

NEXUS

Pirates

2 Players
15 Minutes
Ages 14+

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Overview

NEXUS is a battle-of-wits card game for 2 players where every card you play can be turned against you.

Welcome to the Pirate Life

The players have gathered after a successful raid to tell tall tales and divvy up the loot.

Each player will add gold, jewels and other treasures to the nexus, but that pile of treasure must follow the Pirate Code.

The Pirate Code has its own special first-come-last-served logic regarding who owns each bit of treasure.

Pirate treasure is chaotic by nature – the longer it sits on the table while pirates spin their tales, the harder it is to tell who owns it.

Pirate Terms

To “YARRR” is to reveal ill-gotten goods claimed during the recent raid, or to explain how you kept the raid going with your pirate vessel. The pirate code allow for yarring no matter how convoluted the tale of this raid already is.

To “Parley” is to allow the divvying up of treasure to proceed while looking for one’s next opportunity to yarr.

Objective

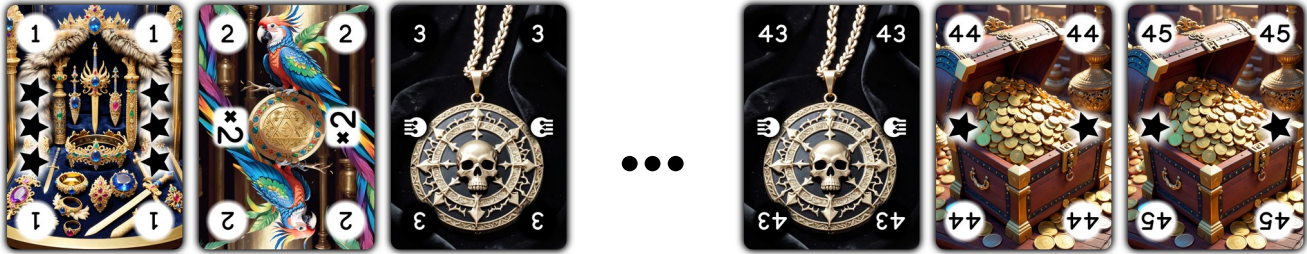
Collect cards with stars into your score zone and force your opponent to take cards with skulls into their score zone.



Components

The NEXUS–Pirates deck consists of 54 cards.

45 of the cards are **Numbered** cards, numbered 1 through 45:



The 9 cards without numbers are **Ship** cards:



Parts of a Card

A card's **number** is printed in each corner.

A card's number tells it whose **Parade** it will join.

Ship cards use different rules to determine whose **Parade** they will join.

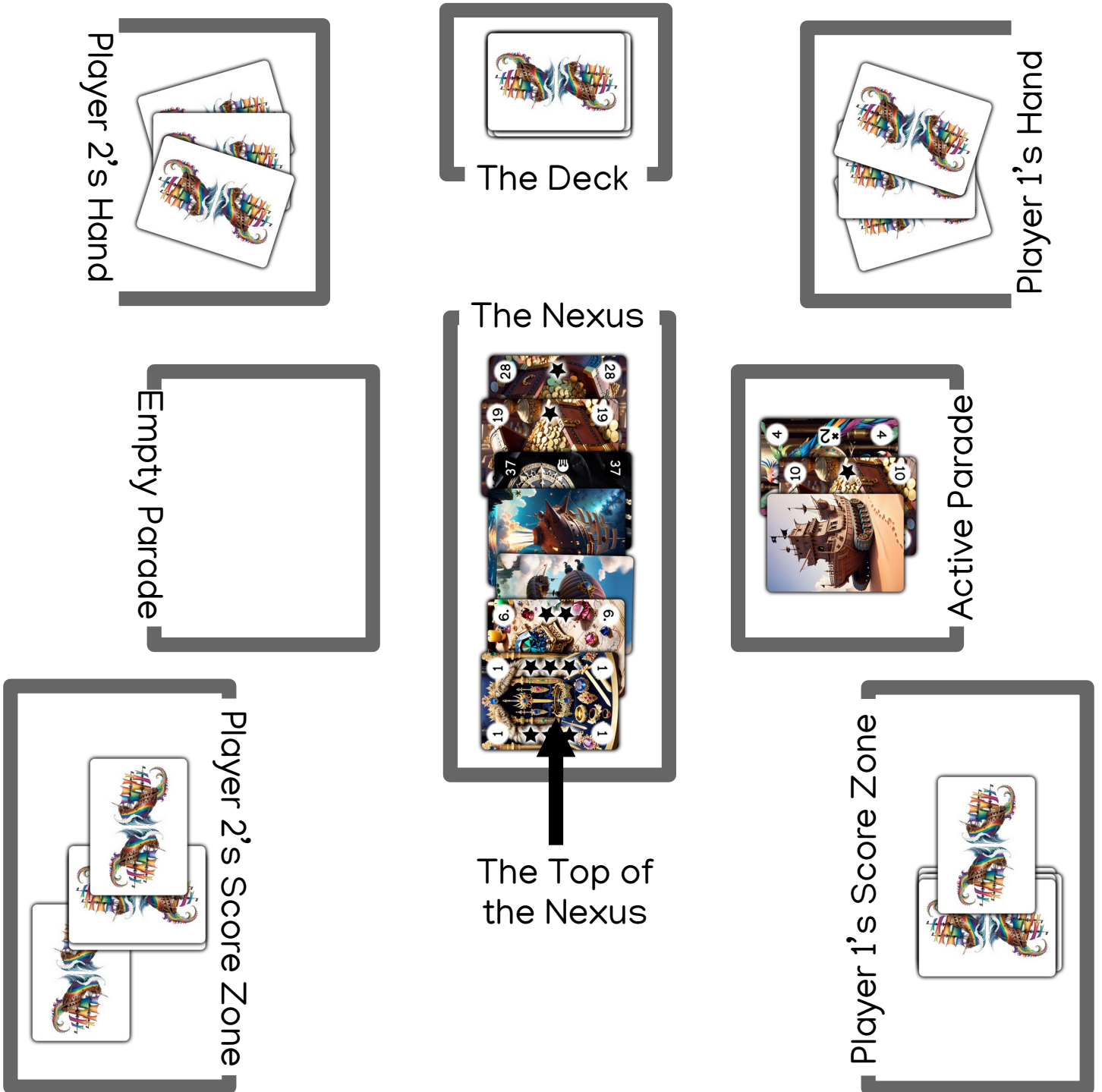


A card's **value** is printed along each of its long sides. (This card has a value of two stars)

A card's value determines how many points it's worth if that card makes it into your score zone.

