WAR SLAYER V
THE UNIVERSAL BETRAYAL

39 Operatives. 12 Double Agents. 1 VIP

Turn your deck of 52 into a thrilling game of espionage and betrayal

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OVERVIEW

Have you played War as a child? Of course!
Now it's time for War Slayer V – Child's play is over.

War Slayer V challenges your wits in order to defeat your opponent and defend your Dossier. Arrange your tactics by drawing three cards each time and decide to either place them in your Dossier or Operations Theater. Do you shield your valuable cards in your Dossier and risk losing them all if an Agent defects or deploy them as operatives, pitting them against your opponent?
Is Attack is the best defense? It's your call to make. Take the Dossier from your opponent, protect your own, capture the most points, reveal the VIP and become the true Spymaster.

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RULES

War Slayer V is a game of strategy and wit that pits two spymasters against each other as they compete for agents, information, and, ultimately, domination.

To begin, the players each get one half of a standard 52 card deck (*with the Jokers removed*). This is your ***HQ***.

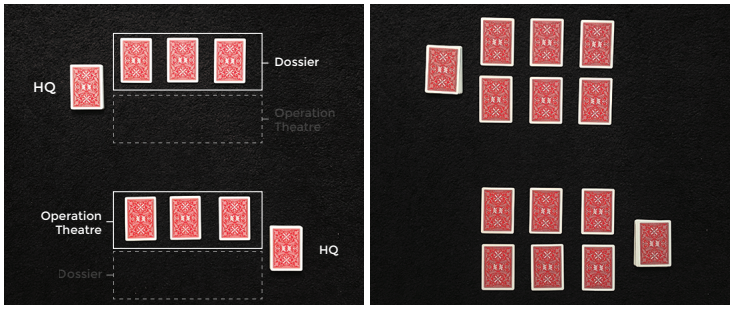
Each turn, both players draw three cards from their ***HQ*** and look at them. There are two sites of play for each player: the ***Dossier*** and the ***Operations Theater***. Players then decide whether or not to add the cards into their ***Dossier*** (as ***Information Cards***) or place them in the ***Operations Theater*** (as active ***Field Operatives***). Once this decision has been made, the players place these three cards facedown in a horizontal row (in however sequence they like) in either their ***Dossier*** or ***Operations Theater*** depending on their decision. The players then draw another set of three cards, look at them, and then arrange them however they like in the remaining row.
*For example, if the first three cards were placed in the **Dossier**, the next three MUST BE placed in the **Operations Theater**.*

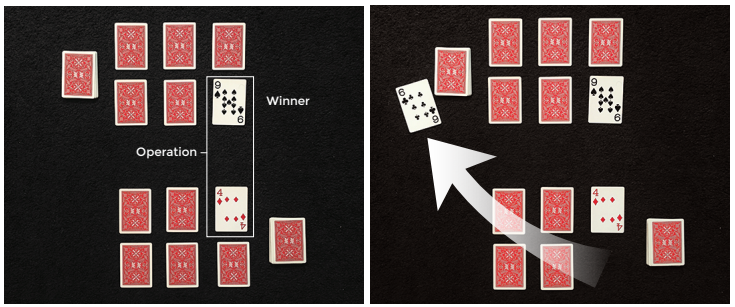
Once this step is complete, the ***Mission*** can begin!
The players simultaneously flip cards in the ***Operations Theater*** starting from the defeated player's left hand-side (*for the first turn, the person who did not deal is considered the "defeated"*). Each ***Operative*** card that is flipped is measured against the numerical value of their opponent's ***Operative*** card in the same position. The highest number wins. Each reveal is called an ***Operation***.
Note: An Agent (Ace) counts as a 10+ and beats all numerical cards.

Once an ***Operation*** is complete, the winner takes the ***Information Card*** that the defeated ***Operative*** was protecting from their opponent's ***Dossier*** and looks at it. They then put it aside to be placed into their deck at the end of the round. The player who lost an ***Information Card*** in the ***Operation*** may then decide whether or not they wish to continue. If they do not wish to continue, then the player who won the most recent ***Operation*** claims all face-up (exposed ***Operatives***) cards on the field and the ***Mission*** (round) ends. Otherwise, play proceeds to the next ***Operation***.
Once all three cards on both player's sides have been drawn (ie after three ***Operations***) , the ***Mission*** is over and all remaining ***Information cards*** in the ***Dossier*** go back to the bottom of their respective player's ***HQ*** decks. Do NOT shuffle your cards.

