Preface

In the beginning of this round, firstly we brainstormed a lot. But as everyone knows, freedom is not necessarily always a good thing. It is meaningless without constrains. We can be very easily lost in the ocean of freedom.

Still, we should start with something. So the first few words popped up in our minds were Trees, Co-op, PVP, Asymmetric game play, and Bejeweled!

We liked Bejeweled a lot, because it's simple, extremely fun and addictive. Also, match-3 games are easy to derive variations from the basic mechanics. For example, Candy Crush, Zuma, and Bubbles have same core mechanism, but just with different peripheral gameplays, which make each one feel different and unique. From this point of view, we really like to design a similar but still fun game, however, the obstacle emerges when we took a step further. It's not convenient for player to play a match 3 in a tabletop setup, since it's hard to handle card deck and the process of eliminating pieces by hand. So we moved on for the moment however didn't entirely abandon the concept.

The tree growing idea is interesting. Ideally, the experience should be two players co-op but also compete with each other to reach the highest altitude, just like the twigs do in real life. But we just don't know how to simulate this process on tabletop yet.

So while talking about the tree growing idea, and also looking at the hexagon map we made for the bejeweled variation, we tried to paper-playtest how to grow a tree on hexagon map. Soon, we found it's interesting to connect different shapes together, which were originally intended to simulate twigs.

At this stage, we felt we have to make a complete set of pieces so we can be sure whether it's worth exploring further more.

So here comes our first version of Hexagon:

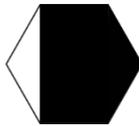## Hexagon

Number of Players
2 players.

The Pack
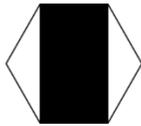Standard pieces:

| x3 | x5 | x6 | x6 | x8 |

x6

The Deal
Any player shuffles the pack deals 3 cards, one at a time to each player.

For each turn, player can draw one card from the deck.

Object of the Game
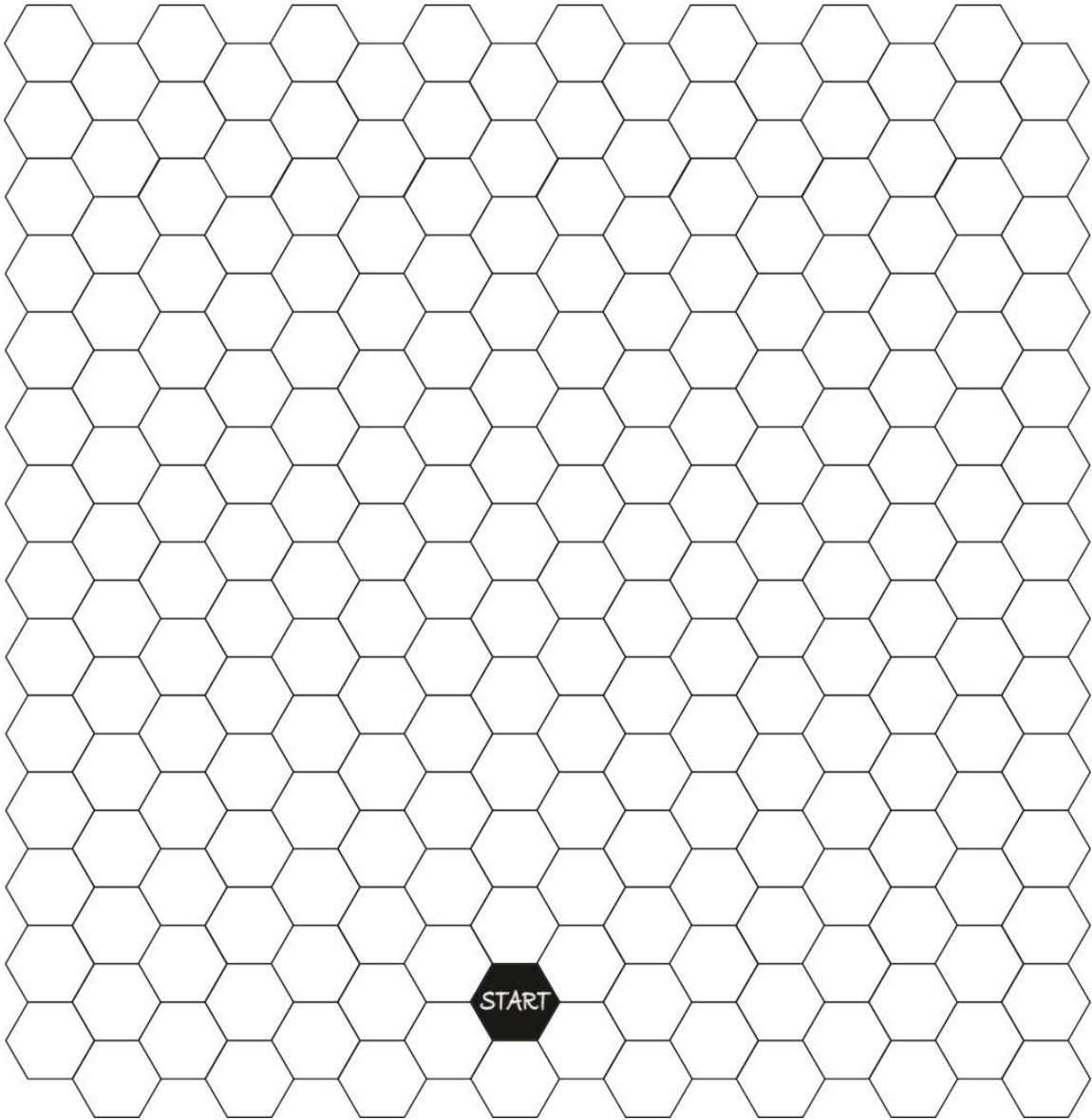None for now.

