

SCAPEGOAT

A 15–20 Minute Game of Targets, Blame, and Corporate Survival

Players: 3–5 (best with 4)

Age: 10+

Components: Standard 52-card deck

Goal: Climb until your Hand Size reaches 6. You win instantly.

1. THE CONCEPT

Year-end reporting is here. Your team must hit its sales target exactly.

Miss it? Someone gets cut.

Beat it? Someone gets investigated.

Hit it perfectly? Everyone looks suspicious.

Your hand size is your rank. Bigger hand = more power, more insulation, more ability to make others eat the fallout.

2. SETUP

Targets

Each year has 4 Quarters, all with the same target:

Players	Quarter	Target
3		10
4		15
5		20

Deal

Everyone starts at **Hand Size 4**. Deal 4 cards to each player.

Start Player

Everyone reveals a card. **Lowest rank** starts (A lowest).

Ties → reveal again. Return revealed cards to hands.

3. CARD VALUES

Face Up (Honest Sales)

- **A** = 1
- **2–10** = face value
- **J/Q/K** = 10

Face Down (Suspicious Sales)

Always counts as **10**.

- **Black (♠ ♣):** Bending rules. Safe if investigated.
 - **Red (♥ ♦):** Cheating. If revealed, the player responsible pays.
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4. GAMEPLAY

On your turn:

1. **Play** 1 card to the current Quarter (up or down).
2. **Add** its value to that Quarter.
3. **If below target:** Continue clockwise.
4. **If \geq target:**
 - Quarter closes.
 - Your played card **stays in that pile**.
 - Extra points carry forward to the next Quarter.
 - If this was Q4, the year ends immediately.
5. **Draw** back up to your Hand Size.

Deadline

Each player gets **2 turns total** for the entire year.

If Q4 isn't filled before that → **Missed Target**.

5. END OF YEAR

Only closing Q4 triggers investigations and promotions. Earlier Quarters just close normally.

A. BEAT THE TARGET (Q4 > target)

You overshot.

The player who closed Q4 is the **Scapegoat**.

They gather all face-down cards from the year.

- **If none exist** → clean; continue below.
- **If any exist** → reveal 1 at random.

Black:

A Promotion Review is held for all players.

Red:

Scapegoat is Demoted.

A Promotion Review is held for all other players.

B. PERFECT TARGET (Q4 = target)

Suspiciously perfect.

The player who closed Q4 is the **Closer**.

They gather all face-down cards.

- **If none exist** → clean; continue below.
- **If any exist** → reveal 1 at random.

Black:

A Promotion Review is held for all players.

Red:

Everyone is Demoted.

No Promotion Review this year.

C. MISSED TARGET (Deadline hit)

Failure to deliver.

1. Everyone reveals 1 card.
2. **Lowest rank** is Demoted (A high, 2 low).
3. All revealed cards are discarded.
4. Everyone draws 1 card.

5. No Promotion Review.
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6. PROMOTION & DEMOTION

Promotion Review

Triggered only by an end-of-year outcome.

1. All eligible players reveal 1 card.
2. **Highest rank wins.** (A high.)
Ties → tied players reveal again until someone wins.
3. **Winner:** Discards all revealed cards, draws 2, Hand Size +1.
4. **Others:** Discard revealed cards, draw 1.

If the Winner reaches **Hand Size 6**, they win the game.

Demotion

- Discard 1 card of your choice.
 - Hand Size -1 (minimum 1).
 - Still in the game, just miserable.
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7. NEXT YEAR

1. Clear all Quarters into the discard pile.
 2. Shuffle if needed.
 3. **Start Player:**
 - If a Promotion Review happened → the promoted player.
 - Otherwise → the player who ended the previous year.
 4. Reset Q1 to 0.
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8. QUICK REFERENCE

Rankings

Context **Order**

Sales (face up) K–Q–J–10...2–A

Promotion A–K–Q–J...2

Missed Target A–K–Q–J...2

Start Player K–Q–J...2–A

End-of-Year Outcomes

Outcome	Trigger	Investigation	Demotion	Promotion Review
Beat Target	Q4 > target	1 random face-down	Scapegoat on Red	All players (Black) or all except Scapegoat (Red)
Perfect Target	Q4 = target	1 random face-down	Everyone on Red	All players on Black
Missed Target	Deadline	None	Lowest card	None

Turn Summary

1. Play
2. Add value
3. Close if \geq target
4. Draw

9. DESIGN NOTES (CONDENSED)

Aces: Weak in sales, kingmakers in reviews.

Face-down Reds: Fast closers—if you're willing to risk unemployment.

Hand Size = Rank: More cards = more control over when other people get blamed.

Hand Size 1: A corporate coffin, but not a grave.

Memory: Cheating in Q1 can explode in Q4.

10. FAQ

Do Aces count high or low?

Sales: low (1)

Everything else: high

What if I'm Hand Size 1 and get Demoted?

Discard your card, draw 1. Stay at 1.

Do earlier Quarters matter?

Only Q4 triggers consequences.

Where do extra points go?

They stay in the Quarter; only the overflow number moves forward.

Can I back out of a Promotion tie?

Yes. Reveal a weak card and fold.

Does the Deadline reset each Quarter?

No. Two turns total for the entire year.

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