Zones

During a game of NEXUS, the cards move between 5 zones: Deck, Hands, Nexus, Parades, and Score Zones.



Setup

1. Shuffle all 54 cards together.
2. Deal out 7 cards in a face-up row in the middle of the play area to start the Nexus.
3. Randomly determine who will be player 1 and who will be player 2.
4. Deal 1 card to begin player 2's Parade. (Player 2 starts with the Active Parade. Player 1's Parade zone starts the game empty.)
5. Deal 3 cards to each player to start their Hands.
6. The remaining 40 cards start in the Deck.
7. Player 1 takes the first turn.

Turn Structure

On each player's turn, they must choose one of the following two options:

Parley

To Parley, do both of the following:

- Resolve the top card of the Nexus according to the Pirate Code.
- Draw a card.

Both parts of this action are mandatory.

Parleying replenishes your options for future turns by increasing the number of cards in your Hand, but you must accept what the top card of the Nexus chooses to do when it resolves.

YARRR!

To YARRR, do the following:

- Play a card from your Hand to the Nexus.

Any card can be played to the Nexus, and it can be played to the top of the Nexus or inserted at any point in the Nexus.

If you don't have any cards in your Hand, you won't be able to YARRR and you'll have to Parley instead.

Yarring lets you change what's happening in the nexus, but it depletes your hand, leaving you with fewer options for future turns.

When you yarr, you can insert the card you play at any point in the nexus, but usually you'll want to put it at the top of the nexus, because that will have the most direct effect on the game.

The Pirate Code

Only the top card of the Nexus can resolve.

When a card resolves, it doesn't care who played that card originally or who is taking the Parley action now to make it resolve; it just cares about its own number compared to the number of the top card of the Active Parade.

The resolving card joins the Active Parade if it can:

- A higher Numbered card can follow a lower Numbered card.
- A Ship can follow any numbered card.
- Any Numbered card can follow a Ship card.

- A lower Numbered card cannot follow a higher Numbered card.
- A Ship cannot follow another Ship.

If a resolving card cannot join the Active Parade, then it will start a new Parade for the player whose Parade is empty. The old Parade is moved to its player's Score Zone.

In this way, there is always exactly 1 Active Parade.

Having the Active Parade is like being on offense – that player has the opportunity to score more cards.

Having an Empty Parade is like being on defense – that player tries to prevent their opponent from scoring more cards and tries to end the current Parade so that they can start a new Parade and be on offense.

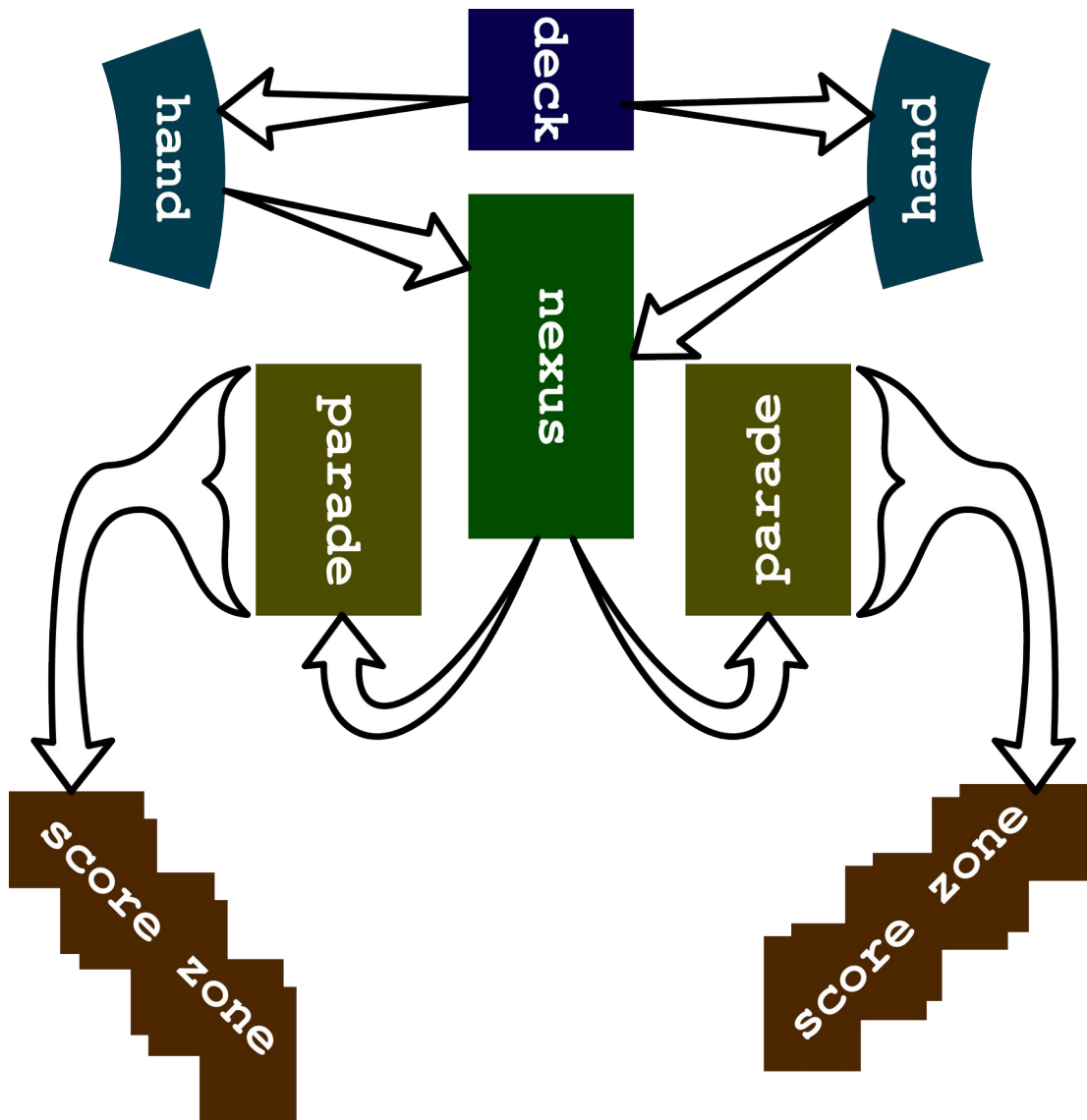
The Pirate Code only applies to how a resolving card joins a Parade. The cards in the Nexus can be in any order.

