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(54) **CARD-BASED THREE-IN-A-ROW GAME**

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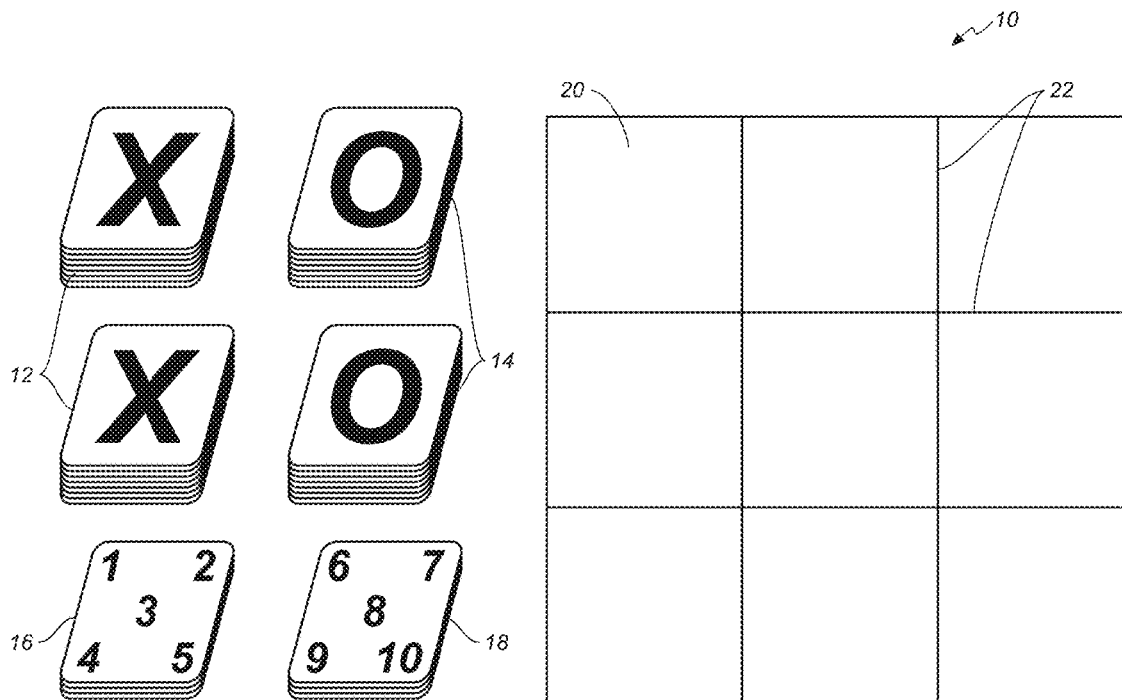
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