Groundwork Exercises over Poles
The Tellington Way

Compiled by Rebecca Booth, Elementals Equine Therapies, Tellington Equine Instructor

How to do Pole Exercises the Tellington Way

Background:

The Tellington Method was the brain child of Linda Tellington-Jones more than 45 years ago. As a student of Moshe Feldenkrais, she wondered what would happen if those same principles were applied to working with horses. The rest is history. You can apply the underlying principles of the Tellington Method to almost any technique you want.

Mindset:

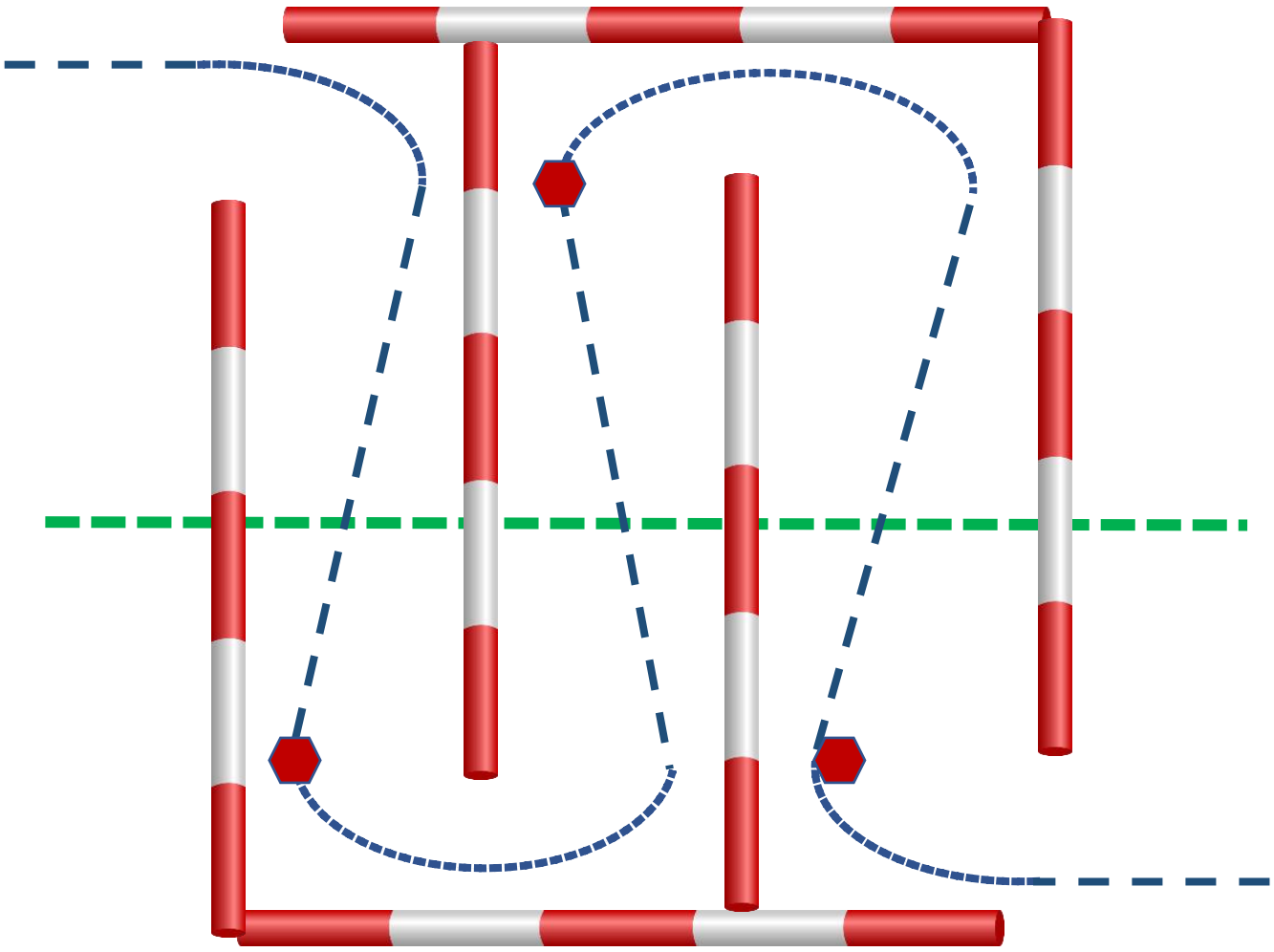
Change your Mind – Change your Horse, meaning if you change your approach and perception, your horse will change as well. It was one of Linda's original sayings and is now adopted and modified by many. Just some of the other useful foundation principles include: -

1. You horse needs to feel safe before any change can occur.
2. Postural habits can change quickly if the activities are unfamiliar, this engages the brain to allow true learning.
3. Learning will be blocked if there is any pain, fear or fear of pain. This can be extended to excessive (for that horse) stress, exhaustion or anxiety.
4. Activities are best kept to a short timeframe to allow the horse to focus.
5. A pause or space to process is very important to embed any new learning. Moving on too quick can cause the achievement to be overridden by new information.
6. Set your horse up for success, if they cannot do an exercise, make is easier. If they (or you) get frustration or stuck, put them away for a break. It can be for any length of time.

Tips for Ground Work Exercises

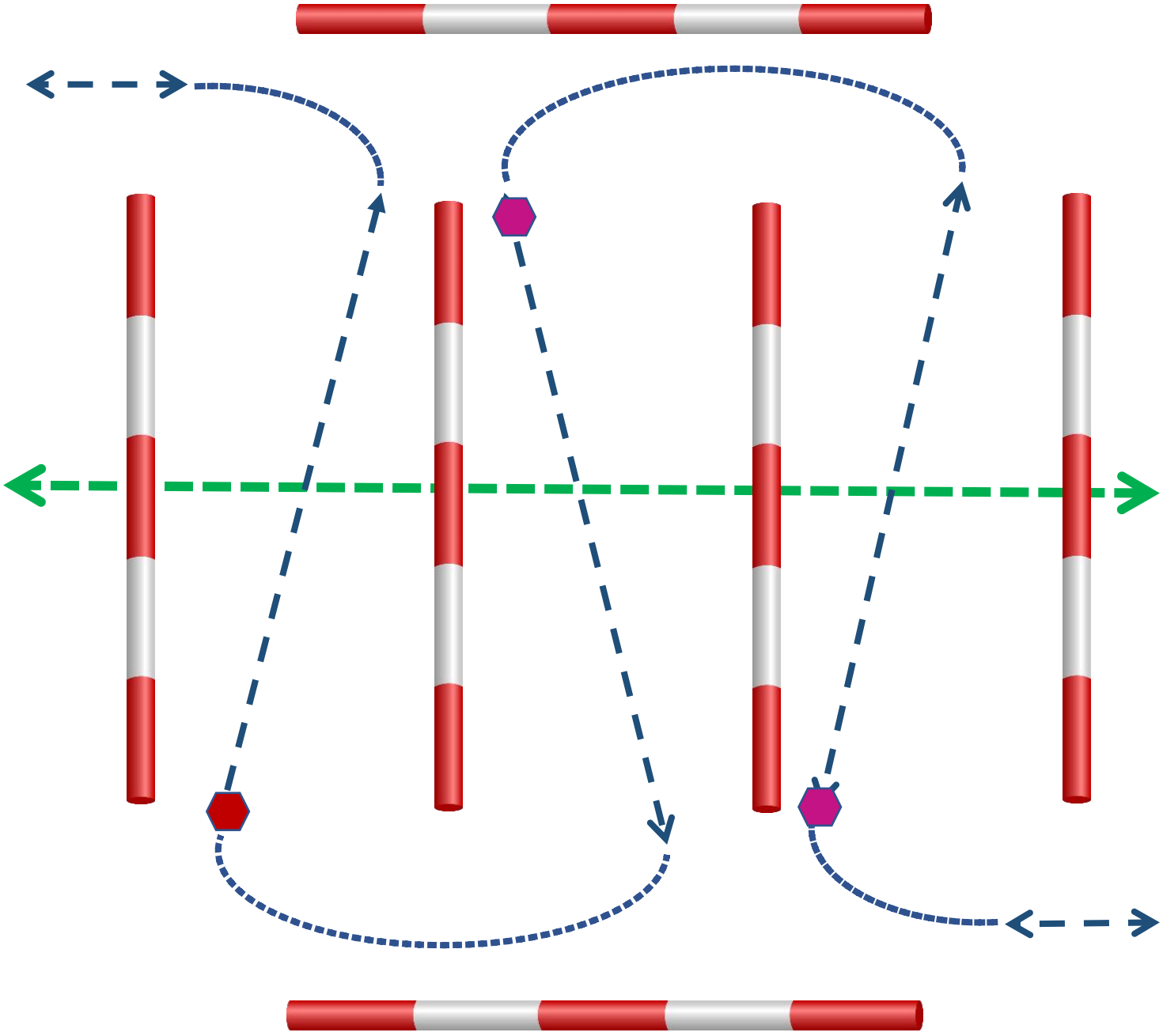
1. All exercises should be done in hand. They can be done ridden at a walk later if desired. You can also do these exercises at liberty.
2. Do the work slowly, your role is to support the horse, best results will be achieved if you let them problem solve and work out how to organise their body. If the horse just follows unthinkingly no real change can occur.
3. Poles should be different heights and different distance in between. These exercises are different than other pole exercises which are designed to improve rhythm and stride. Change the configuration, orientation etc regularly to keep them thinking.
4. Remember the aim of the exercise is to help your horse, how to start, stop, negotiate an element, use their brain and organise their body around corners in a balanced way. This will change habits.
5. Clip the lead to the side, it will help with your communication even though it seems weird. Try it.
6. Be aware if you pull back with your hand to stop or steady your horse. Pulling back will send them forward (physics) and they will become unbalanced.
7. Take note of your horse's head position when they take that first step. Do they lift it up to take a step ? If so, check that you are giving your horse plenty of time to respond to your forward cue. You may be inadvertently pulling them out of balance.
8. You don't have to be in between the poles with your horse.
9. Your horse needs to take a step forward before it can turn.
10. When to you get the hang of the exercises, get creative, apply this method to other pole or obstacle configurations you may have seen.
11. ENJOY & HAVE FUN

