Clay's rules for ZAR

1   The Object of ZAR

ZAR is won by the player with the lowest score at the end of the game. During each hand you want to be the first player to get rid of all of your cards and you want to make the other players draw cards and not be able to play the ones they have.

2   The ZAR Deck

The ZAR deck contains 62 cards, and for each card in the deck there is one identical matching card. The 31 distinct cards are as follows:

18 Basic Symbol cards: 6 Basic Symbols: *Clouds*, *Galaxies*, *Lightning Bolts*, *Moons*, *Stars*, *Suns*, in 3 colors each: Blue, Red, Yellow.

9 Command cards: 3 Commands: *Crabs*, *Frogs*, *Wasps*, in 3 colors each: Blue, Red, Yellow.

4 Power cards: 2 Powers: *Dragons* (Winged and Unwinged), *Peacocks* (Front-view and Side-view).

There are also 2 extra blank cards that come in the box.

3   Starting the Game

ZAR can be played with 2 to 9 players. Sit around a relatively small table — it is very important that all of the players be able to *easily* reach the card piles in the center. Shuffle the deck well (**7** (or **8**) times, cutting it after each **2** shuffles)! Deal one card at a time to each player until they each have received 10 minus the number of players cards (minimum 3 cards). Place the remaining deck face down on the table to start the Drawpile. Wait a few moments for everyone to sort their hands. The dealer then turns over the top card to start the Playpile. This card must be turned over such that everyone, including the dealer, sees it at the same time. The first card cannot be a Power card; if this happens, bury it in the Drawpile and turn over the new top card. The initial direction of play is always clockwise, unless the first card is a Crab. The first card is considered as having been played from the dealer's hand (and can be matched). This counts as the dealer's turn and play now proceeds with the next player.

4   The Turn

Continuing on in the current direction of play, the current player must take a turn. Each of the following steps must be performed in sequence:

1. If you were just matched or "*GOTCHA*"ed, but have not drawn yet, do so now.
2. If you are facing Wasps and can not (or choose not to) play a Wasp from your hand, then draw for the Wasp(s).
3. Perform *one* of the following:
   - (A) Play a card from your hand onto the Playpile. Your card must have the same color *and / or* symbol as the top card on the Playpile, or be a Power card.
   - (B) Draw a card and perform option (A).
   - (C) Draw a card and pass. Declare "*PASS*" when you do this. You may always choose this option even if you have a playable card.

5   Doubling and Matching

Recall that every card in the deck has exactly one identical matching card. This fact enables one of the most fun aspects of playing ZAR — *doubles* and *matches*.

5.1   Doubling

If you have two identical cards in your hand, you may play them both as one play when it is your turn. Declare "*DOUBLE*" when you do this.

5.2   Matching

If you have a card that exactly matches the last card played, you may play it *even if it isn't your turn*. Declare "*MATCH*" when you do this. The player whose card you matched must immediately draw a card. *Playing a match is considered your turn, so play continues with the person **after you***. Playing a match must happen before the next player plays, i.e. before they play a card or touch the Drawpile to draw a card.

5.3   Matching Yourself

Occasionally, you will want to play a match on a card *you just played*. Declare "*DOUBLE*" when you do this. You do not draw a card. This must happen before the next player plays. If the card you are matching is a Power card, you may declare a different color / symbol than you did for the first one.

You may not declare "*MATCH*" on yourself.

6 Going Out

Whenever the number of cards in your hand changes to exactly one, declare "*ZAR*". This happens when you play and then have one card left or when you play your last card and are matched. If you fail to declare "*ZAR*", then anytime until you draw or someone wins the hand, any player may call "*GOTCHA*" on you and you must immediately draw one card. You may be "*GOTCHA*"ed the instant you are no longer touching your second-to-last card(s) or you touch the Drawpile to draw back up to one card. (Avoid this by declaring "*ZAR*" as soon as your hand is in motion.)

You may not go out by playing a multiple card play (e.g. a double) or by matching yourself.

When you play your last card, declare "*OUT*". Your last card can be matched; if this happens you must draw a card and you're back in the hand.

If you played your last card and no one matched it, then you have won the hand. Each card has a point value in the upper right hand corner. Add the total value of each of the other players' unplayed cards to their respective scores. If someone wins the hand by playing a Wasp or by matching, the affected player(s) must draw, and those cards are scored against them.