The Task

None for now.

The Play

1. Each player will be dealt with 3 cards to start with.
2. Each round, player can draw 1 card, and keep maximum 5 cards in hand when turn ends.

3. Player can connect the pieces on the map as long as the shadowed side touched together.

The Map

Everyone starts from the Start point.

START

Playtest No. 1

Date: March 23 2014

Playtesters: Wei Shao, Haley Yang

What Changed: None.

What Worked?

The neighboring mechanics is really working. It's quite dramatic to redirect or continue from your opponent's path, often leads to an unintended surprise.

What Needs Improvement?

Now the game needs a real goal.

Playtest No. 2

Date: March 23 2014

Playtesters: Wei Shao, Haley Yang

What Changed:

Object of the Game
The first one achieves the task wins.

The Task

- Connect A-B
- Connect A-C
- Connect A-D
- Connect B-C
- Connect B-D
- Connect C-D

The Play

1. Player draws one task card, and keeps it only to yourself.
2. Then, each player will be dealt with 3 cards to start with.
3. Each round, player can draw 1 card, and keep maximum 5 cards in hand when turn ends.
4. Player can connect the pieces on the map as long as the shadowed side touched together.
5. Achieve your task while hinder your opponent.

The Map
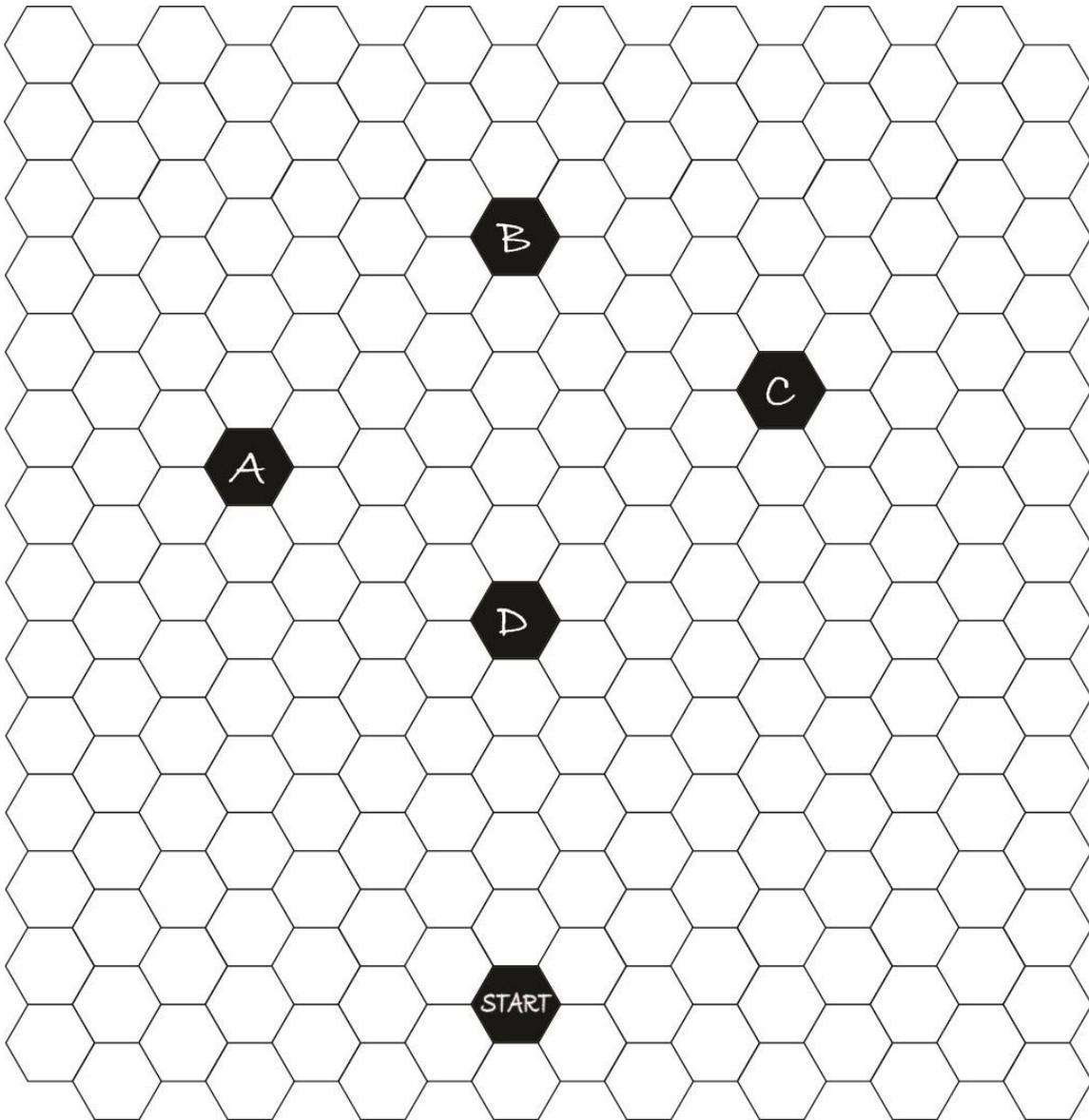
What Worked?

The asymmetric gameplay is interesting. Since the player don't know opponent's goal, there will be a very subtle and delicate situation in the beginning. Often player wants to probe opponent's true attention

while planning own strategy. So at this stage, mostly player will co-op for a while, but always they are on guard with each other.

Also, we intentionally set all the destinations at the roughly same direction, so in the beginning, players can't really tell opponents intention, but later on, the game will be led to completely pvp mode. It's an interesting stage transition.

Putting destinations around corners seems a more reasonable choice for most of games. But we really want players to tangle with each other, so putting goals in a roughly same place is really a right choice for this game, which has no doubt increases the subtlety, and makes the game more dramatic.
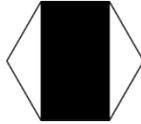
What Needs Improvement?

Balancing is really an issue right now.