Classic Labyrinth



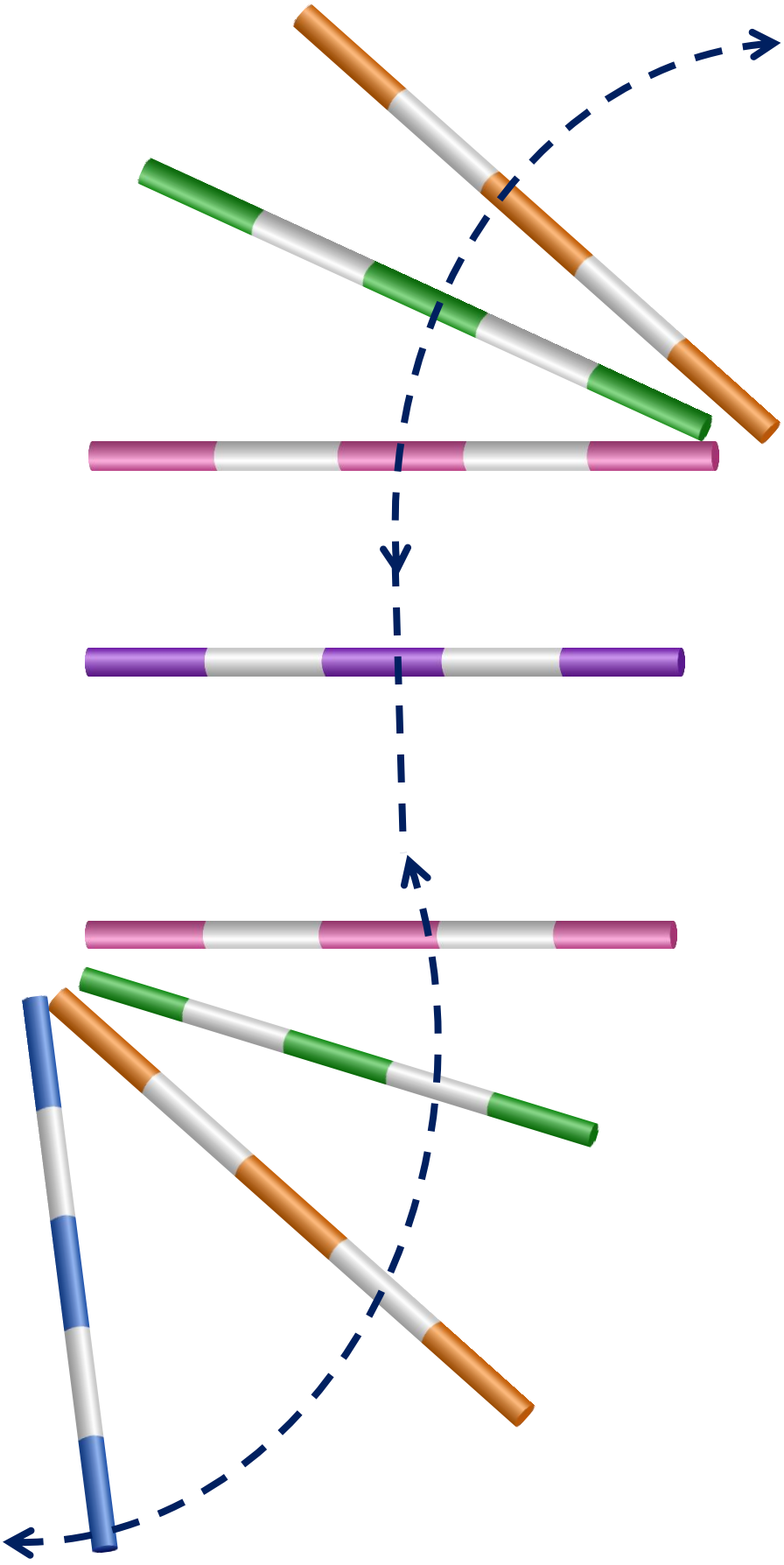
STOP

Open Labyrinth

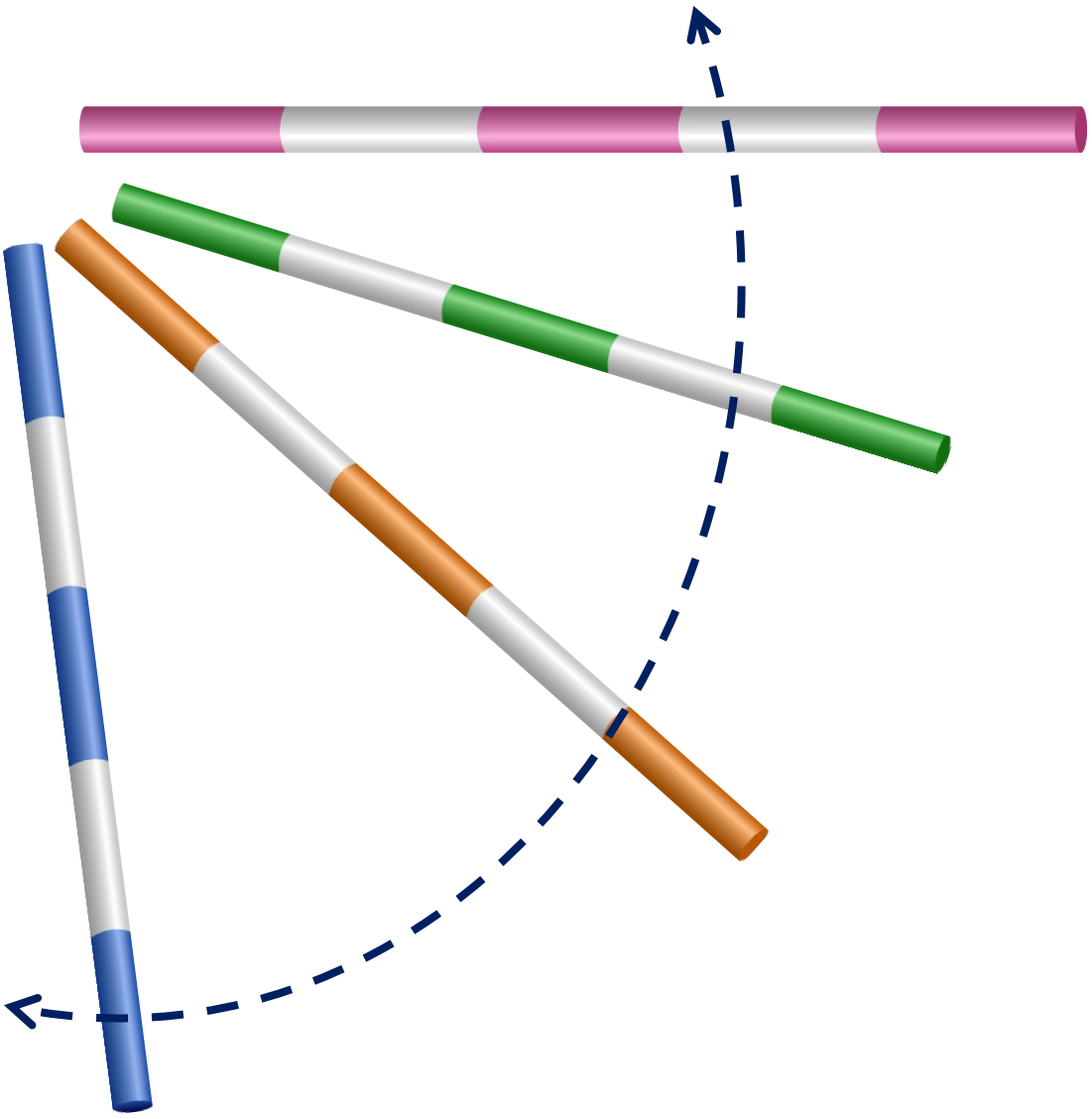


STOP

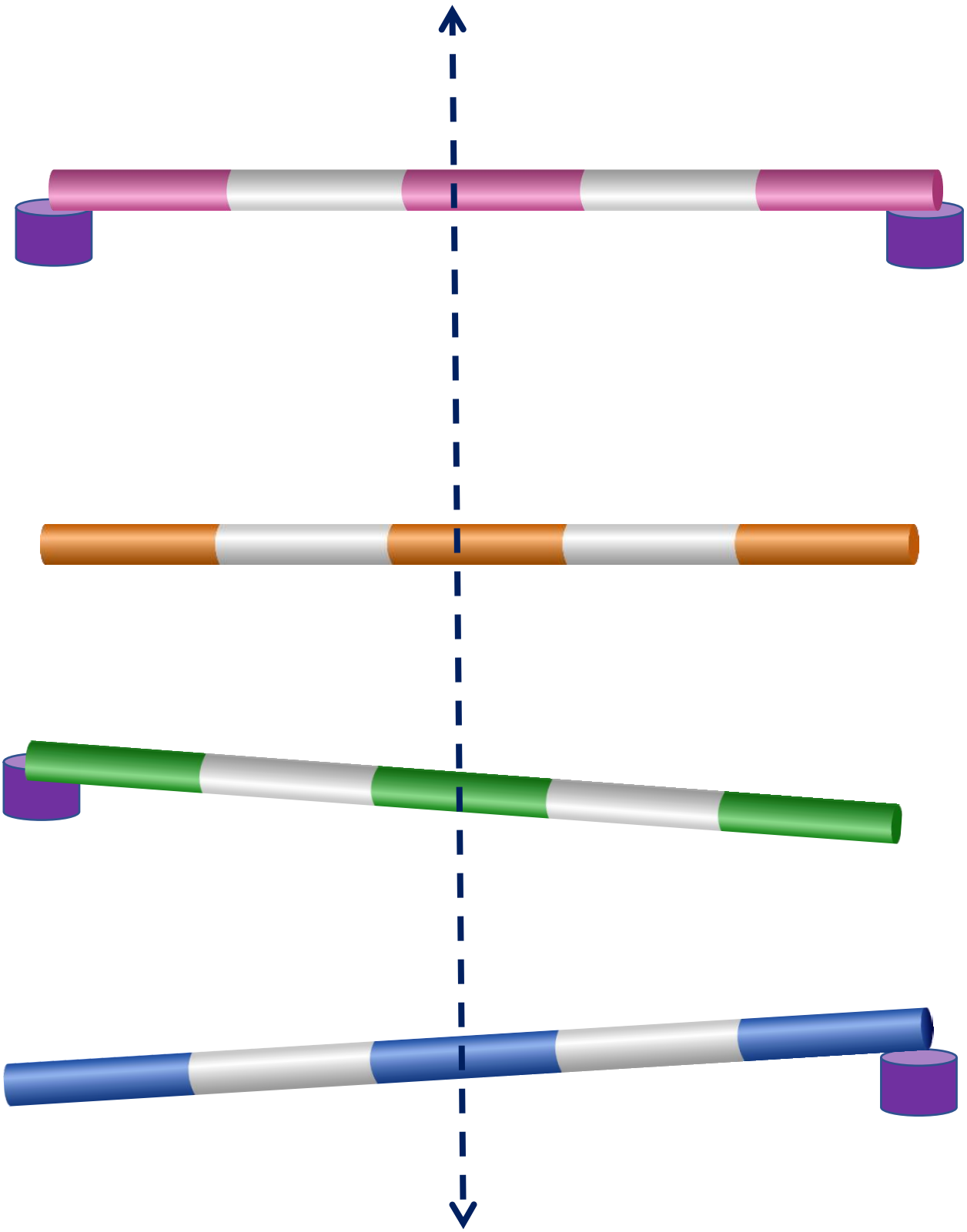
Double Fan



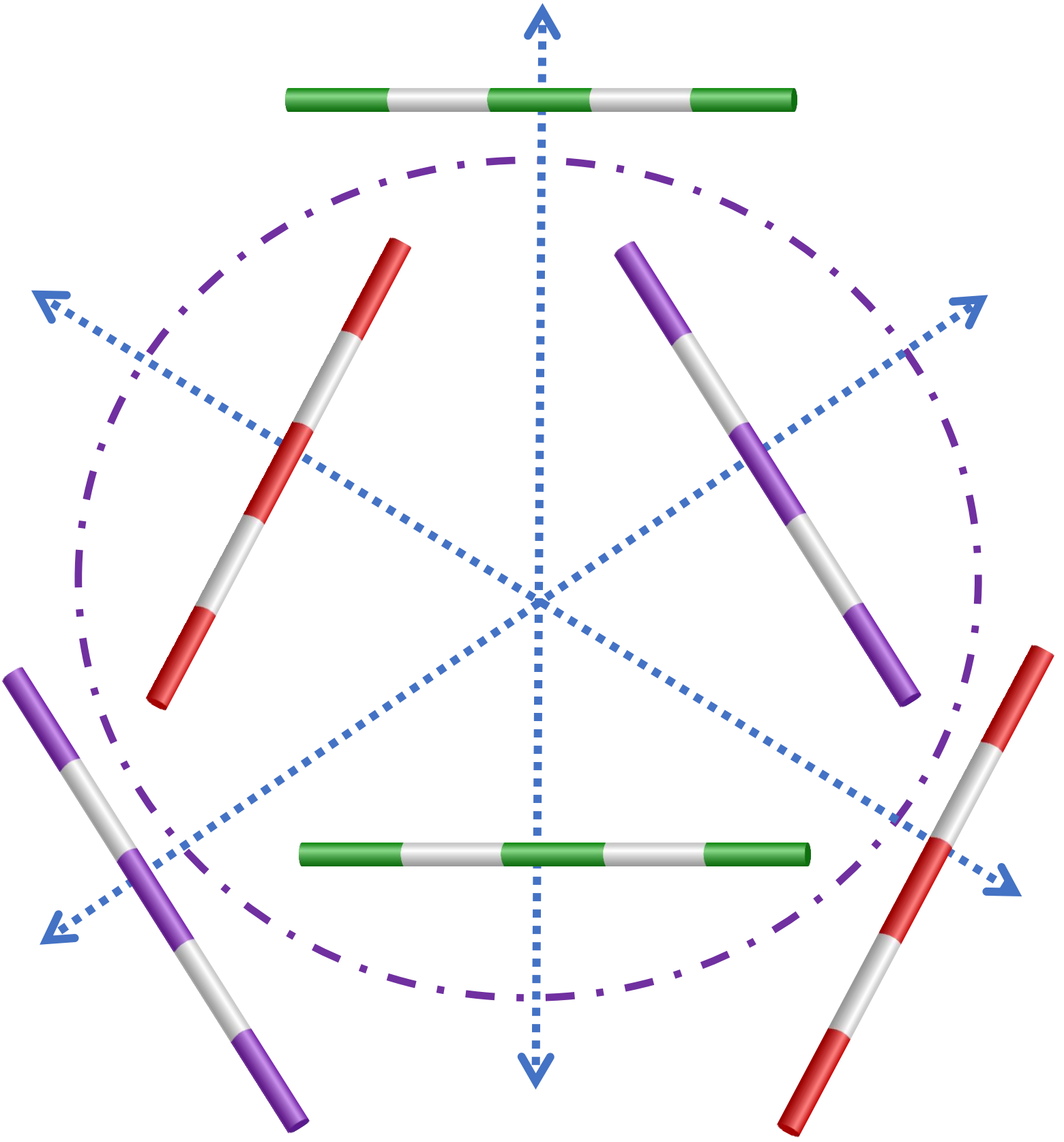
Single Fan



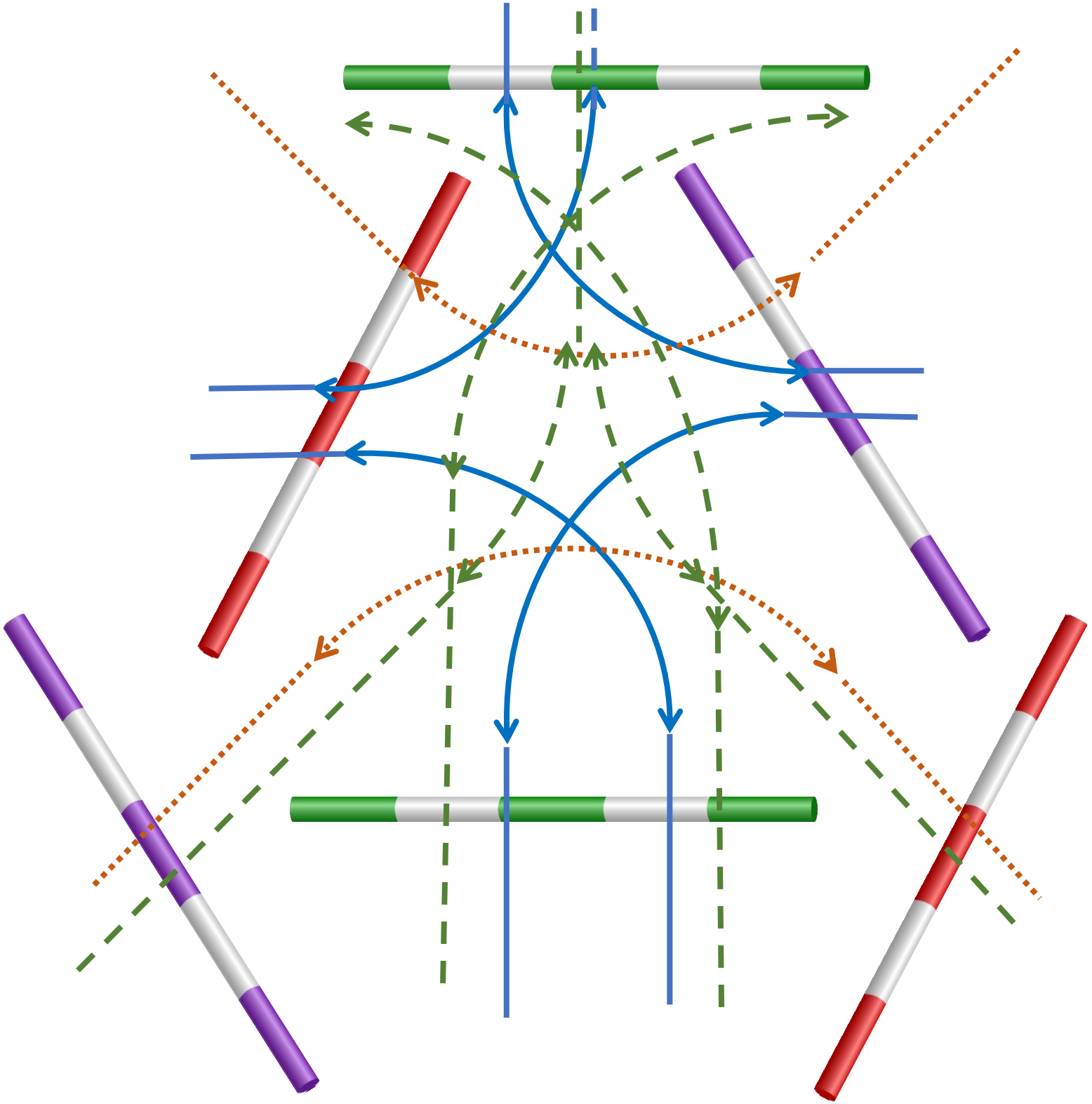
Uneven Poles



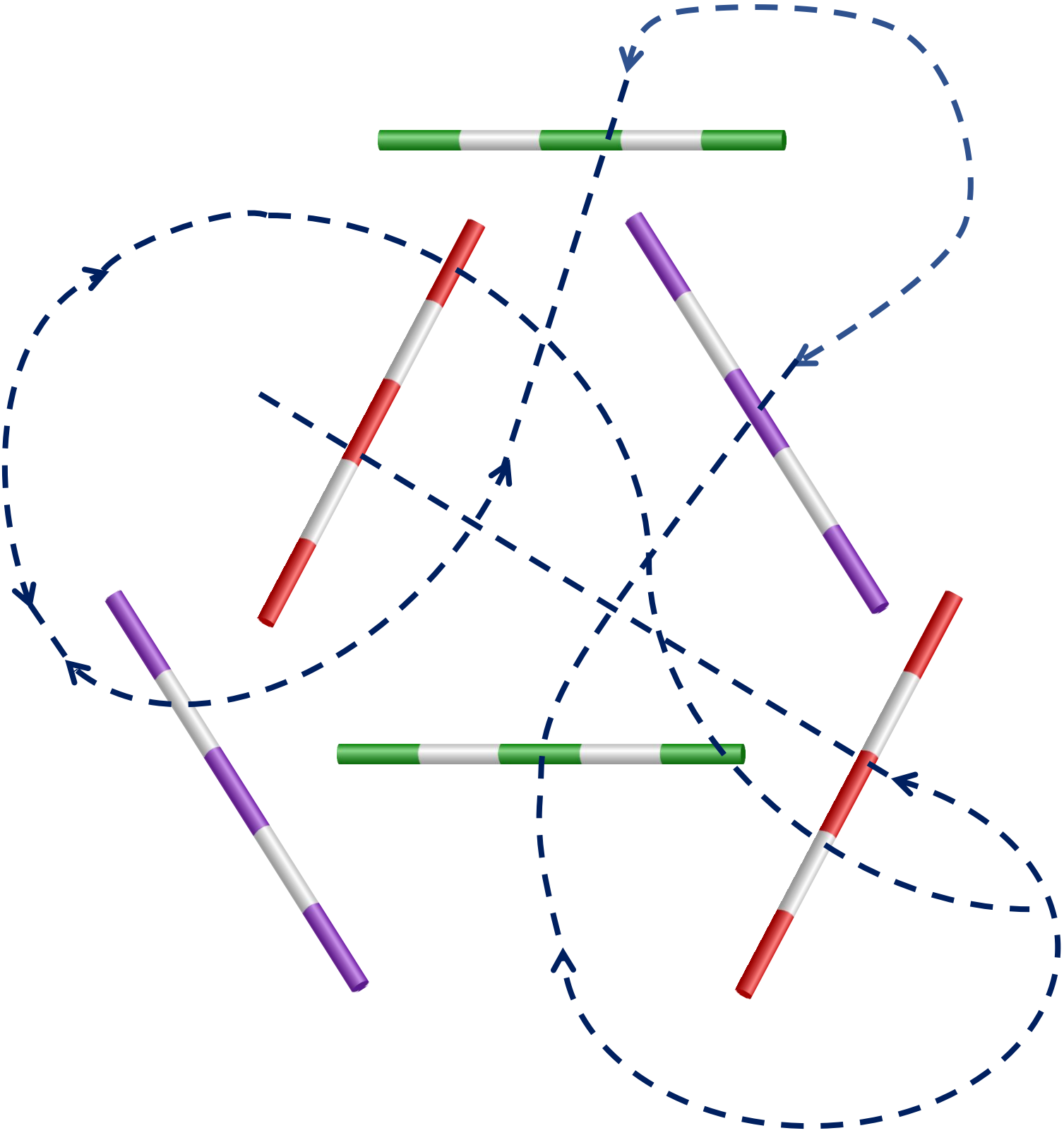
Double Triangle



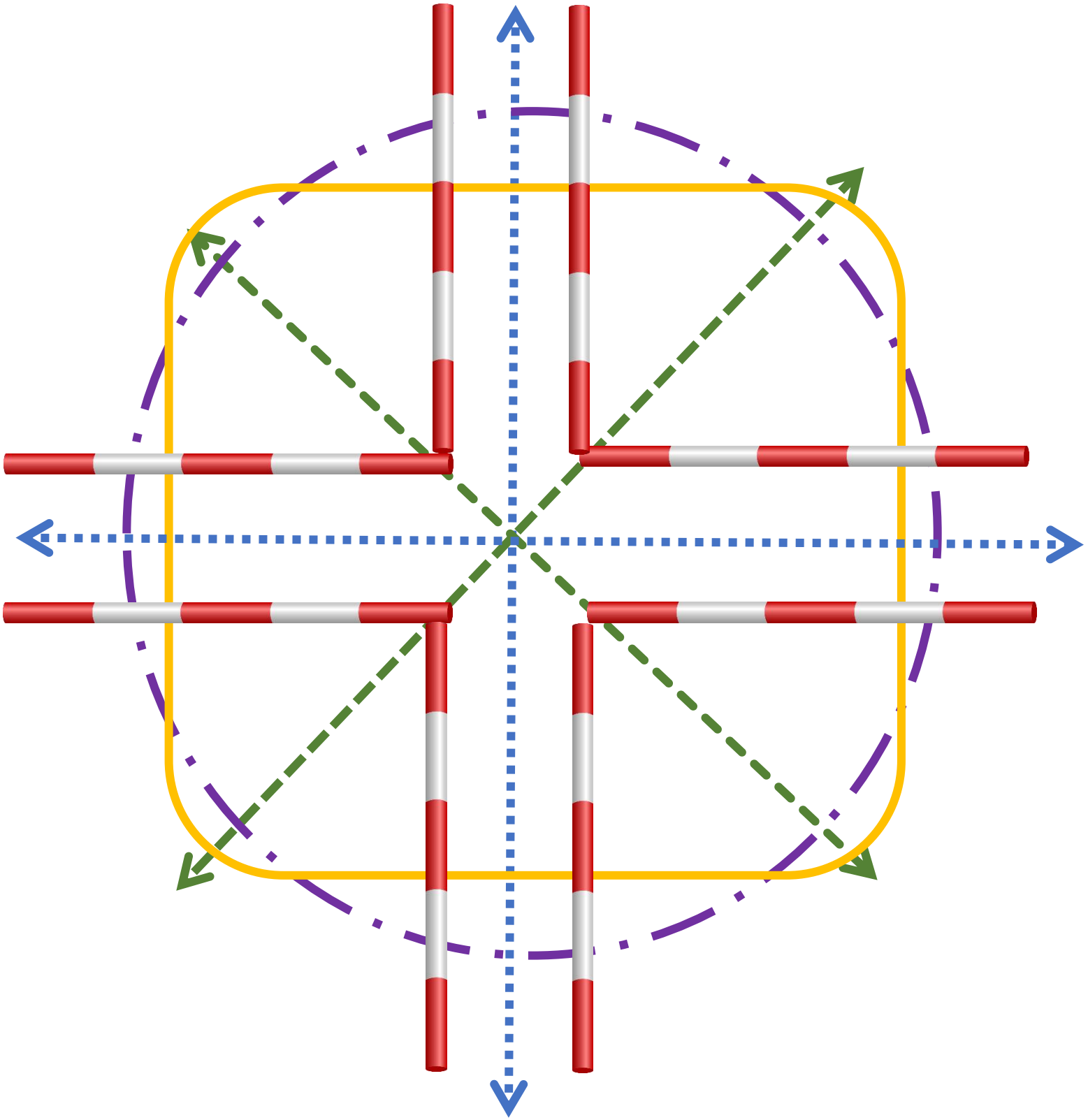
Double Triangle 2



