

# Hacker Express

## Rule Draft

By Eric Pietrocupo  
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Please note that this is a rule draft. So many rules and values have not been tested. So expect a lot of bugs and lack of balance for now. Some game aspects are not complete so improvisation would be required to play the game with these rules. Also note that the first version of the map released is incompatible with these rules, but you could use the original system cards instead to play.

## Introduction

Hacker is a game made by Steve Jackson Games after they have been raided by the secret service for publishing a role playing game book called Cyberpunk that apparently teach how to hack a computer. During the lawsuit, Steve Jackson decided to make a board game about it to avoid bankruptcy. The concept of the game was very interesting but the game ends up being very random and very chaotic which does not appeal to all audiences.

One day, I was looking at the games in my closet that could be well adapted as an express dice game. I found that hacker could actually be a good idea. Now compared to other express dice games, I did not want to use dice with odd faces, I want strictly regular 6 sided dice. So in the end, the game have much more details than a regular express dice game, but it will be played much faster than the original hacker game. So it's more a lighter version of the original game rather than an express dice game.

The goal of the game for this express version is to create an account on as many system possible before the game ends. Once the event deck is almost depleted the authorities will raid the players and the game will end. The player with the most victory points will win. Player gain VP by controlling systems but they also lose VP if the authorities have too much evidence against them.

## Components

Even if the components are similar to the original game, many stuff will need to be reprinted. Here is the component list:

**Network Tile:** Each tile contains 5 network locations. The tiles are connected together to make the board. The network never changes through the course of the game.

**Network Frame:** Additional piece of tiles to create the frame around the network. It adds in dials and add extra connections. Place in dial tokens

**Player Computer:** Each player has a sheet where they can place their computer upgrades.

**Upgrade tiles:** Players can buy various upgrades on the market that can be hooked on their computer to give them bonus to hacking.

**Event cards:** There will be much less event cards than in the original game and the target of the event will have some decisions to make.

**Player tokens:** This can be any colored generic component like bingo or small 3/4" poker chips.

**VP Tokens:** Normally gives negative victory points. But there can be positive victory point tokens.

**Threat tokens:** One of these tokens is placed on each system and it represents threats to hack this system that are generally extra security measures.

**Reward Tokens:** One token is placed on each system, that is a reward given to the first player to hack a system.

**Dice:** A lot of 6 sided dice will be required for playing the game.

**Scoring Track:** This is used to record the number of system currently controlled by each player or to keep track of the score (if cumulative scoring is used). This sheet might have a second track to record the number of evidence gathered against a player.

**Crash Tokens:** Used to indicate the amount of turns left until it boot up. (?not sure)

**First hacker:** This is the first player marker (?Not sure)

**Active hacker:** Used to keep track of the active player.

**In dial tokens:** Used to mark which indial are active.

**Virtual bridge tokens:** Used to make which bridge connection are working.

## Setup

**Network:** You will use a number of network tiles equal to the number of players. In case of odd number of players, the network patch tile is used. The tiles are laid out as 2x2 or 2x3 grids. Once the tile are there, you must build the frame around the board. This will add new connections and in dial locations connections to the network. Add in dial tokens around the frame according to the number of players (to be determined).

**Threats and rewards:** Place a threat and reward token on each system on the network. The system with special abilities have no reward tokens (not sure yet?). The tokens are distributed randomly face down on each system. The unused tokens are just removed from the game.

**Player components:** The players start with an empty sheet that represent their computer and various space to place additional upgrades. Players will also need a large amount of player tokens.

**Hacker shop:** Shuffle the upgrade tiles and draw 4 tiles randomly from the stack. Maybe some tiles are removed when playing with less players.

**Event Deck:** Create the event deck by selecting X cards randomly and shuffling them together. The number of cards to shuffle is to be determined. Take the last 5 cards of the deck, shuffle the "FBI Raid" card and place the cards at the bottom of the deck.

## Game Play

Each player play one after. When everybody has played, system uncrash and house cleans, the first player rotate and a new turn begins. If a player draw the “FBI raid” card that ends the game immediately.

