

Final Game Design Doc

[TABLETOP SIMULATOR WORKSHOP LINK](#)

First iteration/ideas:

Summary

- A tabletop social deduction game where one person is propagating a virus and the rest of the players must figure out who is responsible for it while stopping the virus (and working to their own self-interests).
- You play as the Virus Task Force, trying to stop the spread of a deadly virus.

Player Experience Objectives

- Pressured
- Distrust
- On their feet
- Lots of table talk and strategic discussion
- Hyper aware of how people are acting
- Zoom-friendly (simple web app?)

Mechanics

- Players have to balance Spread and Panic meters
- Spread cannot decrease until the vaccine is developed. It can only be slowed by various policies
- Panic can go up or down, higher panic increases the rate of spread
- Spread increases (if the virus chooses) by rolling over a changing threshold
- Scientists win when Spread drops to 0 (only possible via vaccine administration)
- Virus wins when Spread maxes out
- Every turn, players vote on policies to enact. Every player gets 3 votes which they can distribute however they please to the 6 policies. The two with the most votes are enacted.
- There is then a “night phase” where the virus controller chooses one action to perform.
- At the beginning of the game, secret objectives are assigned and one player is secretly selected to control the virus.
- Each turn before night, players use remaining votes to vote out who they think controls the virus. There should be confusion over whether someone is trying to reach a secret objective or if they are actively sabotaging (and should therefore be voted off)

Player Actions (All players collectively do 2 actions, determined via 3 votes/player)

- Work on vaccine (once developed, can stop spread entirely)
 - Once the vaccine is developed, this becomes “Administer vaccine” (decreases the spread)
- Press conference (decreases panic)
- Close borders (slows spread)

- Increase hospital funding (slow spread a little, decrease panic a little)
- Mask mandate (slows spread a lot, increase panic)
- Lockdown (stop spread temporarily, increases panic)

(note for playtesting: make sure there's no set best options that are chosen every time)

Virus Actions (Mad Scientist does one action, cannot do the same one twice in a row)

- Mutate (Increase spread)
- Misinfo campaign (Increase panic)
- Asymptomatic spreaders (increase spread a lot, decrease panic)
- (increase panic a lot, decrease spread)

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Players have secret objectives? That way they may want certain things to pass, so there's never one correct way to choose policies.

Ex. I am a hospital executive and want "increase hospital funding" to pass X times.

Secret Objectives

- You are a hospital executive. You want "increase hospital funding" to pass 5 times.
(playtest to find what an appropriate number would be)
- You are invested in news networks. You fail if you do not give Press Conference at least one vote every turn.
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Things to Playtest for

- Specific numbers?
- Which policies or virus actions get chosen the most? How can we encourage diverse strategies (secret objectives should help with this)
- Voting system specifics, who votes when, open or blind

Project Plan (Schedule):

- Flesh out our rules document - make sure there is some accusation phase [Week of 11/9]
- Playtest/prototype the voting mechanic [Week of 11/9]
- Iterate with further mechanics until the game is functional (has beginning, middle, end) [Week of 11/16 and of 11/23]
- Complete outside playtests for balance [Week of 11/23 and 11/30]
- Refine and Finalize game [Week of 11/30 and 12/7]

First Iteration

- After doing some basic functionality testing of the voting and meters,
- We changed it so panic does not result in a game over but instead increases spread rate
- Spread now has a variably random chance of increasing

Second Iteration (suggestions)

- Remove player controlled virus entirely, deception completely reliant on secret objectives
- Change the win condition: if the virus wins, everyone loses. Otherwise, you only win if you complete your objective (makes the objectives of utmost importance, so the pressure to get them completed is high) (design goal: if everyone plays selfish for their own objective, then players tend to lose)
- Playtest dice vs card system. Card system might be more flexible since you can add random events (that may increase panic significantly, or something like that)
 - Dice system: Every round, a die is rolled and compared against some variable threshold (varies based on chosen policies, panic, etc). If it exceeds the threshold, spread increases by 1.
 - Card system: Start with a deck of cards with, say, 2 null cards and 3 spread cards. Each turn you have to draw from the deck and if you pull a spread card, the spread increases by 1. Policies, panic, and events (drawn from the deck itself?) can add null cards or spread cards. There could be special spread/"danger" cards that, rather than increasing spread, increase the chance of spread.
- Voting system specifics (all blind? one at a time?)
- If we implement these, we should probably rewrite the entire part above and then start working on a more formal rule set