Before each game starts, decide whether you'll play until someone has a particular score, the food runs out, it's bedtime, etc. When that condition is reached at the end of a hand, whomever has the lowest score has won the game. A good default condition is playing until any player reaches 50 points.

7 Multiple Declarations

Often, there are multiple declarations to make for a single play. You should state them in the following order: "*ZAR*", "MATCH", "*DOUBLE*", Color / Symbol, "*OUT*".

When you play your second-to-last card as a match, declare "*ZAR-MATCH*" (or its short form "*ZAR'CH*"). When you play a double and only have one card left in your hand, declare "*ZAR-DOUBLE*" (or its short form "*ZAR'BLE*"). Other examples are: "*ZAR-YELLOW*", "*ZAR'CH-MOONS*", "*ZAR'BLE-RED*", "*DOUBLE-SUNS*", "*MATCH-BLUE*", "*MATCH-OUT*", etc.

If instead you declare something like "*MATCH-LIGHT-NING BOLTS-ZAR*" and another player finishes saying "*GOTCHA*" to you before you start to say "*ZAR*", you will have to draw a card.

8 Illegal Plays

If someone plays a card illegally, stop the game and undo that play and any subsequent plays. The player who made that play must immediately draw a card (this counts as a "*GOTCHA*"). Any players who played after that play do not draw a card. Resume the game with the player's turn directly following the last legal play. You do not draw a card if you have simply lost a Close Call and the play was otherwise legal.

9 Card Effects

Remember that the effect of playing a Match always happens in addition to any extra effects listed below. For example, when you match a Wasp it causes the matched player to draw a card and *the new accumulated draw count now faces the player **after you***.

9.1 Basic Symbol Cards

No special abilities; they just keep the game moving.

9.2 Command Cards

9.2.1 Crabs: Reverse Direction

Playing a Crab card reverses the current direction of play. Double / matched Crabs cancel each other out and the direction remains the same.

9.2.2 Frogs: Skip Next Player

Playing a Frog skips the next player. Double / matched Frogs skip the next 2 players.

In games with a small number of players, it is possible to give yourself multiple turns in a row by playing one or more Frogs or by matching a Frog. However, you cannot "skip out", that is skip to yourself and then play your last card. You may skip to yourself and then have one card left, but you must then draw a card, i.e. take Turn option (B) or (C).

9.2.3 Wasps: Draw 2 Cards

When you play a Wasp the next player must either draw 2 cards or play *any* Wasp card. If he plays another Wasp, the player after him must draw 4 cards or play a Wasp. Each Wasp that is played adds 2 to the accumulated draw count. This continues until some player does not play a Wasp and must draw the accumulated number of cards. Drawing for the Wasp(s) resets the accumulated draw count to zero. When playing a Wasp, it is often helpful to remind the next player about the new accumulated count, e.g. "*DRAW 6*".

Double Wasps count as Draw 4. A matched Wasp adds 2 to the accumulated draw count.

9.3 Power Cards

9.3.1 Dragons: Change Symbol

A Dragon changes the symbol to be played next to your choice of any one of the 6 Basic Symbols. Declare one of these when you play this: "*CLOUDS*", "*GALAXIES*", "*LIGHTNING BOLTS*", "*MOONS*", "*STARS*", "*SUNS*". When this is played, there is no color; only that symbol or another Dragon may be played next. A Dragon may be played on any card other than a Peacock. There are two different pairs of Dragons — any Dragon can be played on any other Dragon, but only the identical pairs match.

9.3.2 Peacocks: Change Color

A Peacock changes the color to be played next to your choice of any one of the three colors. Declare one of these when you play this: "*BLUE*", "*RED*", "*YELLOW*". When this is played, there is no symbol; only that color or another Peacock may be played next. A Peacock may be played on any card other than a Dragon. There are two different pairs of Peacocks — any Peacock can be played on any other Peacock, but only the identical pairs match.

10 Close Calls

Use these rules to resolve close calls when neither event clearly happened first. If cards were knocked off of the Playpile and it can be determined who did it, then the other player gets precedence, otherwise refer to Table 1.

11 Miscellaneous Rules

- Each call of "*GOTCHA*" must be directed to a specific player with some type of clear gesture, e.g. pointing a finger. Of players liable to be "*GOTCHA*"ed, only those specifically "*GOTCHA*"ed must draw. Drawing for a "*GOTCHA*" happens immediately when the call is made.
- Drawing a card due to a "*GOTCHA*" or a match does *not* prevent matching.
- If you skip to yourself and immediately play a matching Frog, this always counts as matching yourself, unless you have drawn a card other than for a "*GOTCHA*" between playing the Frogs.
- If someone needs to draw a card and the Drawpile is empty, the dealer must immediately reshuffle all but the top card of the Playpile into the Drawpile. Shuffle the deck well!