1. **The distance of A, B, C, D.**

   We need to find a proper distance between each point, so we won't end this game too easily or gain too much advantages for certain tasks.

2. **The numbers of each pattern.**

   To increase the difficulty and also to facilitate player interactions, we gives less of

   and , but more of .

   But the problem is players are often busy sabotaging opponent which makes the game almost impossible to continue.

What Changed:

The Map

We slightly changed the position of A, B, C, D.

The Pack

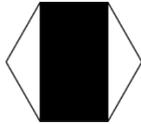| x4	x5	x6	x10	x6

x8

What Worked?

The distance between ABCD seems proper for now. There's no particular advantage for any combinations.

The amount of card for each pattern seems ok. It still could be better, but is acceptable for now.

What Needs Improvement?

The gameplay seems solid but a little bit dry. Time to introduce wild card.

Playtest No. 4

Date: March 23 2014

Playtesters: Wei Shao, Haley Yang

What Changed:

Special cards:

- Draw 2 cards   x3
- Remove 1 card from the map   x3
- Play 2 cards in a turn   x4
- Skip your opponent's turn   x3
- Discard a card from your opponent   x4

During a turn, player can use multiply special cards but only one standard card, or player can skip the turn.

What Worked?

The special cards really added more flavor to the game. Wild card is a good to throw out surprises, which serves well in this game.

What Needs Improvement?

Some special cards are not very useful. And the amount of special cards are not balanced. For example, sometimes player gets too many "Draw 2 Cards" but will be almost pointless if they don't get "Play 2 Cards in a Turn".

Also, when one player is very close to the final goal, another player feels nothing he/she can do to stop opponent.

Playtest No. 5

Date: March 24 2014

Playtesters: Wei Shao, Haley Yang

What Changed:

Added a new shape to block opponent.

Also, ABCD are special start points. You can, but only can put your piece on a grid directly connected with A or B or C or D, and no more pieces are allowed to start from there. (This is mostly as a precaution of blocking opponent's move.)

What Worked?

New pattern brings new ways of play. It surely diversified the strategy. Also we give both player a way to counter-attack, even near the end of the game.

What Needs Improvement?

The amount of each pattern needs balance again.

Playtest No. 6

Date: March 25 2014

Playtesters: John Shield, and Game Designer from Schell Games

What Changed:

None.

What Worked?

The game is definitely intriguing. The core mechanics is solid. And the wild cards properly facilitate the gameplay further.

What Needs Improvement?

As we expected, some player commented that why not start from the center and go towards to each corner, which seems a reasonable and also more balanced option, but we think it really breaks the atmosphere we want. But still, since we didn't actually try that solution, we planned to test it next time.

Playtest No. 7

Date: March 25 2014

Playtesters: Emily Chang, Jerry Chen

What Changed:

None.

What Worked?

Player really had great time playing this game!

What Needs Improvement?

Sometimes, if players are really good, the result of the game could be a draw.

The result also could be a lose-lose situation if one player is really focusing on sabotaging another.

Playtest No. 8

Date: March 25 2014

Playtesters: Yan Zhang, John Shield

What Changed:

None.

What Worked?

Player finds the game is simple but really deep. The strategy is much diversified.

What Needs Improvement?

Sometimes, if players are really good, the result of the game could be a draw.

The result also could be a lose-lose situation if one player is really focusing on sabotaging another.

Playtest No. 9

Date: March 25 2014

Playtesters: Wei Shao, Zinc Ning

What Changed:

We experimented some new shapes. And also adjusted the amount of each accordingly.
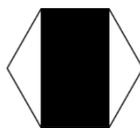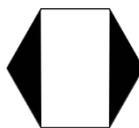
| x3 | x5 | x6 | x10 | x6 |

| x6 | x8 | x3 | x3 |

Player can trade 2 cards in hand from 1 new card from the deck.

What Worked?

New patterns are really interesting to explore. We found this game depends a lot on what kind of patterns we use. Every new pattern may derive new strategy, but may also cause balancing issues.