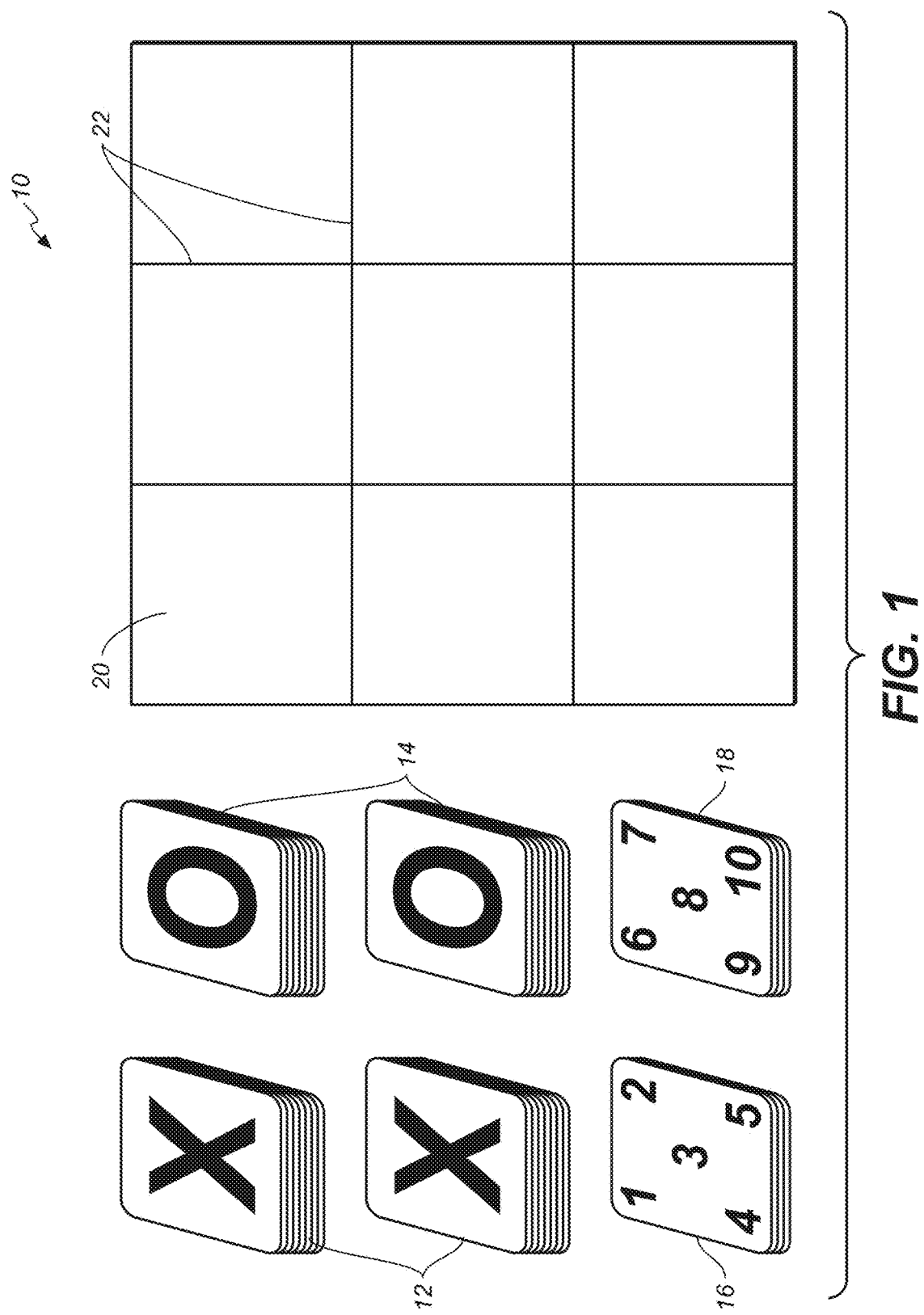
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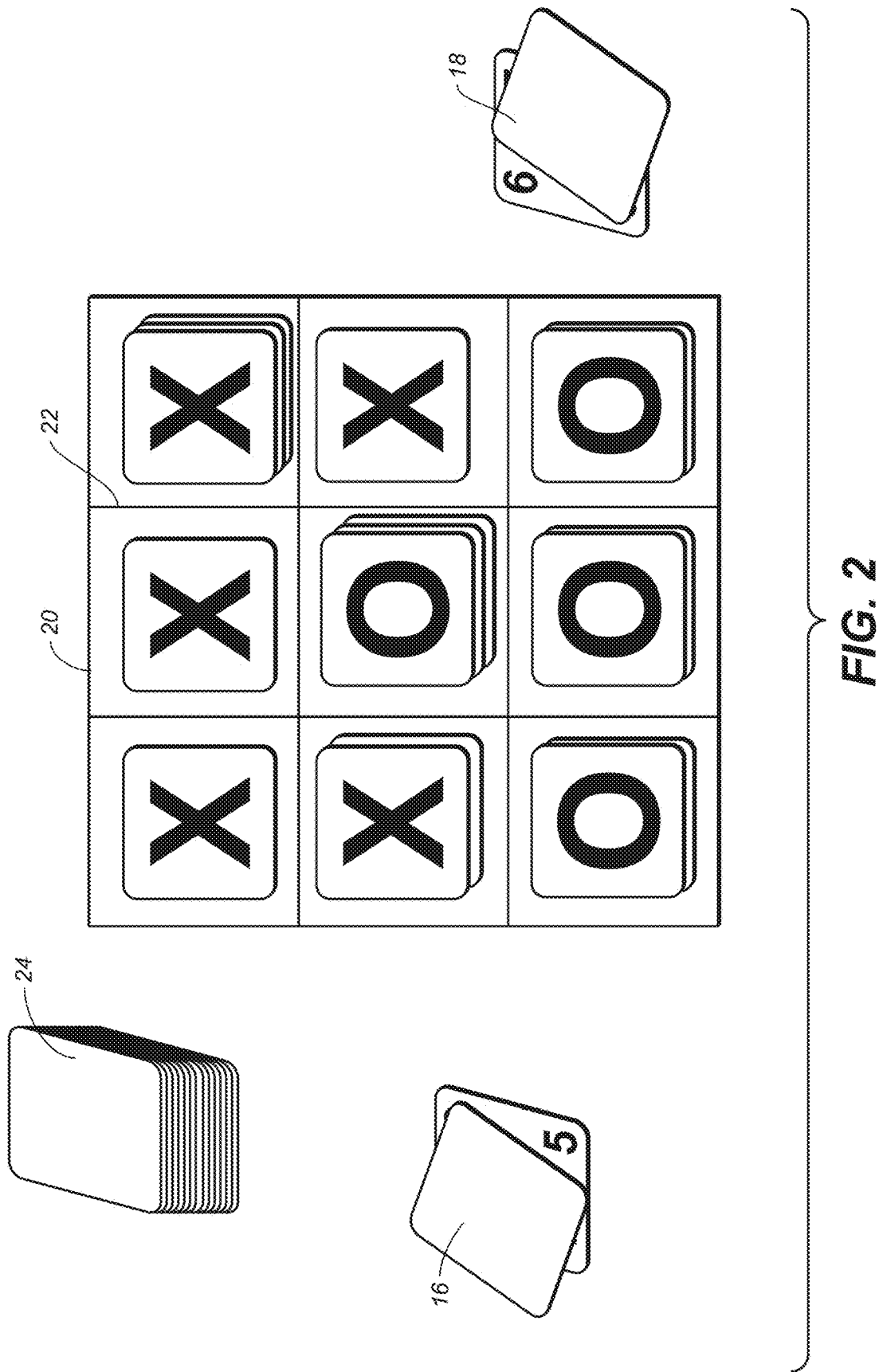
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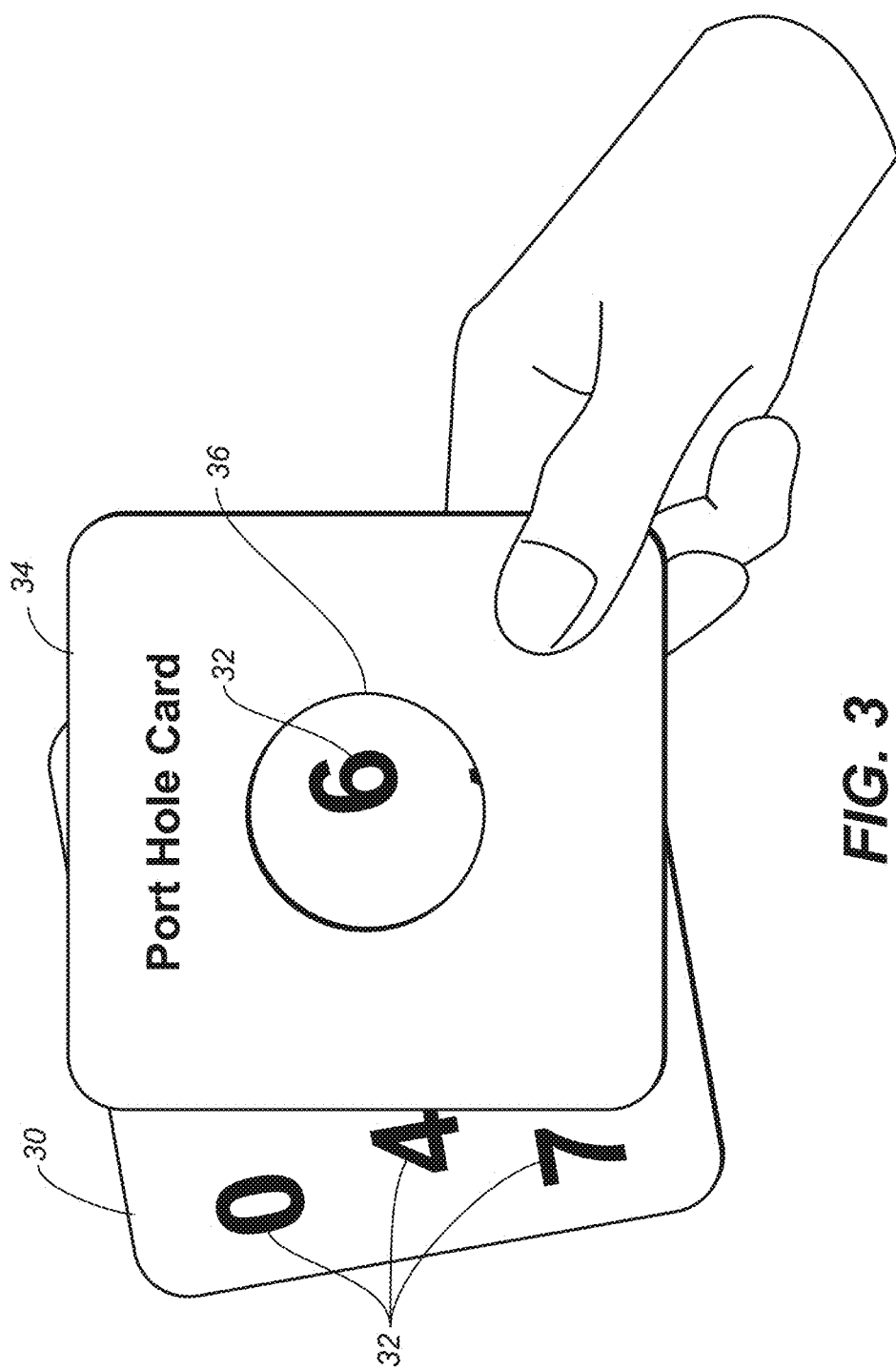
(57) **ABSTRACT**