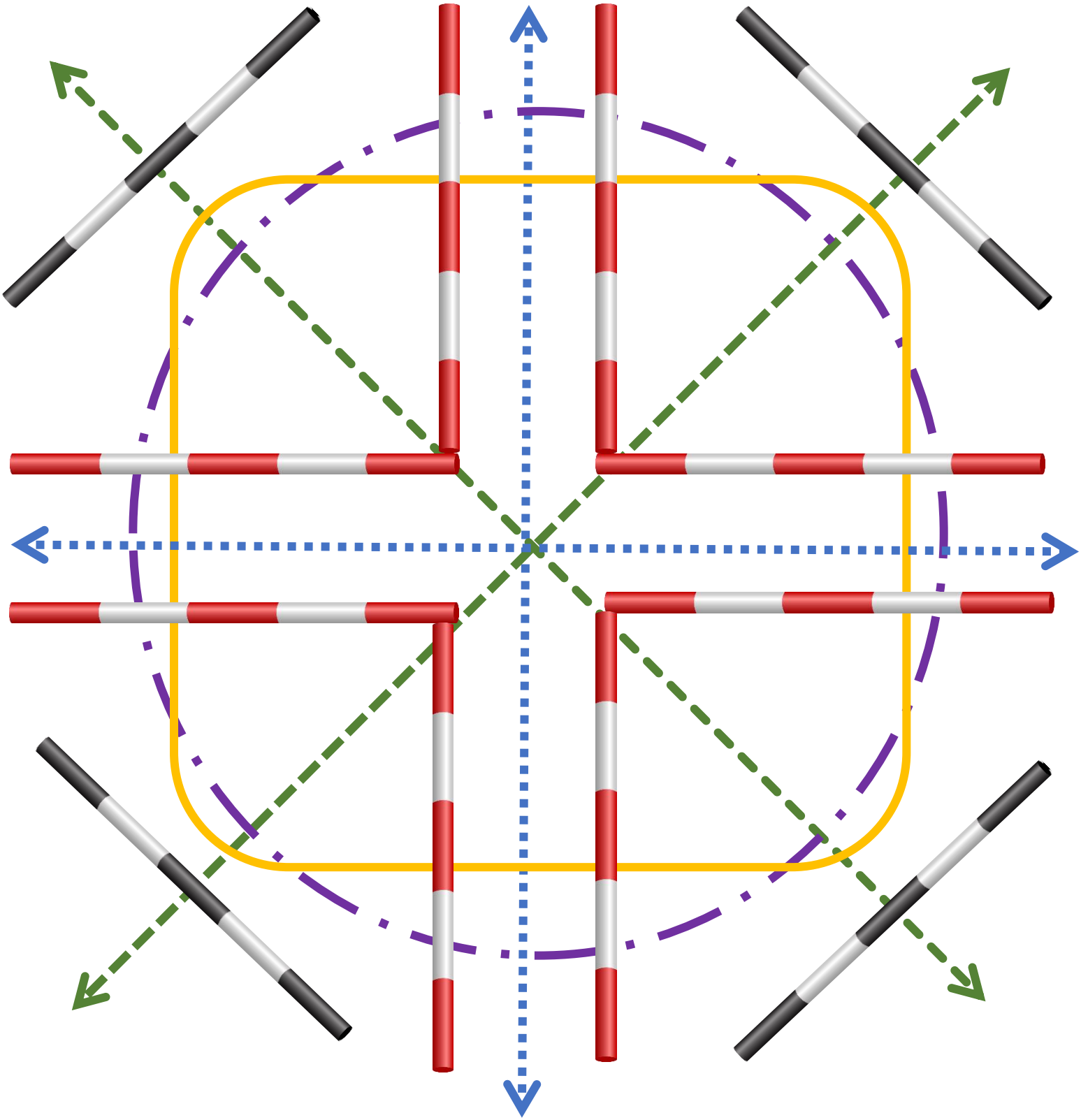
Double Triangle - Freeform



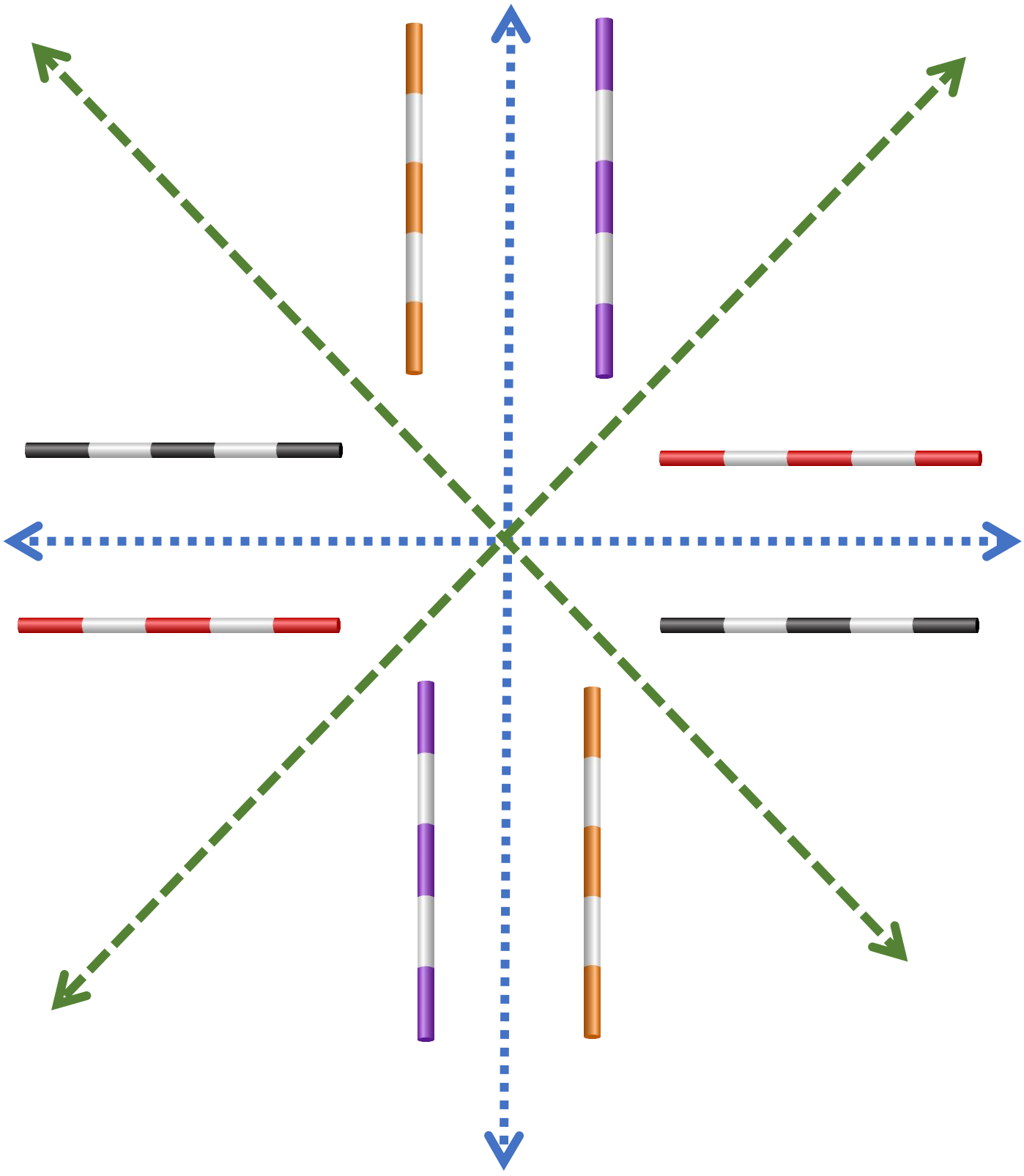
Classic Cross



Classic Cross Plus



Open Cross



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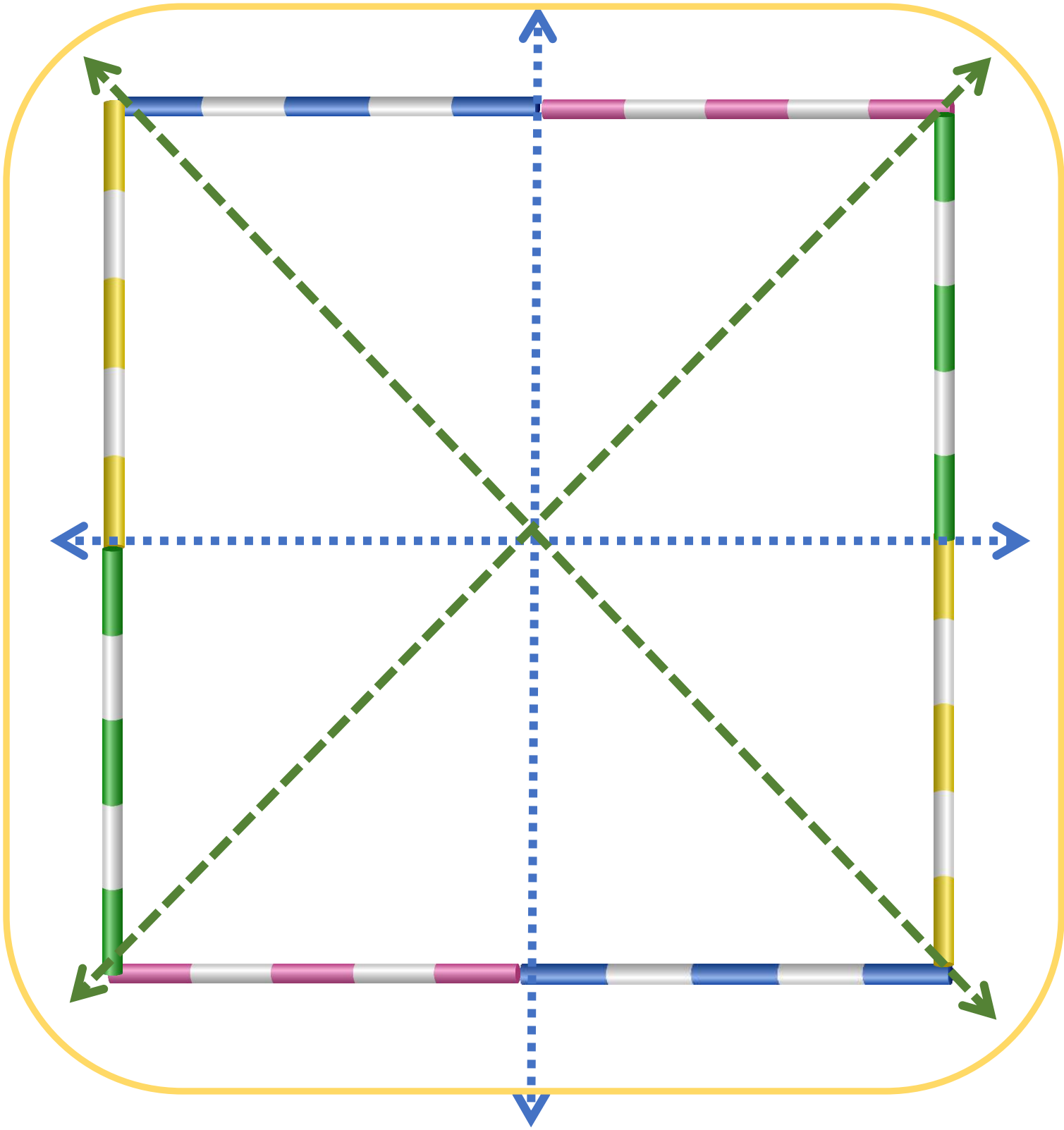

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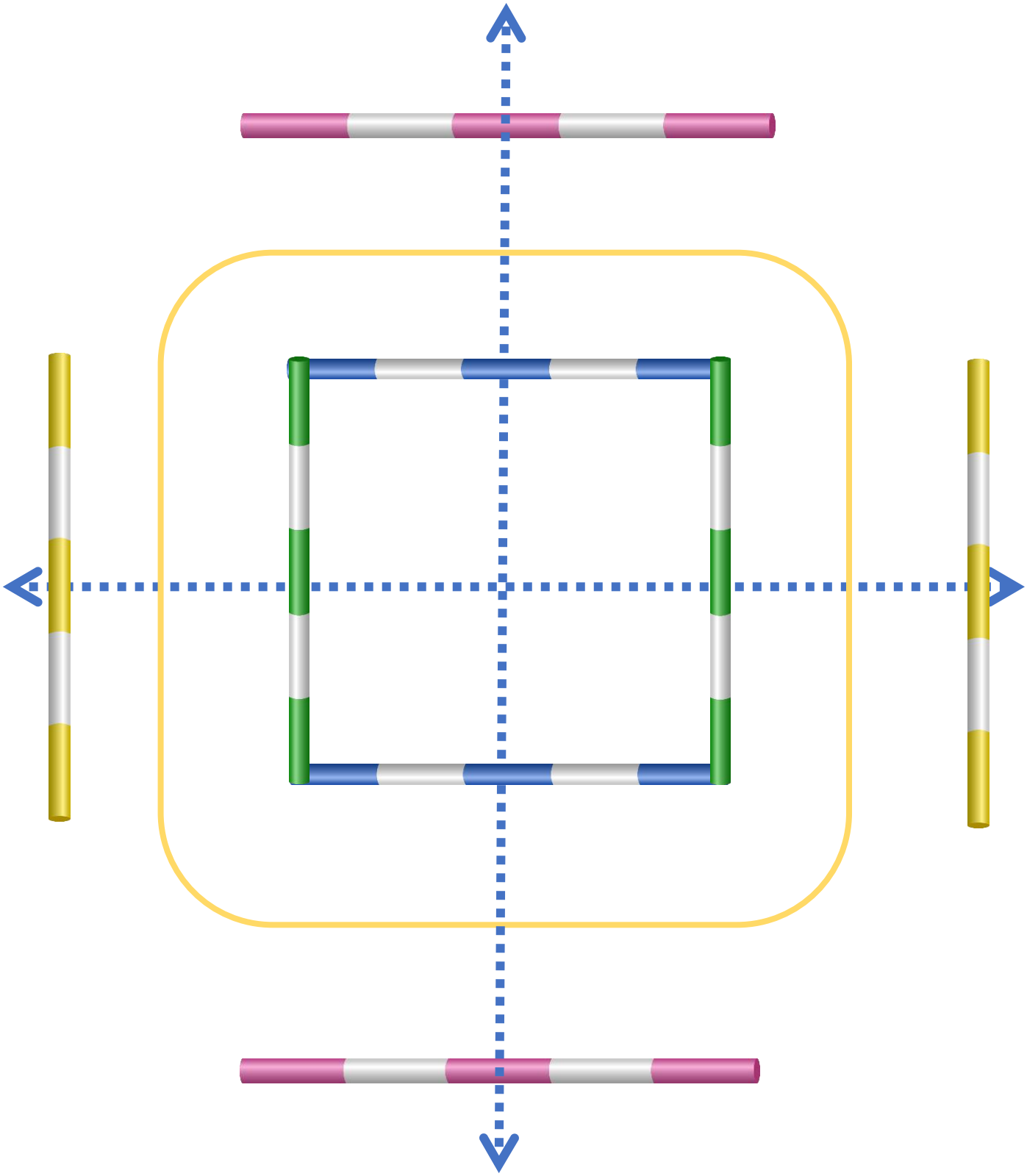
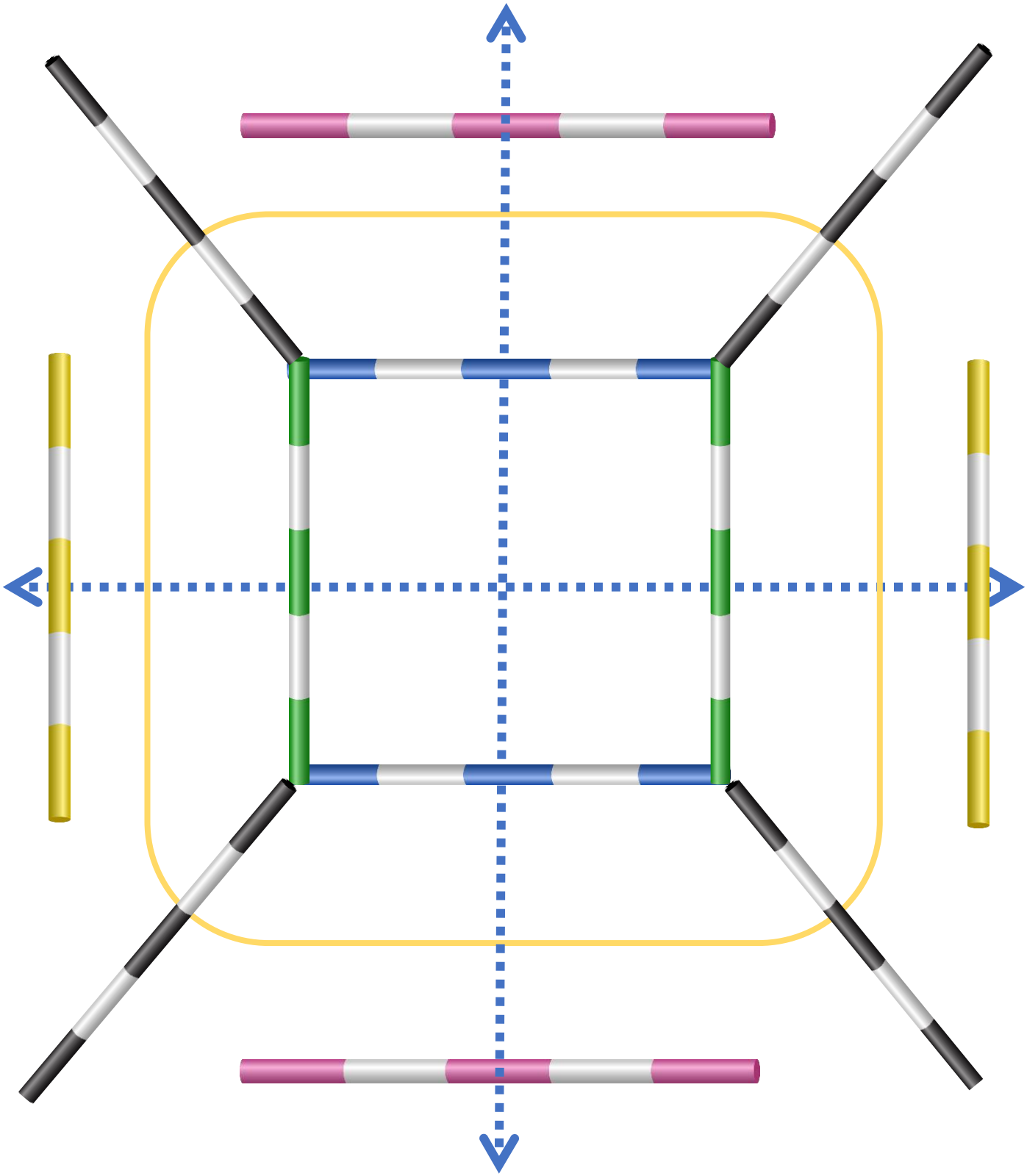
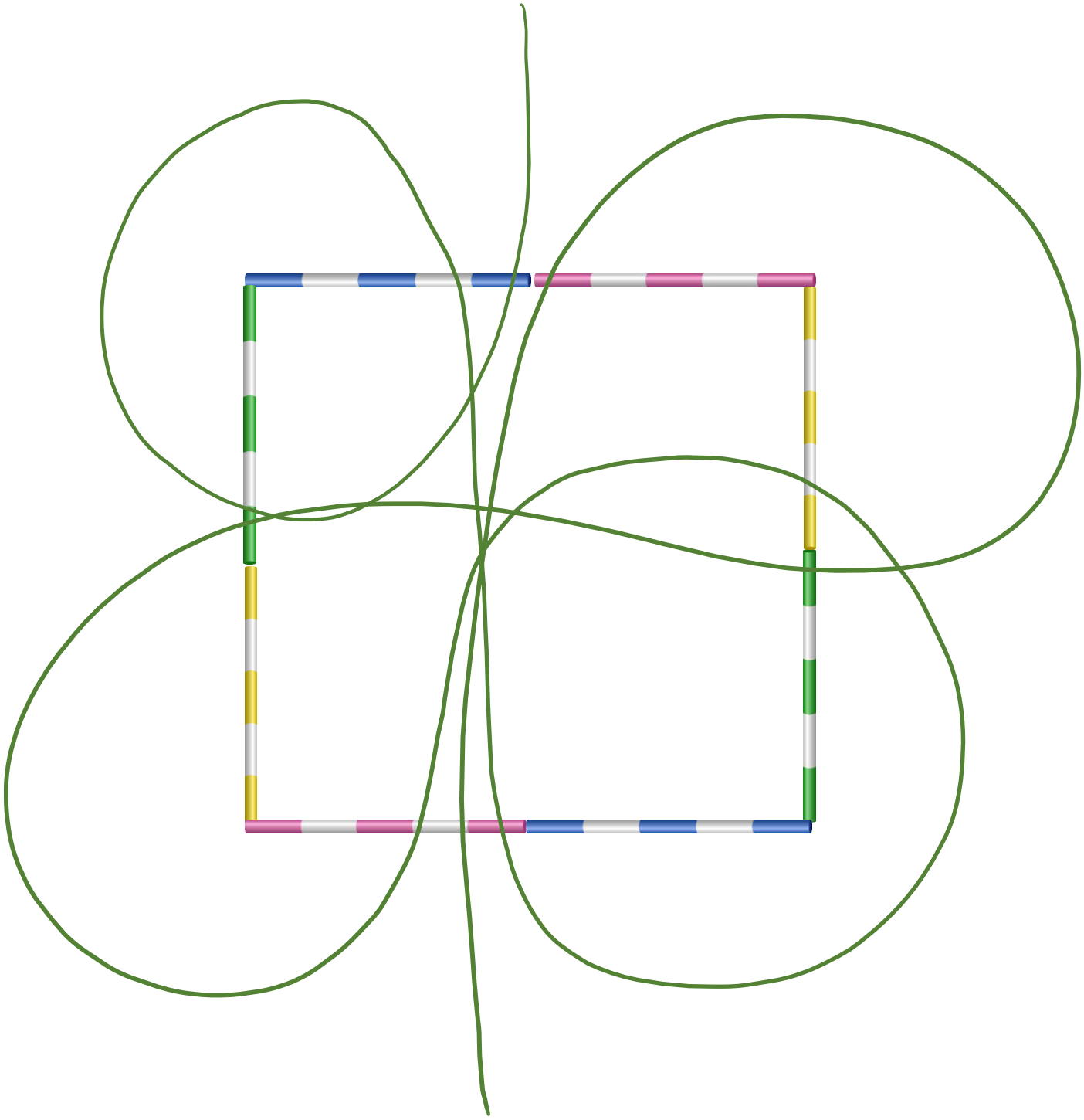