Card Life Cycle

During a game of NEXUS, track what has happened to each card by keeping those cards in the appropriate zone.

With the exception of refilling the Nexus and initial setup, cards can only move between zones in order:

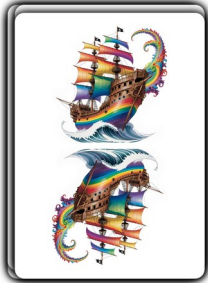
Deck to Hand to Nexus to Parade to Score Zone



Cards may not skip zones or move out of order. For example, players can never play cards from their Hands directly to their Parades.

Zone Specific Rules

The Deck



Keep the **Deck** within reach of both players.

The Deck serves as the timer for a game of NEXUS; when the Deck is empty the game is over. The Deck is face-down, but the number of cards remaining in the Deck is open information.

The exact count of cards remaining in the Deck will become important near the end of the game. To make that count easier, the bottom 5 cards of the Deck may be spread out.

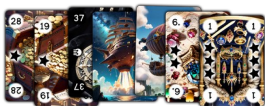
A Hand



Players keep their **Hands** hidden from each other, but the number of cards in each player's Hand is open information.

There is no Hand size limit.

The Nexus



The **Nexus** is a row of cards in the center of the play area.

All the cards in the Nexus are face-up.

The Nexus is the zone where players play cards to interact with the cards their opponent plays. Keep the cards in the Nexus overlapped so that it is clear which card is at the top of the Nexus.

If the Nexus ever gets down to 2 cards, immediately deal 2 cards to the bottom of the Nexus from the Deck. This refilling action could run out the Deck, causing the end of the game.

Zone Specific Rules (continued)

A Parade



A **Parade** is a sequence of cards belonging to one player.

Each player has their own Parade zone on their side of the play area, but there can only be one Active Parade at a time. Whoever has the Active Parade, their opponent's Parade will be empty. Keep the cards in the Active Parade face-up and overlapped so that it's clear which card was added to that Parade last.

Even though each Parade belongs to one specific player, the cards in that Parade do not score points for that player until that Parade is sent to their Score Zone.

A Score Zone



Each player should keep their **Score Zone** as a collection of face-down completed Parades off to the side.

Make sure that each time a Parade is moved to a score zone, it is kept distinct from the other Parades in that score zone. This is important because any multipliers in that Parade will only affect the scoring of the cards in that same Parade.

Scoring

The game ends when the Deck runs out.

This usually happens when a player chooses to Parley for their turn. The other part of Parleying is to resolve the top card of the Nexus, and that should be done completely before ending the game.

When the game ends, cards remaining in players' Hands, in the Nexus, or in the Active Parade are not scored.



Each star in a Score Zone scores 1 point for that player.



Each skull in a Score Zone scores -1 points for that player.



These cards double the value of all stars and skulls in the same Parade.



Ship cards do not contribute any points.

Scoring Examples



3 + 1 + 0 + 2
This Parade is worth 6 points.



-1 + 1 + -1
This Parade is worth negative 1 points.



0 + -1 + 0 + 1 + 0
This Parade is worth 0 points.



(0 + 0 + 0 + -1) × 2
This Parade is worth negative 2 points.

Scoring Examples (continued)



$(3 + 2 + 0) \times 2$
This Parade is worth 10 points.



$(0 + 2 + 0) \times 2 \times 2$
This Parade is worth 8 points.



$(0 + 0 + 0 + 0) \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$
This Parade is worth 0 points.



$(3 + 2 + 2 + 0 + 0) \times 2$
This Parade is worth 14 points.

Parley Example

To understand why a player might want to YARRR, we need to know what would happen if everybody just Parleyed. In this example Ahab (player 1) and Bill (player 2) have just started a game.