Card-based method of playing a k-in-a-row game using a draw pile of cards bearing binary marking elements. The draw pile deck is shuffled and may be distributed, some cards going into a preformed grid and others to players or retained as a draw pile in a face down orientation. Play proceeds in turns, each player selecting a card from the initial draw pile or his dealt draw pile and playing the card either onto an open space on an actual or developing grid, or on a card not bearing the same face up symbol. Points are scored by a player who achieves a k-in-a-row configuration of cards bearing identical face up symbols and wherein multiple points can be scored in a single turn if multiple k-in-a-row configurations are achieved.

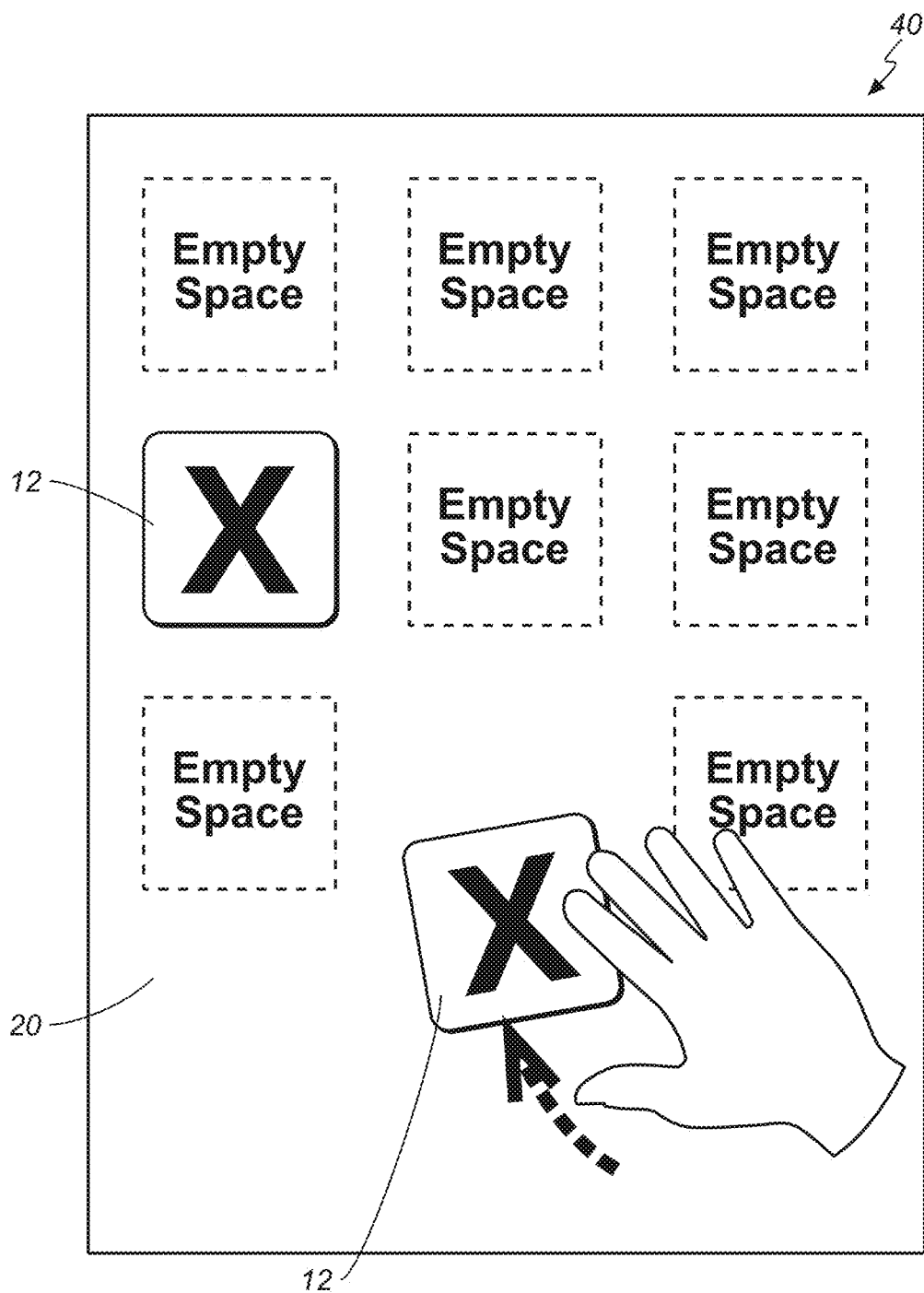




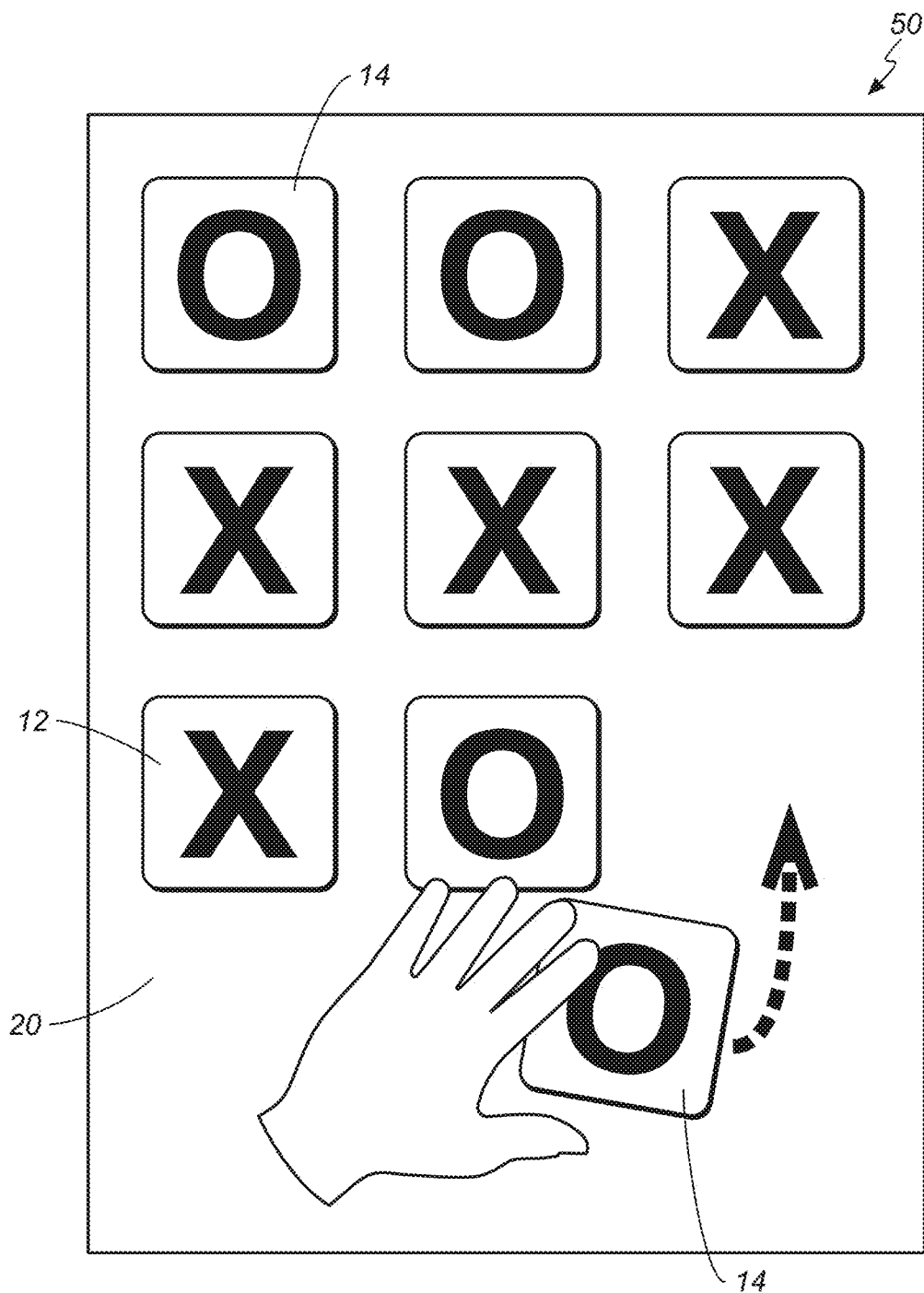




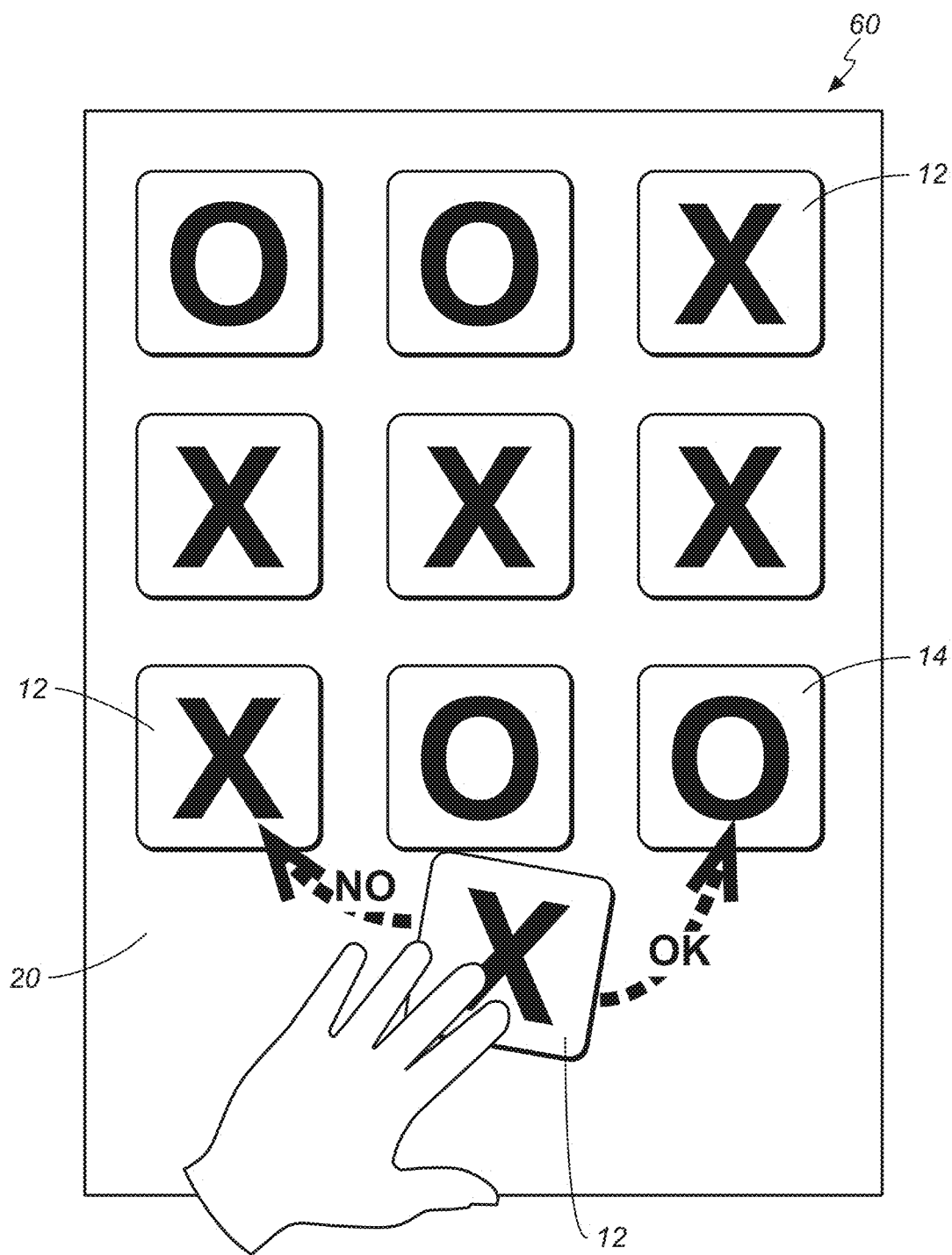
**FIG. 3**



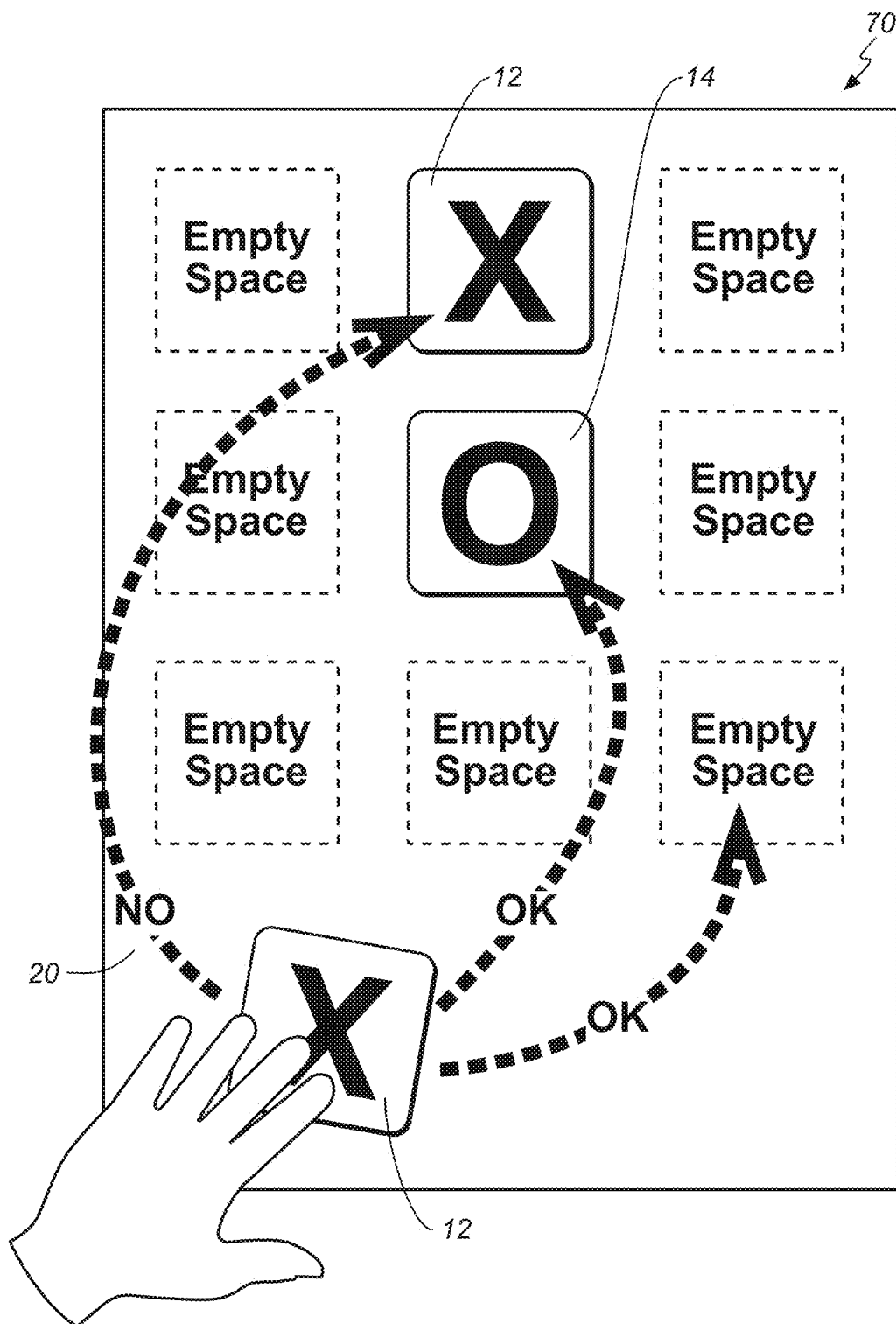
**FIG. 4**



**FIG. 5**

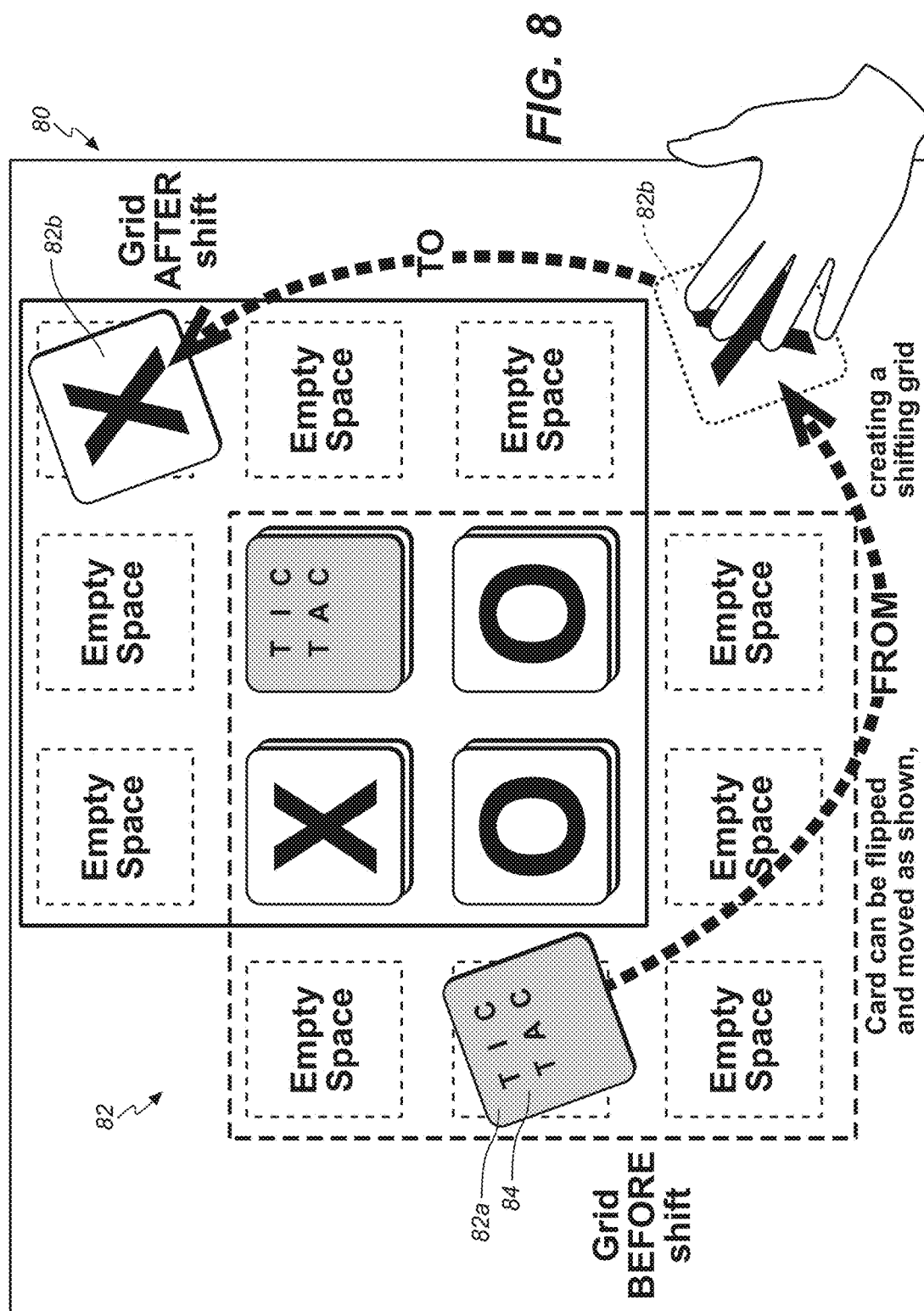


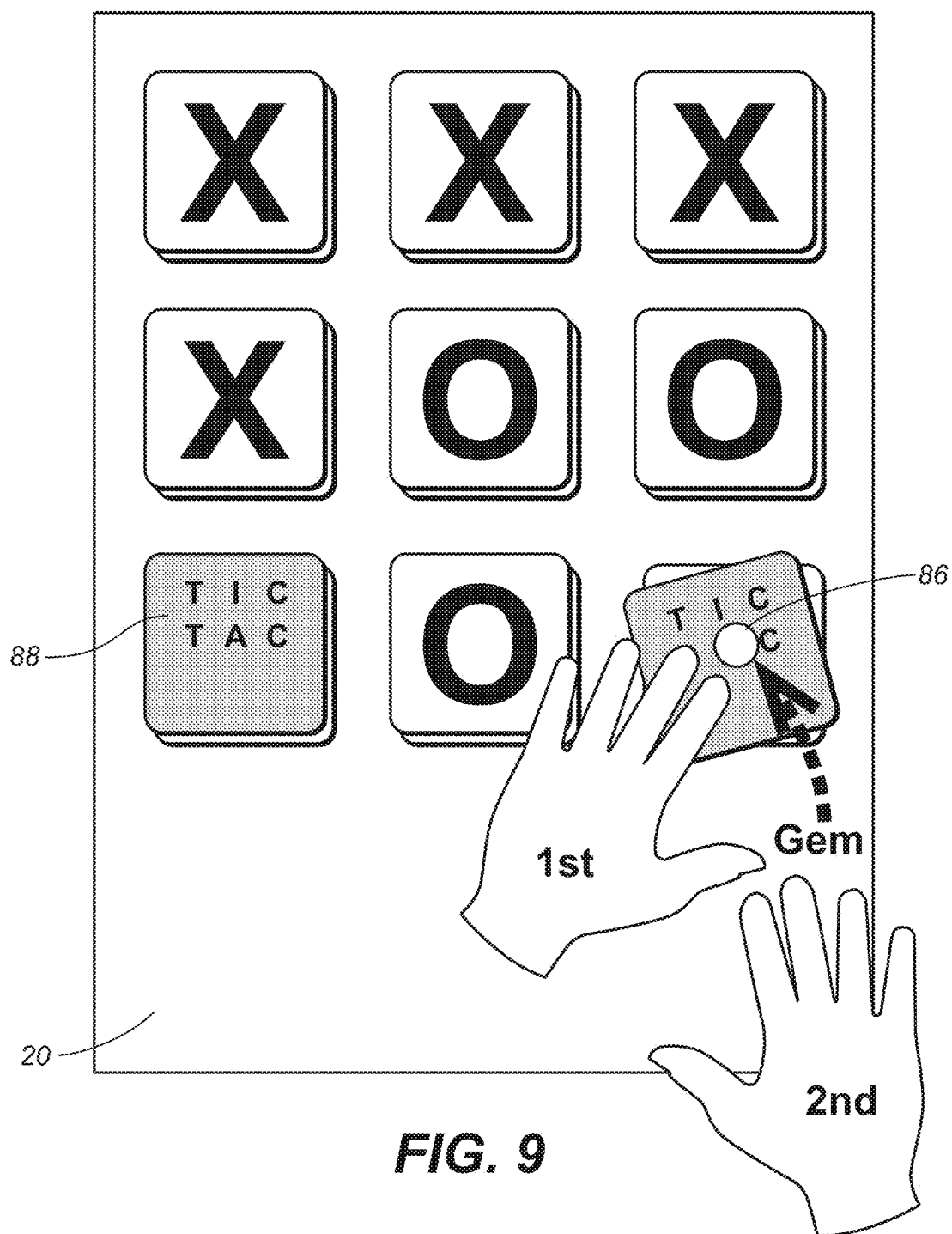
**FIG. 6**

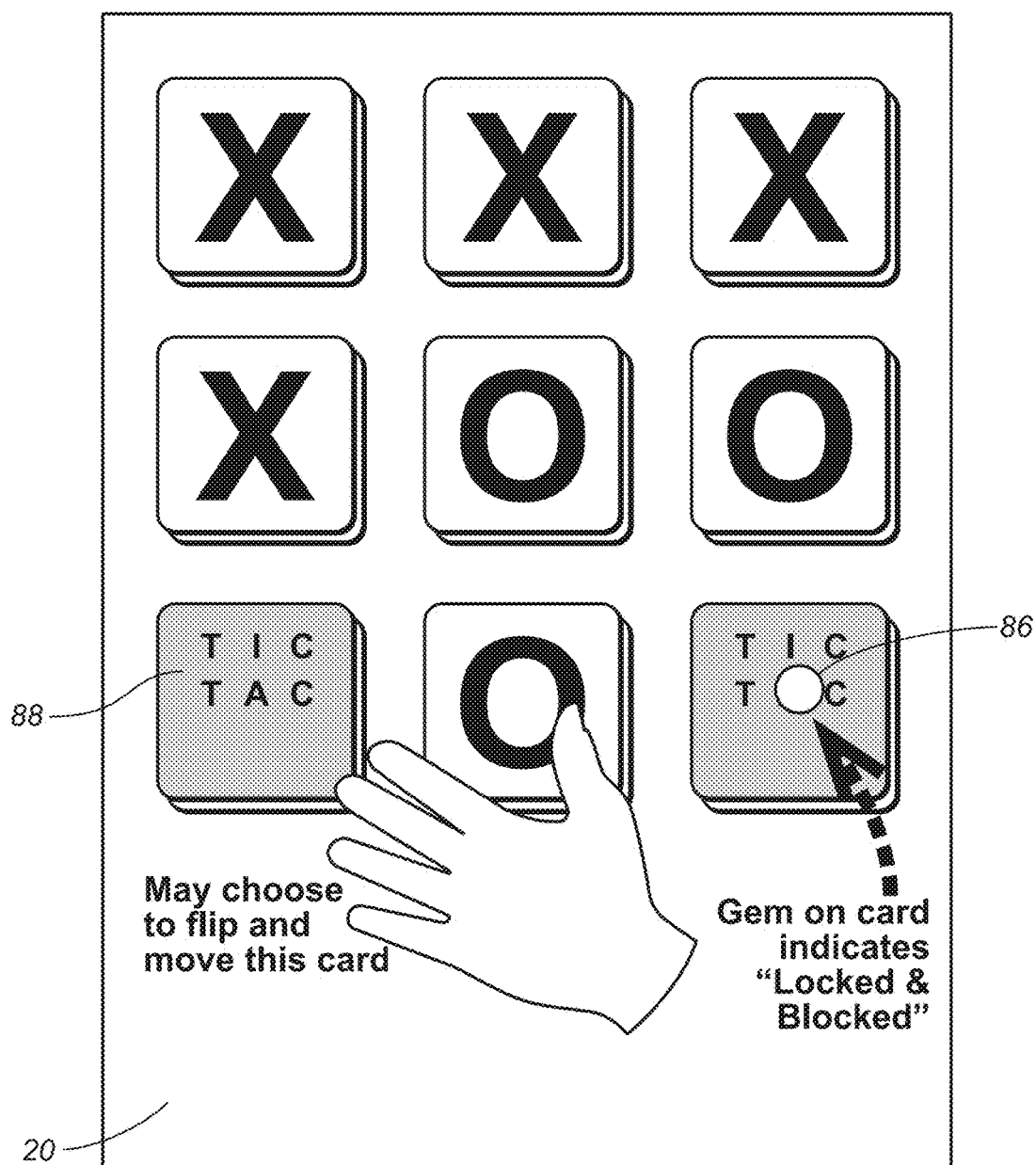


**FIG. 7**









**FIG. 10**

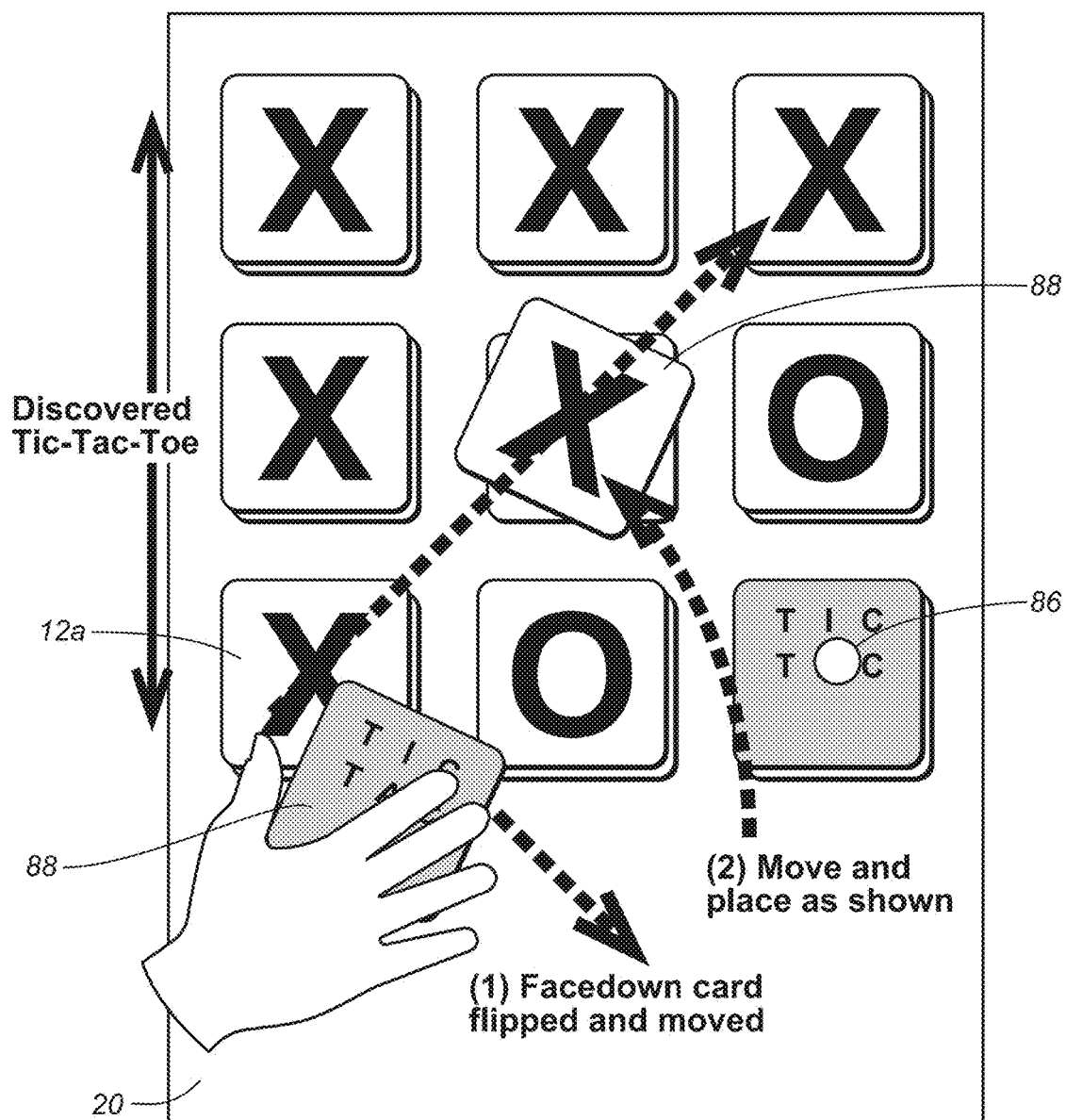


FIG. 11

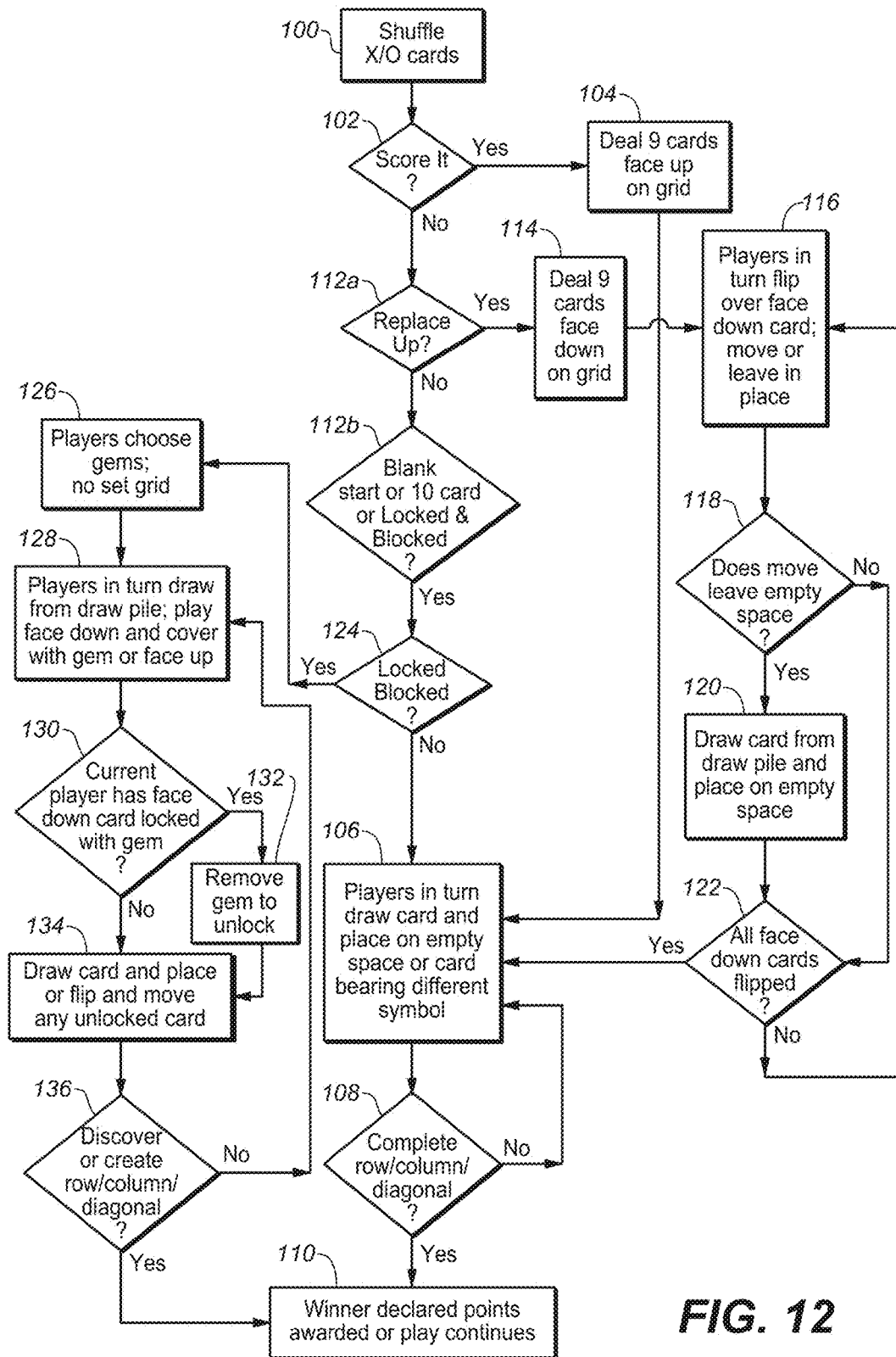


FIG. 12

**CARD-BASED THREE-IN-A-ROW GAME****CROSS REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

**[0001]** The present application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/428,485, filed Nov. 30, 2016, which is incorporated in its entirety by reference herein.

**STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT**

**[0002]** Not applicable.

**THE NAMES OR PARTIES TO A JOINT RESEARCH AGREEMENT**

**[0003]** Not applicable.

**INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE OF MATERIAL SUBMITTED ON A COMPACT DISC**

**[0004]** Not applicable.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION****Field of the Invention**

**[0005]** The present invention relates most generally to a method of playing a three-in-a-row (or more) game, such as tic-tac-toe, and more particularly to a thematically and conceptually related method set for playing tic-tac-toe with a novel card set.