- If the Drawpile is empty, touching the spot that the Drawpile normally occupies counts the same as touching the Drawpile.
- Between hands, players may join or quit a game in progress. If new players join a game, they start with a score equal to the average score of the *current* players (rounded up to the nearest whole number). However, if someone quits and later decides to rejoin the same game, they start with a score equal to the highest score reached for that game (possibly their own previous score). Of course, only current players are eligible to win the game.
- Players should try at all times to hold their cards such that the other players can tell at a glance how many cards are in their hand.
- Players occasionally mistakenly declare "*ZAR*" or "*GOTCHA*". This is normal and carries no penalty. However, if a player does so and it's obviously *intentional and inappropriate*, he must draw a card. This counts as a "*GOTCHA*".
- During a single turn, the maximum combined number of cards that you can draw for Illegal Plays and the previous miscellaneous rule is 3.

12 Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: If I am the current player and I have drawn any cards for Turn step 1 or 2, can I simply declare "*PASS*" and end my turn?

A1: No. You must still perform step 3, which may require drawing another card.

Q2: If someone goes out by playing a Wasp on me, can I avoid drawing if I already have a Wasp in my hand?

A2: Once someone goes out (and is not matched), no additional cards can be played, but all outstanding draws must still happen.

Q3: If I am the current player and I play a card which matches the one on top of the Playpile, is this necessarily a match?

A3: If another player has taken a turn since the card was played or you have drawn any cards this turn other than for a "*GOTCHA*", then your play is not a match. In this case, it is often helpful to declare "*NOT A MATCH*". Otherwise, it is a match, and must be declared, with "*MATCH*" or "*DOUBLE*" (matching yourself), and played as such.

Q4: When I declare "*MATCH*" or "*DOUBLE*" (matching yourself), does the current player have to wait until I play my card?

A4: Absolutely not. The essential part of playing a match is to put your card on the Playpile *before* the current player plays. The required declaration is just to alert

Event A	Event B	Takes precedence
Declaring "*ZAR*"	Calling "*GOTCHA*"	Declaring "*ZAR*"
Playing a card on your turn	Playing a match	Card physically underneath on the Playpile, or if indeterminate: Playing on your turn
Drawing a card	Playing a match	Drawing a card
Drawing a card	Calling "*GOTCHA*"	Drawing a card
Calling "*GOTCHA*"	Playing last card	Calling "*GOTCHA*"
Playing a match	Playing a match (Extended Rules only)	Card physically underneath on the Playpile or if indeterminate: whichever player would have been next in the current direction of play

Table 1: Close call resolutions.

the other players that a match has happened.

Q5: How is playing a double different than matching yourself?

A5: A double consists of playing two identical cards as one play *during your turn*. Matching yourself happens *during the player's turn immediately following yours*, but before that player plays, and like all matching is a race between the current player and playing the match.

Q6: What are some examples of when I would match myself?

A6: – You are the dealer and the first card that is flipped over matches one in your hand.
– You play and now have one card left in your hand, but forgot to declare "*ZAR*". You are immediately "*GOTCHA*"ed and draw a card. One of the cards in your hand matches the last card you played.
– You play one card of a matched pair in your hand and then change your mind ("Hmmm, hanging onto that 2nd Dragon is just too dangerous now...").
– You play a Command or Power card of a matched pair in your hand and then by observing the next player guess her action. You decide that it would be better if it were a different player's turn, or that you should have really changed to a different symbol, etc.

Clay's extended rules for ZAR

13   Multideck ZAR

You can play ZAR with more than one ZAR deck, or more precisely with more than 2 half decks. The following describes the 3 and 4 half deck variations (Deck and a Half ZAR, and Double Deck ZAR, respectively). The Deck and a Half variation is recommended, but the rules will scale to any number of half decks. Note that in an N half deck variation, that every card in the deck has exactly N−1 identical matching cards.

