

BURNOUT 🔥 😱 🔥

A Semi-Cooperative Game of Collective Pressure

Players: 2-5

Age: 12+

Duration: 2-4 minutes (difficulty dependent)

Type: Semi-Cooperative, Bag-Building, Push-Your-Luck

Quick Start

1. Mix the cubes into the bag.
2. Set timer (5 min Standard, 3 min Crisis).
3. Each turn: choose **Work**, **Rest**, **Delegate**, **Support**, or **Overtime**.
4. You burn out at 5 Stress tokens 🟥.
5. When time's up or bag's empty, score.

OVERVIEW

You're a team working to complete a group project before the deadline. Everyone draws from the same shared bag of work and stress tokens. Work too hard and you'll burn out, destroying your work and hurting the team. Rest too much and time runs out.

The system structurally rewards individual ambition: the highest scorer wins a **Promotion**. However, that individual success is strictly conditional on the collective achieving minimum **Project Quality**.

Goal

1. **Compete** for the **Promotion** by having the highest individual score.
2. **Cooperatively** score a minimum **C Grade** pass mark for Project Quality, or no promotion is awarded.

⌚ THE TIMER

Use your smartphone timer. Choose your difficulty:

Mode	Timer	Thematic Focus
2-Player	2 Minutes	
3-5 Player Crisis 🔥	3 Minutes	The intended high-pressure experience. Every turn is critical.
3-5 Player Sweat 😱	4 Minutes	For onboarding.



COMPONENTS

Materials Needed:

From Your Collection:

- **1 Opaque Bag** (cloth drawstring recommended, 6"+ diameter)
- **Wooden cubes or similar tokens:**
 - **2 Players:** 10 , 10 , 10 (30 total)
 - **3 Players:** 12 , 12 , 15 (39 total)
 - **4 Players:** 14 , 14 , 20 (48 total)
 - **5 Players:** 16 , 16 , 25 (57 total)
- **1 Timer** (smartphone recommended)

Play Areas:

- **1 Shared Draw Bag** (the team draws from this together)
- **Personal Work Areas** (space in front of each player for their and tokens)
- **Personal Stress Areas** (space in front of each player for tokens—keep separate and visible)
- **1 Communal Discard Pile** (for lost work and permanently managed stress—starts empty)

Token Types:

- **Green** = High-Quality Work (3pts)
- **Yellow** = Low-Quality Work (1pt)
- **Red** = Stress



SETUP

1. Place the **shared draw bag** in the centre of the table where all players can reach it.
2. Clear space in front of each player for two areas:
 - **Personal Work Area** (for and tokens you've completed)
 - **Personal Stress Area** (for tokens—keep these separate and visible to all)
3. Set up a **Communal Discard Pile** area (this starts empty—it's used for lost work and permanently managed stress during play).
4. Designate one player to be the **Timekeeper** .
5. Add the starting mix of tokens to the shared bag based on player count:
 - **2 Players:** 10 , 10 , 10
 - **3 Players:** 12 , 12 , 15
 - **4 Players:** 14 , 14 , 20
 - **5 Players:** 16 , 16 , 25
6. **Shake the bag** .

The Timekeeper goes **last**. The player to the Timekeeper's immediate left goes **first**. Play continues clockwise.

GAMEPLAY

Each turn should take only a few seconds—the timer pressure is part of the challenge.

- The Timekeeper starts the timer  (based on your chosen difficulty mode).
- Players take turns clockwise.

On your turn, you must **choose and resolve ONE** of the following actions:

1. "WORK" (The Required Task)

Draw one token from the shared bag  and resolve it:

-  or  → Add to your Work Area 
-  → Add to your Stress Area 

(Note: Stressed players discard ()  tokens instead of keeping them.  tokens are always added to your Stress Area  regardless of your state—see Stress & Burnout section)

2. "REST" (Decompress)

Remove 2  tokens from your Stress Area  :

- **Discard one** permanently (remove from game) 
- **Return one** to the shared bag 

If you only have 1 red token: Return it to the shared bag  (nothing is discarded).

If you have 0 red tokens: You cannot take this action.

3. "DELEGATE" (Transfer Risk)

Transfer 1  token from your Stress Area  to any other player's Stress Area .

This action has no restrictions—you can use it pre-emptively, even when you're not stressed. Protection at others' expense.

4. "SUPPORT" (The Altruistic Choice)

Choose one other player. Remove 1  token from their Stress Area  and **discard it permanently** .

Requirement: You must have **fewer than 3 red tokens** in your own Stress Area .

This is the only action that permanently removes stress from the game.

5. "OVERTIME" (The Gamble)

Take **two "Work" actions** in a row (draw twice from the bag , resolving each draw completely before the second).

Sometimes Overtime helps you catch up. Sometimes it's the final straw.

Designer's note: For a more strategic game, limit the Overtime action to 1 per player.

⚠ STRESS & BURNOUT

This is the central mechanic of the game.