**Background Discussion**

**[0006]** Tic-Tac-Toe, also known as “noughts and crosses” or “Xs and Os” is a “three-in-a-row” game that has historically been played with pencil and paper or stick and sand and involves marking open spaces on a 3×3 grid with either an “X” or an “O” mark. Because the tic-tac-toe grid is a 3×3 grid, it is a “three-in-a-row” game. That is, a player who succeeds in aligning three marks either horizontally, vertically, or diagonally wins the game. The game is considered to have very low state-space complexity, game-tree complexity, and involves very few plies (turns) to reach a conclusion. Disappointingly, once the simple game algorithm is mastered by both players, all skillfully played games will end in a draw, with no player winning. The game thus tends to be most popular with children.

**[0007]** However, simple table top or flat surface games such as tic-tac-toe provide hours of entertainment pleasure. When made sufficiently complex, the games can have cognitive benefits. To that end, the simple game of tic-tac-toe has been rendered in more than one dimension (i.e., in multiple levels). Such a variation, however, entails providing a three dimensional board structure on which to play, which includes levels above the surface on which the game board is placed. A one-dimensional tic-tac-toe game would also benefit from being made more complex by providing players more strategic options.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

**[0008]** In its most essential aspect, the present invention is an improved and reimaged form of tic-tac-toe, played on

either real or imaginary grid, and in either 3×3 grid or grids where  $n > 3$ . Players are not assigned either an X or an O, but instead play either or both marks throughout the game using X and O cards selected from a shuffled deck. Game variations significantly increase game complexity under several complexity measures.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS**