### *Turn Order Summary*

1. Draw an event card
2. Main Phase
  - 2a. Hack the network
  - 2b. Buy Upgrades
3. Free Actions
4. Scoring
5. End of turn

### *Turn Order Details*

**1. Draw an event card:** Take the top event card from deck if your score ranking is in lower or equal to the player in middle position. Draw a second card if you are the last player. the middle position is calculated like this:

- 2 players: 2nd
- 3 players: 2nd
- 4 players: 2nd
- 5 players: 3rd
- 6 players: 3rd

**2. Main Phase:** The players has 2 choice during this phase, they cannot do both. Either they spend their time hacking the network or either they work to get some money and shop for new equipment.

**2a. Hack the network:** Each player can do a certain number of hacks per turn that is determine by their computer level. A hack can be used for various purpose, but the same system can never be hacked twice in a turn what-ever the reason or the success level of the hack. Here is what you can hack for:

**Infiltration:** This is the most common reason to hack. It allows the player to create an account on the target system if successful. Even if there is 4 space to place account tokens, there is no limit of account tokens that can be placed on an system. Anyways, if there is too much tokens, the system will house clean.

**Extra accounts** (Need account): A player can hack a system where he already have an account to get a 2nd account.

**Houseclean** (Need account): The player can hack a system where he has an account to remove an enemy player account. If successful, the player can decide which player he want to house clean. See houseclean rules later.

Ability (Need account): Some systems gives special benefits if they are hacked for their ability.

?Disable Threat (Need account): This allows the hacker to disable the threat token of a system. The token is placed face down in the user account area. So this could have the consequence of triggering houseclean.

?Increase security (Need account): A successful hack will add a +1 security token to the system. (Maybe it requires original manuals)

**Determining valid targets to hack:** A target system can only be hacked if connected directly to an in dial or if the player can make a chain of account starting from the in dial up to the target system. The same account cannot be used twice in the same hack. You need a 2nd account to create hacking path that loop back on a system already used.

**Rolling and resolution:** All systems are hacked at the same time. The player roll as many dice he have hacks and place 1 die on each system he wants to hack. Then the player roll again as many dice and place them on the system where there is already a die to form a pair of dice. Then for each system where there is a pair of dice, you compare the values to see if the hack is successful.

If the pair of dice plus any other bonus exceed the security level of the system, the hack is successful. If the pair of dice value is lower or equal the ICE value (ignore all bonus to the roll) then the ICE is triggered.

**Triggering ICE (Intrusion Counter-Measure Electronics):** When the player trigger ICE, he loses his account on that system if he had one. But he lose the account in an adjacent system used in the hack path. Any dice placed in that adjacent system are also removed. If that any of these 2 system were directly linked to the in dial used for hacking, the player gain an evidence token.

**Order of resolution:** The system hacked are resolved in any order the player want except if they share the same path. In that case, the system further in the path is resolved first. That could create situation where for a path A -> B -> C, a player have an account in system A and B. The Player hack B and C, but C trigger ICE that destroy the account in system B. In that case, the player lose his hack in system B.

**Abandoning Hacks:** A player can decide not to place some dice after the first roll he he thinks he does not have any chance. So for example, a player with 3 hack could roll 3 dice and only place 2. But for the second roll, he will only roll 2 dice. So abandoning hacks reduce the risk but also reduce the chance to make the strong hack successful.

**Net Ninja:** The player who controls the most system at any given time will become the net ninja. The net ninja gives a +1 to all hack die to hack any system as long as he is the net ninja. The title can be lost at anytime, even in the middle of a player's turn. The net ninja is also worth 1 victory point.

**Hacking a controlled system:** When a player hack system where he already have an account, for example to house clean, he adds +2 to his roll.

**Threat:** The first hacker to hack a system will reveal the threat token if he successfully infiltrate the system or if he trigger ICE. If the token is revealed from triggering ICE, any black ICE or viral threat is applied immediately. From now on, the threat token will be active on that system for the rest of the

game until disabled. Some threat like the sniffer and firewall are also effective if the player hack through the system to hack somewhere else.

**Reward:** The first hacker to infiltrate a system will get the reward token. This token will give a new advantage in the network. This reward token can be used at any time during their turn. Unused tokens are placed face down in front of the players.

**2b. Buy Upgrades:** A player can decide to work to get some money and shop for system upgrades instead of hacking. When doing so the hacker receive X\$ that he can spend on system upgrades. Upgrades he already owned can be sold at the price purchased to buy more expensive upgrades. Sold upgrades are sent to the discard pile.