Design Doc Draft 2

Summary

- A tabletop social deduction game where the players play as the Virus Task Force politicians trying to meet their own self interests while stopping the spread of a deadly virus. Can you work together to stop the virus, or will you be defeated by your own selfishness?

Player Experience Objectives

- Pressured
- Distrust
- On their feet
- Lots of table talk and strategic discussion
- Hyper aware of how people are acting - analyzing others actions, accusing people for reactions, etc.
- Zoom-friendly (simple web app?)

Mechanics

- At the beginning of the game, secret objectives are randomly dealt from a deck. Each player must keep their secret role/objective concealed until the end of the game.
- Players have to keep a “spread” meter from reaching its maximum value (20 or so)
- Spread cannot decrease until the vaccine is developed. It can only be slowed by various policies.
- Panic can go up or down, higher panic increases the rate of spread
- Deck method: Every round, you pull X cards from a dynamic deck. The deck starts out containing [some base case, maybe 1 null and 4 spread?]. If you pull a spread card, the spread increases by 1. If you pull a null card, the spread does not change.
 - Once a vaccine is developed, the “administer vaccine” policy will add vaccine cards to the deck. Pulling a vaccine card decreases spread by 1.
- Players can win when Spread drops to 0 (only possible via vaccine administration)
 - Once spread has dropped to 0, any players who have completed their secret objectives have WON. Any players who have not completed their secret objectives have LOST.
 - If the spread reaches the maximum value, then EVERY PLAYER LOSES.
- Every turn, players vote on policies to enact.
 - Every player gets 3 votes which they can distribute however they please to the 6 policies.
 - The 2 policies with the most votes are enacted.
 - Every player’s voting chips look the same, so you don’t know who chose what.
 - One player is the lead scientist, rotates every round one player to the left.
 - Everyone closes their eyes and one by one (starting with the lead sci) puts in as many chips (at least 1) on whatever policies they choose.
 - Ties are decided by the lead scientist... Tie carefully!

Player Actions (All players collectively do 2 actions, determined via 3 votes/player, detailed above)

- "Work on vaccine" (fills a vaccine meter)
 - Once the vaccine is developed (meter hits some maximum value), this becomes "Administer vaccine" (adds 1 vaccine card to the deck)
- "Increase Hospital Funding" (adds null card to deck)
- "Mask Mandate" (one less pull from the deck, but it adds 2 spread cards)
- "Press Conference" (one more pull from the deck, but it adds 3 null cards)
- "Lockdown" (don't pull from the deck this round, but add 1 spread cards)
- "Voter Suspension" (vote to shut someone up for 1 round, ties resolved by The Chair)

(note for playtesting: make sure there's no set best options that are chosen every time)

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Secret Objectives

- Hospital Executive: You want "Increase Hospital Funding" to pass 8 times. (playtest to find what an appropriate number would be)
- You are invested in news networks. You fail if you do not give Press Conference at least one vote every turn.
- Voracious Legislator: Stuff the Deck to like 20 or 30 cards
- Silencer: Shut the same person up 3 times through voter suspension
- Dissenter: Put all your votes into something that nobody else votes for 5 times
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Things to Playtest for

- Specific numbers?
 - Anywhere there is a number, playtest to find a precise value
- Which policies get chosen the most? How can we encourage diverse strategies (secret objectives should help with this)
- Why do objectives have to be secret? Is there any reason NOT to share your objective?

Mechanics Control Tests:

Goal is to simulate the virus spreading exponentially. Here we simulated control tests to see how well the virus spread over time.