**[0009]** The invention will be better understood and objects other than those set forth above will become apparent when consideration is given to the following detailed description thereof. Such description makes reference to the annexed drawings wherein:

**[0010]** FIG. 1 is a top plan view showing a divided deck of cards each bearing an “X” and a divided deck of cards each bearing an “O”, as well as two decks of scoring cards and a playing board bearing a grid marking;

**[0011]** FIG. 2 is a top plan view showing cards as played and thus as displayed on the playing board, as well as scoring cards indicating a score differential and a draw pile;

**[0012]** FIG. 3 is a top plan view showing a port hole card held above a scorecard;

**[0013]** FIG. 4 is a top plan view showing cards “X” and “O” as played and thus as displayed on either a real (physical) or an imaginary grid;

**[0014]** FIG. 5 is a top plan view showing a card being placed on a 3×3 real or imaginary playing grid;

**[0015]** FIG. 6 is a top plan view showing placement of a card bearing the “X” value over a card bearing the “O” value on an imaginary 3×3 grid;

**[0016]** FIG. 7 is a top plan view showing placement of a of a card bearing the “X” value over a card bearing the “O” value on an imaginary 3×3 grid;

**[0017]** FIG. 8 is a top plan view showing the flipping and placement of a card “face down” during a “grid shift”;

**[0018]** FIG. 9 is a top plan view showing placement of a “gem” over a card placed face down indicating that further play by an opponent is blocked;

**[0019]** FIG. 10 is a top plan view showing a face down card about to be flipped over and another face down card with a gem placed over it;

**[0020]** FIG. 11 is a top plan view showing a face down card being flipped and played over another “X” card; and

**[0021]** FIG. 12 is a flow chart illustrating the steps for each major game variation.