

Signals and Shadows: Espionage Across the Iron Curtain

Introduction: Signals and Shadows is a Cold War-themed strategy game designed for 6-18 players. The game challenges players to take on the roles of agents, handlers, and counter-intelligence officers during the tense geopolitical standoff between NATO and the Soviet Union. Players will attempt to pass secrets safely and uncover opposing spies, using strategic communication and deduction skills.

Objective: The aim is to successfully pass secrets between handlers and agents to score points for your team, while counter-intelligence works to intercept these exchanges and identify spies. The game ends when one team reaches 6 points or after 30 minutes of play.

Setup:

1. Players and Roles:

- **6-11 Players:** Includes 2 counter-intelligence officers, 4+ agents, and appropriate handlers.
- **12-18 Players:** Includes 4 counter-intelligence officers, 8+ agents, and handlers as needed.

2. Materials: Each player receives two identity cards (one secret and one false) and one drop method card. Identity cards should include a mix of real subversive agents and counter-intelligence identities. Drop method cards include: signal site, safe house, dead drop, or brush pass.

3. Secret Distribution: Use an envelope or briefcase to contain several 'secret' cards, which circulate among players.

Gameplay:

- 1. Card Distribution:** Shuffle all identity and drop method cards and distribute them to players. Counter-intelligence agents may choose to reveal their roles at their discretion.
- 2. Non-Verbal Communication:** Agents need to figure out who their handler is and learn their drop method through non-verbal cues like winking or nodding.

3. **Making the Drop:** When an agent receives the briefcase or envelope and knows their handler and the drop method, they announce they are making a drop and read aloud a secret card.
4. **Role of Counter-Intelligence:** These players monitor to deduce who is exchanging secrets and may speak anytime to make accusations or remain silent to observe further.

Special Rules:

1. **Accusations:** Counter-intelligence makes accusations by stating a suspected agent's handler and the method of the drop. If correct, the accused must confirm by revealing their cards.
2. **Scoring:**
 - Successfully passing a secret: 1 point to each of the agent and handler, and to their team.
 - Correct accusation by counter-intelligence: 3 points to their team.
 - Incorrect accusation: Point deductions vary by role (-4 points for MI6, -1 for HUAC, -3 for MGB, -2 for NKVD).

Round and Game End:

- A round ends when a secret is successfully passed and discussed. Counter-intelligence may choose to initiate the next round.
- The game ends either when a team scores 6 points or after 30 minutes.

Player Competition: Agents add their individual scores to their team's total, competing both within their bloc (NATO or Soviet) and against the opposing bloc. This fosters both individual and team competition.

Conclusion: Signals and Shadows requires strategic thinking, keen observation, and effective communication. By embodying roles within a Cold War espionage framework, players learn about historical figures, unclassified secrets, and strategies.