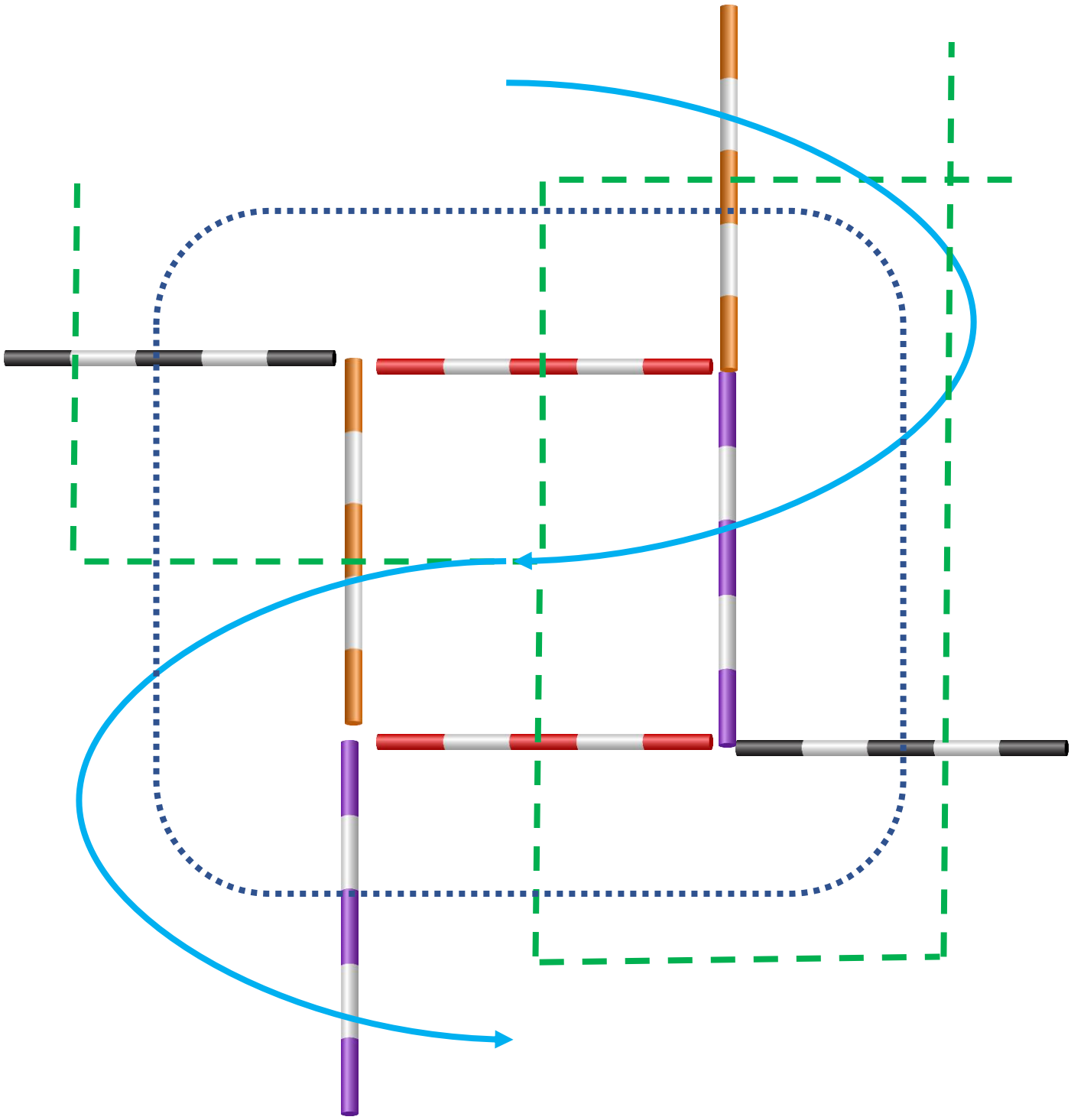
Square 3



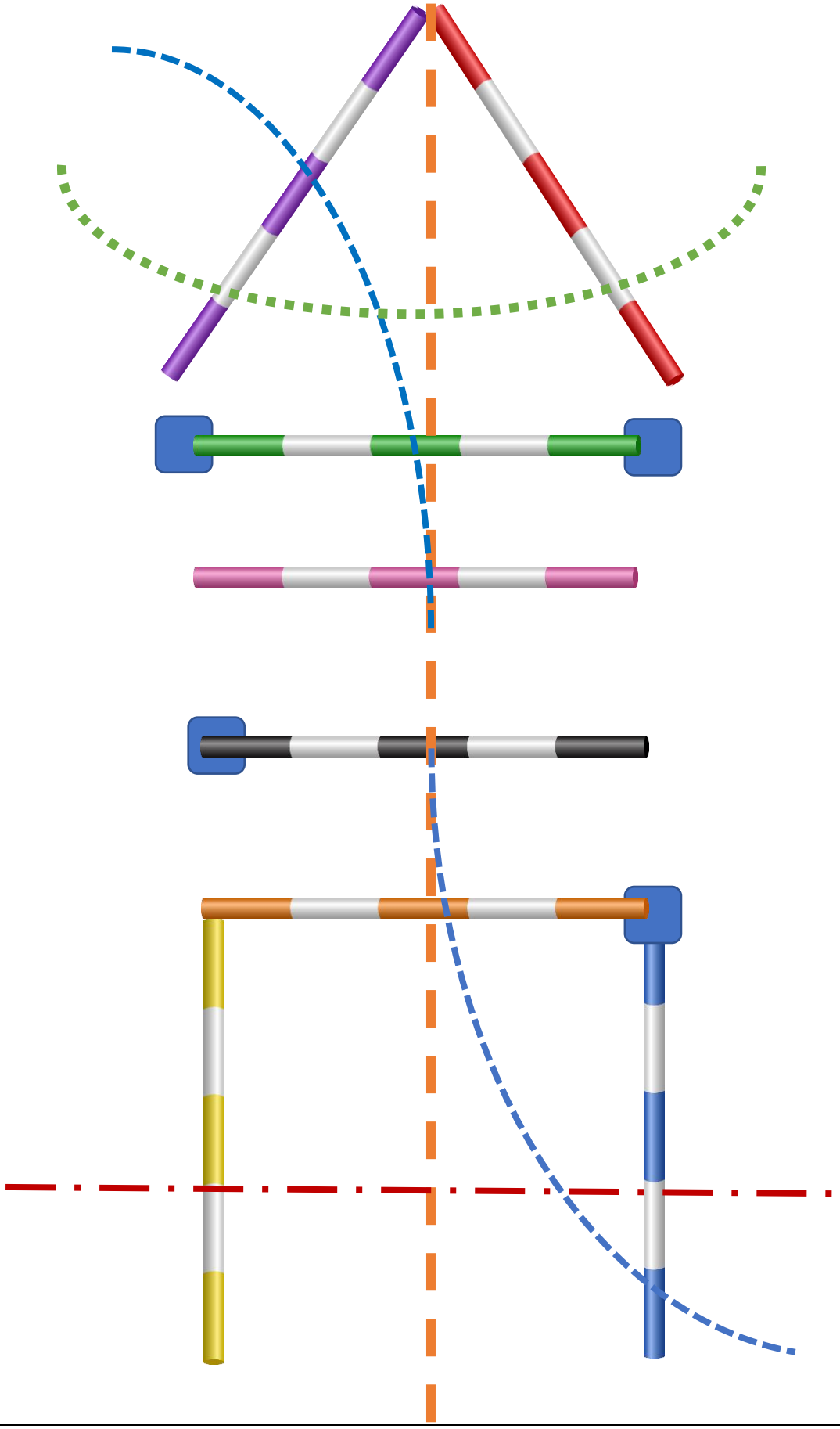
Square 4



Square – Extended



The Rocket



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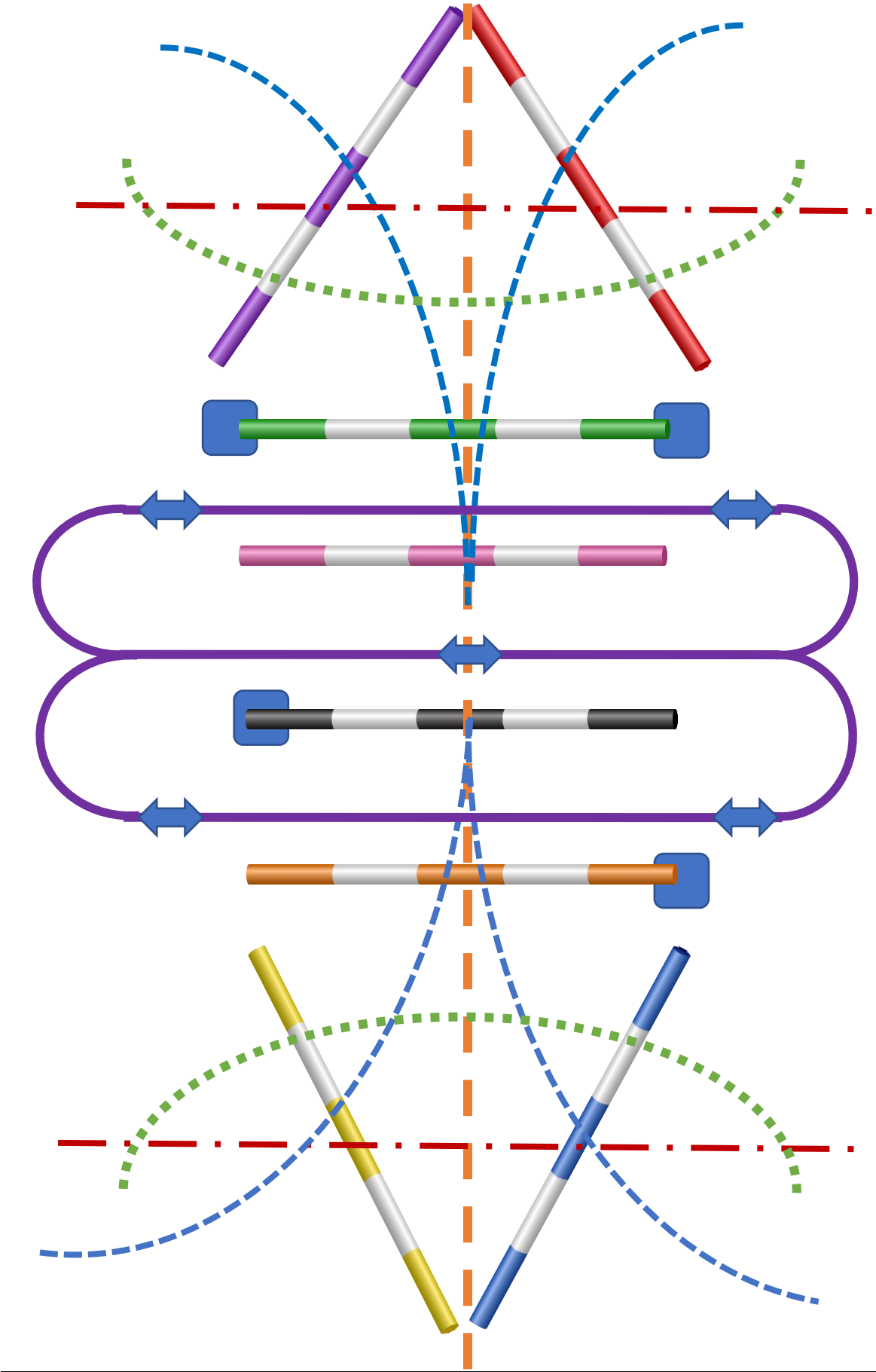

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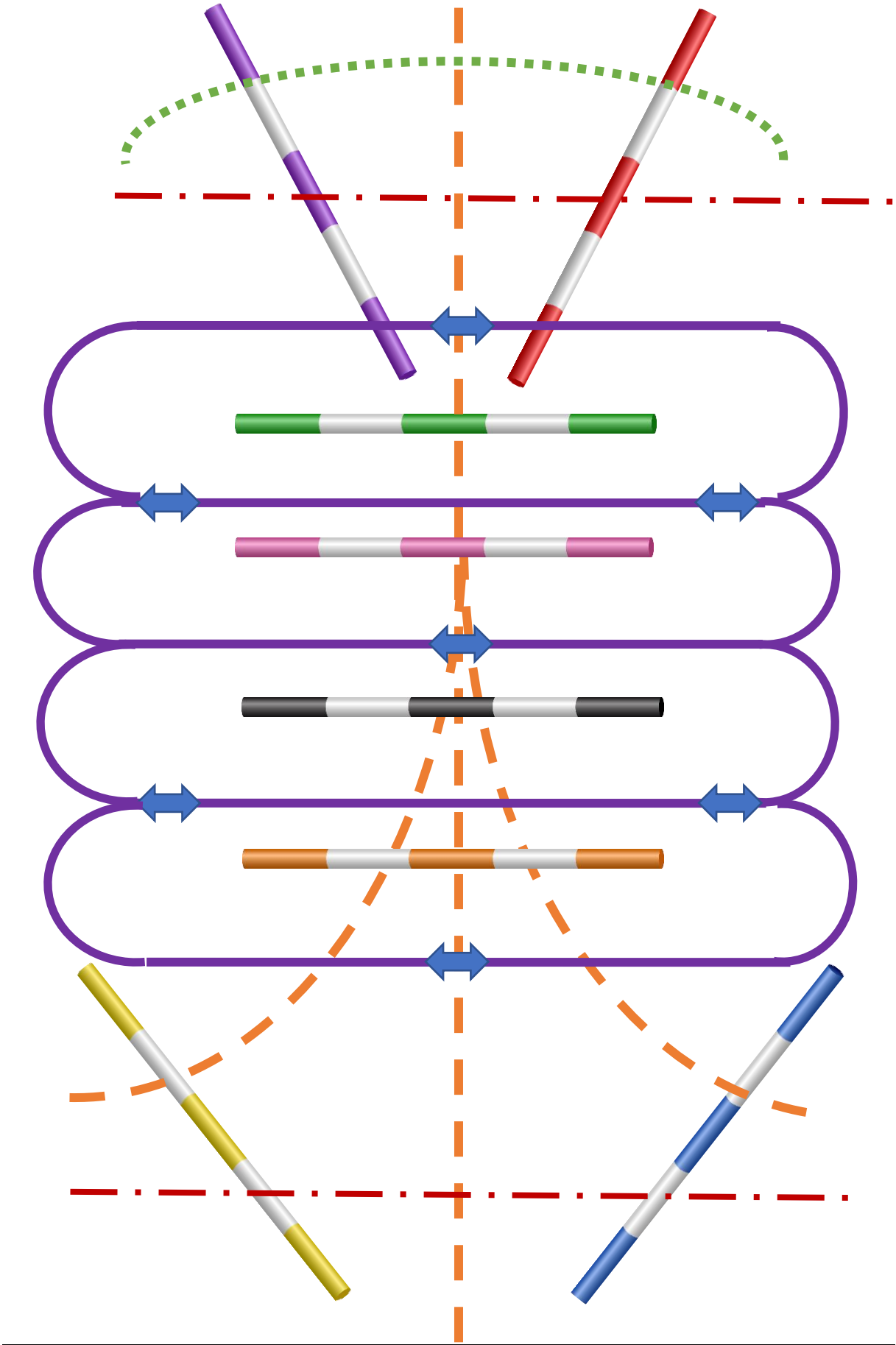
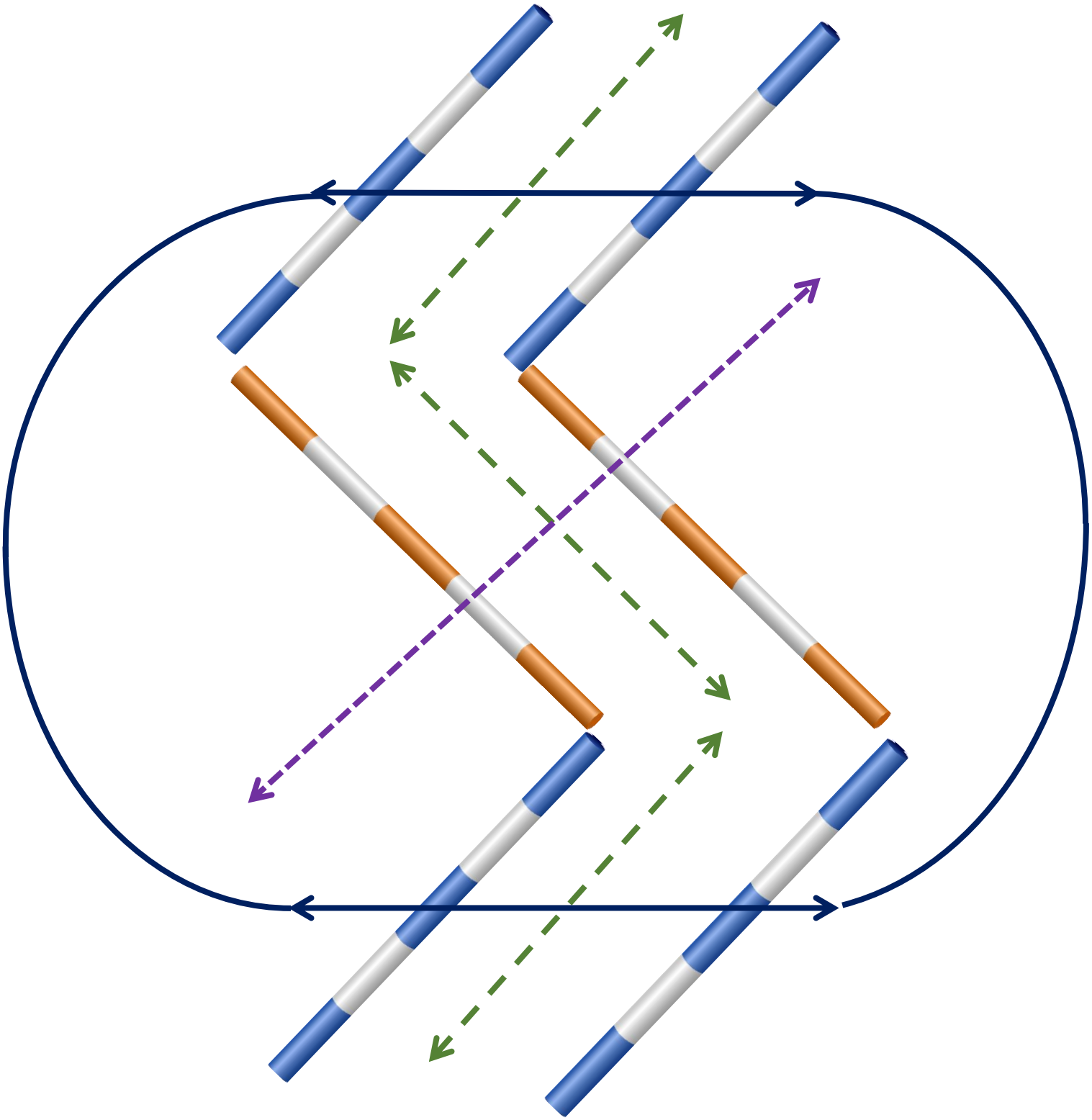
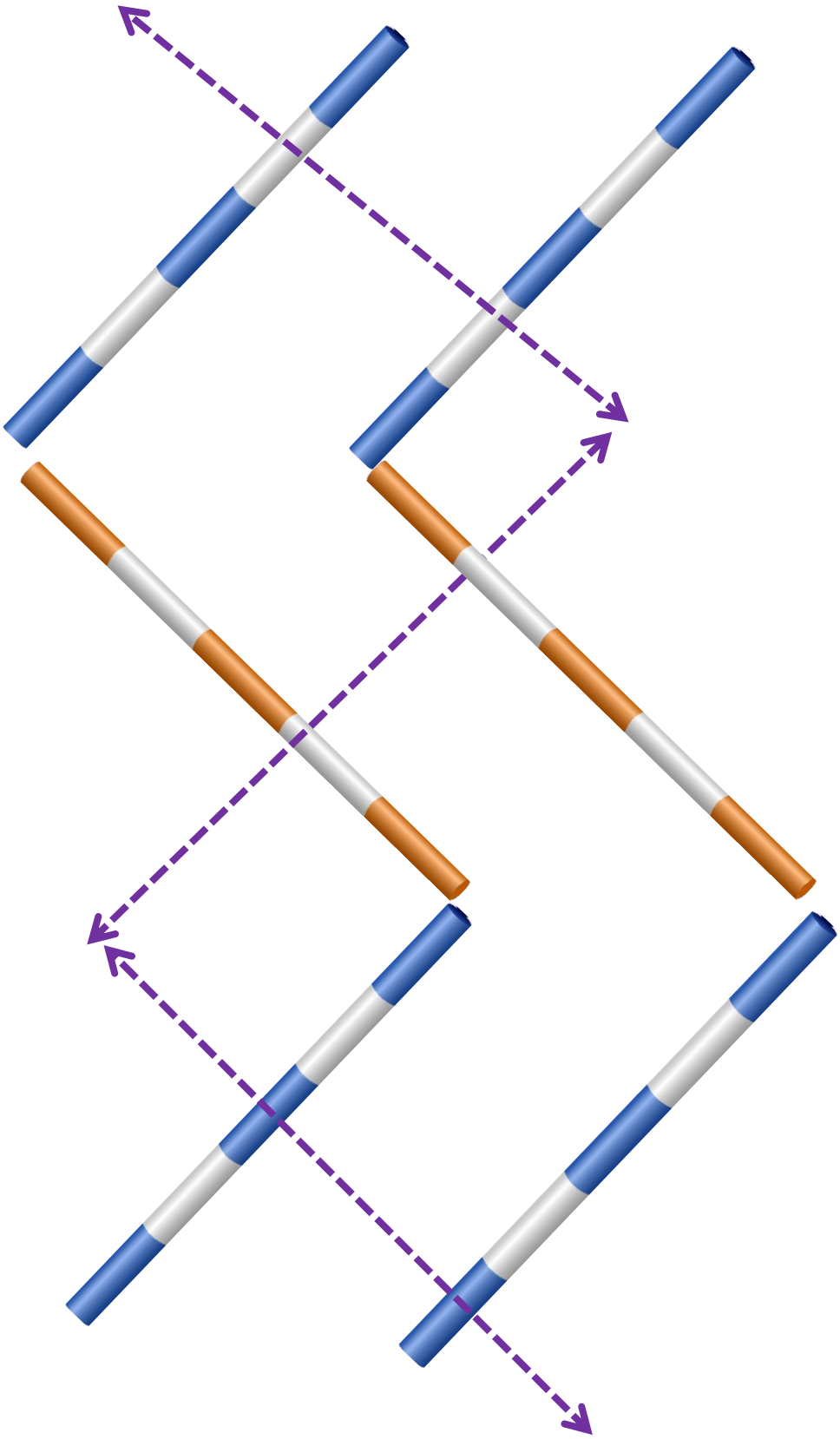