Dice System:

Here we all rolled 2d6s to enable the spread of the virus. We would all roll at a base threshold and see if we can get the virus to spread. The virus was able to spread but the only difficult part would be to factor in how we would initiate the administration of the vaccine. It would be difficult to show to players how the vaccine is spreading out to the population

Card System:

We simulated what would happen if we were to draw from a deck of 5 cards (2 null and 3 spread). In the first rounds we drew one card each and the spread only increased by 1. Once we started to add more pulls we felt that the spread would be done well exponentially. Also it would help with facilitating the administration of the vaccine.

Playtest Results:

Rule Change Suggestions:

- Vaccine meter max out at 10, takes too long to get to 20
- Do not add a spread card when lockdown is voted for
- Hospital Executive goal too hard, decrease from 8 to 4 or 5
- Discenter won very early, maybe make harder goal
- News network goal too unfair, make similar to hosp. Exec. instead
- Stuff the deck goal should be 30
- Pull counter should not increase automatically every turn
- Should be at least one more way to decrease spread

Player Experience Feedback

- **Pressure**
 - The level of pressure was very good, “chaotic glee”, players did not feel too pressured or not pressured enough (general rating 6/10 and 7/10)
- **Distrust**
 - Levels of distrust were extremely high, many accusations were made, reported very fun (general rating 9/10 10/10)
- **On their feet**

- Players were able to think and move faster very quickly after starting the game, it was easy to get into (general rating 8/10)
- **Strategy**
 - Players felt they could improve for the next game, felt that there was plenty of opportunity for strategy

Overall

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and players seemed to be having a really fun time (they got very loud). There was a high level of distrust and accusations without becoming too much, there were also “alliances” somewhat.

To do (11/20):

- Decrease acceleration of spread meter
 - Playtest only increasing pull count on a full cycle (chair position goes all the way around)
- Playtest with a strict timer
- Tweak numbers
- Playtest an adjusted lockdown
 - Does not add a spread card but can only be called every other round?

Lockdown no spread card

Playtest 11/22:

How does the timer feel?

The pacing was very good. The only downside is the end game. It got very slow and nobody was really doing in the game

Does it limit discussion?

Did not limit discussion, needs to be adjusted for the amount of players

How did it feel to enact policies, did you feel your voice heard?

Enacting policies felt good. A couple of tweaks to the voter suspension roles

Did you feel that the secret objectives were doable? Did they provide a challenge?

Dissenter needs a lot more challenge, Silencer and most likely jester needs more chaos

-The roles need to counter each other more often create more anti synergy with each other roles

-Need more chaos

-Add a vote manipulation role

-Possible rule for the chair to have one extra vote?

Changes from Playtest 11/29:

- Modified the Voracious Legislator role info to be more specific
 - Previously: "Stuff the Deck to 30 cards"
 - Now: "Get the deck to at least 30 cards by the end of the game"
- Added "Keep your remaining chips visible for the other players throughout the voting phase." to the voting phase. This was not clarified beforehand and caused some confusion in both the 11/22 and 11/29 playtests.
- Added Materials section to the rules to make setup more clear. (the game is prototypable with common game materials and a simple board, so having these materials makes creating your own copy of the prototype simple)
- Changed Voracious Legislator role to spread cards only
- Renamed Silencer to Grudge and added a new Silencer role
- Gave Media Conglomerate CEO a proper role title and reworked the goal -- now it is very similar (and directly opposed to) hospital exec
- Added Mask Manufacturer role
- Added Gridlocker role
- Added Diplomat role

To do:

- PLAYTEST VORACIOUS LEGISLATOR ROLE for specific numbers. How many spread cards is enough that it will cause conflict?
- Playtest exact number for media conglomerate CEO
- Playtest with new roles Silencer, Mask Manufacturer, Gridlocker, Diplomat
 - Make sure that Mask Manufacturer isn't too easy
 - Make sure that Gridlocker does not ruin the game or anybody's fun. Roles should be opposed to each other, not frustrating everyone involved. Just get rid of the role if it's too obnoxious to play with.
 - Test exact number for Diplomat - make sure it's not too easy



Playtest 12/5:

- Done over tabletop sim
- Vaccine passed every round but 1 (that round that it didn't pass was a tie)
- Took 2 hours and 8 minutes, but some time was wasted on figuring out tabletop sim stuff
- Played 18 rounds
- Roles that were in play: Mask Manu., Dissenter, Hospital Exec, Gridlocker, Jester
- Jester was too hard, needs some major reworking or removal
- Gridlocker ruins the fun for everyone after a point, probably want to scrap the role entirely
- Some ideas for new roles
 - One that wants the same set of policies to pass X times in a row
 - Some sort of new reworked Jester role (removed for the time being)
 - Potentially some sort of role that wins if everyone else loses?

Changes made:

- Removed gridlocker role (Gridlocker: Make the game run for at least 20 turns.)
- Removed jester role (Jester: Get silenced 3 times.)
- Lockdown clarification in the rules: pull count still increases that round.
- Voracious Legislator clarification: The deck must get to 8 spread cards at any point, not just at the end.
- Added a Strategy Notes section to the rules
- Added an option to select which roles to play with at the beginning. (Inspired by One Night Ultimate Werewolf). Adds a lot of replayability and customization.

To do:

- Playtest voracious legislator
- Playtest silencer and grudge - Do they work together well? Can they

- Playtest mask manufacturer - make sure it's not too easy
- Playtest diplomat - make sure it's not too easy
- Playtest media congl. Ceo - make sure 8 is a good number

Playtest 12/7:

- Done over tabletop sim
- About an hour long - but we cut off the end once it was clear who was going to win
 - The post-vaccine part of the game is extremely repetitive and long
 - Maybe buff Administer Vaccine to add more vaccine cards to the deck? Might want to sacrifice some realism here to make the game more fun
 - Another alternative might be to limit lockdowns, forcing the players to continue to gamble on pulls, which would keep the game suspenseful. Lockdown somewhat kills that suspense when you blow through many turns of vaccine/lockdown to fill the deck with vaccine cards.
 - Rayan tested this and the same problem of repetition happened, so speeding it up might be the best option. Event cards would also help
- Playtested with voracious legislator, silencer, grudge, mask manufacturer, and diplomat
- Diplomat is not opposed to anyone - betrays the idea that roles should cause conflict
 - Diplomat is extremely easy as a result
- If you know silencer or grudge is in the game, it's very easy to counter, even if you don't know who it is. The game should probably be played with entirely random roles so you don't know which ones are in play
- Lockdown is best lategame, but voracious legislator wants an early lockdown (don't lockdown early to counter that role)
- Players (same group as the last two playtests) were very collaborative once they were familiar with the mechanics. Roles were revealed much earlier and a coalition formed to get a majority of the players to complete their secret agendas. It would be preferable if this would lead to collective death, but one player still managed to come out without a win, and I believe assisting him to victory would have lost the game for everyone.
- Unclear what happens when you run out of cards in the pull deck or from the reserve cards
- Some ideas for new roles
 - A role that wants to create ties

Changes made:

- Diplomat now has to vote on policies that other people also vote on (opposite of dissenter) while still spreading out their votes. This should be playtested to see if people can counter a known diplomat now.
- Kept the part of the rules that allows for choosing a set of roles to play with, since that should be allowed, but it is probably not the ideal way to play, as many roles can be countered by knowing that they are in play.
- Clarified what should happen when any deck is depleted.

Final notes:

- The game is functional and playable, but not well balanced for a proper release.
 - Many roles still need adjusting and new roles should be added. The game is most fun when you don't know which roles are in play, so the more (well-tested and balanced) roles, the better.
 - Diplomat has new changes that need testing
 - Media Conglomerate CEO still needs testing
 - Grudge and Silencer might be very difficult
- There is still room for expansion with event cards
 - As well as more roles, we had an idea to introduce random event cards into the pull deck. This would also need a lot of playtesting but should help make the late game more fun and surprising (it currently gets very repetitive once the vaccine is developed).
- Still want to improve the late game
 - After the vaccine is developed the game gets very repetitive.
 - We could speed up Administer Vaccine