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION**

**[0022]** Referring first to FIGS. 1-3 wherein like reference numerals refer to like components in the various views, there is illustrated therein a new and improved game set **10** and method for playing a game of tic-tac-toe with cards. In this first embodiment or version of the game, the game set **10** includes a first deck of playing cards **12**, each bearing an “X,” a second deck of playing cards **14**, each bearing an “O”, a first deck of scoring cards **16** bearing numbers 1-5 disposed in order in the upper left corner, upper right corner, lower left corner, lower right corner, and center, respectively, and a second deck of scoring cards **18**, bearing numbers 6-10 and arranged and arrayed similarly. There are preferably at least 17 “X” cards, at least 17 “O” cards, and at least 8 scoring cards. In an embodiment, **30**, each of the

scoring cards may include all numbers from 1-10 **32** on a single side [FIG. 3]. A Port Hole Card **34** having a central hole **36** is used to cover all numbers other than the number representing a player's cumulative earned score. The card is moved to cover all numbers surpassed and those yet to be achieved and to show only the player's actual score.

**[0023]** The game set next includes an optional game board **20** having a 3x3 grid **22**, in the fashion of a tic-tac-toe board. The game may also be played without a board, wherein the players simply construct an effective grid pattern by laying cards down in a rows and columns of equal number, i.e., a square grid. The grid is at least 3x3 in size. When the first and second decks **14**, **16** of playing cards are combined, they comprise the draw pile **24**.

**[0024]** The card mark indicia described as being either Xs or Os, is somewhat arbitrary, though faithful to tradition. But it will be appreciated that such "X" and "O" indicia as designation may signify any consistently distinguishing indicia. Thus, as used herein, "X" can mean any of a first kind of mark or indicia (such as color) and "O" can mean any of a second kind of mark or indicia, the first and second indicia readily distinguishable from one another.

