

President Deathspank: A Scrum hybrid

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

This document presents a solution to the current assignment. It shows one way the problem could be done and sets some expectations. You don't have to match it exactly, but it provides a starting point.

Chapter 2

Universe Description: *Presidents of Virtue* in the DeathSpank World

2.1 Setting: SpankTopia in Political Chaos

SpankTopia has never exactly been a bastion of calm, but things have gotten especially weird.

After recovering the mysterious Artifact and doing battle over the six legendary Thongs of Virtue, the heroic DeathSpank has accidentally destabilized the entire realm.[2, 4] Each time a Thong changes hands, the balance of power shifts: mayors become peasants, peasants become tyrants, and somewhere in the shadows the AntiSpank grins behind a curtain of sizzling bacon.[3]

To keep the world from collapsing into full-scale ridiculousness, the Council of Virtue has adopted a new, highly official, completely serious system of governance:¹ a card-driven political contest known as *Presidents of Virtue*. Every round of the game reshuffles the hierarchy of SpankTopia. Heroes rise, villains fall, and whoever empties their hand first becomes the new leader of the land—at least until the next round of chaos.[1]

2.1.1 Core Inspiration

Presidents of Virtue is a narrative reskin and mechanical variant of the shedding-type card game commonly known as *President*, *Scum*, or *Asshole*, in which players race to shed all of their cards to claim the top social rank for the next round.[1]

The universe skin, titles and card powers are inspired by the action role-playing series *DeathSpank*, *DeathSpank: Thongs of Virtue*, and *The Baconing*, where DeathSpank dispenses justice, hunts for mystical underwear, and eventually confronts his evil counterpart,

¹It is neither official nor serious.

the AntiSpank.[2, 4, 3]

2.1.2 Cast of Roles

Each round, the players earn in-world titles based on the order in which they empty their hands. In the canonical four-player version, the titles are:

- **Hero of SpankTopia** (President): first to go out. Wields the greatest power between rounds.
- **Deputy of Justice** (Vice-President): second to go out. Still powerful, but slightly less sparkly.
- **Adventurers** (Citizens): any middle positions. They are the working heroes of the realm.
- **Minion of AntiSpank** (High-Scum): next-to-last; clearly one bad decision away from full villainy.
- **AntiSpank** (Scum): last player with cards. They represent the forces of corruption and are treated accordingly.

With five or more players, multiple *Adventurer* ranks may exist; with six or more, tables may insert extra titles such as *Clerk of Bacon*, *Thong Custodian*, or *Intern of Mildly Evil Paperwork* as desired. Titles matter because they determine trading privileges and turn order in the next round.

2.2 Rules of Play

2.2.1 Components and Objective

- Standard French deck of 52 cards; add up to 2 jokers if desired.
- Recommended player count: 3–6 (more players may use multiple decks).
- Default rank order (low to high): 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, J, Q, K, A, 2; jokers (if used) are higher than 2 and act as special bombs.[1]

Objective: Be the first to play all the cards in your hand. The relative finishing order determines titles for the next round.

2.2.2 Dealing and Initial Titles

For the very first round, all players are treated as *Adventurers*. Choose a dealer randomly. The dealer shuffles and deals all cards face-down, one at a time, clockwise. Slightly uneven hand sizes are permitted.

For subsequent rounds, the **Hero of SpankTopia** (President) deals. Seating is arranged in title order, clockwise, starting from the Hero and going down the hierarchy. This reinforces the social ladder both in fiction and in gameplay, similar to the original *President*.[1]

2.2.3 Between-Round Trading: Thongs of Virtue

After the cards are dealt (except in the first round), a structured trading phase occurs:

- The **AntiSpank** must give their *two highest* cards to the **Hero of SpankTopia**.
- The **Hero of SpankTopia** returns any *two* cards of their choice (often weak cards, nicknamed “Cursed Thongs”).
- The **Minion of AntiSpank** gives their single highest card to the **Deputy of Justice**, who returns one card of their choice.

With more players and extra intermediate ranks, this can be extended (for example, the lowest two ranks might each owe tribute to the top two, parallel to the richer multi-title variants of *President*[1]). The theme is clear: virtue flows up, junk flows down.