← Ahab's Hand



← The Nexus



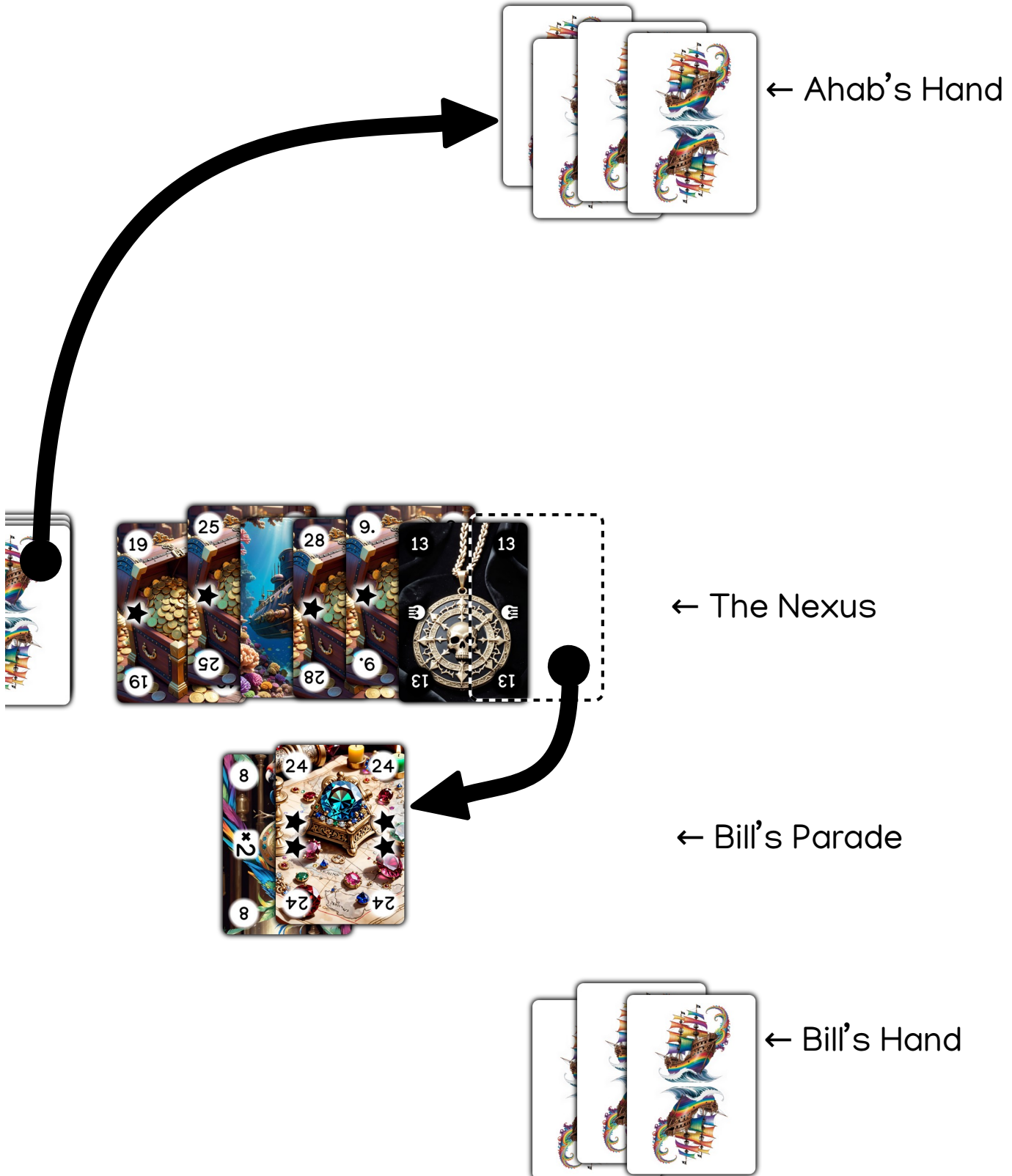
← Bill's Parade



← Bill's Hand

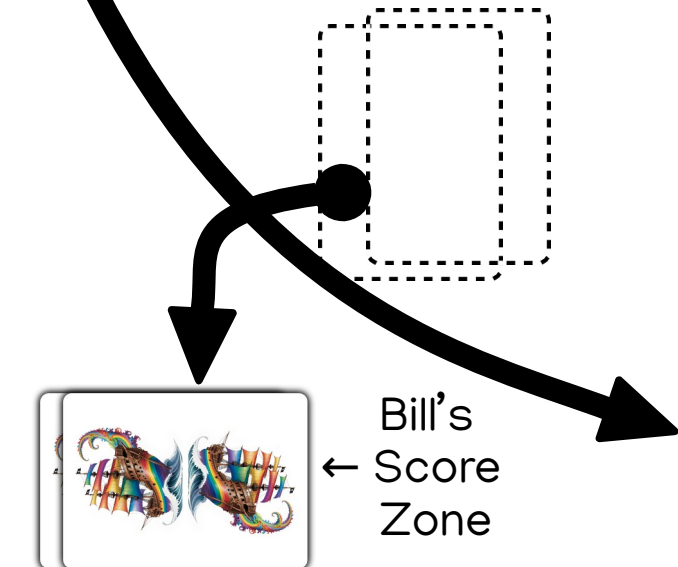
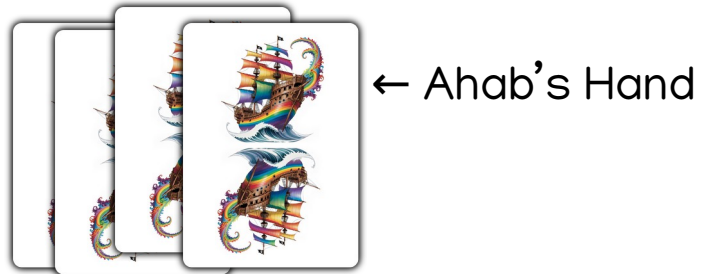
Parley Example

Ahab takes the first turn and decides to Parley. The 24 card on top of the Nexus resolves. 24 is greater than 8, so the 24 card continues Bill's Parade. Ahab also draws a card for Parleying.