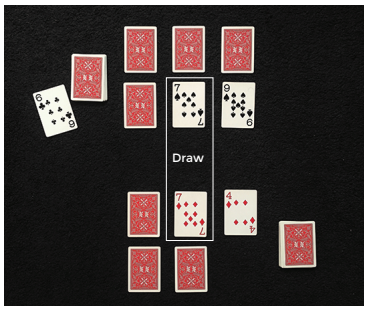
SCORING TABLE

CARD	ROLE	SCORE
Ace of Spades	VIP	10pts
Royal Cards (K, Q, J)	Defectors (Double Agents)	5pts (each)
Ace Cards	Operatives (Agents)	5pts (each)
Number Cards (10 - 2)	Operatives	1pts (each)





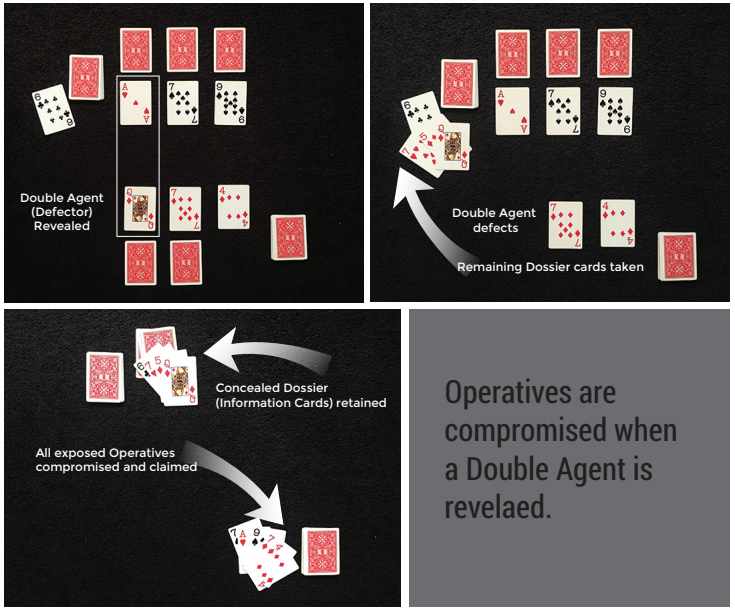
In the case of a Draw, play proceeds without any *Information cards* exchanging hands.



During an ***Operation***, If a ***Double Agent*** (Royal Card) is revealed, the ***Mission*** ends immediately. The ***Double Agent*** defects and is claimed by the opponent along with all remaining ***Information Cards*** in the opponent's ***Dossier***.
However, all remaining face-up (exposed ***Operatives/Agents***) cards are compromised in the process and claimed by the defeated player.
Claimed cards are added to the the bottom of each respective player's ***HQ*** decks and the game proceeds as normal.

The game ends when the ***VIP*** card (Ace of Spades), is revealed in ***Operations*** or taken from a ***Dossier***.
*Note: When the **VIP** is revealed during an **Operation**, the game continues until the end of that **Mission** (round) before Scoring can commence.*

Once the game ends, players count up the points in their ***HQ*** deck (as per the Scoring table) to determine a winner.



• Summary of Operation Results •

*When an **Operation** is won:*
The aligned ***Information Card*** from the ***Dossier*** is claimed by the winner.
All other cards remain as is. Play goes on (unless defeated player backs out of the ***Mission***).

*After the third (final) **Operation** in a **Mission** ends:*
All cards that did not exchange hands go back to their respective owners. On to the next ***Mission***.

*When an **Operation** ends in a draw:*
No cards exchange hands. Play goes on.

*When a player backs out of a **Mission**:*
All exposed cards go to the winning player. The ***Mission*** (Round) is over.