**[0025]** The inventive method of playing an improved game of tic-tac-toe of increased complexity, the name aptly given the name of TIC TAC WHOA!®, includes a number of game variations of increasing game complexity. All variations share a salient game principle—namely, that each player does not select his initial X or O identity but has it determined by the selection of an X or an O card from a randomly shuffled draw pile, and thus he or she may begin a game as either an "X" or an "O" player. More importantly, and further to the unique aspect of the inventive game, he or she may change X/O identity at any point during play to strategically pursue the most expedient victory by creating an unbroken line of identically marked cards bearing either mark, X or O—horizontally, vertically, or diagonally arrayed, as in regular tic-tac-toe. [TIC TAC WHOA! is a registered trademark of Zobmondo!! Entertainment, LLC of Greenbrae, Calif.]

**[0026]** Under the general rules of the game that apply universally to all game variations discussed herein, two to four players may play at the same time. A standard game deck is employed, which comprises an equal number of "X" cards and "O" cards, at least 8 scoring cards, and an optional standard three-in-a-row grid. The objective of the game is to achieve the highest point total per round. Rules for the standard beginner's game are as follows:

**[0027]** Players position themselves around the game board or an imaginary grid and the scoring cards are separated and one of each kind is distributed to each player. Then the "X" and "O" cards are combined and thoroughly shuffled, and they are placed next to the playing board in the form of a draw pile with all the cards face down.

**[0028]** No player is designated as either an "X" or an "O" player." Instead, all players are "X" and "O" players and can score using either symbol.

**[0029]** As an arbitrary rule of courtesy and custom, the youngest player begins play by drawing a card from the draw pile. It will, of course, bear either an "X" or an "O" symbol, and the player lays that card in any square on the grid. Play continues to the left (clockwise), with the next player selecting a card from the draw pile and then placing it either in an (actual or imaginary) open square or on top of a previously played card, the election to play on top of a

previously played card may be made only if the card facing up bears the opposite symbol—meaning that a card bearing an "X" cannot be played on top of another "X" card, and the same holds for "O" cards. In more complex variation of this game, a "Blank" (face down) card counts as a symbol of choice for a player, and two "Blank" cards may not be placed on top of each other.

**[0030]** A player scores one point for every standard three-in-a-row tic-tac-toe achieved (three same-symbol "X" or "O" cards in a row in any orientation—horizontally, vertically, or diagonally). It is possible to score multiple points per turn. But play does not stop merely because a three-in-a-row combination is achieved. In fact, play continues on the fully occupied grid until all the cards in the draw pile have been used or one player reaches 10 points or all cards on the grid bear the same symbol. If a newly played card creates more than one three in a row (for example: playing a card in a corner that sets up both a diagonal and horizontal three-in-a-row) the player can score on all tic-tac-toes created. A turn scoring three or more points is called "Tic Tac Whoa!" A player can only score if the card last played creates a new three-in-a-row. If there was a three-in-a-row combination from a previous turn, that combination cannot be included when a new three-in-row is scored.

**[0031]** If at any time, all the cards showing on the grid bear the same symbol (i.e., all 9 cards are showing an "X") then the game is over and the player with the highest score wins the round.

**[0032]** Scoring: Scorecards bear numbers from 1-10 in upper and lower rows of four numbers and a middle row of three numbers. Each player may have a "Port Hole Card", which is simply a similarly sized card having a hole in its middle sized sufficiently to view any single number on a scorecard through the hole. Thus, to use the scorecards, each player places the card bearing numbers and covers the card with the Port Hole Card. As scores are earned, the player uncovers each number in order, adding cumulative scores—e.g., if the player has two points and scores another single point, he or she displays the number 3 through the hole in the Port Hole Card.

**[0033]** Strategic advantage is occasionally gained by passing up on a scoring opportunity in order to place a card so the tableau undermines scoring opportunities for opponents.

**[0034]** FIGS. 4-11 show grid development during play of several game variations. Referring first to FIG. 4, in a simple game variation **40**, called "10 Card," intended for two beginner players aged 4 years and older, a small deck of cards is counted out, the deck consisting of five "X" cards and five "O" cards. This deck is shuffled and the cards placed face down for a consolidated and single draw pile. During a turn, a player draws a card from the draw pile. The card selected is played by placing it anywhere on a real or imaginary "Tic Tac Toe" grid. The game board is not required. The player can place only the card drawn and may not move any card already placed on the grid. Additionally, in this variation, during a turn the player may not place a card on top of one that has already been played.

**[0035]** When a player achieves three-in-a-row of any symbol, it is a win. Draws are possible. Again, each time a card is drawn, the player is either an "X" player or an "O" player for that turn. Strategically, it is advantageous to consider and count how many cards of each symbol have been played when formulating a strategy. If the game ends in a tie, the deck is shuffled and play resumed.

**[0036]** FIGS. 5-6 show grid development in another game variation **50** of relatively basic complexity, called “ScoreIt,” intended for 2 to 4 players, 5 years of age and older, 9 cards are dealt, face-up, in rows of three, making a 3×3 grid. If all 9 cards come up “X”s or “O”s, the cards are collected and reshuffled. The remainder of the deck comprises the draw pile.

**[0037]** During a turn, a player draws a card from the draw pile, and the card being played is placed anywhere on the existing grid. However, same-symbol cards cannot be played on top of one another (refer here to FIG. 6). Again, the player on his or her turn can only place the card drawn and may not move a card already played on the grid.

**[0038]** When a three-in-a-row is achieved, a point is added on the scorecard, but the cards are not removed from the grid. Instead, play simply continues with an entirely filled grid. Each tic-tac-toe is worth a point. The first player to ten points (or the player with the most points when the cards run out) is the winner. If the result is a tie, the cards are shuffled and play continues.

**[0039]** In yet another game variation of moderate complexity **70**, called “Blank Start,” intended for players five years old and older, during a turn, a player draws a card from the draw pile and the card being played can be placed anywhere on a real or imaginary 3×3 Tic Tac Toe grid, including on top of a previously played card. However, same-symbol cards cannot be played on top of each other. (See FIG. 7) As with the previous variations, the player can only place the card drawn and may not move a card already in play on the grid.

**[0040]** When three-in-a-row is achieved, it is scored on the scorecard, but the cards are not removed from the grid. Each tic-tac-toe is worth a point and the first player to reach ten points (or the player with the most points when the cards run out) is the winner. In case of a tie, the cards are shuffled and play resumes.

**[0041]** In still another variation of more demanding and increasing complexity, called “ReplaceUp,” intended for players aged 7 years old and older, nine cards are dealt face down in a 3×3 grid. The remaining “X” and “O” cards become the draw pile.

**[0042]** The first player flips over a card on the grid. Each successive player chooses a face down card to flip over. At the time a card is chosen and flipped, it may be moved to another spot, but only onto cards that are already face up. Existing face up cards cannot be moved. If a player moves a card such that it leaves an open space in the grid, the player replaces the card with another card from the draw pile, face-up. This is the final act in a player’s turn, and points are also awarded for any tic-tac-toes that are created by this new card. Each card in the grid must be flipped over before any cards are drawn from the pile.

**[0043]** The first player to ten points (or the player with the most points when the cards run out) is the winner. In case of a tie, the cards are reshuffled and play resumes.

**[0044]** Referring next to FIGS. 8-11, in an advanced variation **80** suitable for most players 10 years old and older, called “Locked & Blocked,” the shuffled deck is placed face down in a draw pile. Each player chooses a colored gem.

**[0045]** In this level of play, the 3×3 grid **82** not pre-set; the developing grid is fluid and does not have fixed with borders. Rather, the grid is set up and develops as the cards are played. Indeed, the grid may even shift (see movement from **82a** to **82b**) in the first few turns as cards are drawn and

placed or flipped over and moved **84**, although the cards cannot go outside of a 3×3 grid. The first player draws a card and plays it in on the playing surface, face up or face down, and the player may look at the card before playing it. Cards played face down are temporarily “Locked & Blocked.” The player must first place his or her card face down and then place a colored gem **86** on top of the card to identify the card as a “Locked & Blocked” card [see FIG. 9].

**[0046]** No other player may flip a Locked & Blocked card or play a card on this space other than the player who placed his or her gem on the card, and he or she must do so on his/her next turn. After that original player’s turn, the gem must be removed and, accordingly, the card is unlocked and unblocked.

**[0047]** Now referring to FIG. 10, the next player may choose a face down card on the grid **88** to flip over (except a Locked & Blocked card) or draw a card from the draw pile, at his or her election. If a card **88** is flipped over, it must be moved from its current position. A face down card which is flipped and moved can be placed on an empty space in a 3×3 grid or on top of an existing card as long as it is not the same symbol or Locked & Blocked. It must be placed face up. If a card is already face up on the grid, it cannot be moved. A card drawn from the pile may be placed face up or face down on an empty space or on top of an existing card as long as it is not the same symbol or Locked & Blocked. The person playing the card may look at it before playing it. Remember, a drawn card played face down is Locked & Blocked (the player’s gem is placed on top) and can only be played on top of any face up card or on an empty space.

**[0048]** Looking now at FIG. 11, if a player flips over a card **88** that had been played face down on top of another card **12a**, and if moving that card **88** results in a score for both the moved card and the “uncovered” card **12a**, the player who flipped over and moved the card may take points for both the created tic-tac-toes and the “discovered” tic-tac-toes.