Optional variant (*Communal Bacon*): the Hero may declare “Thongs for the People” and reverse the direction of generosity: the Hero gives two best cards to the AntiSpank and receives two worst cards in return, mirroring the “Communism” variants of the original game.[1] This is usually triggered as an act of mercy, chaos, or comedy.

2.2.4 Turn Structure: Quests and Justice Bursts

Play proceeds clockwise. The first leader of the first round is the player holding the 3 of Clubs (or another agreed-upon lowest card). In later rounds, the Hero of SpankTopia leads the first trick.

1. **Lead a Quest.** On your turn, you may start a new *quest* by playing a group of cards of the same rank:
 - Single (one card), pair (two of a kind), triple, or four-of-a-kind.
 - Optional rule: longer sequences (runs) of consecutive ranks of the same length may be allowed, e.g., 5-6-7 vs 9-10-J.[1]

2. **Respond or Pass.** Each subsequent player may:
 - Play the *same number* of cards of a *higher rank*, or
 - Pass and sit out the rest of that quest (trick), unless using a special revolution option.
3. **Ending the Quest.** When all players in sequence pass, the last player to successfully play a set wins the quest. They collect the pile into a “won” stack (for flavor, not scoring), and then lead the next quest with any legal group from their hand.

2.2.5 Justice Bursts and Bacon Revolutions

To reinforce the DeathSpank feel, several special rules layer on top of the standard climbing structure:

Justice Burst (2s and Jokers). Twos (and jokers if used) are ultra-powerful cards. They can be played only *in pattern*: a single 2 over a single card, two 2s over a pair, etc. A Justice Burst immediately clears the table; the player who triggered it wins the quest and leads the next one. Players may *never* lead a quest with a 2 or joker.

Ending the round by playing a Justice Burst is dangerous: if your last card is a 2 or joker, you *automatically become the AntiSpank* for the next round, even if you technically finished first. This mirrors harsh variants where ending on a bomb card forces a player into last place.[1]

Bacon Revolution (Four-of-a-Kind). If a player ever plays four of a kind in one move (either as a lead or as a legal response), a *Bacon Revolution* triggers. From that moment until the end of the current round, the rank order is completely reversed: 2 becomes the weakest card and 3 becomes the strongest, or vice versa depending on table convention. This is adapted from “revolution” variants in *President* and is thematically tied to DeathSpank’s universe-scale silliness and the consequences of wearing too many Thongs of Virtue.[1, 4, 3]

2.2.6 End of Round and Campaign Play

When a player plays their last card, they immediately claim the highest remaining title (e.g., Hero, Deputy, Adventurer, Minion, AntiSpank). Play continues among the remaining players until all titles are assigned or until only one player still holds cards.

A *campaign* of *Presidents of Virtue* is simply a sequence of rounds with evolving titles. Tables may:

- Score each round (e.g., Hero earns +3, Deputy +2, Adventurer +1, Minion 0, Anti-Spank -1).

- Track long-term achievements (e.g., “Most Times as Hero”, “Most Times Accidentally AntiSpank”, “Longest Bacon Revolution Streak”).
- Introduce narrative events between rounds, such as side quests inspired by locations and NPCs from the *DeathSpank* games.[2, 4, 3]

2.3 Player and User Choices

2.3.1 Choices for Players Around the Table

Players face several meaningful decisions every round:

- **Risk vs. Safety in Leading.** Do you lead small, conservative singles to gently drain your hand, or unleash pairs and triples to try to seize control early?
- **Timing of Justice Bursts.** Do you burn powerful 2s and jokers early to escape a bad position, or hoard them to swing a late-game quest?
- **Embracing or Avoiding the AntiSpank Role.** Some players may intentionally drift toward the bottom of the hierarchy to enjoy the drama of climbing back up in later rounds, or to exploit variants like reversed trading.
- **Triggering Bacon Revolutions.** Holding four-of-a-kind, you can flip the entire power structure of the deck. Is it worth confusing everyone—including yourself—to rescue a weak hand?
- **Social Bluffing and Table Talk.** The DeathSpank universe almost demands ridiculous in-character banter. Players may negotiate, taunt, or role-play their titles, adding emergent narrative on top of the core card play.

