns trying to pull ahead of you -- or knock you down. Can you hold onto your lead?

## CARD ABILITIES

In these descriptions, "this pyramid" refers to the pyramid that is actually using the ability. "This space" is the space that the pyramid occupies. The "target space" is the space that the pyramid is pointing at. If the pyramid is lying down, this is the adjacent space that it points at. If the pyramid is standing up, the "target space" is the same as "this space"; a standing pyramid points at its *own* space.

### Legend:



This card may only be used by a pyramid which is standing up.



This card may only be used by a pyramid which is lying down.



This card may be used by a pyramid of any orientation.



This card may only be used by a pyramid on a card territory, not in the wasteland.



This card may be used by a pyramid in the wasteland or on a card territory.



The population limit of three pyramids per space must be obeyed while using this card.



The population limit may be ignored while using this card.



The hand limit of six cards must be obeyed while using this card.



The hand limit may be ignored while using this card.



This card does not need to be used by any particular pyramid. It may be played by any pyramid, or played straight from your hand if you have no pyramids on the board.

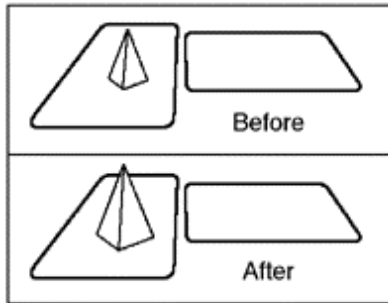


The requirements of this card vary; they are the requirements of whichever is being copied.

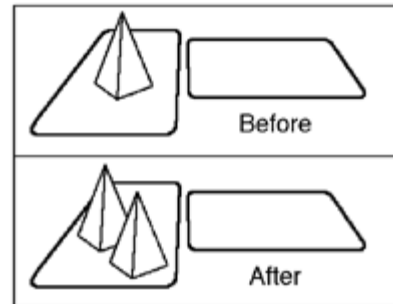
## BASIC TYPE CARD ABILITIES

### Grow or Clone

This pyramid may either grow or clone. To grow, replace this pyramid with a pyramid one size larger. To clone, place another pyramid of the same size or smaller in this space.



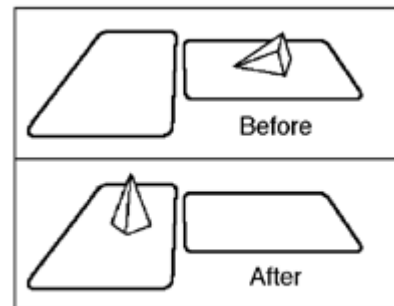
Using Cups to Grow



Using Cups to Duplicate

### Move

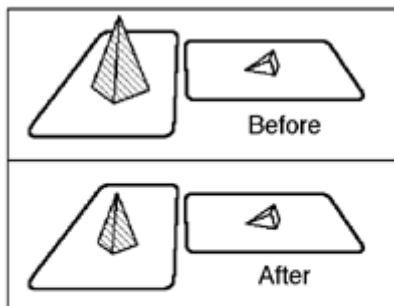
Move this pyramid into the target space, and place it standing up. *A pyramid must be lying down to move. It moves into the space it's pointing at, and arrives standing up. If you want to move it again, you'll first have to take a turn to reorient pyramid.*



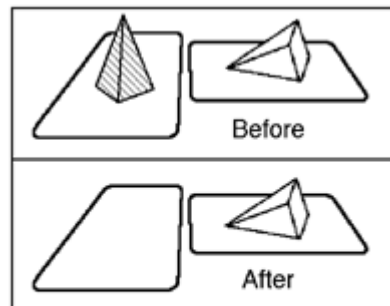
Using Wands to Move

## Attack

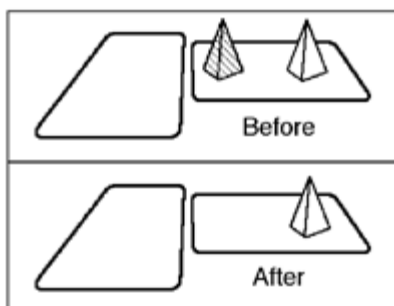
This pyramid attacks any pyramid in the target space. (A pyramid may not attack itself, but it may attack other pyramids of the same color.) If the attacking pyramid is smaller than the target, the target is reduced one size. If the attacker is the same size or larger, the target is destroyed. If there are no pyramids in the target space, the top card in the space is removed and discarded. *You cannot choose whether to attack pyramids or territories. If there are pyramids in the target space, you can decide to attack any of them, but if there are none, you must destroy the card.* Remember, a standing pyramid points at its own space, so it can attack other pyramids on the same card as itself. A pyramid standing alone cannot use Attack cards at all, because a pyramid cannot attack itself and cannot destroy the territory it occupies.