**[0049]** If a card is drawn, it counts as a move, and the drawn card can be placed anywhere on the grid (except on a same-symbol card). If the player moves a card and it leaves an open space in the grid, the player replaces the card with another card from the draw pile. Before replacing the card with a card from the draw pile, the player may look at the card before placing it face down. Cards replaced face down are locked and blocked, which means, first “locked”, and no other player may flip this card except the player who placed the card in this status on his/her next turn, and after that it’s open, as well as “blocked”, meaning no other player may play a card on this space except the player who placed the card in this status on his next turn, and then it’s open.

**[0050]** The first player to ten points (or the player with the most points when the draw pile cards run out) is the winner. In case of a tie, cards are reshuffled up and play resumes.

**[0051]** In a final variation of the game for experts called “Insane,” and intended for players 12 years old and older, the X/O deck is placed face down in a draw pile, but there is no pre-set 3×3 grid. Rather, the first player draws a card and plays it in the middle of the playing surface, either face up or face down, and the player may look at the card and conceal it from others before placing it. Cards replaced face down are Locked & Blocked, as described above.

**[0052]** Each succeeding player may flip over a face down card or draw a card from the pile. If a card is flipped over, it must be moved. A drawn or moved card can be placed on top of an existing card (no same symbols though) or on any



side of a card already played (but cannot be placed diagonally). If a card is already played (if it is face-up on the grid), it cannot be moved. Cards drawn from the pile may be placed face up or face down, and the player playing the card may look at it before playing.

**[0053]** In this version of the game, the grid is set up as cards are played. Thus, the grid may shift in the first few turns as cards are drawn and placed or flipped over and moved. The cards cannot go outside the developing 3×3 grid.

**[0054]** The first player to ten points (or the player with the most points when the cards run out or have been flipped) is the winner. If the game results in a tie, the cards are reshuffled and play resumes.

**[0055]** Looking next at FIG. 12, there is shown a flow chart illustrating the principal steps in each of the above-described game variations other than “Insane.” Thus, the flow of play for the above-described games of “10 Card”, “Score It”, “Blank Start”, “Replace Up”, and “Locked & Blocked” are set out.

**[0056]** At the beginning of each game, a draw pile of X/O cards (or other binary symbol or element set) is shuffled **100**. If the game being played is Score It **102**, then 9 X/O cards are laid face up in a 3×3 grid arrangement **104**. Play then proceeds with each player, in turn, drawing a card from the draw pile and placing the card either on an empty space or on a card already placed but bearing a different symbol on its face up side **106**. Play proceeds in turn until a complete row or column or diagonal line shows a line of face up cards bearing the same symbol **108**, at which time a winner is declared and points awarded **110** as decided before play commences.

**[0057]** If the game is not Score It but is instead “Replace Up” **112a**, then 9 cards are dealt face down in a 3×3 arrangement **114**. In the early phase of this game, players in turn flip over the face down cards **116** and with each turn, may either move the card flipped over onto another face up card not bearing the same symbol or may leave the card in place. If the flipped card is moved and thus leaves an empty space in the grid **118**, a card is drawn by the current player and placed face up on the empty space **120**. If not, play, players continue flipping cards **122** until all face down cards have been flipped over, at which point play continues as at box **106** et seq. When a player completes a three-in-a-row card alignment, a point is scored, and the player is either declared a winner (10 Card), or play continues at box **106** until the draw pile is exhausted.

**[0058]** If the game being played is not Replace Up, then it may be instead “Blank Start” or “10 Card” or “Locked & Blocked” **112b**.

**[0059]** “If the game is Locked & Blocked **124**, then players next step after shuffling the X/O draw pile deck is to select a marker **126**, such as a gem, for use in placing over face down cards during game play. No grid location is set and may be shifted, as described above. Players in turn draw from the draw pile, inspect the card symbol, and then place the drawn card either face down or face up on a developing grid; face down cards are locked and blocked and cannot be flipped over by the opposing player. They are marked with the marker to signify the player who has locked and blocked the card **128**. If on a subsequent turn the player has a face down card with a marker atop **130**, the player must remove the gem, flip over the card to unlock it, and must then move it either to a blank space in the developing grid or place in

on top of another face up card not bearing the same symbol **132**. If at a turn a player does not have a locked card on the grid, he or she draws a card from the draw pile and either places it atop a card not bearing the same symbol or on an empty space **134**. If at **132** or **134**, the player creates or discovers a 3-in-a-row card alignment **136**, a point is scored and play continues at box **128** until a player reaches a predetermined score or until the draw pile is exhausted. The player with the most points is declared the winner.

**[0060]** Electronic versions of the game are clearly contemplated and considered to be within the scope of the invention, including in the form of apps for connected devices that enable play-against-device and play-against-a-friend formats, either for remote play or with others physically present.

**[0061]** From the foregoing, it will be evident that the inventive game, in its most essential aspect, is a card-based tic-tac-toe game, wherein each turn in play begins by drawing a card from either a consolidated or divided and dealt draw pile comprising an identical number of “X” and “O” cards, shuffled so that they are randomly ordered throughout the pile(s). Accordingly, when a player’s turn arrives, he or she does not know what kind of card will be played. Thus, players do not assume an “X” or an “O” identity that is maintained during play. Rather, a player simply plays the card drawn and attempts to configure the tic-tac-toe playing grid either to complete a score with either kind of card, to set the grid up for a later score, or to block an opponent’s score. Several novel elements are also introduced to make the uncertainty yet more strategically interesting: firstly, the game is no longer limited to only two players, but can instead be played by three or even four players at once; secondly, cards need not be played only on open (free, unplayed) spaces, but in most game variations it is permitted (even desirable) that cards can be played on top of previously played cards, as long as the card does not bear the same “X” or “O” symbol or is a blank card; and thirdly, most importantly, a player can score on any three-in-a-row combination, comprising either “X”s or “O”s.

**[0062]** While the game is “card-based” in concept, in an electronic version of the game, the “cards” can be virtual, comprising any kind of random choice generator algorithm that represents and simulates shuffling a deck and selecting a card from the shuffled deck. Thus, an “X” or an “O” card or symbol in such a game implementation would not necessarily even be represented visually as a virtual card, but merely a symbol the choice of which is generated and elicited after the last play has been completed.

**[0063]** There are numerous novel elements and features that characterize the game. Salient features includes: (1) both players can and will be both x’s and o’s during the game; (b) at each turn a player draws a card not knowing whether it will be an “X” or an “O” on that turn, thereby creating a sense of mystery and requiring flexibility and in devising a strategy, as the player must contemplate both the offensive opportunities to score and the defensive considerations of not creating scoring chances for an opponent; (c) no player is either an “X” or an “O” for the entire game, but is one or the other on every turn and cannot know which until the card is drawn; (d) except for the beginner level, cards are continually played on top of other cards and no card may be played on another card on the grid bearing the same symbol (that is, an “X” card cannot be played on top of a face up “X” card on the grid, and an “O” card cannot

be played on top of an already played “O” card; (e) except for the beginner level (which is really just an introduction/training) to the more difficult levels) each tic-tac-toe scores a point; (f) a player may score multiple points on a turn by creating multiple tic-tac-toes in multiple directions; and (g) the game does not end after the first tic-tac-toe is created.

**[0064]** The above disclosure is sufficient to enable one of ordinary skill in the art to practice the invention, and provides the best mode of practicing the invention presently contemplated by the inventor. While there is provided herein a full and complete disclosure of the preferred embodiments of this invention, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction, dimensional relationships, and operation shown and described. Various modifications, alternative constructions, changes and equivalents will readily occur to those skilled in the art and may be employed, as suitable, without departing from the true spirit and scope of the invention. Such changes might involve alternative materials, components, structural arrangements, sizes, shapes, forms, functions, operational features or the like. For instance, it is contemplated that several variations will emerge naturally from the use of larger card decks, larger grids, and thus larger player groups. Multidimensional grids providing for three-in-a-row matching vertically are also contemplated, as are games calling for matching four- or more-in-a-row or more.

**[0065]** Therefore, the above description and illustrations should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention, which is defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed as invention is:

**1.** A card-based method of playing tic-tac-toe, comprising:  
 providing a plurality of identically sized cards bearing identical indicia on a first side and either an “X” or an “O” on a second side so as to be denominated either an “X” or an “O” card;  
 consolidating the “X” and “O” cards into a deck;  
 shuffling the deck so as to form an initial draw pile with the game cards in a face down orientation;  
 either distributing the initial draw pile to game players so as to form player draw piles or leaving the initial draw pile singular and intact;  
 wherein play proceeds in turns and each player begins a turn by selecting a card from the initial draw pile or his or her player draw pile and plays the card either onto a preformed tic-tac-toe 3×3 or greater grid on a game board or onto a playing surface so as to begin a forming 3×3 or greater grid independently of a preformed grid;  
 wherein play proceeds by each player laying down cards selected from a draw pile either onto open squares in the preformed grid or forming 3×3 or greater grid or onto previously played cards at his or her election; and  
 wherein a point is scored by a player who achieves a conventional k-in-a-row configuration of either “X” or “O” cards and wherein multiple points can be scored in a single turn if multiple three-in-a-row configurations are achieved.

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