The player can only buy the upgrades displayed in the hacker shop. Once the player is done, replace each bought upgrade with an upgrade tile from the stack. Once the upgrade stack is depleted, reshuffle the discard pile.

**3. Free actions:** The free action phase is a special phase that generally encourage negotiation. Even if they are free actions, some of them has limits.

Crashing (1 per turn): A player can decide to crash a system where he have an account. This will add 3 crash tokens to the system, but everything else stay there. But a crashed system does not score and cannot be used in the hacking path. (?Maybe once per system, but risk to get evidence tokens)

Narking (once per system): A player can decide to force a houseclean on a system he have an account. The admin will try to houseclean everybody (including the narking player) on the system and reactivate any disabled threat. See houseclean rules later.

Phreak (free-Hack)(1 per player): A player can give information to another player to make him infiltrate a system where he has an account. It gives to player a +2 to infiltrate the system immediately. Roll 2 dice and check the results. If that player hit ICE, the active player also lose his account, but he is not affected by ICE.

Dropping account (Unlimited): Players can decide to remove any of their account token from any system they want. Back doors cannot be removed.

Trading (Unlimited): Players can trade reward tokens, pieces of equipment, event cards and account between each other. Players can only trade with the active player. Event cards are always traded face down, since the only way to see the content of a card is to play the card.

Open In dial and virtual bridges (Unlimited): An indial or virtual bridge owned by a player can be revealed to the public.

Discarding event card (Unlimited): All players can discard any of their even card during the free action phase. Generally this is done through part of a deal.

?Propagate Virus (Need account): If you are infected or have the virus reward token (?not sure yet) you can infect all players on the target system. (maybe not an action, rather part of the reward ability)

**Playing event cards:** Event cards can be played only against the active player. The players can never show their event cards to other players even when negotiating. The only way to reveal an event card is to play it. Else once discarded it is placed face down or at the bottom of the discard pile. Players can tell any information on his cards, but it does not have to be true. So a lot of bluffing is possible.

**Negotiation:** Players can use their free actions to negotiate stuff. For example a player could decide to give a reward in order for a player to open an in dial. Player can also threaten other players with event cards they have in their hands: “If you don't give me this account I'll use that even on you”. In this case, the player who accept the deal could ask his opponent to discard the event card as a part of the deal.

Deals where the effects happens on the same turn must be accomplished. But if a deals that requires to be fulfil later, the player could decide not to keep his promise. For example, if a player say: “open this in dial and I'll give you a phreak on my turn”, the player could decide not to phreak his opponent.

**4. Scoring:** Players get points for the following reasons:

Controlled Systems: For each system where a player has 1 or more account, he gain 1 victory point.

Net Ninja: If at the end of his turn, the player has the net ninja marker, he gains 1 victory point.

**5. End of turn:** Pass to the next player in clockwise order. When all the players have played their turn, the following checks must be made.

Un-crashing systems: Remove a crashed token from every system that has any tokens. If all the tokens are remove from the system, the system is up again. The system automatically houseclean.

House clean: Every system that has too much hacker immediately house clean. Any disabled threat are reactivated and hacker rolls 1 die for each account to see if it survives the clean up. Accounts if the roll is 5+. When an player use a hack to houseclean people, they lose their account on a 3+. Worm tokens are also removed this way. The number of account required to house clean is still to be determined (it's relative to the number of players), worm and disabled threat count as account tokens for housecleaning.

Player rotation: The active player rotate counter-clockwise.

### ***End of game***

When the "FBI Raid" card is drawn the game ends immediately. The players will now need to adjust their score. Player will discard 1 evidence tokens from their stack for the following reasons:

Unused Event cards: Any RGB set of 3 cards where all the colors are different (Red+Green+Blue).

Unused Reward Tokens: Any set of 2 unused reward tokens.

The number of evidence tokens left will give a penalty points to the player according to a triangular path. These points are removed from the player's score.

1 token = -1 VP  
2 tokens = -3 VP  
3 tokens = -6 VP

4 tokens = -10 VP  
5 tokens = -15 VP  
6 tokens = -21 VP

7 tokens = -28 VP  
8 tokens = -36 VP  
etc...