Zig Zag 1



Zig Zag 2



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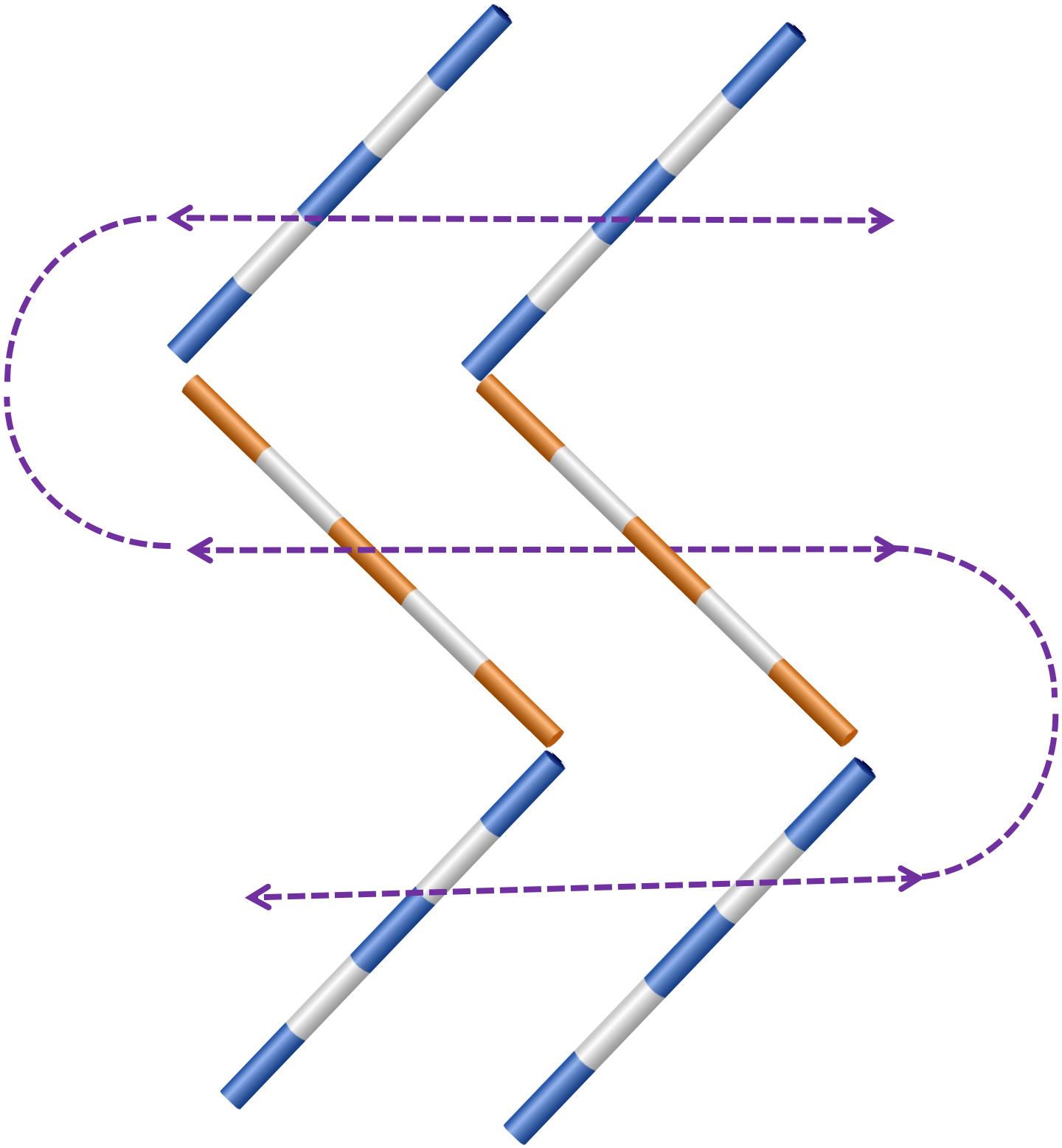
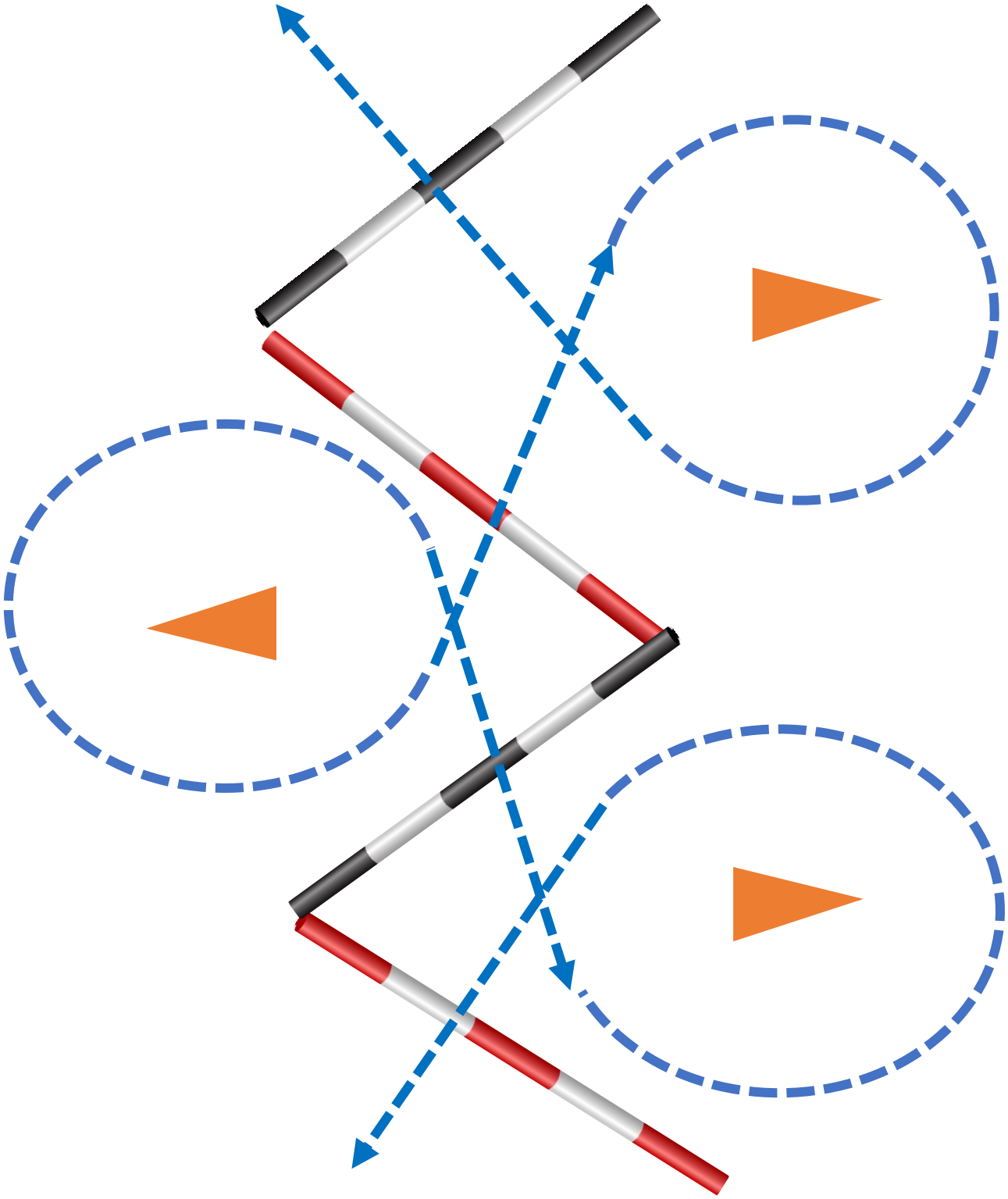