2.3.2 Choices for Users of a Digital or Classroom Version

If *Presidents of Virtue* is implemented as a digital or classroom activity, non-tabletop “users” (students, designers, or players interacting with a UI) have additional configuration choices:

- Toggle optional rules: Bacon Revolutions, Communal Bacon (reversed trading), runs/straights, or special Justice Burst constraints.
- Configure scoring models for a course: number of rounds, how titles map onto participation points or bonuses.
- Decide whether roles carry minor special powers (e.g., the Hero can declare one rule toggle per round, the AntiSpank always leads the very first quest, the Minion may look at one opponent’s hand once per round, etc.).

- Adjust deck size and player caps for accessibility (e.g., limit to single deck for smaller groups, enable multi-deck chaos for large events).

These choices allow instructors or designers to tune the experience: fast and light for ice-breakers, or strategic and campaign-based for longer narrative sessions.

2.4 Constraints and Design Goals

2.4.1 Mechanical Constraints

- **Player Count:** The base rules assume 3–6 players. More players require additional decks and possibly simplified role ladders to keep the between-round trading manageable.[1]
- **Card Visibility:** Hands are private; only played cards and discarded piles are public. Any “table talk” or information sharing is optional and stylistic rather than mechanical.
- **Pacing:** The shedding core keeps each round relatively short (5–15 minutes), matching both the original *President* and the bite-sized feel of the *DeathSpank* games.[1, 2]
- **Complexity Ceiling:** Optional rules (runs, revolutions, special bombs) are modular. Groups can add or remove them to match their experience level.

2.4.2 Thematic and Pedagogical Constraints

- **Tone:** The tone aims to echo DeathSpank’s blend of heroic fantasy and self-aware absurdity without requiring prior knowledge of the games.[2, 4, 3]
- **Narrative Flexibility:** The roles and titles are deliberately loose so they can be adapted for storytelling, classroom activities, or light role-playing.
- **Reusability:** Because the underlying mechanics closely track a well-known card game, *Presidents of Virtue* can slide neatly into contexts where *President* is already familiar, adding theme without reinventing the rules from scratch.

Overall, *Presidents of Virtue* wraps a familiar shedding game in the heroic nonsense of the DeathSpank universe: players climb a social ladder built from Thongs of Virtue, bursts of justice, and the occasional bacon-fueled revolution.

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Chapter 3

Math Writeup: Counting Presidents of Virtue

This chapter connects the story and rules of *Presidents of Virtue* to four core counting ideas from discrete mathematics:

- permutations (when order matters),
- combinations (when order does not matter),
- stars-and-bars (distributing identical things into labeled boxes),
- and probability (using counts to measure how likely an event is).

Each section below includes a clearly labeled **Problem**, the relevant **Formula**, and a fully **Worked Example** in the DeathSpank / Presidents of Virtue universe.

3.1 Permutations: Ordering the Chain of Command

In each round of *Presidents of Virtue*, players race to empty their hands. The order in which they finish determines the social ladder for the next round: Hero of SpankTopia, Deputy of Justice, Adventurers, Minion of AntiSpank, and finally the AntiSpank.

Problem (Permutations)

Suppose there are n distinct players at the table. At the end of a round, all titles are assigned by finishing order: first place becomes Hero of SpankTopia, second becomes Deputy of Justice, and so on, down to the AntiSpank in last place.

Question. How many different ways can the titles be assigned after one round, assuming every finishing order is possible?

Formula (Permutations)

A *permutation* of n distinct objects is any ordering of them in a line. The number of permutations of n distinct objects is

$$n! = n \cdot (n - 1) \cdot (n - 2) \cdots 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1,$$

with the special convention that $0! = 1$.

In words: for the first position we have n choices; for the second, $n - 1$ choices; and so on, until only one choice remains. By the product principle, we multiply these choices together to get $n!$ possible orders.

