

Aquarius Rising

by Matthew Rogers

Players: 2 - 5
Playing Time: 20 - 40 min

A mashup of two Looney Labs products: the tiling card game *Aquarius* and the Looney Pyramids game system. Build up as well as out and connect your elements to the higher planes.

Equipment Needed

- Four Rainbow pyramid sets
- One “Aquarius” deck, either an old-style (1.0) deck or one of the newer decks with some cards removed

Setup

1. If using a newer Aquarius deck, remove and set aside the diagonal Element cards, the wild card, and one full-panel card of each Element, so that only the 40 Element cards of the original deck remain. Keep all of whatever action cards are in your deck.
2. Divide four Rainbow pyramid sets evenly among the players; i.e.
 - Two players:** two 15-pyramid, 5-color sets each
 - Three players:** give each player one full set, plus five random pyramids from the fourth set
 - Four players:** one 15-pyramid, 5-color set each
 - Five players:** each should receive twelve pyramids (omit a different color from each full set, thus forming a fifth quasi-set)
3. The pyramid colors correspond to the Elements: red pyramids are Fire, blue are Water, yellow are Air, green are Earth, and black are Space.
4. Deal one face-down goal card to each player, who secretly inspects it (unless they are playing “Aqua-Chicken Rising” as described in the variants below).
5. Deal a hand of three Element/Action cards to each player.
6. Take the first card off the top of the shuffled deck. If it is an Action card, discard it. Continue until an Element card is reached, and place this card face-up in the center of the play area. Alternately: Start with the Aquarius Dragon (promo card from Looney Labs) face-up on the table to start play.
7. The player with the longest middle name goes first, and play proceeds in turns as described in the next section.

Goal

In Aquarius Rising, the goal is to get your goal element to the top of an ascending house of cards with pyramid supports. As in the original Aquarius game, your goal Element can change – to your advantage or dismay.

Turn Sequence

Each player's turn consists of the following three actions in the same sequence: (1) Draw a card, (2) Play a card, & (3) Play a pyramid

Each action is mandatory, unless game circumstances forbid it.

(1) Draw a Card

Take one face-down card from the top of the deck. If the deck is exhausted, then continue without drawing.

(2) Play a Card

Play an Action card or an Element card from your hand. If you have no permitted play available for any card from your hand, then continue without doing so.

Action Cards

Action cards play the same as they do in ordinary Aquarius, with two important exceptions:

- **Zap a Card** instead allows the player to trade all unplayed pyramids with one other player. (There is no zapping of played cards from the table in Aquarius Rising.)
- **Move a Card** allows the player to place two pyramids instead of one during the “play a pyramid” action for that turn. (Cards played to the table remain in place until the end of the game in Aquarius Rising.)

Element Cards

Element cards play the same as they do in ordinary Aquarius, with one important addition: A card can be placed on top of another card that has four pyramids there to support the new card. The new card must match at least one element to the pyramids/card below it, so that, for example, a green pyramid is below the earth panel of a new card. The vertical “house” thus established can continue to rise for multiple stories.

Multi-Connection Bonus

The Aquarius 2.0 multi-connection bonus rule only applies to vertical connections. I.e. a card that matches two different elements to the pyramids beneath it will generate a bonus draw, and so forth. Do not award bonus draws for multiple connections made at “ground level.”

(3) Play a Pyramid

Play a pyramid from your supply by placing it upright on one of the Element cards on the table. The following rules limit the placement of pyramids:

- A pyramid fills one corner/quarter of a card. There can be no more than four pyramids on any one Element card.
- The color of the pyramid must match the element in that corner of the card: red pyramids go on Fire, blue on Water, yellow on Air, green on Earth, and black on Space. (No pyramids can be played on the Aquarius Dragon, if it is used!)
- Once one pyramid has been played on a card, the other three pyramids on that card can only be of the same size as the original pyramid.
- No pyramid can be played on a card that is orthogonally adjacent to a card that has a pyramid on it already.
- If you cannot legally play a pyramid, pass the remainder of your turn.

Crash Ruling

Aquarius Rising was not intended to be a dexterity game, and houses built with four pyramidal supports are surprisingly stable. It should be rare for a house to suffer serious damage by player accident.

If pyramids or cards are dislodged from a house, and they can be replaced to the agreement of all players, then the game should continue thus. When agreement cannot be reached about the accurate reconstruction of the game arrangement, the game is sadly cut short, and the person responsible for the crash is the loser, although with three or more players there will be no individual winner.

Ending the Game

The game ends when no one can do any of the three actions any more.

Determining the Winner

Players reveal their goals:

- The Element that is highest (in real height from the table) wins. Height includes pyramids placed on top of cards, all the way to the pyramid tips. All pyramids of the same size category are assumed to be of uniform height, and all cards of uniform thickness, so that within a given house, pyramids on the same story will tie.
- If two (or more) Elements have the same altitude, count and compare the number of pyramid pips of the contending Elements in the house(s) that their highest Element card/pyramid is atop. The greater score wins.

- If that too is a tie, then see which of the contending Elements has the next highest card/pyramid; that Element wins.
- If that too is a tie, count and compare pips for the secondary altitude.
- If that too is a tie, then see which of those contending Elements has the largest number of connected panels on the tabletop.
- If that too is a tie, then the game is well and truly drawn between those players.

Official Variants

The following variants increase the material available for building, as well as the flexibility of pyramid placement, and thus lead to more and taller houses. The two can even be combined for Aquarius Rising Sky High to the Clouds.

"To the Clouds": In addition to their basic Elemental pyramids, give each player a single trio of white pyramids at the start of the game. The white pyramids are "wild" and can be played on any Element. They are not wild for purposes of cards set on top of them; cards on top must connect to a corner/quarter other than the "cloud" beneath them. (Ergo, a house cannot rise above a set of four white pyramids on a card -- a situation that is only possible in a four- or five-player game.)

"Sky High": In addition to their basic Elemental pyramids, give each player a single trio of clear pyramids at the start of the game. The clear pyramids are "wild" and can be played on any Element. They assume the Elemental identity of whatever corner/quarter they occupy for purposes of setting cards on top. E.g. a clear pyramid on a water panel is treated as blue for purposes of further building.

Bonus Variant (Aqua-Chicken)

This set of extra rules for Aquarius was devised by John Cooper to make the game a little more stressful. Two or more players mutually agree to not look at their Goal cards for as long as possible. An otherwise normal game of Aquarius (or Aquarius Rising) is played. The last player who looks at his or her Goal card is the winner of the Aqua-Chicken sub-game.

- When someone plays "Shuffle Goals", it is OK to look at your old Goal card (before turning it in), but your *new* Goal card must be left face down in order for you to stay in the game of Aqua-Chicken.
- Trading Goals is different; do not look at the Goal card that you are trading, or at the one you exchange it for.

Caution: playing Aqua-Chicken may annoy the other "normal" players in the game. Please play responsibly.