What Needs Improvement?
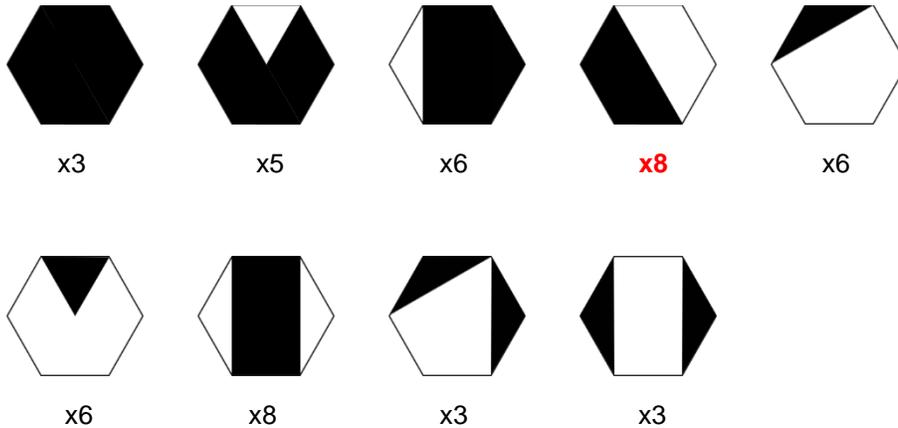
Balance, balance, and balance.

Need a way to solve draw round.

Playtest No. 10

Date: April 10 2014

Playtesters: Wei Shao, Haley Yang

What Changed:

| x3 | x5 | x6 | **x8** | x6 |

| x6 | x8 | x3 | x3 |

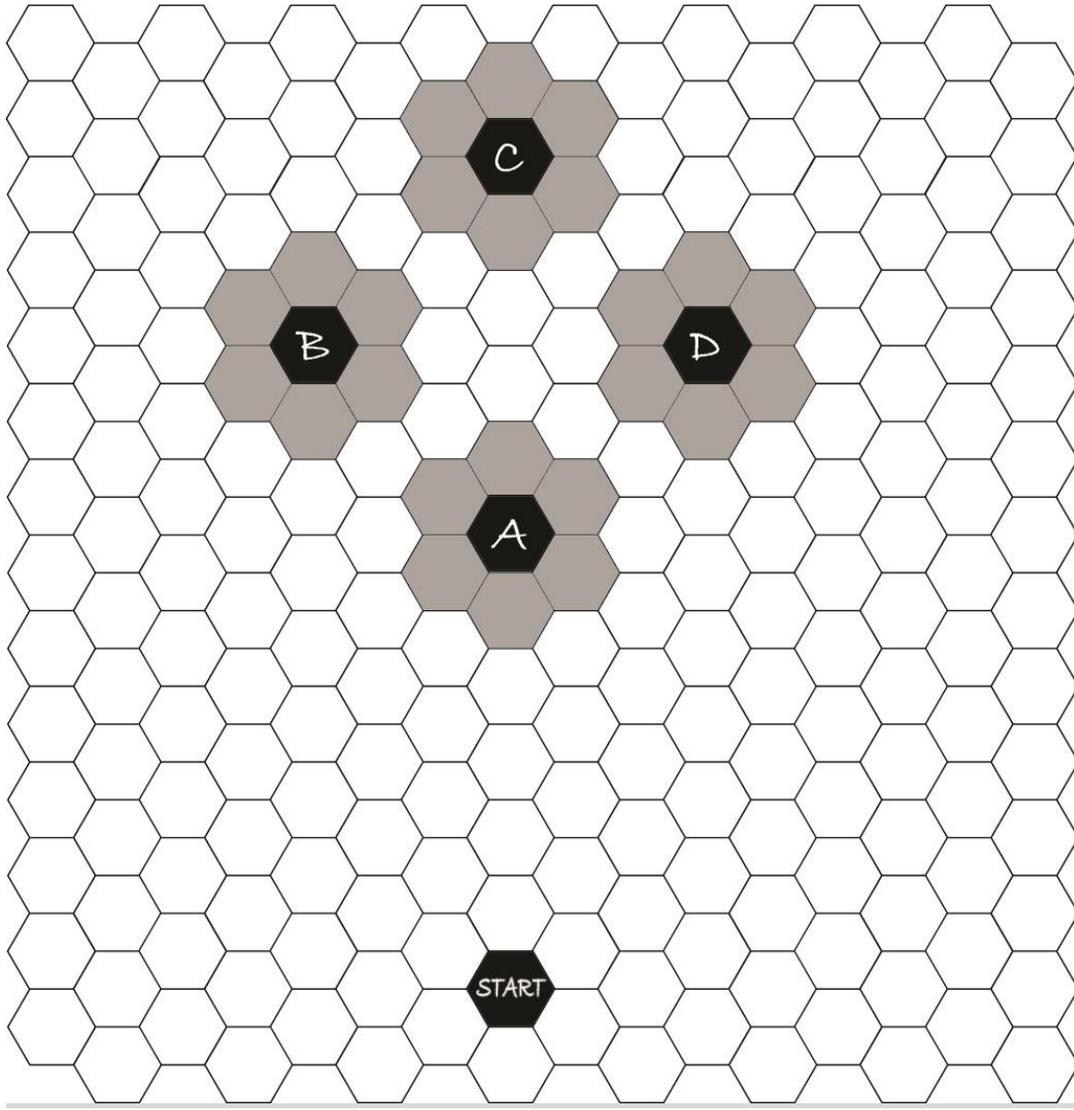Special cards:

- Draw **2** cards   x**4**
- Remove 1 card from the map   x**5**
- Play 2 cards in a turn   x3
- Skip your opponent's turn   x3
- **Take** a card from your opponent x4

Player starts with 5 cards. Draw 1 card each turn. Player can only have maximum 7 cards in hand when turn ends.

If the deck runs out, game ends. The one captures more strategic points wins. If no one captures any points, the one has a longer path wins. If two players has the same length of their road, the game is a draw.

The Map

What Worked?

The balance is pretty good in terms of current scope. The strategy still varies.

The amount of special cards are proper. With them, player is able to initiate surprise strikes, which is fun and intense.

What Needs Improvement?

The game is still possible to reach lose-lose situation. It's better come up with some rules to prevent that.

Number of Players
2 players.

The Pack
Standard pieces:

| x3 | x5 | x6 | x8 | x6 |

| x6 | x8 | x3 | x3 |

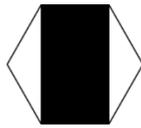Special cards:

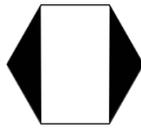- Draw 2 cards   x4
- Remove 1 card from the map   x5
- Play 2 cards in a turn   x3
- Skip your opponent's turn   x3
- Take a card from your opponent   x4

The Deal
Any player shuffles the pack deals 5 cards, one at a time to each player.

For each turn, player can draw one card from the deck.

Object of the Game
The first one achieves the task wins.