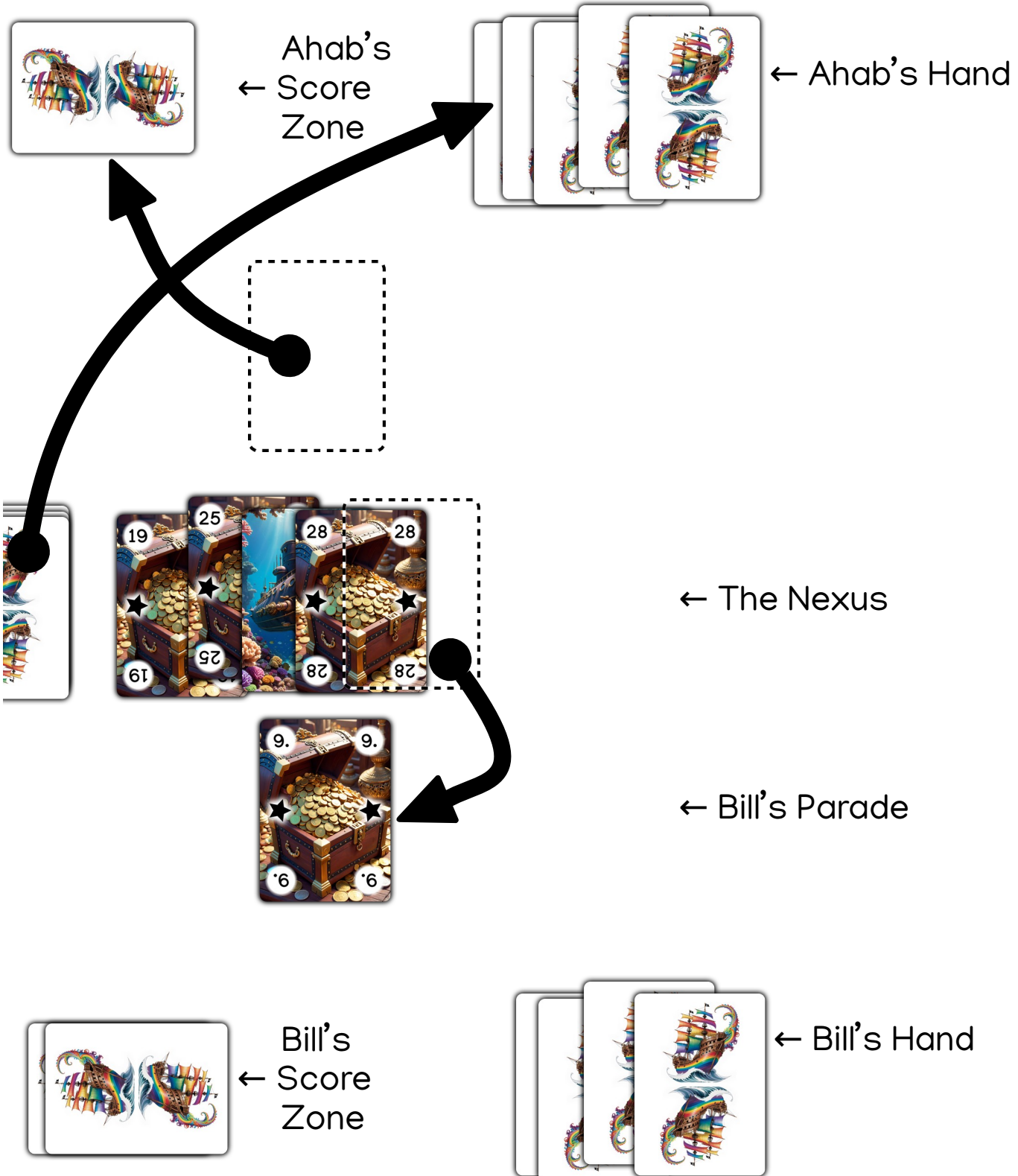
Parley Example

Bill takes his turn and also decides to Parley. The 13 card on top of the Nexus resolves. 13 is less than 24, so the 13 card starts a new Parade for Ahab. The 8 and 24 go to Bill's Score Zone. Bill also draws a card for Parleying.



Parley Example

Ahab takes his next turn and decides to Parley. The 9 card on top of the Nexus resolves. 9 is less than 13, so the 9 card starts a new Parade for Bill. The 13 goes to Ahab's Score Zone. Ahab also draws a card for Parleying.



Parley Example

Bill takes his next turn and decides to Parley. The 28 card on top of the Nexus resolves. 28 is greater than 9, so the 28 card continues Bill's Parade. Bill also draws a card for Parleying.



