

Elemental Towers

a solitaire game designed by Nick Sula
Playing time: approximately 15 minutes

The trumpets have sounded, the fires are lit, and the Elemental Tribes are heading to the celebration! You have thirty days to harness the power of the elements to build towering crystal shrines as tributes. Can you impress the chieftains? The strongest Tribes award the most prestige, so make haste to complete your Elemental Towers!

You will need:

- 45 Looney Pyramids - 3 trios each of 5 colors (Red, Green, Blue, Yellow, Black)
- Aquarius deck (first edition, containing 5 goal cards, 15 action cards, and 40 element cards)*

Object of the Game

The object of the game is to score points by building towers of pyramids. Towers that are the color of the most highly valued elements at the end of the game will score the most points. As you play cards to the table, placing matching elements side by side will allow you to build pyramids and move them from space to space to form towers. Try to achieve the highest score you can before the deck runs out!

Setup

- Shuffle the 5 goal cards, and lay them face up in a vertical line to form the scoring row. Their positions from top to bottom represent the score value of each element: values 5,4,3,2,1.
- Shuffle the rest of the cards, and deal yourself a facedown deck of 30 cards. Put the remaining cards back in the box.
- Draw one card and place it face up in the center of the table. If it is an action card, shuffle it back into the deck and draw again until you draw an element card.
- Have the supply of pyramids nearby.

Gameplay

Each turn, you draw and play one card.

- If you draw an **element card**, add it to the arrangement on the table. Cards must be placed exactly edge-to-edge with another card, aligned in the same direction (not perpendicular). You gain power if you play a card so that its elemental panels match adjacent panels (see “Elemental Matches”), but it is not required to play cards so their elements match.
 - If you draw an **action card**, resolve the action immediately (see “Resolving Action Cards”), then discard the card.
- The game ends after you play the last card in the deck.

Towers

A **tower** is a stack of 2 or 3 pyramids, all the same color but different sizes.

A **complete tower** is a tower of 3 pyramids, all the same color, one pyramid of each size (small, medium, large).

Towers are formed by moving smaller pyramids onto larger ones. A tower moves as a single unit, and is the only way that more than one pyramid can occupy a single space.

The goal of the game is to form complete towers of the highest scoring elemental colors.

Elemental Matches

When you play a card so that an element panel matches an adjacent panel on another card, you gain the power to perform one action with pyramids of that element’s color.

For each match you make, you may either:

- 1) **Build** a pyramid of that element’s color, **OR**
- 2) **Move** any pyramid or tower of that element’s color.

If you place your card so it makes multiple matches at once, you earn one Build or Move action for each match you make. Resolve each match using pyramids of its color.

You must complete all of your actions before drawing and playing the next card from the deck.

Elemental Colors:

Element of matching panels	Color of pyramid to Build or Move
Fire	Red
Earth	Green
Water	Blue
Air	Yellow
Ether	Black

For each match you make, you may either:

Build a Pyramid of the Matched Color

Place one pyramid from the supply on either card involved in the match, onto either matching space. The space you choose to build in **must be empty**. The pyramid you build must be the **color and size of the space it is built in**.

Size of build location	Size of pyramid
Small space (1/4 of the card)	Small
Medium space (1/2 of the card)	Medium
Large space (whole card)	Large

Note: If there are no more pyramids of the required color and size left in the supply, then you cannot build a pyramid in that space.

- OR -

Move any Pyramid/Tower of the Matched Color

Choose any pyramid or tower, on any card, that is the color of the matching element. Move that pyramid or tower one adjacent space.

No more than one pyramid/tower may occupy a space. But, you may move a smaller pyramid into a space containing a same-colored pyramid of exactly one size larger to form a tower (see “Stacking Pyramids into Towers”).

A tower is moved as a single unit and cannot be unstacked. Pyramids of different colors do not form towers and may never occupy the same space.

Stacking Pyramids into Towers

When you move a pyramid into a space containing a same-colored pyramid exactly one size larger, you must immediately stack the pyramids and form a tower.

Once stacked, a tower cannot be unstacked.

Towers must be stacked in order; you can only stack small pyramids on medium pyramids, and only medium pyramids on large pyramids. *Small pyramids may not be stacked directly onto large pyramids.*

For example, if you move a small red pyramid into an adjacent space containing a medium red pyramid, you must stack them to form a small-medium red tower.

But, you may not move a medium pyramid into a space containing only a small pyramid.

Also, you may move a small-medium red tower into an adjacent space containing a large red pyramid. You immediately stack them to form a complete red tower.

Resolving Action Cards

When you draw an Action Card from the deck, you must resolve it immediately and discard it. These actions are mandatory, unless impossible (e.g. no need to “Move a Card” if there is only one card on the table).

- **Shuffle Goals:** Randomly rearrange the five cards in the scoring row.
- **Trade Goals:** Swap the positions of any two adjacent cards in the scoring row.
- **Move a Card:** Move any element card on the table, along with any pyramids currently on it, to a different position in the arrangement. Immediately resolve any matches, taking build or move actions as if you played that card from the deck.
- **Zap a Card:** Remove an element card from the arrangement, and shuffle it back into the deck. If that card had pyramids on it, return them to the supply.
- **Trade Hands:** Trade a single pyramid on any space for a pyramid from the supply of the same color but different size.

End of the Game

The game ends after the last card is played.

Score

At the end of the game, determine the value of each complete tower by checking the position of its element in the scoring row. Top to bottom, the scoring values in the row are 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Remember, the elements in the scoring row are likely to change position (and value) throughout the game as Action Cards are drawn from the deck. Only the positions at the end of the game determine the values for your final score.

Tower Prestige

You score 5 points for each complete tower that is the color of the element at the top of the row; 4 points for each complete tower that is the color of the next element; then 3, 2, and finally 1 point for each complete tower that is the color of the element at the bottom of the row.

Elemental Mastery

You gain a bonus of 10 points if you have at least one complete tower of each of the five elements.

Incomplete towers and single pyramids are worth 0 points.

Final Score	Rank
1 - 5	Novice
6 - 10	Apprentice
11 - 15	Artisan
16 - 20	Architect
21 +	Master Builder

Ready to try again? Shuffle the same 30 cards back together and play again, now knowing which cards the deck has in store for you. Try to beat your best score!

Or, reshuffle all of the cards and deal yourself a deck of 30 new cards to change your fate for the next game...

Draft Variant (optional)

Give yourself some control over the contents of the deck by using this alternate setup to draft cards for your game:

Set aside the 5 goal cards. Shuffle the rest of the cards. Remove 15 cards and put them back into the box without looking at them.

Deal a stack of 10 cards facedown - this is your deck. Then, add cards into your deck by repeating these steps until the cards run out:

- Draw 3 cards and look at them.
- Choose 2 to keep; put them facedown into your deck.
- Discard the third card.

When you have gone through all the cards, your facedown deck will have 30 cards in it. Put the discards back into the box.

Shuffle your deck, draw one card to place face-up in the center of the table, and shuffle & deal the 5 goal cards into a scoring row. You are ready to play!

*This game was designed using the First Edition Aquarius Deck. If you are using a newer edition, you can convert to the First Edition by removing the following cards: the 3 “Shuffle Hands” action cards, the 10 diagonal divider 2-panel element cards, 1 of each color single-element panel card, and the wild card.

Elemental Towers was the winning entry in The Great 2-0-1-8 Solo Game Creating Contest hosted by Alex Ottenstein, designer of the solitaire Looney Pyramids game, Solomids.

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