



COMPONENTS

52 letter tiles & 8 threat chips



1 cotton bag



4 tile racks



4 player screens



4 dry erase markers

8 double sided keyboard sheets



GAME CONCEPT

DATA LEAK is a game of making words and breaking passwords. Acting as a skilled computer hacker, you will attempt to break your opponents' passwords before they can break yours, knowing that these passwords must be formed from a pool of only 45 letters.

Unfortunately, data leaks happen every turn and you'll have to be canny about which letters of your password you reveal to your opponents.

By browsing the darknet and using threats such as viruses, worms and trojan horses, more letters will be revealed until you eventually break your opponents' passwords. The last player with an unguessed password will win the game.



SETUP

- > Put all 37 letter tiles **without a dot** into the cotton bag. Then, put an additional 8 letters **with a dot** into the bag, according to the language all players will be using during the game. There will be 7 unused letter tiles – these should be returned to the game box.

For Dutch, add: E, E, J, K, N, U, W, Z

For English, add: A, H, I, K, O, S, W, Y

For French, add: A, E, I, J, N, S, U, Y

For German, add: E, H, K, N, U, U, W, Z

The distribution of the letter tiles is based on a number of factors, primarily the balance between vowels and consonants, and the prevalence of trigrams in each language. Consideration was also given to the place of certain letters inside words – for instance, in English, the letter 'J' is rarely found in the middle or end of a word.

- > Shuffle the threat chips and place them face-down in the middle of the table.
- > Give each player a screen, a tile rack, a marker and a keyboard sheet of the chosen language (the language is marked in the top left corner of the double-sided sheets).

HACKS (GAME ROUNDS)

A game of Data Leak is played over a number of hacks (rounds).

Each hack consists of 2 phases:

1. MAKING PASSWORDS
2. BREAKING PASSWORDS

The player who has the **best computer skills** (in real life) **will start** the first hack. At the start of each hack that follows, the starting player will be the next person in clockwise order.



MAKING PASSWORDS

In this phase, all players are trying to set their passwords, which must be valid words (see page 5 for details). Long passwords are usually better, but sometimes a clever, short password can fool your opponents!

Depending on player count, every player draws an equal number of letter tiles from the bag and places them in their tile racks, without revealing those letters to their opponents.

2 players > 14 letters

3 players > 9 letters

4 players > 8 letters

Begin with the starting player and proceed in clockwise order. Once everyone has taken their letter tiles, they may start to create their passwords. This is done simultaneously by all players.

A password must have **at least 4 letters**. If any player is unable to make a 4-letter password, they must reveal their tiles to all players. Then, return **all** players' letter tiles to the bag and restart this phase of the game.

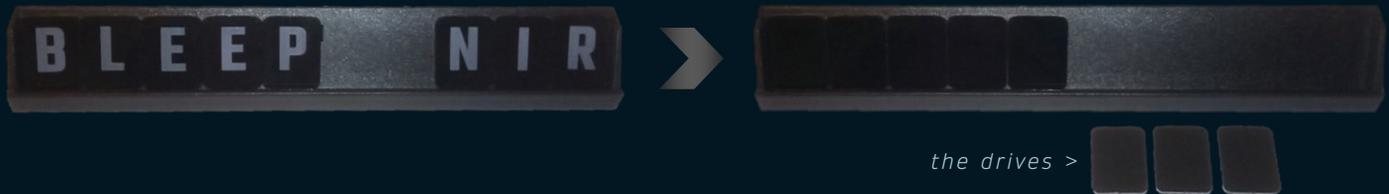
With 4 players, the chance of not being able to make a 4-letter word is approximately 1:100. With 3 players, that chance becomes 1:250. With 2 players, the chance of being unable to make a word is nearly non-existent.

To create a password, each player arranges their letters in the right order on their tile rack.



Example of a possible word in English

Then each player conceals their password (turns the tiles face-down in the tile rack). A player's unused letters must be placed **face-down** on the table behind their tile rack. These letters are called the *drives*, as in C: drive, E: drive, etc....



TIP: Players should not use all of their letters to create their passwords, as leftover letters (in the form of drives) will let them take actions during the next phase of play!

Once all players have completed these steps, they must set their screens behind their tile racks, so that players can see each other's tile racks. Then all players rotate their tile racks 180°, so the concealed letters on their tile racks face their opponents.

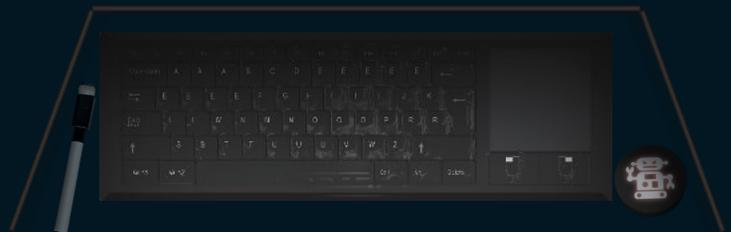
Players must keep their keyboard sheets behind their screens, and use their markers to cross out any letters that match those in their passwords and drives, as well as any others they are able to identify through the course of play.



To **complete this phase of play**, each player takes randomly a number of threat chips:

2 players > 3 threat chips

3-4 players > 2 threat chips



Each player looks at their threat chips and discards one face-down to the middle of the table and keeps the remaining chip(s) behind their screen - these chips may be used in the next phase.