Ahab's
← Score
Zone



← Ahab's Hand



← The Nexus



← Bill's Parade



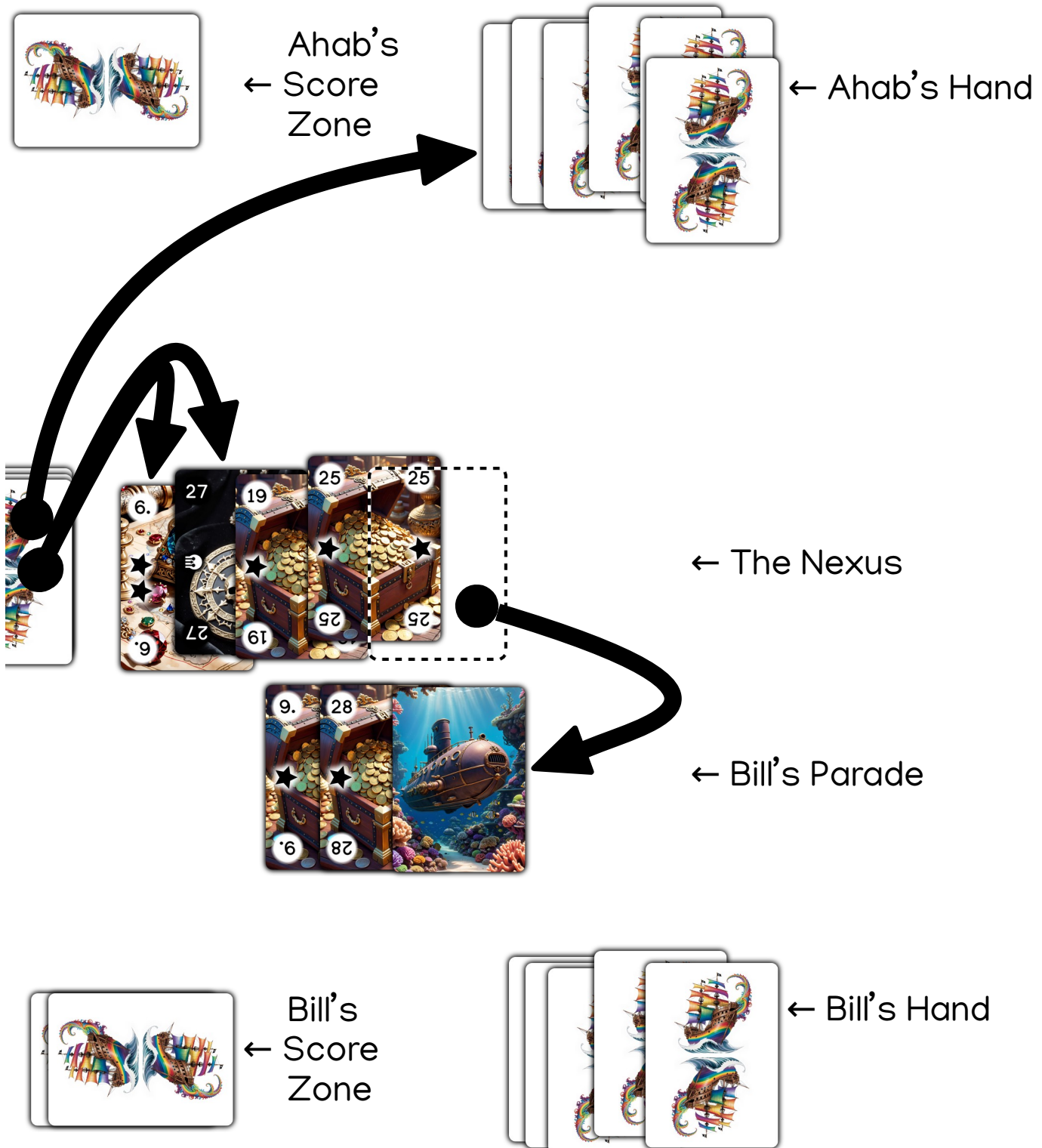
Bill's
← Score
Zone



← Bill's Hand

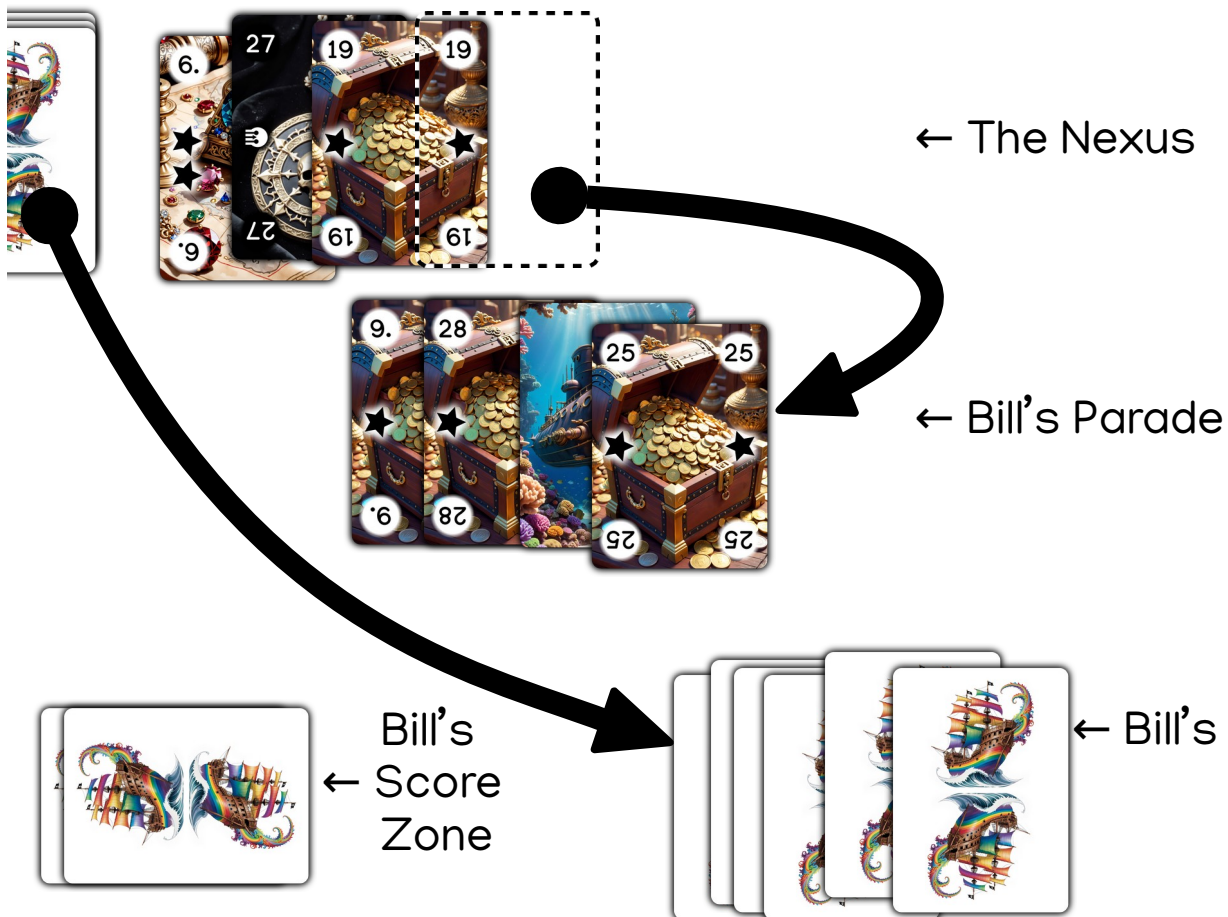
Parley Example

Ahab takes his next turn and decides to Parley. The Ship card on top of the Nexus resolves. A Ship can follow any number, so the Ship card continues Bill's Parade. The Nexus has only 2 cards left so Ahab refills 2 cards from the deck to the bottom of the Nexus. Ahab also draws a card for Parleying.



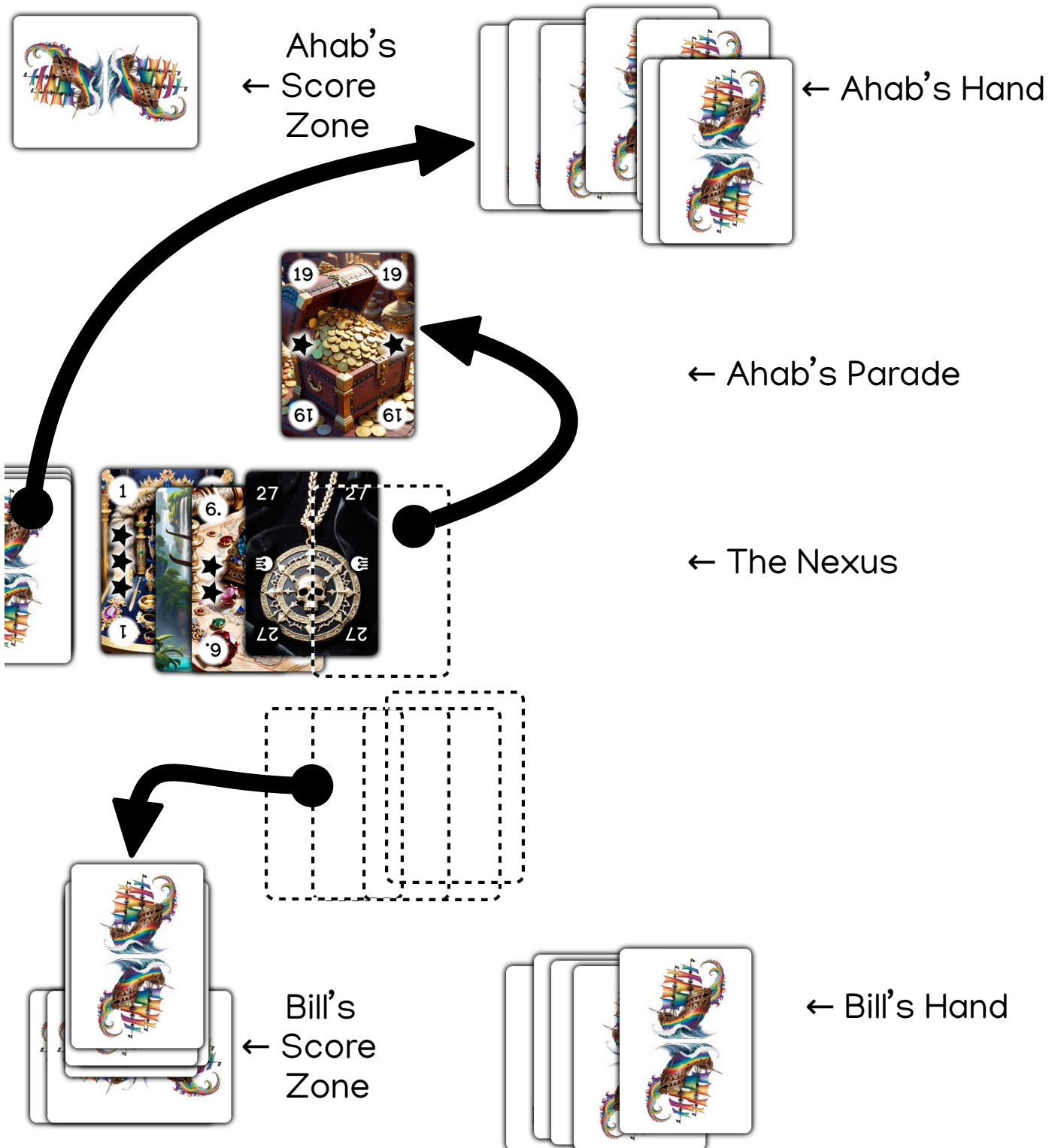
Parley Example

Bill takes his next turn and decides to Parley. The 25 card on top of the Nexus resolves. Any number can follow a Ship, so the 25 card continues Bill's Parade. Bill also draws a card for Parleying.



Parley Example

Ahab takes his next turn and decides to Parley. The 19 card on top of the Nexus resolves. 19 is less than 25, so the 19 card starts a new Parade for Ahab. Bill's Parade moves to his Score Zone. Ahab refills the Nexus again. Ahab also draws a card for Parleying.



YARRR! Example

This is the same starting setup as the previous example, but this time Ahab looks at the nexus and sees that Bill is about to get a lot of stars while Ahab gets the skulls.