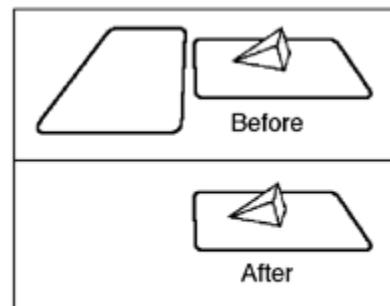
Using Swords to Reduce a Minion



Using Swords to Destroy a Minion



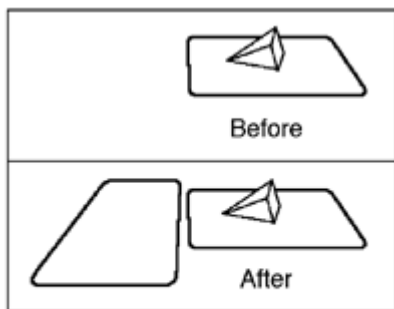
Using Swords in Occupied Territory



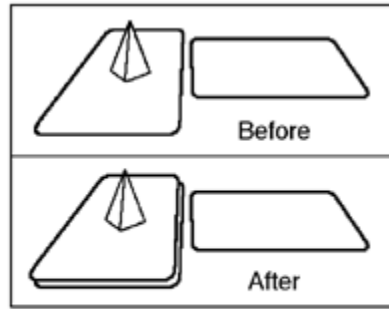
Using Swords to Destroy Territory

## Build

This pyramid builds new territory in the target space. Draw a card from the deck and place it on the target space. If any other player has pyramids in the target space, you may not use this card. However, if the target space contains only your pyramids, they are unaffected and the new card goes underneath them. *You can build territory in wasteland spaces, extending the board; or you can build territory on top of existing cards, stacking the cards higher. Only the top card in a space ever counts for anything. An upright pyramid can build territory under itself, but only if it's already on a card. Remember, a pyramid in the wasteland can't use Build cards at all.*



Using Pentacles to Create Territory



Using Pentacles to Change Territory

## Grow or Clone (Wild), Move (Wild), Attack (Wild), or Build (Wild)

If this card is played from your hand, it may be played as if it had any of the four Common card abilities. On the board, this card has only its own ability, as described above.



## STRATEGIES

Spend your first few turns growing and cloning (unless you see a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity). If you put your initial piece on a *Grow or Clone*, you have an advantage, since you can use the *Grow or Clone* ability over and over. Otherwise, you'll be limited to playing *Grow and Clone* cards from your hand.

You might want to draw cards early on, as well. You can hold up to six, and you start with only three.

You want to occupy more cards. This means you have to clone new pyramids and send them out, while still leaving pyramids on your starting cards. Don't abandon a valuable card.

Since you can only take one turn option on your turn, it may take several turns to accomplish something. For example, moving a pyramid to attack may require you to reorient, move one space, reorient again, and then attack.

But by the same token, turns are very short. Once you're familiar with the game, you can plan a couple of turns in advance, and the game zips right along.

To mobilize your forces as quickly as possible, grow large pyramids, then clone them, and then reorient all your pyramids at once. It's inefficient to take a reorientation turn every time you get a new piece on the board.

A fine defensive strategy is to use *Build* cards to build a peninsula on your side of the board, which nobody else can easily reach. But watch out for *Transport Territory*, *Move Twice*, *Create Pyramid in Wasteland*, and *Teleport*.

It is possible to share a card with another player, but it can be an uneasy truce. If both pieces are standing, either can attack the other. And neither of you can score points for the card when the game ends... unless one player is somehow removed from the card. Beware the last-minute betrayal.

Watch for the unexpected. Since the deck will be reshuffled at least once, every card should turn up. If one doesn't appear, someone might be hoarding it.

Initiative is critical. If two players have pyramids pointing at the same valuable card, whoever moves in first will probably be destroyed. But if either player is distracted for a turn, or lacks an *Attack* card, the other player may be able to occupy and defend the target.

One pyramid on a card can be destroyed. If you have two, you can respond to any attack by cloning... as long as you are sitting on a *Grow or Clone*, or you have a *Grow or Clone* left in your hand. Beware of *Attack Twice*.

In any multi-player game, there is diplomacy. If two players get into a tussle, the others may spread unchecked over the board. A non-aggression pact can keep you in the running. On the other hand, if you get too far ahead, you may face a devastating cooperative attack.

If someone points pyramids at you, it may not be a prelude to an attack. She might be defending herself, preventing you from gaining the initiative in pointing at her. On the other hand, it might be a prelude to an attack...

### **HIGHLIGHTS TO REMEMBER**

A pyramid can be standing up, or lying down pointing in any of the four cardinal directions.

You can only do one action on your turn. Most actions involve just one pyramid, but reorienting multiple pyramids is an exception.

There is a population limit of three pyramids per space, unless some card ability says otherwise.

There is a hand limit of six cards in each player's hand, unless some card ability says otherwise.

A pyramid can only inhabit a wasteland space if it is next to at least one card.

A pyramid cannot use an *Attack* card to destroy the territory it occupies. Only *Destroy Occupied Territory* can do this.

You can only declare the end of the game after the deck has been used up and reshuffled at least once.