



# Pondlife

## Rulebook

A two-player game of strategy

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# Introduction

Welcome to the fun and strategic hidden depths in the game of Pondlife. It is a two-player game set in a pond. One player is Yellow the other is Blue. Each player has the following pieces:

## Types of piece



Nest  $\times 1$



Tadpoles  $\times 8$



Eggs  $\times 7$  white  
 $\times 8$  black



Frogs  $\times 3$



Newts  $\times 2$



Snake  $\times 1$



Dragonfly  $\times 1$



Eel  $\times 1$

(For advanced players)



Fish  $\times 1$



# Gameplay

The board and starting position is as shown:



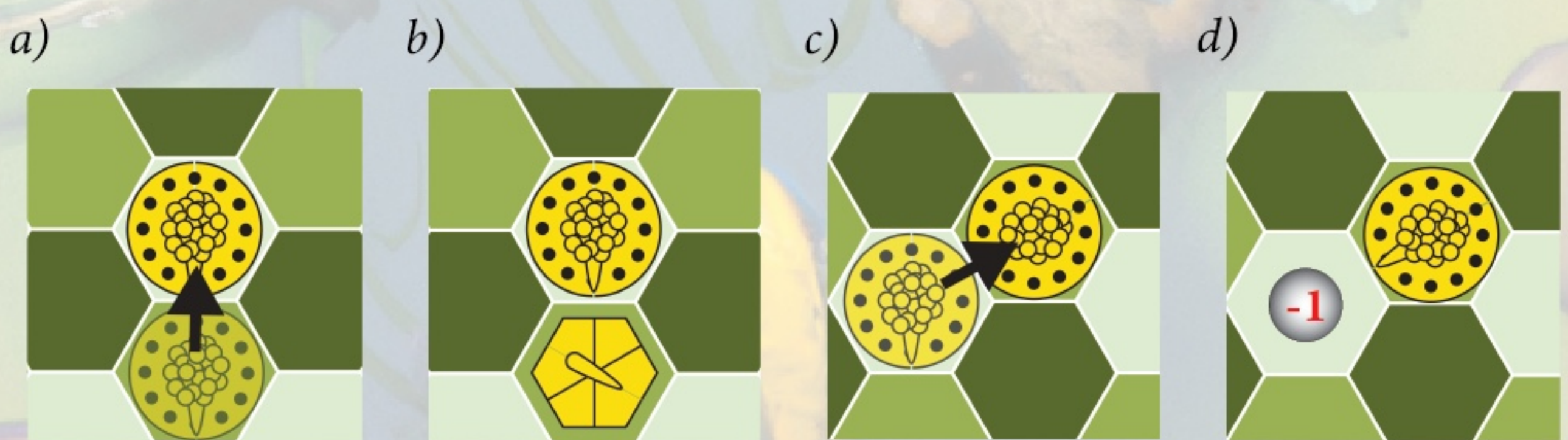
*Starting positions*

The aim of the game is to eat your opponents' **nest**. For each player, the game starts with the eight **tadpoles** and the nest on the board and the other eight pieces off the board on that players own side. These pieces are unhatched. You also start with either seven or eight **eggs** on your side of the board.



# The nest

The nest can move one space to a neighboring hex and when it does it can hatch an unhatched piece (in any orientation) by placing it on the hex that the nest moved from. Moving the nest and placing the new piece together constitute one move. The nest can also move without hatching a new piece but only a limited number of times. Every time you do this you must hand your opponent one of your eggs and when you run out of both eggs and unborn pieces your nest is immobile and can easily be eaten. Like all pieces, the nest can eat enemy pieces by moving on to their hex but it cannot eat tadpoles.



*Example Nest moves: (a-b) Moving upward and hatching a newt. (c-d) Moving diagonally and spending an egg*



# Tadpoles

For tadpoles, it matters which way they are facing. All tadpoles start off facing the opponent. A tadpole can move one space to three possible positions, either straight ahead or 60 degrees to the right or the left. If it turns to the right or left then it rotates the same way. The tail should end up pointing to the hex it came from. A tadpole can only eat an enemy piece when it turn right or left, that is, It cannot eat a piece directly in front of it. The spaces it can move to in front from it's point of view not from the players point of view.