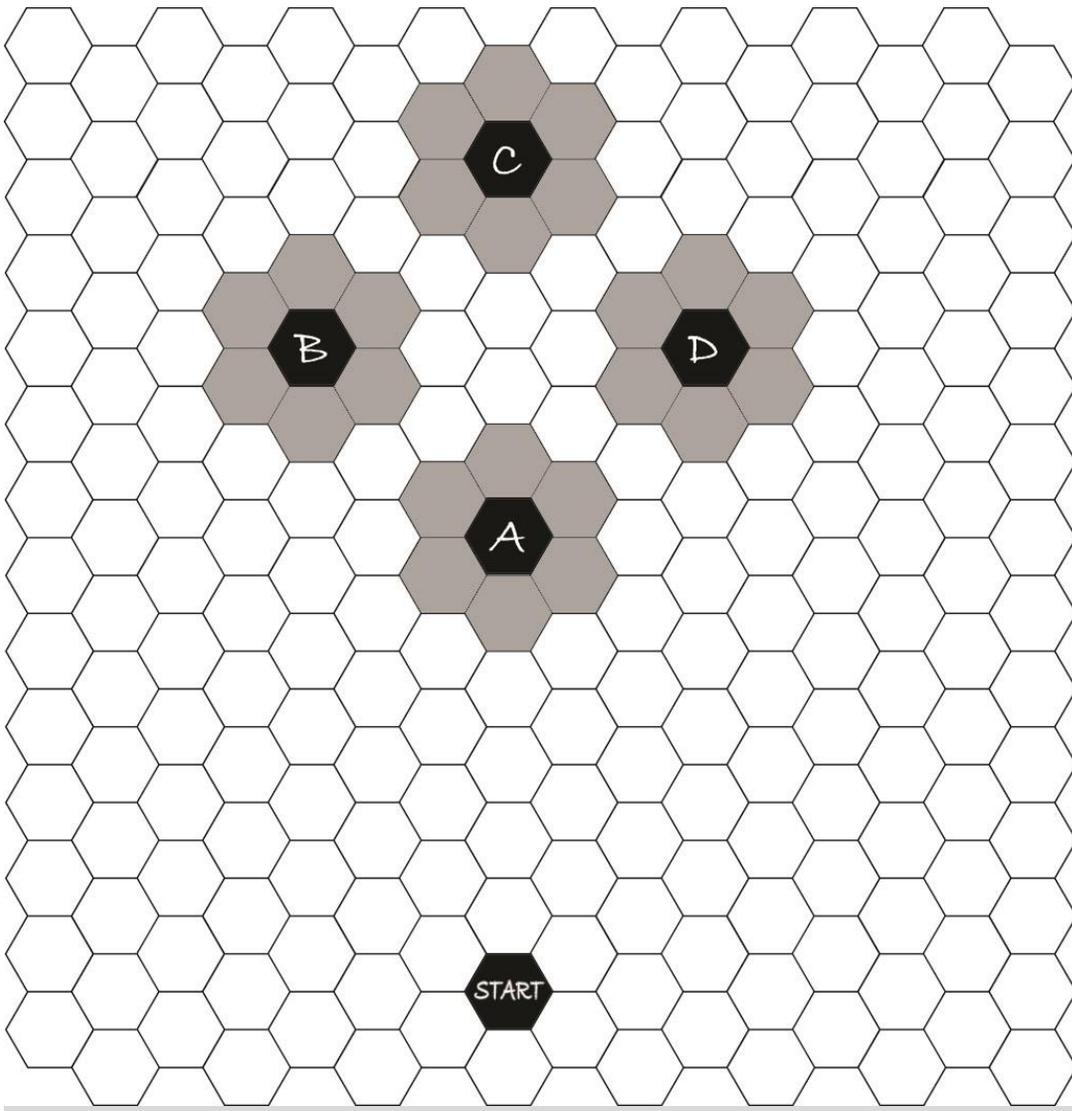If the deck runs out, the one captures more strategic points wins.

If no one captures any points, the one with longer path wins.

Otherwise, game is a draw.

The Task

- Connect A-B
- Connect A-C
- Connect A-D
- Connect B-C
- Connect B-D
- Connect C-D

The Map

The Play

1. Player draws one task card, and keeps it only to yourself.

2. Then, each player will be dealt with 3 cards to start with.
3. Each round, player can draw 1 card, and keep maximum 5 cards in hand when turn ends.
4. During a turn, player can use multiply special cards but only one standard card, or player can skip the turn.
5. Player can connect the pieces on the map as long as the shadowed side touched together.
6. ABCD are special start points. You can, but only can put your piece on a grid directly connected with A or B or C or D, and no more pieces are allowed to start from there. (This is mostly as a precaution of blocking opponent's move.)
7. Achieve your task while hindering your opponent.