Players with a score of 0 or less loses the game. The surviving player with the most victory points wins. The players share the victory in case of ties.

## Reference

This section contains the list of information.

### *System Upgrades*

There are various spots to fill on the player's sheet. The values up the upgrades are to be defined.

Modem: Gives +0, +1 or +2 bonus to hack. (+3 for military upgrade)

Computer: Gives hacks: 2 hacks, 3 hack or 4 hack. (5 hack for military upgrade)

Cards: Various upgrades that has different powers:

Ram: +1 hack (maybe different power, re-rolls) or roll extra dice.

ICE Skater: Reduce ICE level of all hacks by X.

Sequencer: +1 hack, but maybe change for something else.

Military Icebreaker: Ignore ICE.

Box: This is external boxes that you can add to your computer. From he original game:

Off-white Box: +2 to hack (to be redefined)

Mauve box: +1 hack (to be redefined)

Fuschia Box: +1 to hack (to be redefined)

Other colors will be added.

Expansion: Increase the size of your computer to add another card.

Original Manuals: Allows to place +1 or +2 security token to system with a hack without failure (or need the manual to be able to increase security)

Tim Norton Anti-Virus: Can be used to clean 1 type of virus from your system and maybe protect your system from that type of virus from the rest of the game.

Programs: Not really sure but maybe you can buy programs that allows you to use your hack for doing special actions. For example, you could have the “mail bomb” that allows a player to crash an adjacent system with a successful hack.

### *Event Cards*

To be defined. Probably the cards will not be very unique to make it easier to remember the list and bluff the effects.

## ***Hacker Abilities***

These are unique abilities that every hacker could have. This is just a list of ideas since I'll have to wait for the game to be working before define theses.

Computer Engineer: Harder to trigger ICE.

Dad is a lawyer: Discard 1/2 or 1/3 of your evidence tokens at the end of the game.

Works for a phone company: When goin shopping, you get a free indial or virtual bridge reward.

Rich Dad: Minimal equipment better or get extra money when go shopping.

???: Easier to infiltrate

???: Hrder to clean house

???: Virus resistant, & maybe get virus rewards

???: Get a 2nd reward token when get a reward.

## ***System Abilities***

This is a list of some ideas that system could have as special ability. There would be 1 such system per tile. To activate that ability you need an account an hack the system on the next turn.

Pentagon: Get a military upgrade (Military upgrades are strong but gives 2 evidence tokens)

FBI: Discard 1 evidence token

IRS: Gain money

## ***Threat***

Security Improved: Increase the security level l of the system by +1 or +2

Black ICE: The ICE on this system is different. Players lose account according to normal ICE rules, but he can be traced back up to his in dial. Count the number of system from the in dial to the target and subtract it from 12 (ex: 5 system gives  $12-5=7$ ). The player must roll greater or equal this value to avoid getting an evidence token. Each out dial used reduce the value by 2 additional points.

Sniffer: When targeting or using this system on your path, any hack with a roll of 6 or less will add an evidence token to the player what ever if he is successful or not.

Firewall: When targeting or using this system in your path, the security level of the target system is increased by +1.

## ***Rewards***

Backdoor: You can use this token to add a back door to any system you want. You place the token in the system with a token of your color above it (to indicate ownerships). Back doors count as an account that cannot be removed in any way.

Allies: These are fried that gives you bonus and does not count as equipment. Each ally has different bonus applicable once per turn.

Secret In dial: You can place this token in any free in dial spot and add a token of your color above it (to indicate ownership). This is a special in dial that can only be used by you until open.



Virtual Bridge: You can place this token on any open connection and add a token of your color (to indicate ownership). This path can now be exclusively used by you until you open it.

? Maybe worms are virus could also be rewards. They cannot be system upgrades because people will know they have them.

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Notes:

**Propagate Virus**: maybe virus are reward that can be given during trades or can infect system. Not sure if you are immune against your own virus.

**Worm**: Not sure if worm is player controlled and triggered or if it's an independent threat.

I think it could be more fun if virus and worm where sent by the player for just making trouble rather than being threats

Nb of players: Maybe the game can be played with more than 6 players, but not sure if it really worth is to play with let say 8 players.