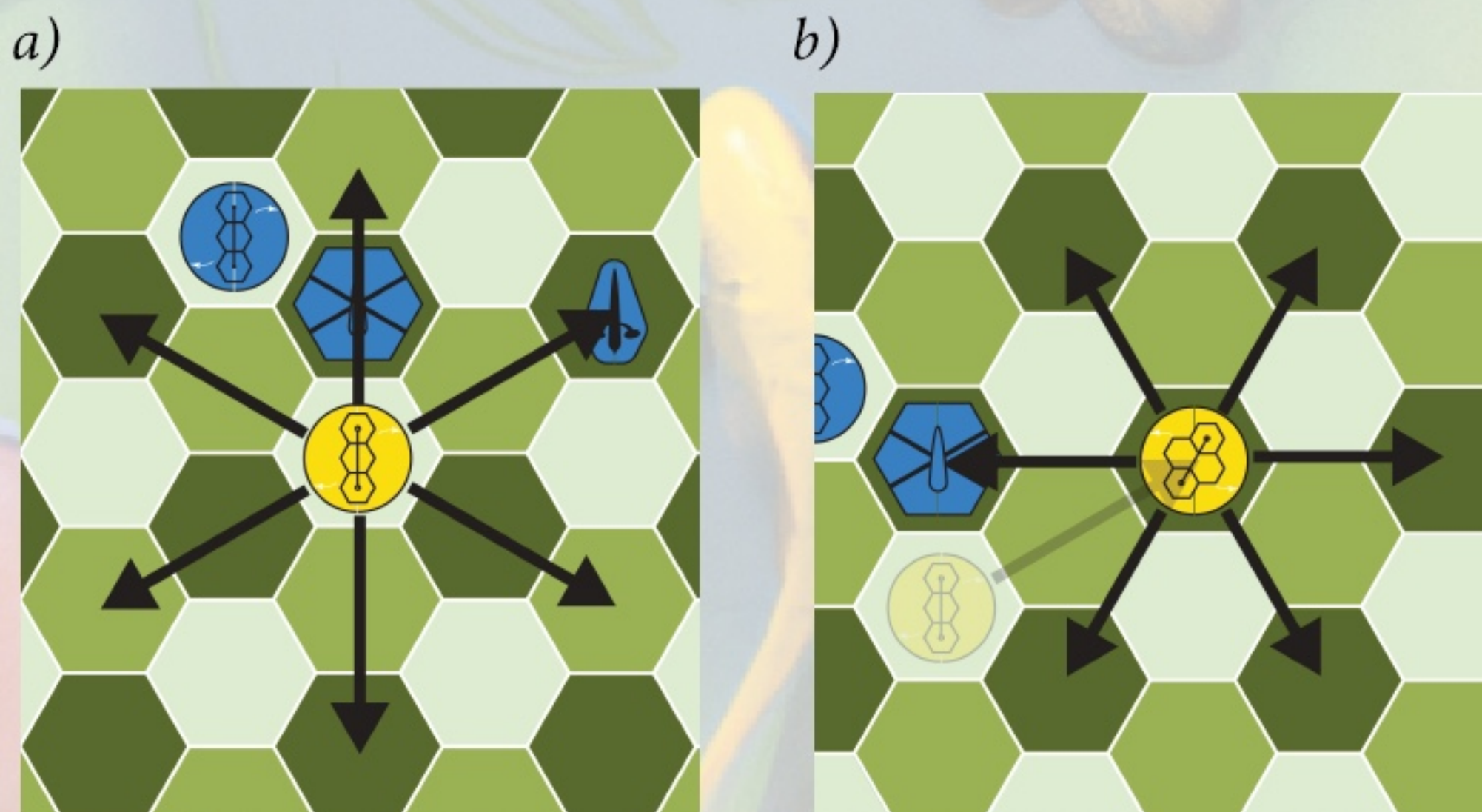


*Example Tadpole Moves: (a) The three permissable moves (b) Turning to face direction of travel (c) Only taking diagonally*