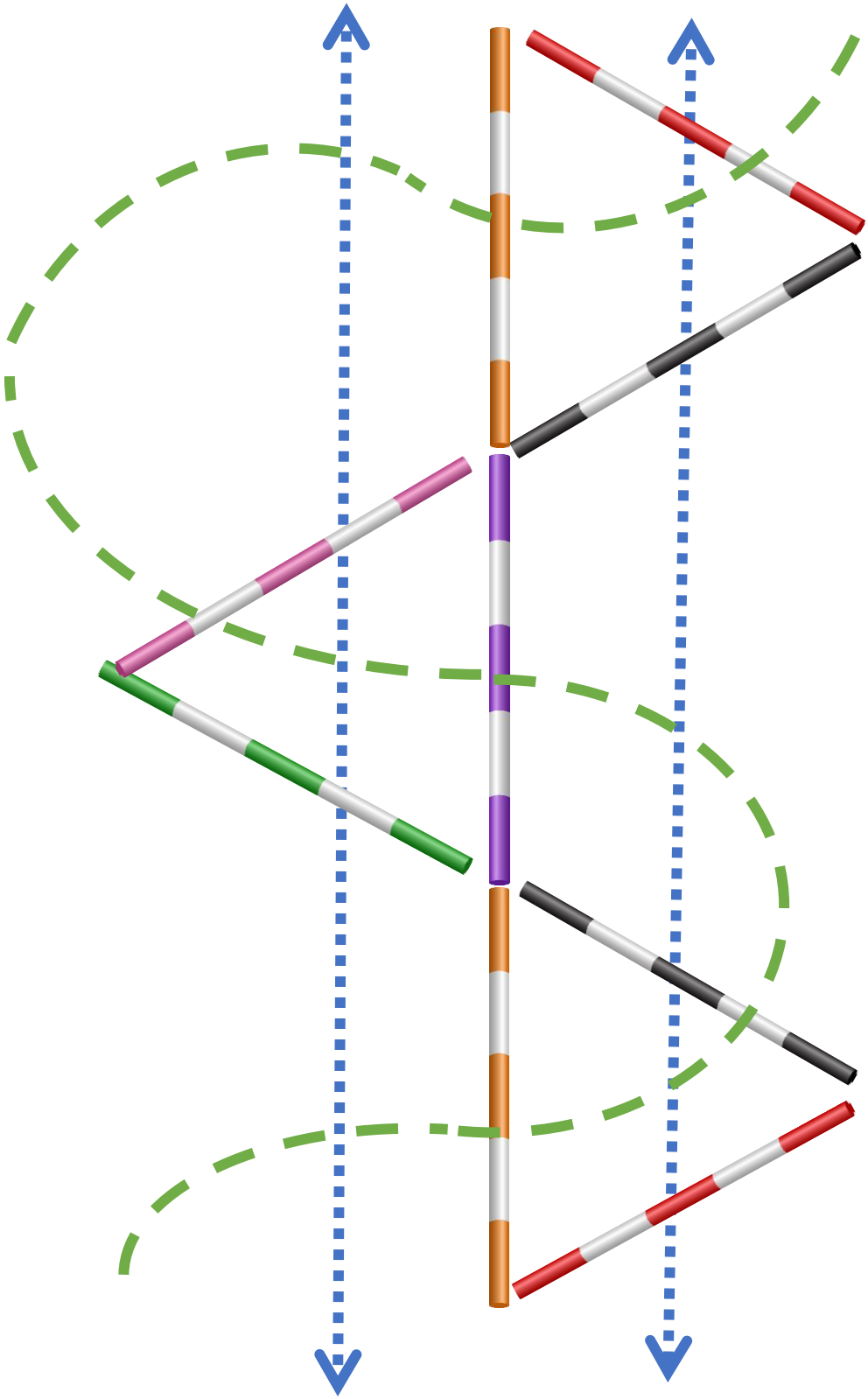
Zig Zag with Cones



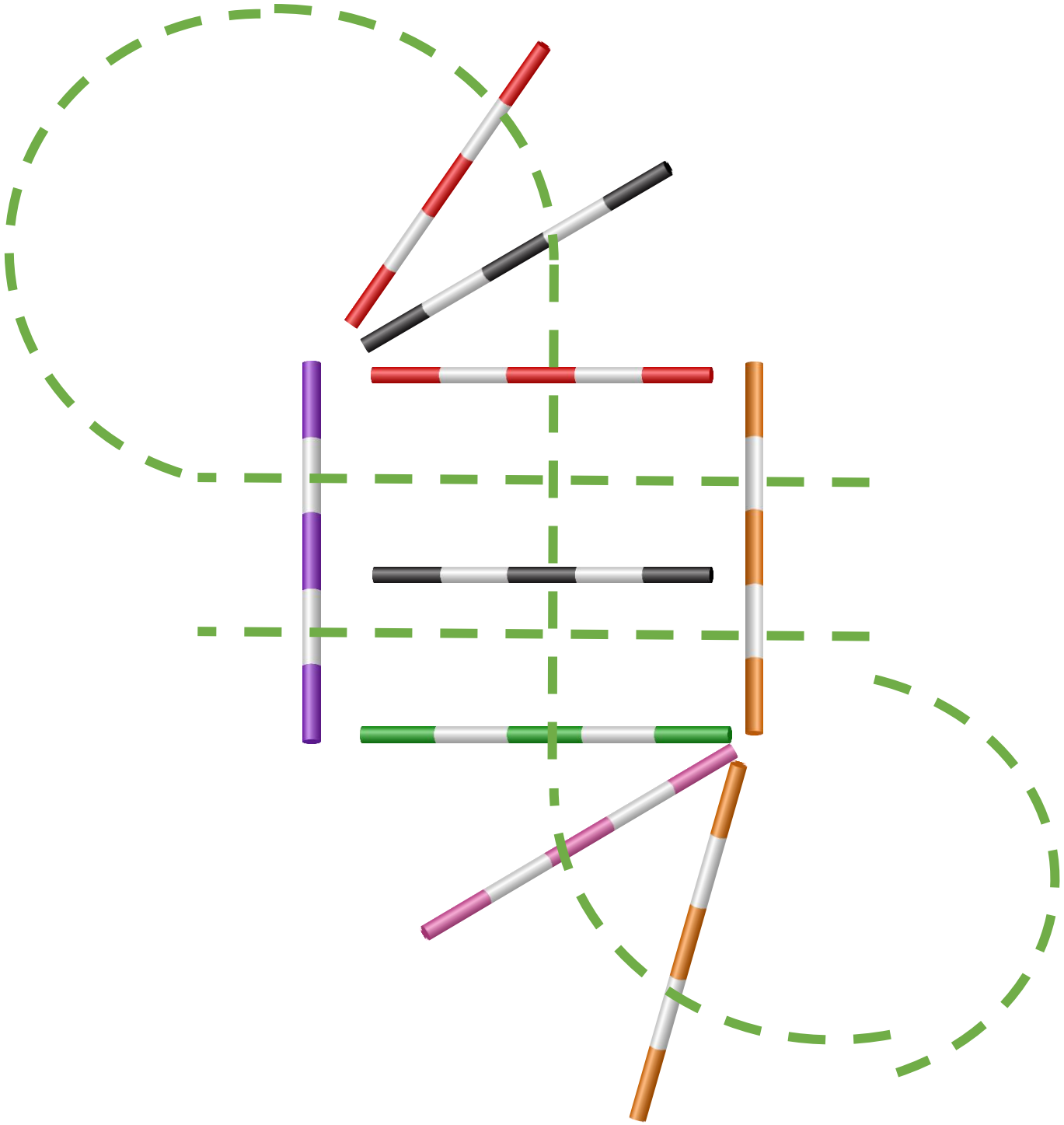
Double Diamond

From A Year of Polework by Vet Physio Phyle

Triple Triangle



Square with Fan



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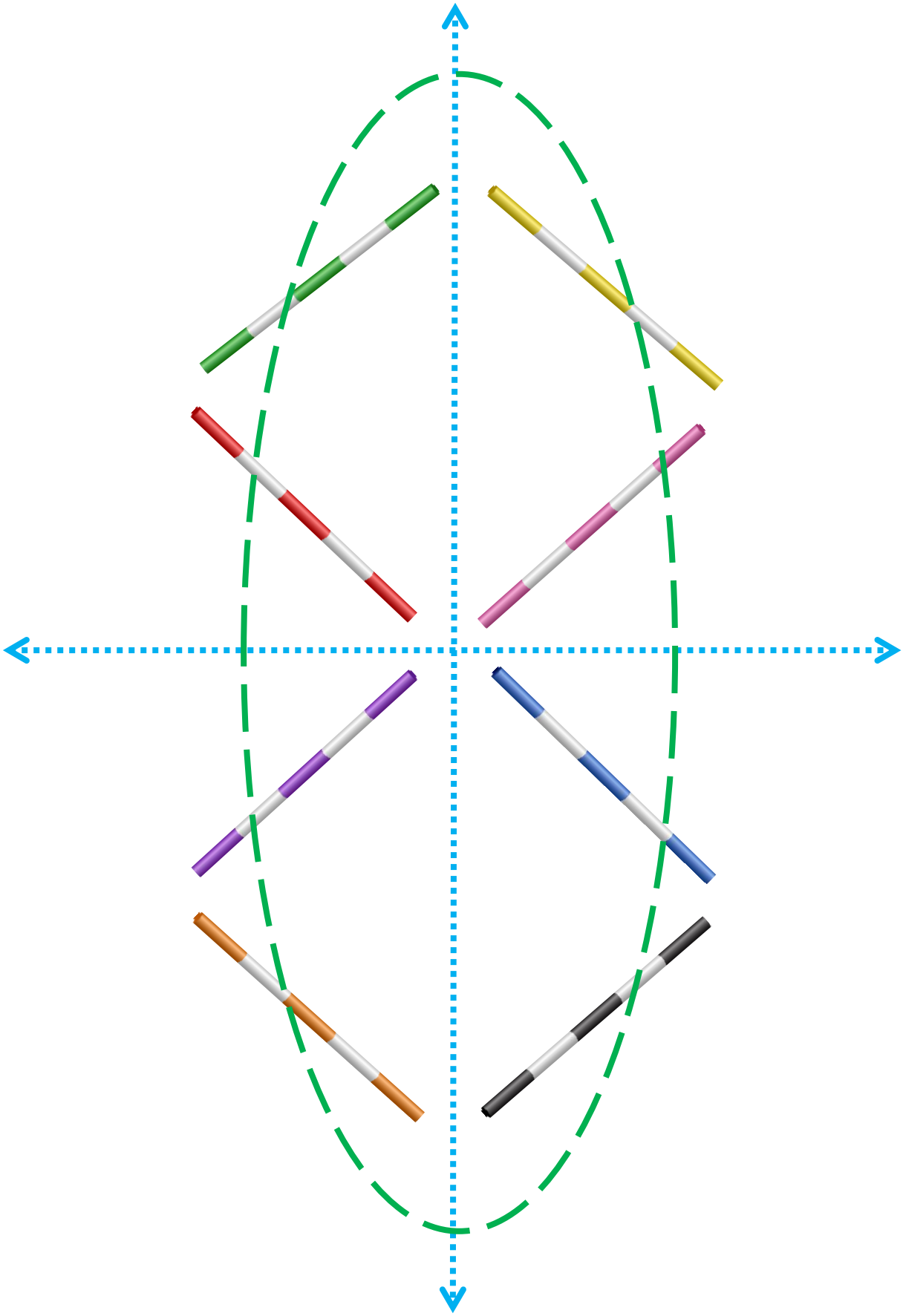

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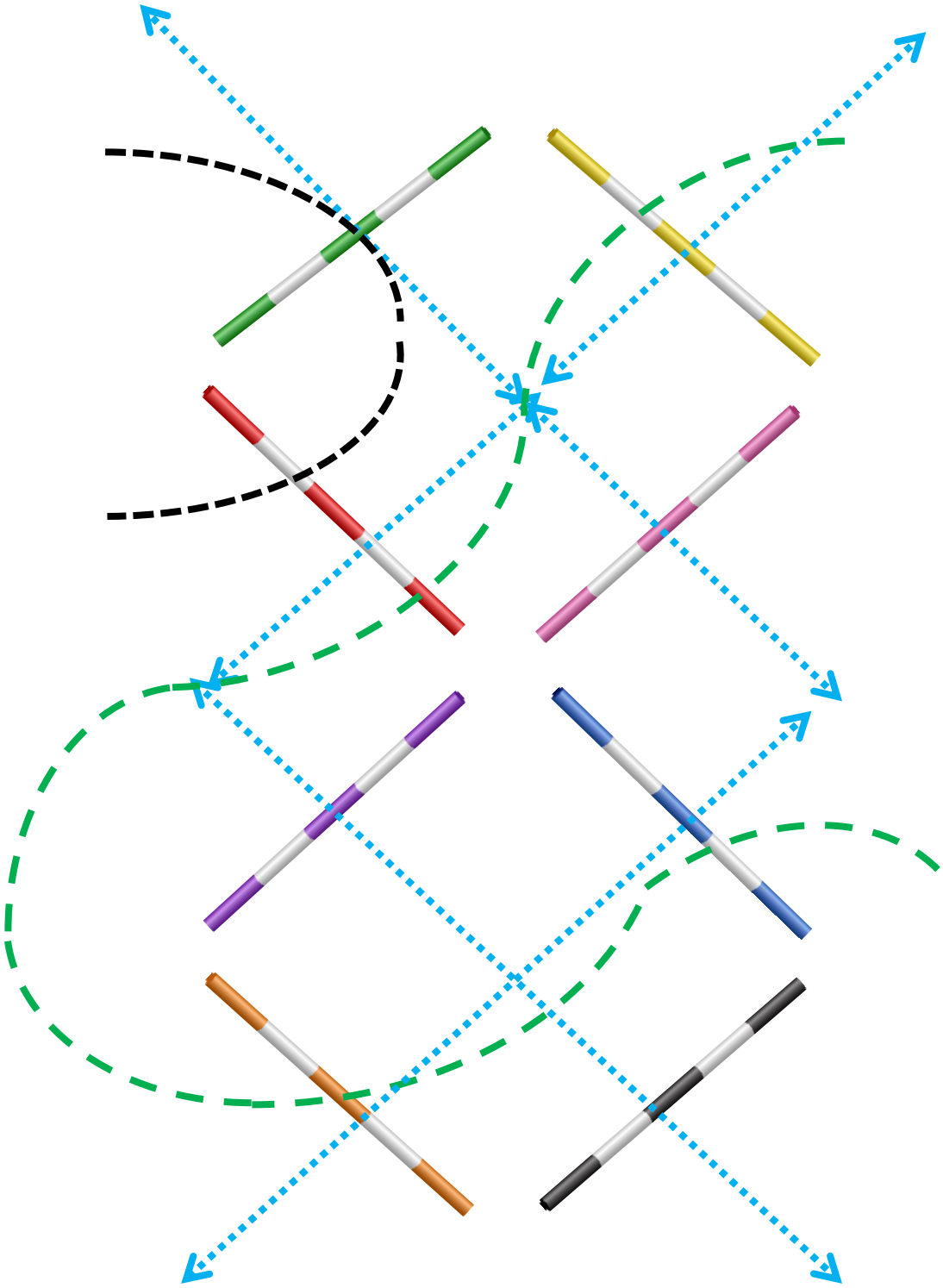
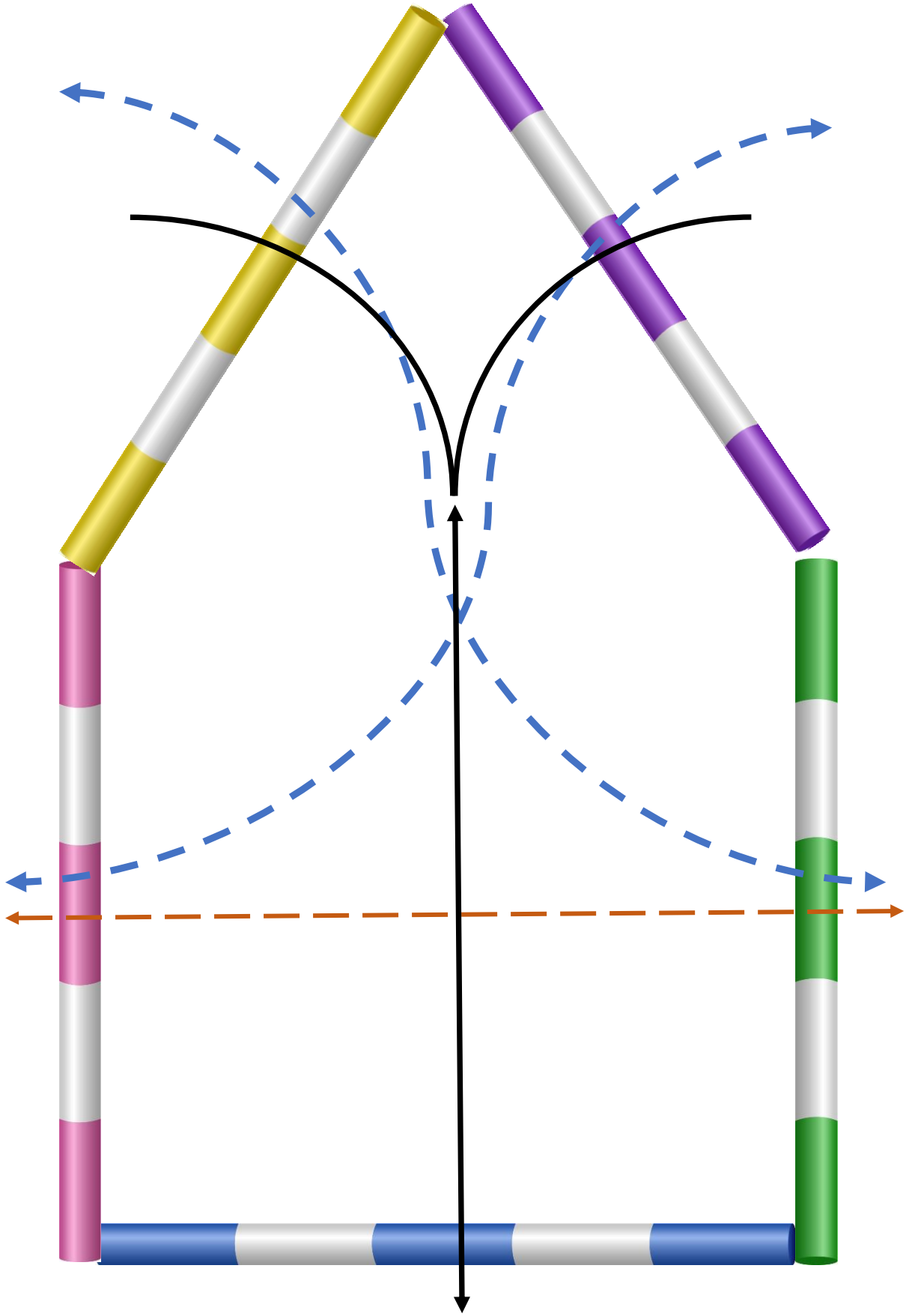
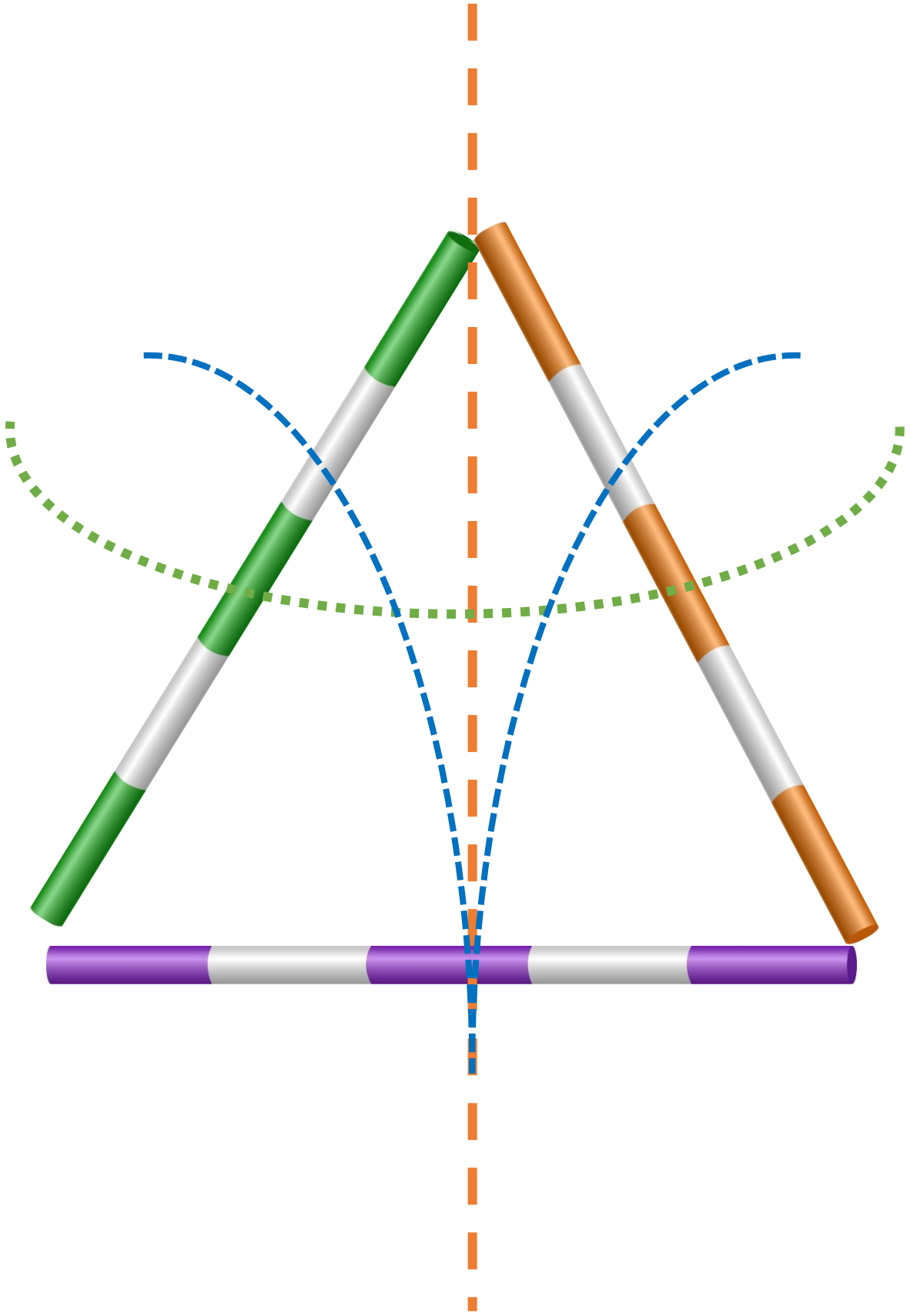


The House



3 Pole Series



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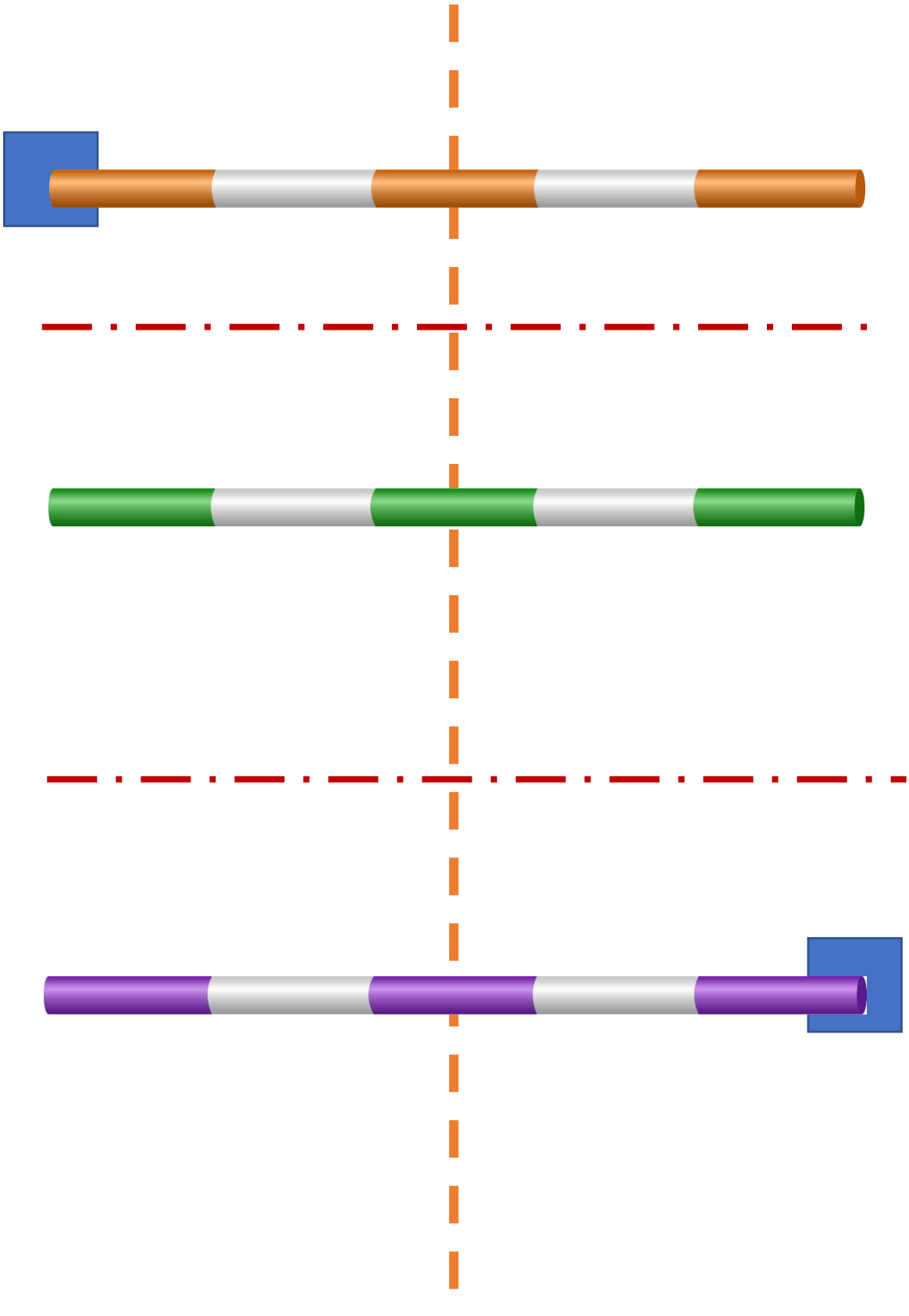