*When a **Double Agent** (Royal Card) is revealed:*
The ***Double Agent*** defects and is claimed by the opposing player along with that player's entire ***Dossier***. However, all remaining exposed cards are compromised and claimed by the losing player.
The ***Mission*** (Round) is over.

DOCUMENTATION AND PROCESS

Analyzing the old rules, and creating new ones:
We began the process by attempting to play the original War game for several rounds. We then discussed the rules and our thoughts about the game in its original form. We all felt the game was repetitive and relied entirely on luck (randomness). We decided to make a game that retained the convenience of using a standard 52 card playing deck but required more strategy. We also felt it was quite telling that the duration of a single round of War long exceeded the amount of time it could keep us engaged.
We started by making some simple changes to the rules. Instead of drawing one card each time, we tried allowing the player to draw up to three cards. They could see the cards (something War did not permit) and place them facedown in a line. In the original War, each player must flip their own card to 'battle' with but we tried allowing the player to choose which opponent's card to 'battle'. By doing so, we thought the game would require a bit more strategy, but at the same time we knew 'the luck factor' would still play an important role in this setup.
We collectively tried adjusting these basic modifications one step at a time and assessing what impact the change would have on the game as a whole.
… the 'Difficult' part:
While making our first prototype, we felt it was really hard to get a good idea of what it took to make the game more fun. We spent around 2 hours going back and forth, reworking the same few rules. Brainstorming was hard, but by each discussing our own ideas, we found some promising combinations that we integrated into our design. By repeatedly doing so, the new game mechanics became more and more clear.

Presenting the new game , play-testing and listening to feedback:
At this stage, we presented our first prototype to the class. We first invited the class TA to play with us. She was visibly frustrated at the very beginning, but the more she played, the more she began making sense of the rules. She appreciated our ideas, but also pointed out that we need to think about how to make our rules more accessible. We then invited our classmates to play-test. Both play-testers had trouble grasping the game as we admittedly struggled to define the rules in an intelligible way. One of the players noted that, while the game seems more strategic than the original War, it retained a lot of what he believed to be War's flaws. Namely 'battles' felt too random and selecting which card to 'attack' seemed like a meaningless choice. The feedback highlighted areas we needed to work one: The first being the 'battle' component and the second being finding a way to frame the game so that it is easier to explain. The rules needed to make more sense in context as opposed to being arbitrary decisions that can seem counter-intuitive (for example, why does a losing player win face-up cards? And how could we make that make more sense in the context of the game).
… the 'Difficult' part (again):
As designers, we got too involved in the whole modification process but didn't pay enough attention to how to best communicate the rules to players and have them make sense. For our next meeting, we would need to adjust the aspects of the game we felt were lacking as well as figuring out a way to frame or contextualize these rules.









More revisions, more playtesting:

In this final revision stage, we adjusted some the game mechanics. We improved the card attack/protect rule, and added a new consequence system into our game. Now the players need to decide the order that they put the attack/treasure cards. We also made to so that players can see all 6 cards they drew, but not all at once. Keeping the element of risk but reducing the need for complete blind luck. We felt the result greatly improved the strategy involved. We also added a 'story' or more accurately a premise. To make the rules easier to understand, we made our game a 'Spy game' and changed the attack cards to "Operatives or Agents", and the treasure cards to "Information cards in a Dossier".

By doing so we thought players could now understand what is at stake and why some cards 'defect' while other are 'compromised' and lost.

We tried the adjusted game several times by ourselves and then invited players to test (including one of the play-tester from the class session). We thought it was important to not only test the game but to test it in relation to its earlier state. We got positive feedback on our new rules. There was a comment about not knowing with any certainty whether a player was winning or losing whilst playing the game. The player in this instance thought it was too difficult to gauge whether he was winning or losing, knowledge which may otherwise influence his decisions during the game. While we found this to be a valid point, we collectively decided that this mystery may yield interesting results and it was not at odds with secretive world of espionage we were going for.

Conclusion:

Even though we encountered different problems at each stage, we gradually got familiar with the "brainstorming –> fast prototyping –> play-testing –> revising" design process. We feel the game definitely benefitted from solving different problems as a team and we also feel we got the game to a place we were all happy with.