# Frogs

One of the hatchable pieces is the frog. It is a round piece with two different sides. It doesn't matter which way a frog is facing but it does matter which way up it is. A frog can be hatched either way up but it then flips over every time it is moved. A frog can move like the little picture on top shows. When the side with three hexagons is showing it can jump over a neighboring hex and land on the next hex in a straight line. When the side with four hexagons is showing it can move "diagonally", meaning it jumps along the line between two neighboring hexes and lands on a hex that is the same color as the one it is moving from. The frogs move is a jump, meaning it cannot be blocked.



*Example Frog moves: (a) when "upright" (b) when "upside down"*



# Newts and Snakes

The next two types of piece (the **newts** and the **snake**) don't jump but instead slide, meaning they can go as far as the player wants so long as their path is not blocked. That means they go to any hex that has a straight line of empty spaces between it and where it came from. They can land on either an empty space or an opponent's piece (taking the piece). The newts have an X shape on them with thick lines and a tail and a head. These pieces can move in the directions that the thick lines point and when they get to their destination, they rotate so that the tail points back to where they came from:

a)



b)



*Example Newt moves: (a) Newt can stop at any black arrowhead but is blocked by other pieces. (b) Having moved it, points in its direction of travel determining where it can go next.*



Another slider is the snake which is hexagonal and has lines pointing in all six directions. It can simply slide in any of the six orthogonal directions:



*Example snake moves*

## Dragonflies and Eels

There are two more sliding pieces: the **dragonfly** and the **eel**. These two pieces look alike but they are different. Like the newt, these pieces have a tail that points back to where they came from and thick black



lines indicating which directions they can go. Look at the way the tail is facing relative to the way the thick lines are pointing to tell the difference between them. The **dragonfly** has its tail pointing away from its thick black lines, so it moves onward over successive moves. The **eels** tail points towards its thick black lines so it doubles back on itself over successive moves.

The eel and the dragonfly jump one space in the directions they can move and then slide onwards from there. This means they cannot move a single space and they are not blocked by a piece on the first hex of their path. **Novices may wish to play without the Eel, as it has a hard-to-predict movement pattern.**



a) *Example Dragonfly moves*



b) *Example Eel moves*



# Fish

The final piece is the fish. This is a larger round piece with multiple hexagons on it. It has a choice of two types of move. It can either move one space in any of the six directions or it can bounce diagonally for an unlimited number of times so long as none of the squares on the diagonal line (which will all be the same color as the hex that the fish is standing on) on the way to its destination are blocked. A player may not hatch the fish until he/she has hatched four other pieces.



*Example fish moves*



## *Additional rules*

**Checking:** The aim of the game is to eat the nest but you must first warn your opponent when the nest is under threat by saying “check”. Your opponents only legal moves are then the ones that get them out of check, meaning no longer under threat of being eaten.

**Non-repetition:** Any move that reproduces exactly a board position that has already existed is illegal. When it is your turn, you must move. If you have no legal move then you lose.

**Draws:** Nest is designed to prevent draws from occurring. However, players may discover a situation in which the game cannot be resolved in a reasonable timeframe, in which case they may agree to a draw. If there are 60 moves in a row with no pieces being taken and no nest moves you may demand a draw.



**Opening:** The player with the yellow pieces goes first. To compensate for this advantage the blue player gets one more egg. Eight instead of seven.

**Handicapping:** If players are of unequal skill or experience you can give the weaker player an advantage. The weaker player gets the blue pieces (and therefore gets one extra egg) and gets to make several moves before the stronger player gets to move. He/she is not allowed to eat enemy pieces during these moves. After that, the game proceeds as normal. For a larger skill differential you can deny the stronger player some pieces from the start.



Good luck and try not to  
get eaten!