-  tokens in your Stress Area 🚨 = "Active Stress"
-  tokens in the Shared Bag 🍀 = "Team Stress"

"STRESSED" (3-4 Tokens)

If you have **3 or 4 ** tokens in your Stress Area 🚨, you are **"Stressed."**

While Stressed:

- If you draw a  token during Work, you **cannot** place it in your Work Area  — instead, place it in the **Discard Pile** 
- You may only keep low quality  tokens.
- You **cannot** take the Support action (you lack the emotional capacity to help others)
- (*Drawing  or , and using Rest or Delegate, are resolved as normal*)

"BURNOUT" (5+ Tokens)

If you ever accumulate **5 or more ** tokens in your Stress Area 🚨, you **"Burn Out."**

When you Burn Out:

1. **IMMEDIATELY announce "Burnout!"** (required—alerts the table)
 2. **Remove 3 tokens** from your Work Area  (any combination of  or  — your choice) and place them in the Discard Pile 
 3. **You remain at 5+  tokens** (you don't automatically recover)
 4. On your future turns, you **cannot take the "Work" or "Support" actions**
 5. You can **only Rest or Delegate** until you get below 5  tokens
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GAME END & SCORING

The game ends when:

- The timer expires
- The shared bag  is empty

Timer Expiration Rules :

- If a player is mid-action when time expires: **Complete that action fully**
- Do NOT continue to the next player
- **Immediately proceed to scoring**
- *Example: Timer expires while you're resolving Overtime's first draw—complete both draws, then score*

Phase 1: Determine Individual Score & Winner

The primary focus is determining the winner of the individual competition for the Promotion.

1. **Action:** Each player determines their **Individual Score** (tokens in their Work Area ):
 - +3 Points for every  token
 - +1 Point for every  token
2. **Action:** The player with the highest **Individual Score** is up for **promotion** .

Tiebreaker: Fewest  tokens in Stress Area . If still tied, the Promotion  is **not awarded to anyone** (the competition was too close to justify the single advancement).

Phase 2: Calculate the Group Grade (Project Quality)

This phase determines whether the **promotion** is approved.

1. **Action:** Add all players' **Individual Scores** together to get the **Total Team Points**.
2. **Action:** Compare the **Total Team Points** to determine your final **Group Grade**.

The entire team receives the final **Group Grade**.

 2-PLAYER GAME GRADES	
Total Team Points	Grade
39-40 points	A+
35-38 points	A
30-34 points	B
24-29 points	C
16-23 points	D
0-15 points	F

Maximum possible: 40 points if all  and  tokens are collected.

 3-PLAYER GAME GRADES	
Total Team Points	Grade
47-48 points	A+
42-46 points	A
36-41 points	B
29-35 points	C
19-28 points	D
0-18 points	F

Maximum possible: 48 points if all  and  tokens are collected.

🏆 4-PLAYER GAME GRADES	
Total Team Points	Grade
54-56 points	A+
49-53 points	A
43-48 points	B
36-42 points	C
25-35 points	D
0-24 points	F

Maximum possible: 56 points if all 🟩 and 🟪 tokens are collected.

🏆 5-PLAYER GAME GRADES	
Total Team Points	Grade
62-64 points	A+
56-61 points	A
48-55 points	B
39-47 points	C
27-38 points	D
0-26 points	F

Maximum possible: 64 points if all 🟩 and 🟪 tokens are collected.

Phase 3: The Corporate Judgement

The **Promotion** 🏆 is only awarded if the final **Group Grade** was **C or higher**.

Minimum C Grade Thresholds: 2P: 24+ points | 3P: 29+ points | 4P: 36+ points | 5P: 39+ points

System Outcomes: The System's Final Word

The structural conflict in *Burnout* creates three predictable outcomes:

- **Success + Success:** The team achieved a **C+ Grade or higher**, and a single **High Achiever** won the **Promotion** (The ideal, if ruthlessly competitive, outcome).
 - **Sacrifice + Promotion:** One or more players sacrifice their chance at individual victory and promotion to ensure an **A+ Grade**, but the **High Achiever** won the **Promotion** (The structural punishment for altruism).
 - **Failure + Failure:** The team crashed to a **D or F Grade**, and the **Promotion Gate was blocked**. No one advances, regardless of their individual score (The penalty for unrestrained greed).
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QUICK REFERENCE

Action	Effect	Restrictions / Notes
1. WORK	Draw 1 token from the bag 	If STRESSED (3-4 ) , discard  tokens →  .  always adds to Stress Area  .
2. REST	Remove 2  tokens	1 discarded permanently  , 1 returns to bag  . Requires ≥ 1  to use.
3. DELEGATE	Transfer 1  to another player	No restrictions.
4. SUPPORT	Remove 1  from another player, discard permanently 	You must have < 3  tokens.
5. OVERTIME	Take two WORK actions in a row	If you Burn Out after first draw, second draw cannot happen.

? FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Timing & Bag

Q: What happens when time expires?

A: Finish the current action, then score immediately. Do not start a new turn.

Q: Can I peek in the bag  ?

A: No.

Stress (3-4) & Burnout (5+)

Q: What if I draw  while Stressed (3-4 )?

A: Discard it immediately  . Stressed players cannot keep  tokens.

Q: What if I hit 5+  tokens?

A: You Burn Out instantly: announce it, remove 3 tokens from your Work Area  , and you can only Rest or Delegate until below 5  . You stay at 5+  until you take an action that reduces it (like Rest).

Q: Can I Burn Out multiple times?

A: Yes. Every time you reach 5+  , Burnout applies.

Q: What if everyone is Stressed at once?

A: Nobody can Support. You can only Rest (polluting the bag ), Delegate, or Work (wasting  tokens).

Actions

Q: Can I Delegate while Stressed or at 4  ?

A: Yes. Delegate has no restrictions and can push others into Burnout.

Q: When can I use Support?

A: Only when you have fewer than 3  tokens. You can Support anyone who has  tokens.

Q: Can Overtime trigger Burnout mid-action?

A: Yes. If the first draw takes you to 5+  , you Burn Out and cannot complete the second draw.