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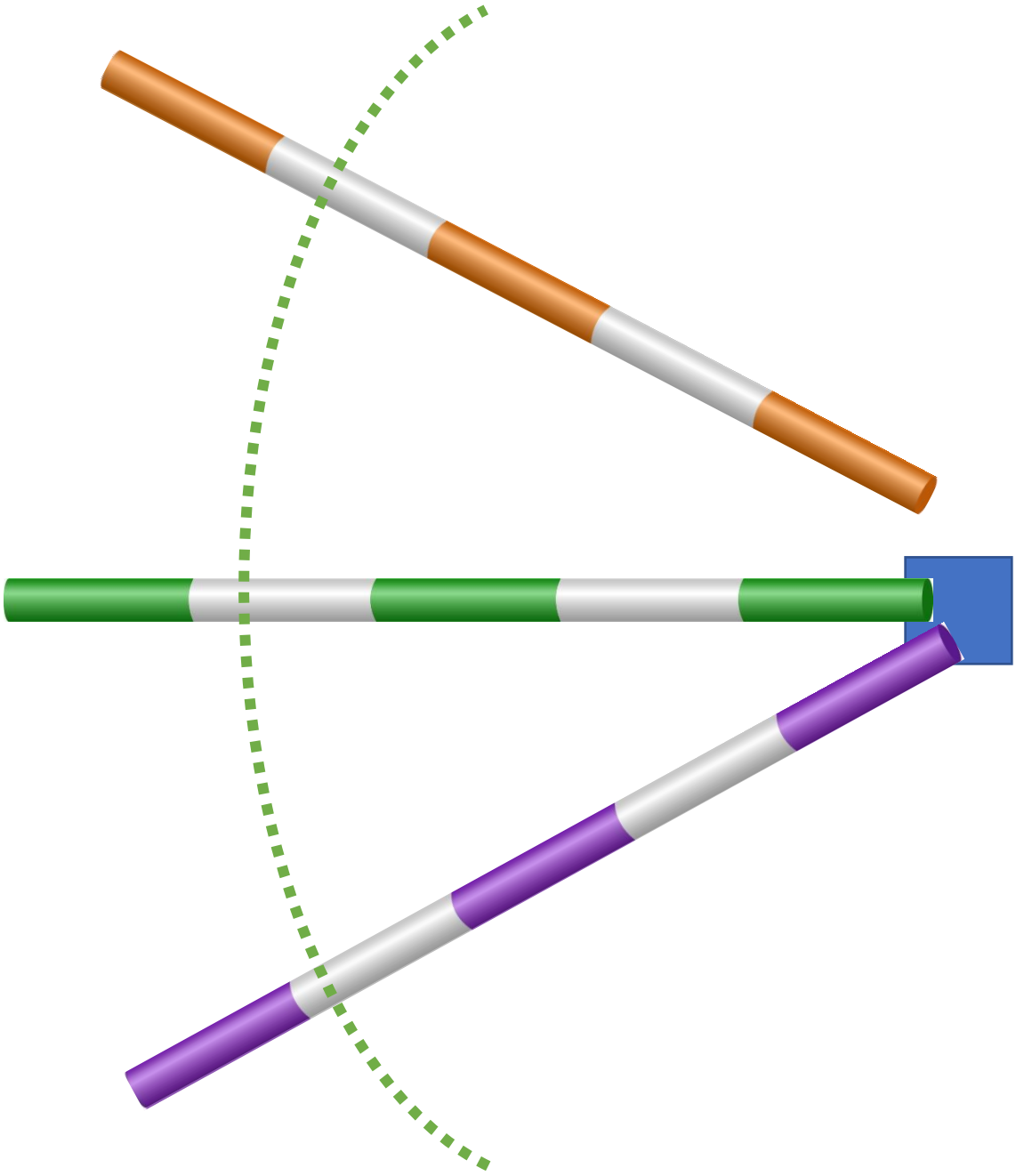

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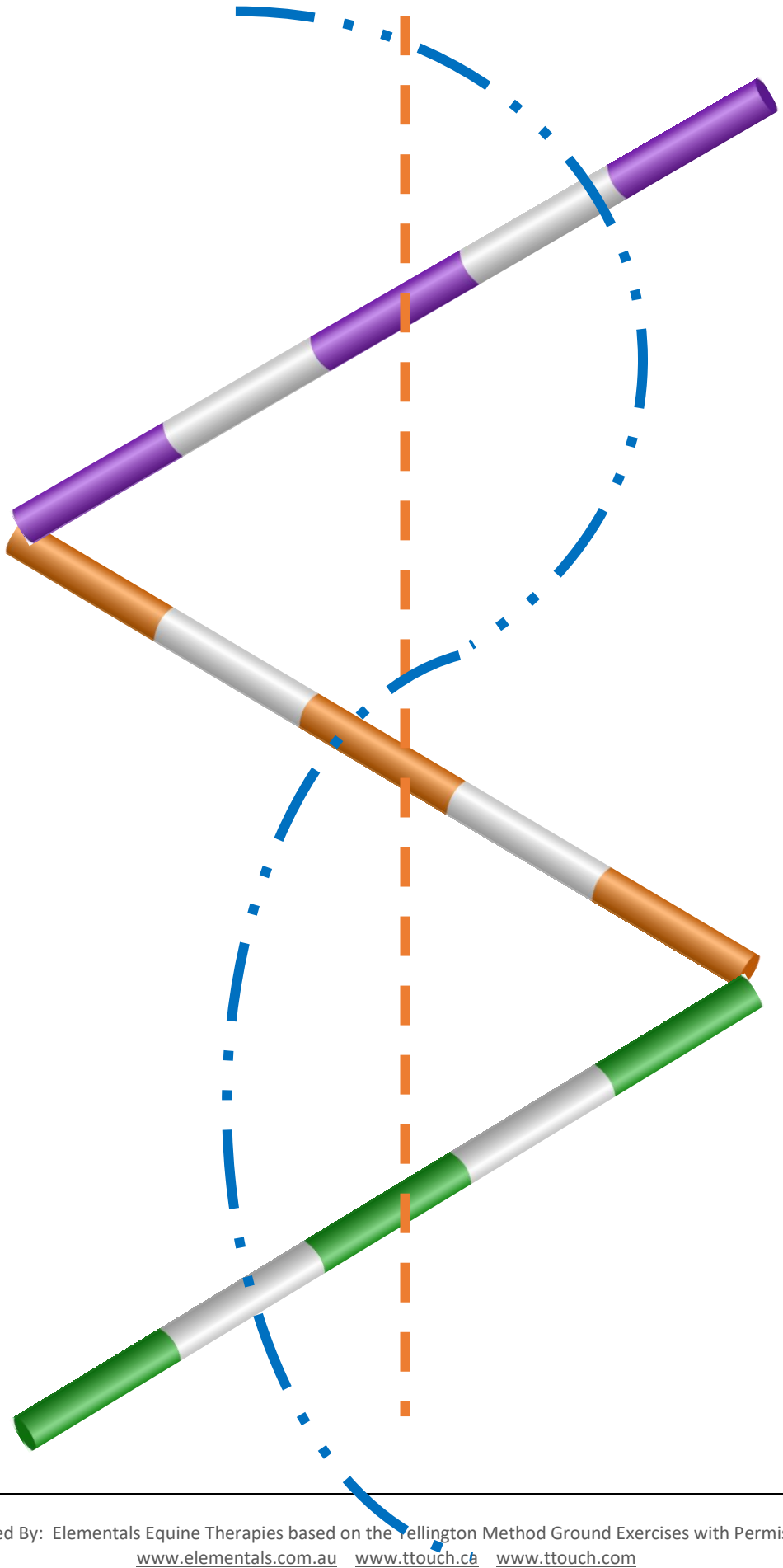

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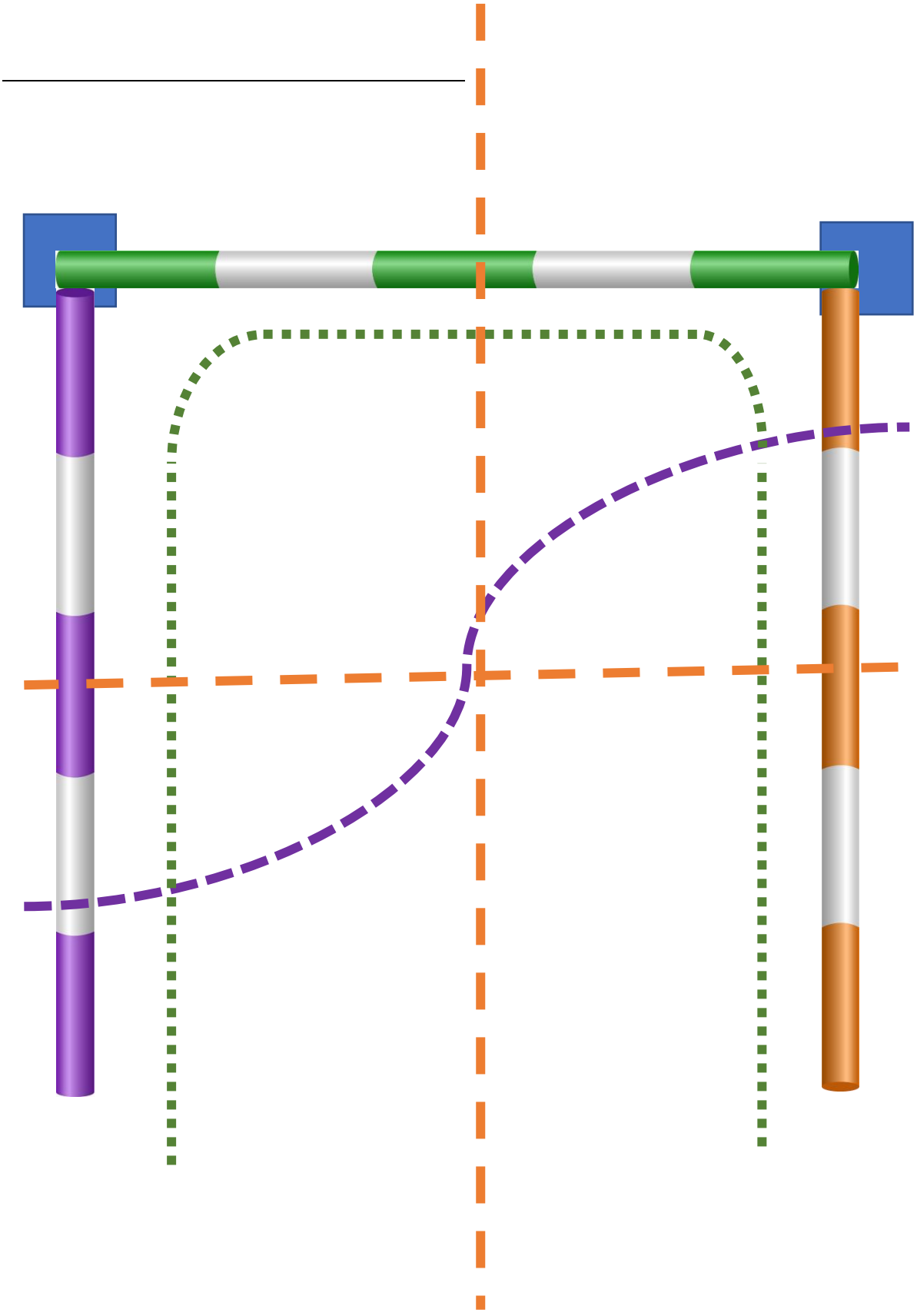

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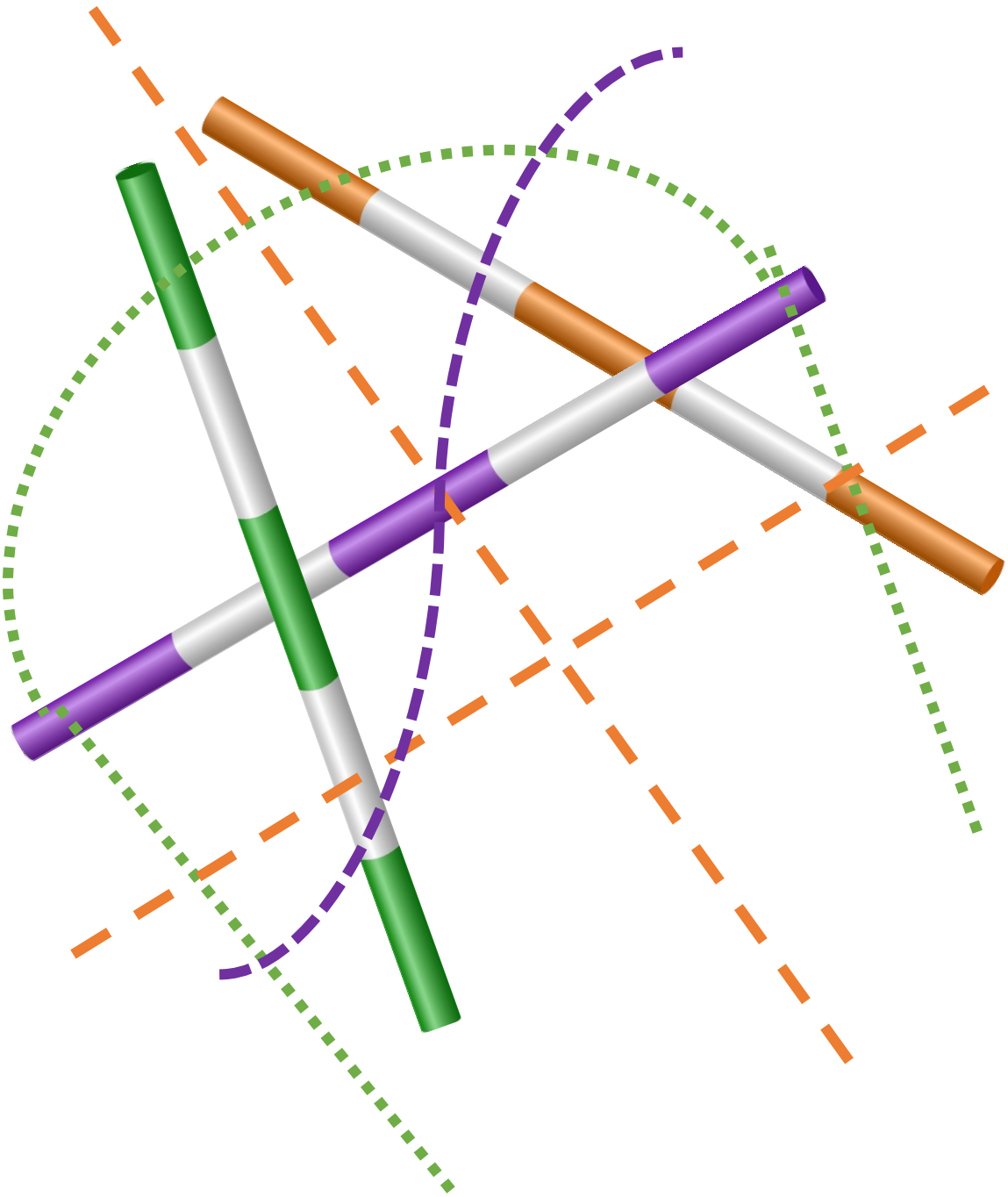

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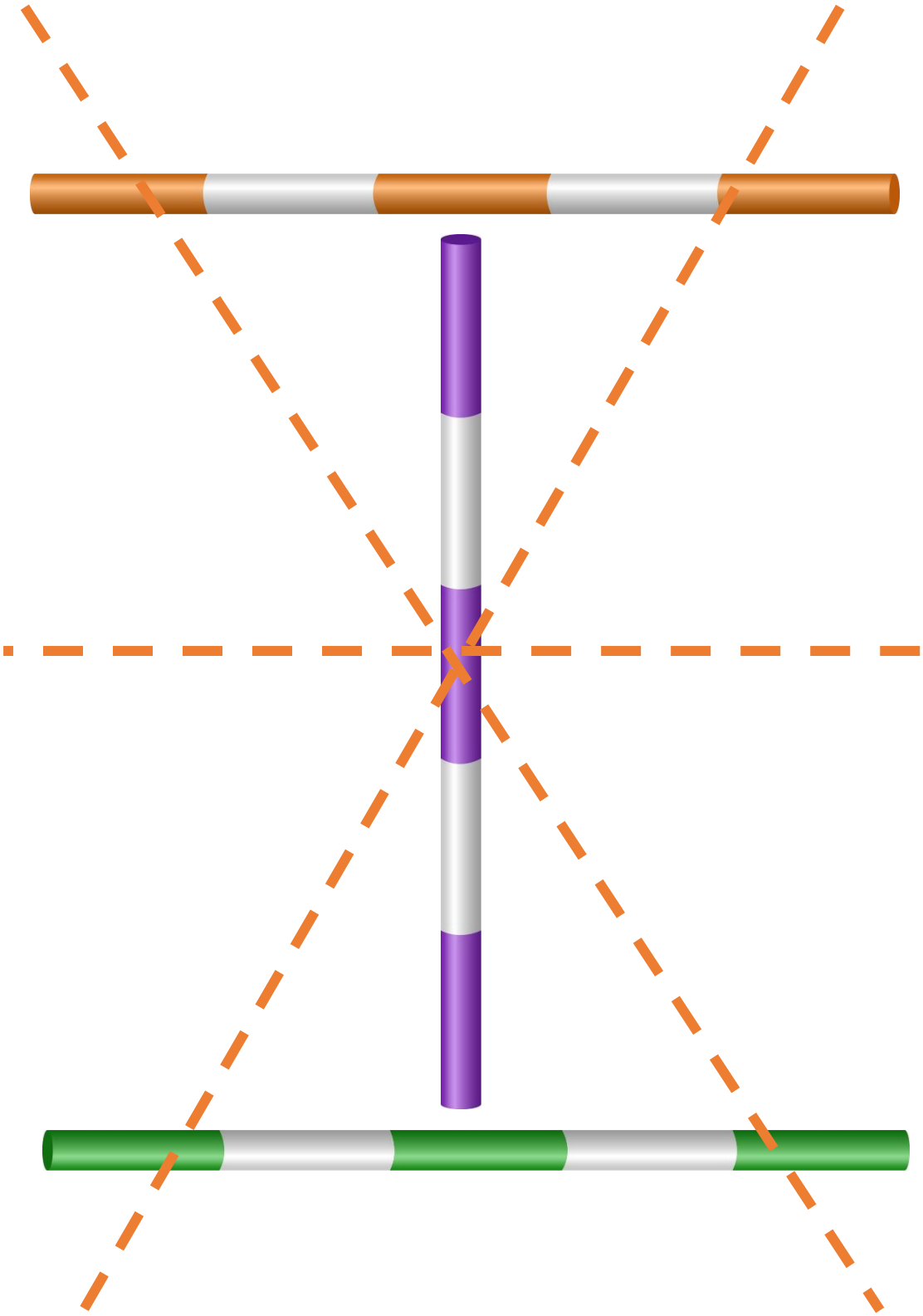