VALIDITY OF WORDS

A password may be any word (including inflections and derivations), but proper nouns (and their derivatives) which are capitalized, abbreviations and words with a hyphen or an apostrophe are **not allowed**.

Before the game starts, and for the purpose of settling disputes, players should agree on an official (or online) dictionary. This should also help to prevent players from creating invalid passwords. We recommend using *Groene Boekje* for Dutch, *Oxford English Dictionary* for English, *Larousse* for French, and *Deutsches Wörterbuch* for German.

If a player does create an invalid password, they will be penalized at the end of a hack!

NOTE: Each vowel tile represents all variants of that vowel: such as those with accents (e.g. a --> à, e --> é, u --> û) or umlauts (e.g. a --> ä, o --> ö, u --> ü). In this way, words like *café* and *Bühne* may be created. The German letter "Eszett" (ß) is not present in this game; it may instead be represented with two "s", as in *Fussball*.





BREAKING PASSWORDS

This phase is played in turns, beginning with the starting player and continuing in clockwise order.

Each turn consists of 3 steps:

1. DATA LEAK
2. RESET DRIVES
3. PERFORM ACTIONS

1. DATA LEAK

Reveal one of the letters in your password.

Data leaks inevitably occur, so this step is **mandatory**. This is a tactical and important choice!

NOTE: The last concealed letter of a password cannot be revealed this way.

2. RESET DRIVES

Your drives - letter tiles that are not part of your password - may be used during your turn to take special actions (described on the following pages). When you take one of these actions, you must turn one or more drives 90° to show that they have been used for that action. Hereafter, turning a drive 90° is called *activating a drive*.

During this step of your turn, return all of your drives to an “upright”, non-turned position.



3. PERFORM ACTIONS

You may perform the following actions as many times as you like, up to the limit of drives you have available to use.

The activation symbol  shown next to the actions below indicates how many drives must be activated in order to perform that action one time.

3.1. SCAN THE WEB

Draw and look at one letter tile from the cotton bag (*darknet*), cross the letter out on your keyboard sheet and place that letter tile **face-down** in the center of the table (*internet*).

If you use this ability and there are insufficient tiles in the darknet, you must look at any additional letters from the internet instead.

3.2. GET A PUBLIC DRIVE

You may obtain an additional drive by taking a letter tile from the **darknet**, if available. Add that tile to your drives, **activated** and **face-up**, visible to other players.

This ability may never be used to take letter tiles from the internet.

3.3. RELEASE A THREAT

Play one of your threat chips to activate its effect. Each threat chip may only be **used once per hack**. Used threat chips must be placed face-up in the middle of the table.

An overview of the threats is shown on the last page of this rulebook.



3.4. BREAK A PASSWORD



Make one guess at a password.

While there is no penalty for an incorrect guess, it might give the other players some additional information.

Make sure to spell out the word you're guessing, because some words are homophones (as with the English words *grey* and *gray*, and the French words *jouée* and *joués*).

A **player whose password has been successfully guessed** is **out of the game** until the start of next hack.

A **player who successfully guesses a password may peek** at **all drives** belonging to the player who has been hacked!

END OF HACK

A hack ends as soon as there is only **one password** that **remains unguessed**. The owner of that password draws a circle around one of the "WIN" keys on their keyboard sheet.

But, if that password is determined to be invalid, the "winner" may not circle one of their WIN keys. Instead, they must erase a WIN key that they have already circled in a previous hack. If that player had not already circled a WIN key, all other players may circle one of their own WIN keys*!

*In the very rare event that this causes multiple players to win their 3rd hack at the same time, these players share their victory. However, the player who caused this anti-climax must apologize deeply and read "Vocabulary for Dummies."

The first player to first win 3 hacks will win the game!



RULES FOR 2 PLAYERS

For 2-player games, the normal rules apply with the following exceptions:

- > Each player must make 2 passwords. Give each player 2 tile racks.
- > Whenever a player has a *data leak*, they must reveal one letter from **each** password.
- > A player who successfully guesses a password, may **not** peek at their opponent's drives.
- > A hack ends when **both** of a single player's passwords have been guessed.

NOTE: A player's drives are shared between both of their passwords (each player has a single PC protected by 2 passwords, so to speak).

CREDITS

Thanks to all the friends , boardgame enthusiasts and possible publishers for all the useful feedback. Special thanks to Sven, Tim, Boris, Nore and Nele for the additional support I needed to make this game alive.

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OVERVIEW OF THREATS



A player of your choice skips their entire next turn (this also includes step 1: DATA LEAK).



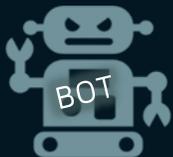
All other players **must** activate 1 additional drive for each action they take on their next turn.



A player of your choice **may** give you one of their activated face-down drives. If they choose to not give you a drive, their activated drives will **not** reset on their next turn.



Choose a player of your choice. For each letter they look at when *scanning the web* on their next turn, they **must** show **all** those scanned letters to you as well.



All other players **must** perform at least one *break a password* action on their next turn (only if they hold at least 2 drives).



Reveal 1 letter of 2 different passwords (i.e. 2 letters in total). This **can** be the last unrevealed letter of a password.



A player of your choice **must** reveal one additional letter from one of their passwords, for each action they take on their next turn.



Peek at up to 3 drives belonging to one player of your choice. You may peek at the drives of a player whose password has already been guessed.