13.1   Starting a Multideck Game

Multideck ZAR can be played with 2 to 14 players. Beware that seating a large number of players around a table such that they are all easily able to reach the card piles in the center is not easy. Moreover, shuffling the larger number of cards will take more effort. Shuffle the deck well (**8** (or **9**) times for Deck and a Half ZAR and **9** (or **10**) times for Double Deck ZAR, cutting it after each **2** shuffles)! Deal one card at a time to each player until they each have received 15 minus the number of players cards (minimum 3, maximum 10 cards). Proceed using the regular starting the game rules.

13.2   Multiple Card Plays

In addition to doubles, triples and quads become possible. So does making a multiple card play and matching someone.

Triples and quads work analogously to doubles. Substitute "*DOUBLE*" in rules and declarations as appropriate with "*TRIPLE*" or "*QUAD*". Example declarations are: "*MATCH-DOUBLE*", "*TRIPLE*", "*QUAD*", "*ZAR'PLE*", "*ZAR'QUAD*", "*ZAR'CH-TRIPLE-BLUE*", "*ZAR'QUAD-MOONS*", etc.

13.3   Command Cards

- An odd number of Crabs reverses direction.
- Triple Frogs skip the next 3 players; Quad Frogs skip the next 4 players, etc.

Action	Declaration	Declaration (matching yourself)
Playing a match on a match	"*MATCH*"	"*DOUBLE*"
Playing a match on a double	"*MATCH*"	"*TRIPLE*"
Playing a match on a triple	"*MATCH*"	"*QUAD*"
Playing a double as a match	"*MATCH-DOUBLE*"	"*TRIPLE*"
Playing a triple as a match	"*MATCH-TRIPLE*"	"*QUAD*"

Table 2: Calls for multideck ZAR.

- Triple Wasps count as Draw 6; Quad Wasps count as Draw 8, etc.

13.4 Matching

- A match may itself be matched.
- A player may match himself multiple times in a row. See Table 2 for what to call in these cases. Playing "*MATCH*", "*MATCH-DOUBLE*", "*MATCH-TRIPLE*", etc., each cause exactly one card to be drawn.

13.5 Example

Player 1 plays a Frog; player 4 matches it with a double ("*MATCH-DOUBLE*"); and player 2 matches player 4 ("*MATCH*"). Player 1 must draw a card; then player 4 must draw a card; and then a quad skip happens from player 2.

Note that drawing for a match does not prevent further matching. As always, play ultimately proceeds from the last player to play a match.

14 The Chameleon Card

Each ZAR deck comes with 2 blanks cards. Consider using them as Chameleon cards.

The Chameleon card is a Power card worth 6 points. It has no color or symbol of its own. It can only be played in turn, except to match another Chameleon card. It can be played with other cards (including Chameleons) to make doubles, triples, etc. Other cards can match it once it has assumed a specific identity. There are two ways to play a Chameleon:

- It can be played on any card. When played it becomes an exact match of the card it was played on (or in the case of it being played on a Chameleon card, whatever the last non-Chameleon card which was played). Follow the normal rules for matching whenever this is played.
- It can be used as an exact match for any card in your hand. When played this way, the multiple card play you are making must be a legal play on whatever card is on top of the Playpile.

When played as a Peacock or Dragon, you must declare a color or symbol, respectively.

If a player goes out, a Chameleon card can not be played to resume the hand, except if it is played as a match on another Chameleon on the top of the Playpile.

14.1 Examples

Assume play is proceeding clockwise in a 4 player game.

- Player 1 plays a Blue Sun; Player 2 plays a Chameleon ("*MATCH*"); and Player 1 plays a Chameleon ("*MATCH*"). Players 1 and 2 both draw for their matches and Player 2 faces a virtual Blue Sun, unless someone matches first by playing the other Blue Sun.
- Player 2 plays a Blue Wasp ("*DRAW 2*"); and Player 3 plays 2 Red Wasps and 2 Chameleons ("*QUAD-DRAW 10*"). Player 4 now has to draw 10, unless he can play a Wasp or a Chameleon. If this is a multideck game, someone could still match first by playing a Red Wasp or, if Player 3 placed a Chameleon on top of the Playpile, another Chameleon.

14.2 Frequently Asked Question

Q1: If I am the dealer and I have just started a new hand, can I play a Chameleon card before the next player plays ("*DOUBLE*")?

A1: No. Once you have flipped over the first card, it is no longer your turn. You can not match yourself because the Chameleon can only be played in turn, except to match another Chameleon. That is not possible because a Chameleon is a Power card, so it could not have started the hand. However, if you have both a Chameleon and the card matching the Playpile, you could play it as part of a "*TRIPLE*".