Worked Example

Let $n = 5$ players sit down to play: DeathSpank, Sparkles, Steve, a Random Adventurer, and the Mysterious Clerk of Bacon.

At the end of the round, the finishing order determines:

- | | |
|-----|---------------------|
| 1st | Hero of SpankTopia |
| 2nd | Deputy of Justice |
| 3rd | Adventurer |
| 4th | Minion of AntiSpank |
| 5th | AntiSpank |

How many possible ways can these titles be assigned?

Because all five characters are distinct, this is just the number of permutations of 5 distinct players:

$$5! = 5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1 = 120.$$

So there are 120 different ways the round could end in terms of titles. Even with only five players, the space of possible “political timelines” for SpankTopia is already quite large.

Design note. If a designer wanted to guarantee that some specific character (say, DeathSpank) *never* becomes AntiSpank, they would be forbidding all permutations with that character in last place. That is a structural change to the game, and permutations give us a precise language for describing it.

3.2 Combinations: Choosing Sets of Thongs of Virtue

Between rounds, the Hero of SpankTopia may be allowed to equip special artifacts or Thongs of Virtue that grant small advantages (extra card trades, one-time Justice Bursts, or fancy decorative glow).

In many situations, it is the set of artifacts that matters, not the order in which they are chosen.

Problem (Combinations)

Suppose there are n distinct Thongs of Virtue stored in the Sacred Drawer of Laundry. At the start of a campaign night, the Hero is allowed to choose k of them as their *loadout* for the evening.

Question. How many different loadouts of k Thongs can the Hero choose, if the order of selection does not matter?

Formula (Combinations)

A *combination* answers the question: “In how many ways can we choose k objects from n distinct objects when order does not matter?”

The number of such combinations is

$$\binom{n}{k} = \frac{n!}{k!(n-k)!},$$

read as “ n choose k .”

The denominator divides out over-counting, since each *set* of k objects can be listed in $k!$ different orders.

Worked Example

Assume there are $n = 7$ distinct Thongs of Virtue:

Justice, Stealth, Bacon, Looting, Mana, Friendship, and Mildly Confusing Glow.

Before the first round, the Hero may choose $k = 3$ of these to wear (in a safe, family-friendly way). Only the set matters; wearing Justice–Bacon–Mana is the same loadout as Mana–Justice–Bacon.

The number of possible loadouts is

$$\binom{7}{3} = \frac{7!}{3! 4!} = \frac{7 \cdot 6 \cdot 5}{3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1} = 35.$$

So there are 35 distinct sets of three Thongs the Hero could bring into the session. If you later tweak the balance by adding more artifacts, you can use the same combination formula to see how quickly the loadout universe grows.

3.3 Stars-and-Bars: Distributing Justice Points

Many role-playing games let a character spread points across several abilities. In *Presidents of Virtue*, we might imagine DeathSpank distributing *Justice Points* among different powers before the game starts.

Problem (Stars-and-Bars)

DeathSpank has J Justice Points to allocate among k special powers:

- Smite of Righteousness,
- Flaming Bacon Shield,
- and Loot Sense.

Let x_1, x_2, x_3 be the number of points assigned to these three powers, respectively.

Question A. If $J = 6$ and $k = 3$, and each power may receive any nonnegative number of points (including zero), how many different allocations (x_1, x_2, x_3) are possible?

Question B. Answer the same question, but now require that every power must receive at least one point.

Formula (Stars-and-Bars)

We are counting the number of nonnegative integer solutions to

$$x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k = J$$

with $x_i \geq 0$.

The classic stars-and-bars result says that the number of such solutions is

$$\binom{J+k-1}{k-1}.$$

If instead every power must receive at least one point, we set $y_i = x_i - 1$ so $y_i \geq 0$ and

$$y_1 + y_2 + \cdots + y_k = J - k.$$

Then the number of solutions with $x_i \geq 1$ is

$$\binom{(J-k)+k-1}{k-1} = \binom{J-1}{k-1}.$$

Worked Example

Question A: Some powers may get zero. Here $J = 6$ and $k = 3$, so we count nonnegative integer solutions to

$$x_1 + x_2 + x_3 = 6.$$

By stars-and-bars, the number of allocations is

$$\binom{6+3-1}{3-1} = \binom{8}{2} = \frac{8 \cdot 7}{2 \cdot 1} = 28.$$

So there are 28 ways for DeathSpank to distribute 6 Justice Points among three powers if some powers are allowed to be left at zero.