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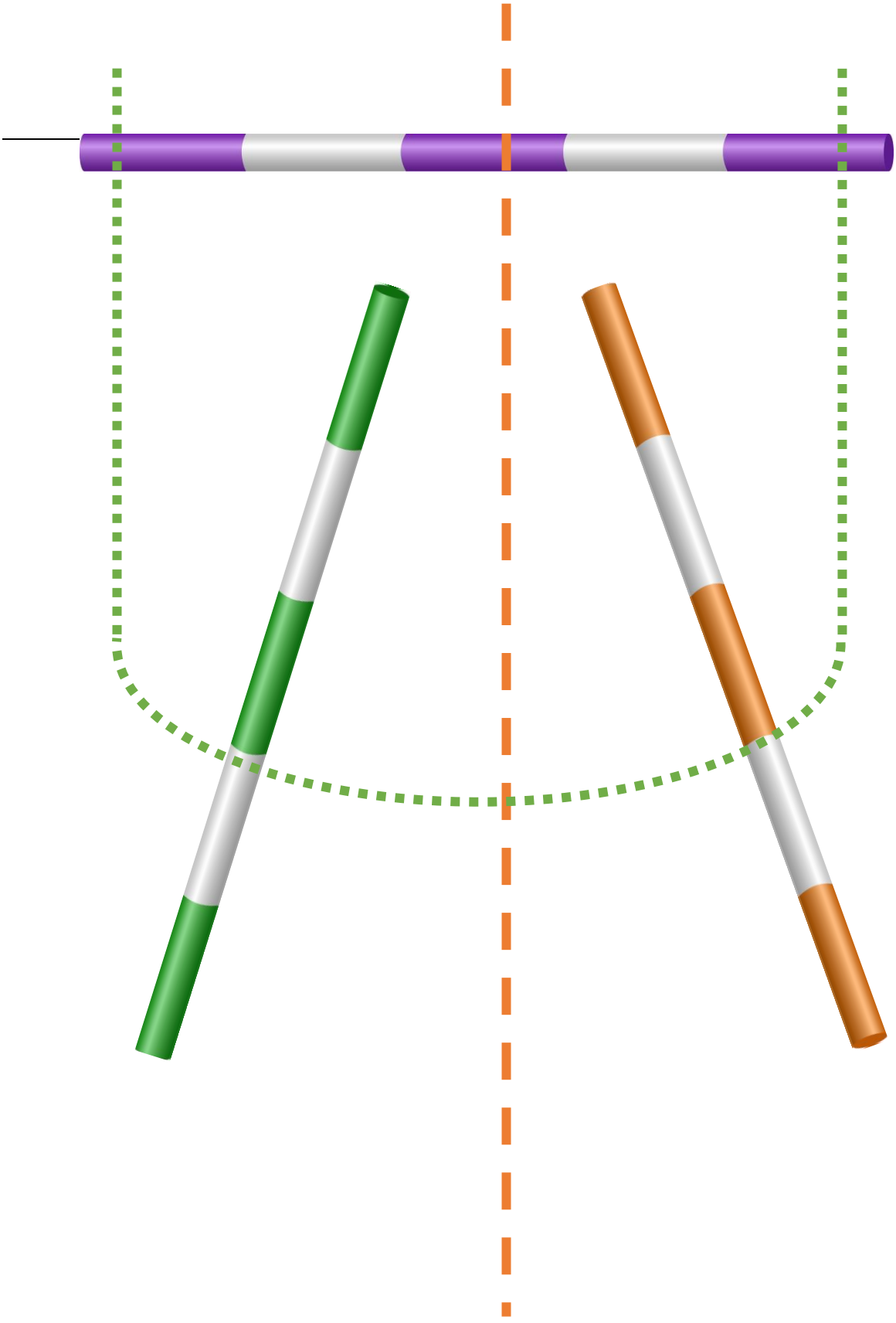

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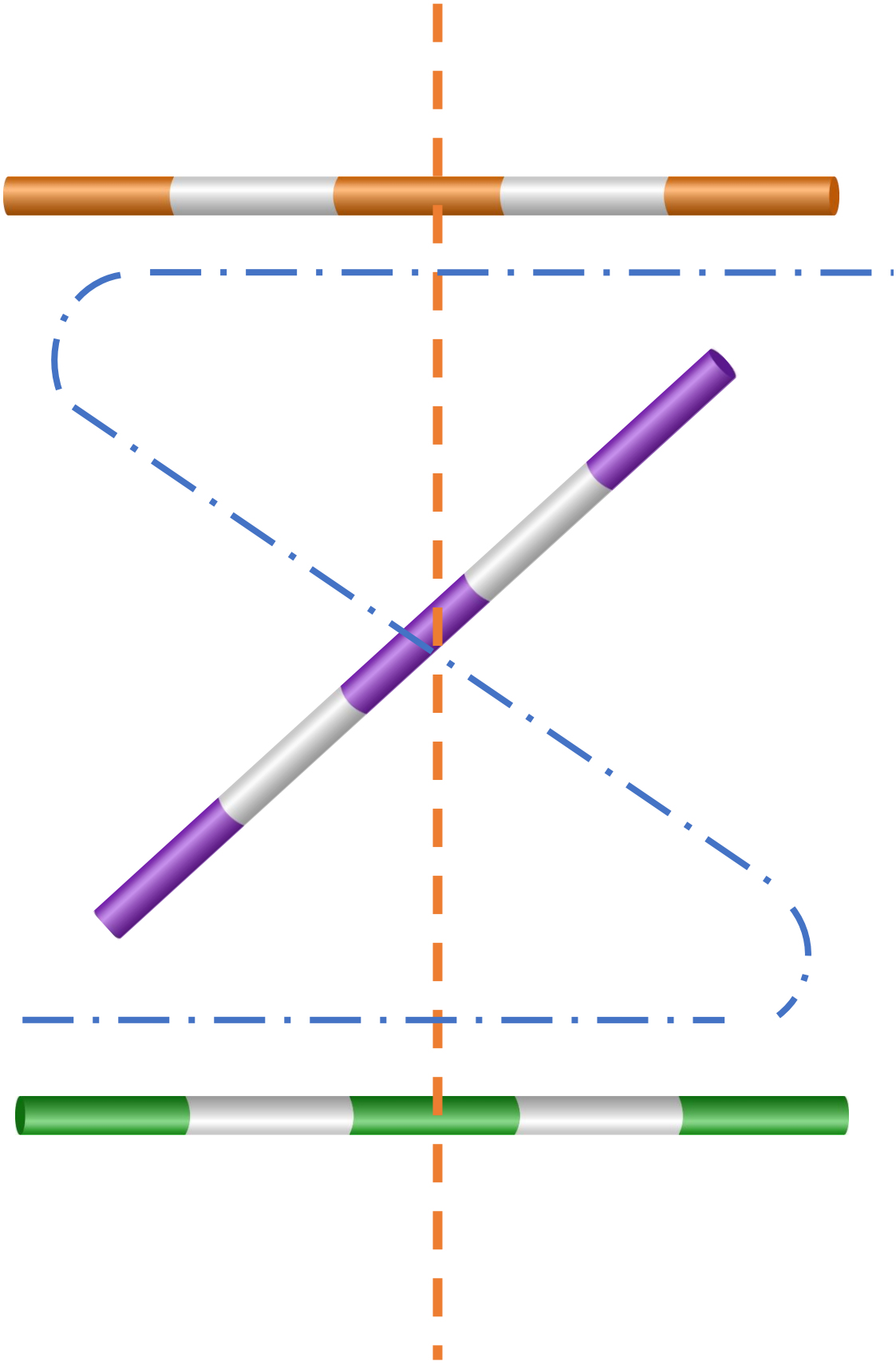

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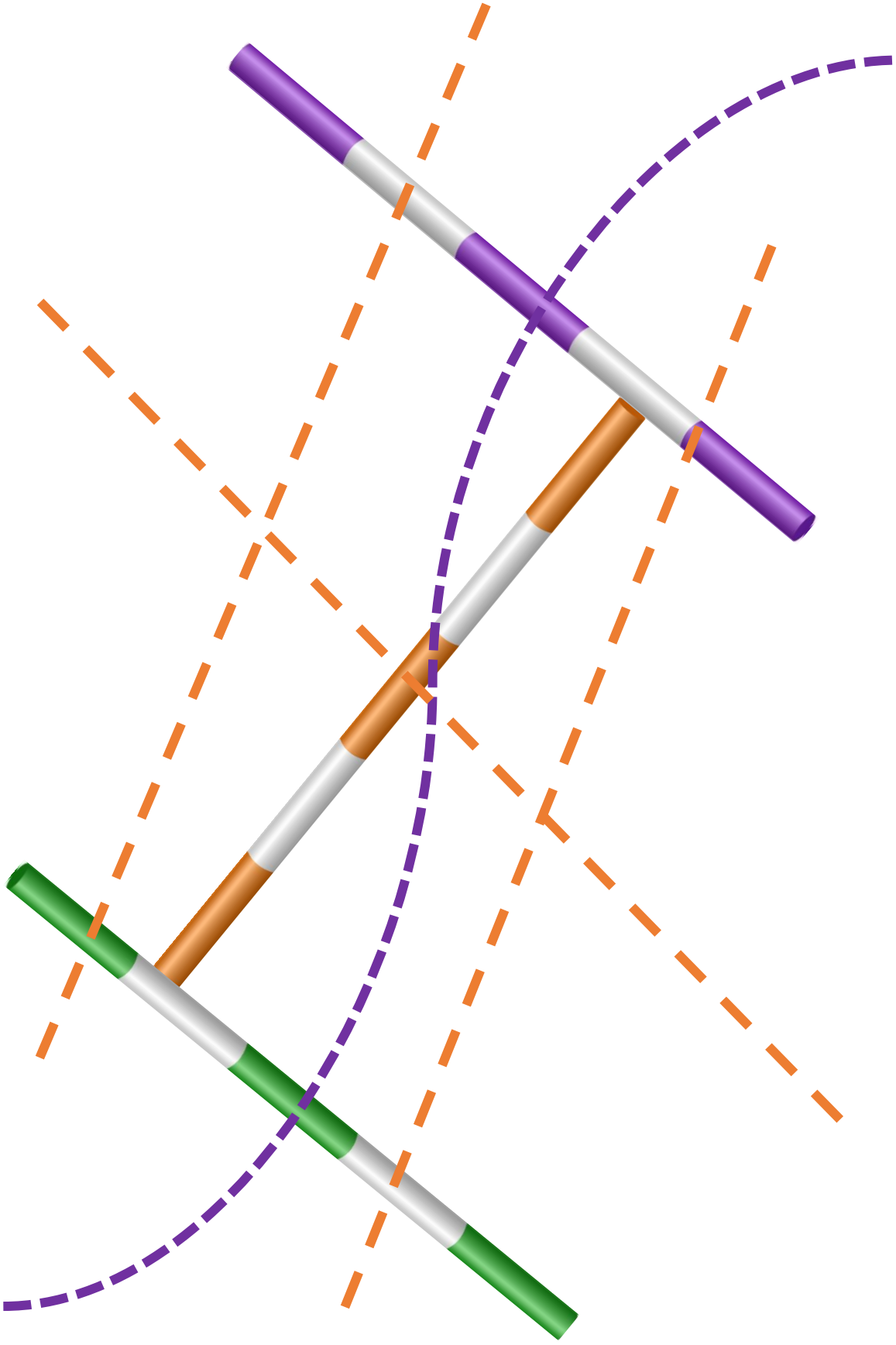

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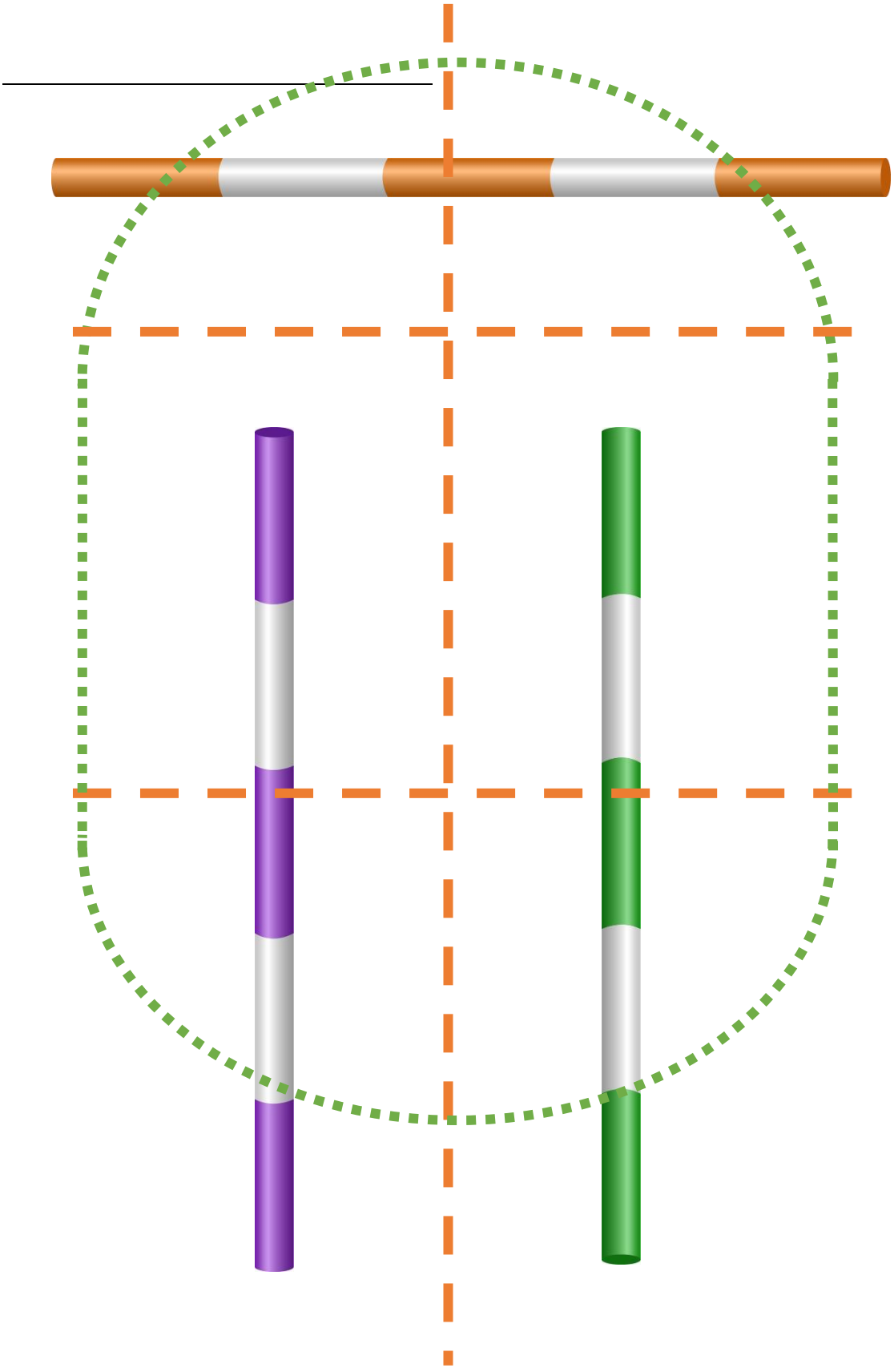
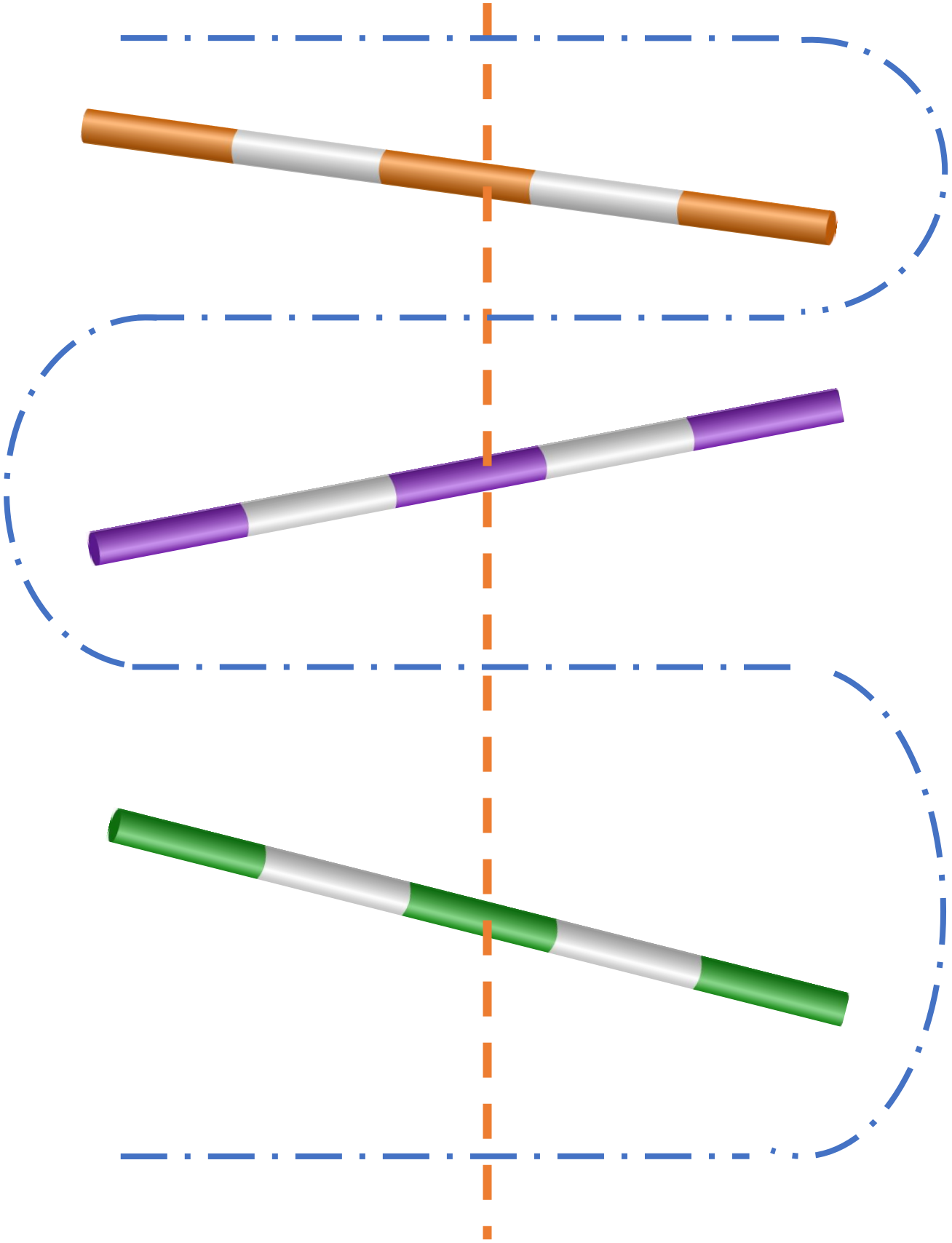
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