← Ahab's Hand



← The Nexus



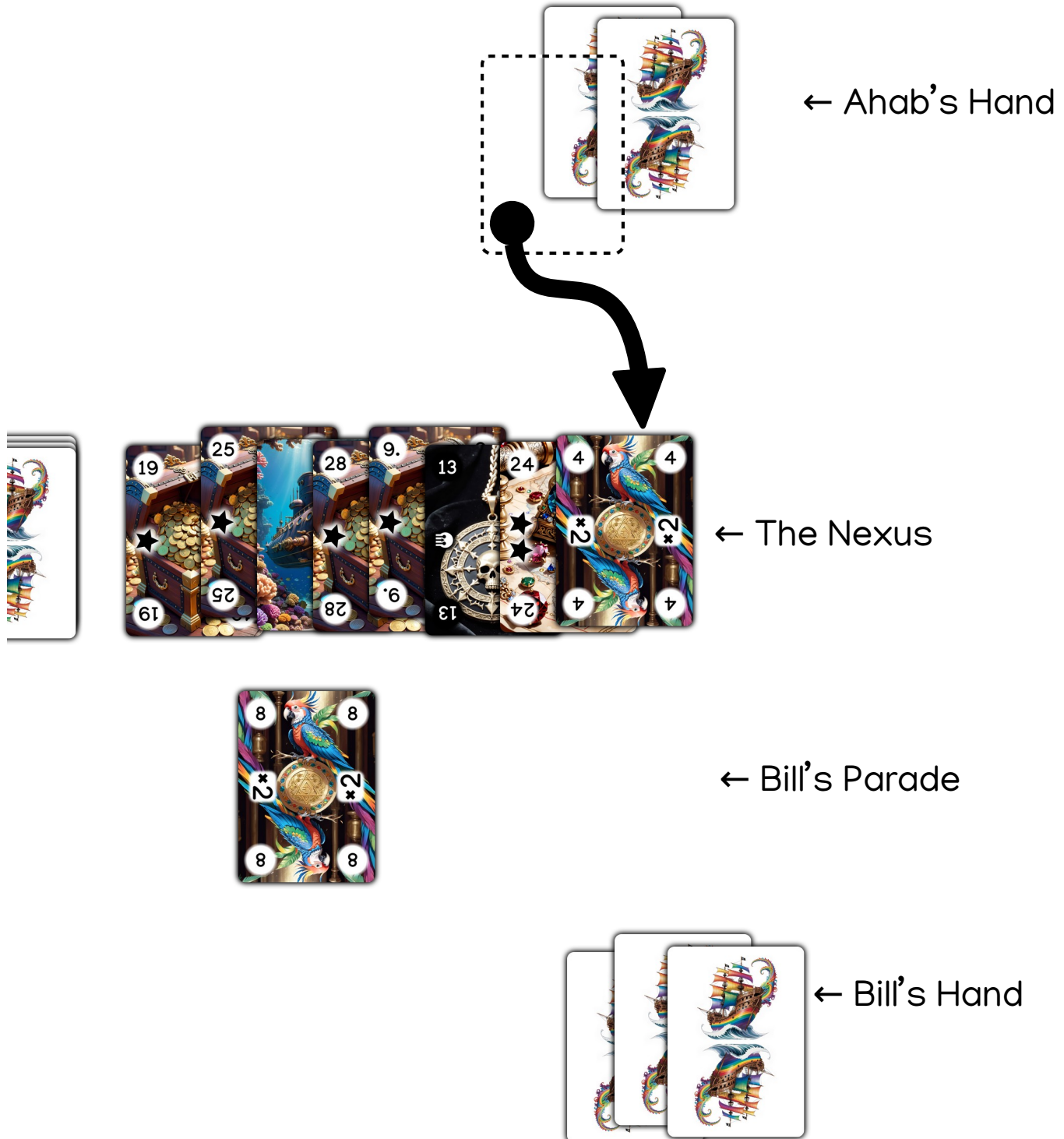
← Bill's Parade



← Bill's Hand

YARRR! Example

This time Ahab chooses to YARRR by playing the 4 card from his Hand to the top of the Nexus. Ahab has fewer cards in his Hand to work with now, but if that 4 resolves all those points that would have gone to Bill will be lined up to come to Ahab instead.



Notes

I forgot whose turn it is!

Count how many cards are in the Nexus:

Odd count of cards → It's player 1's turn

Even count of cards → It's player 2's turn

I think I forgot to draw a card!

Count how many cards are in the Nexus plus both players' Hands. If the count is less than 13, then somebody has missed a card draw. That target number of 13 increases by 2 each time the Nexus has to be refilled from the Deck.

How many cards are left in the Deck?

Near the end of the game, the count of cards remaining in the Deck becomes important. To make that count easier, players may spread out the bottom 5 or so cards of the Deck.

Variant: Double-Ended Nexus

For an even more chaotic game, play with a double-ended Nexus.

In this variant, when a player Parleys they **choose** whether to resolve the top card or bottom card of the Nexus.

The only other rule change for this variant is that if the Nexus needs to be refilled because it got down to just 2 cards, put the refill cards into the middle of the Nexus.

Variant: 2 vs 2

For 4 player game, form 2 teams of 2 players each. Sit across from your teammate to ensure that no team ever gets 2 turns in a row as play proceeds clockwise.

In this variant, there's still just one Deck and one Nexus, but each of the 4 players has their own Hand.

There are still 2 Parade Zones (one for each team), and there can only be one Active Parade at a time.

There are also just 2 Score Zones, one for each team.

Whichever team starts with the Active Parade, one of the players from the other team takes the first turn.

2 vs 2 is a good way to introduce new players to NEXUS by pairing them with a more experienced teammate.

Avomath Games

Other version of Nexus and other games from Avomath Games can be found at

<https://games.avomath.com>