Question B: Every power must get at least one point. Now we require $x_1, x_2, x_3 \geq 1$ and $x_1 + x_2 + x_3 = 6$.

Set $y_i = x_i - 1$, so $y_i \geq 0$ and

$$y_1 + y_2 + y_3 = 6 - 3 = 3.$$

By stars-and-bars, the number of such allocations is

$$\binom{3+3-1}{3-1} = \binom{5}{2} = \frac{5 \cdot 4}{2 \cdot 1} = 10.$$

So there are 10 allocations in which every power gets at least one Justice Point. In game-design language: enforcing “no dump stats” shrinks the build universe from 28 to 10 possibilities.

3.4 Probability: Justice Bursts in a Starting Hand

Counting lets us describe how *big* a universe of possibilities is. Probability uses those counts to describe how *likely* certain events are, assuming all hands are equally likely.

Problem (Probability with Combinations)

In *Presidents of Virtue*, the card 2 in each suit is treated as a *Justice Burst*—a very powerful card that often clears the trick.

Suppose we are using a standard 52-card deck with four suits and four Justice Bursts (the four 2s). A player is dealt a 5-card starting hand.

Question. What is the probability that the player's starting hand contains *exactly one* Justice Burst?

Formula (Probability from Counting)

When all 5-card hands are equally likely, we can write

$$\Pr(\text{exactly one Justice Burst}) = \frac{\text{number of hands with exactly one 2}}{\text{number of all 5-card hands}}.$$

- The number of all 5-card hands from a 52-card deck is

$$\binom{52}{5}.$$

- To have *exactly one* Justice Burst:
 - choose which one of the four 2s appears: $\binom{4}{1}$ ways;
 - choose the remaining 4 cards from the 48 non-2 cards: $\binom{48}{4}$ ways.

So the number of favorable hands is

$$\binom{4}{1} \binom{48}{4}.$$

Therefore

$$\Pr(\text{exactly one Justice Burst}) = \frac{\binom{4}{1} \binom{48}{4}}{\binom{52}{5}}.$$

Worked Example

We can either leave the answer in binomial form (which is already meaningful), or evaluate it numerically.

First, keep it symbolic:

$$\Pr(\text{exactly one Justice Burst}) = \frac{\binom{4}{1} \binom{48}{4}}{\binom{52}{5}}.$$

If we expand:

$$\binom{4}{1} = 4, \quad \binom{48}{4} = \frac{48 \cdot 47 \cdot 46 \cdot 45}{4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1}, \quad \binom{52}{5} = \frac{52 \cdot 51 \cdot 50 \cdot 49 \cdot 48}{5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1}.$$

Computing these (by hand or with a calculator) gives approximately

$$\Pr(\text{exactly one Justice Burst}) \approx 0.2995,$$

or about a 30% chance.

In other words, if you sit down and are repeatedly dealt random 5-card hands from a fresh deck, you should expect to see *exactly one* Justice Burst in roughly 3 out of every 10 hands, on average.

Design note. If you want Justice Bursts to be more common in starting hands, you could:

- add more special cards to the deck, or
- increase the starting hand size.

Either way, the combination formulas above let you recompute the exact probabilities and make data-informed design decisions.

Summary

In this chapter we:

- used **permutations** to count possible chains of command at the end of a round;
- used **combinations** to count how many artifact loadouts or Thong sets a Hero can choose;

- used **stars-and-bars** to count how many Justice Point builds are possible for a character;
- and used **probability** to quantify how often special cards (Justice Bursts) appear in random hands.

These four tools give a mathematical backbone to the *Presidents of Virtue* universe. They also serve as a template: any time you invent a new mini-game or variant, you can ask the same questions:

How many different configurations are possible, and how likely are the ones I care about?

Answering those questions is where discrete mathematics and game design shake hands.

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