

Botnet

A strategic game of evilness

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1 About

Botnet is a table-top card game based around the dark underground of computer virus networks. It places you as the evil mastermind of the next big botnet, pitted against your competitors in a fight to rule the botnet market.

2 Rules

In order to play Botnet with 2 to 4 players you need one Botnet Starter Set. For more players, simply add more Unix Home Base systems. In addition, each player will need a set of tokens, which aren't included but can be anything from pennies to stones. Each player's tokens should be different from the other players'.

2.1 Setup

Network Setup In order to set up Botnet, first separate the System cards from the rest of the cards. Remove the Unix Home Base systems from the System cards and set aside before dealing the Systems out randomly, face down, in a hex grid (called The Network). Make sure to leave space (about half an inch) between each system to allow for Programs to be easily played. Then take one Unix Home Base for each player and place them face up on opposite sides of The Network. Finally, each player should place two of his Virus Tokens on his Unix Home Base.

Draw Pile Setup Take all the Mission, Upgrade, Program, and Hack cards and shuffle them before placing them in a Draw Pile where both players can reach, and then both players draw three cards each. Both players also receive \$20 initial Income.

In order to decide which player goes first, both players should individually cut the Draw Pile. Whichever turns over the card with the highest card goes first. Play will then alternate among the players in turn.

2.2 Turns

Income The first part of a player's turn is accounting for Income. They should look at all of the Systems they have infected, and add up the Income generated, bearing in mind any modifiers in place.

Draw After Income generation, a player may draw one card from the Draw Pile. While a player may draw over the Hand Limit (initially 3), at the end of a turn, any excess cards must be discarded into the Discard Pile.

Viruses During his turn, a player may move and attack with his viruses. Initially, each player may only move one virus per turn (a Rate of 1), a distance of one Node on The Network (a Speed of 1). These values are, of course, augmentable via Programs and Upgrades.

A virus may move any number of Nodes up to the current Speed, though movement is not required. In addition, a virus must stop once it encounters a neutral or enemy system, regardless of the Speed allowed. Unless allowed to via Hacks, a player may never move the last Virus Token off of a System, as that would make the System Neutral again.

Hacks Hacks are instant play cards that can be played only during the player's turn, unless otherwise specified. These give bonuses and augmentations that last for only a turn, and should be moved to the Discard Pile once the turn is completed. In order to play a Hack, a player should withdraw Income equal to the Hack's cost from their Reserves. There is no limit to the number of Hacks that can be played, except for the Reserves a player has.

Programs and Upgrades Programs and Upgrades are two similar types of cards that give permanent benefits to a player or System. Upgrades may only be played on a player's Unix Home Base, while Programs may only be played on Systems in The Network. In order to play a Program or Upgrade, a player should withdraw Income equal to the Program or Upgrade's cost from their Reserves. Unless a Program explicitly says otherwise, it must be played on a System the player controls. Programs and Upgrades remain on Systems until the end of the game, regardless of a change in ownership.

System Abilities Some Systems have unique abilities that can only be used by players who control them. These abilities can only be used once per turn and only during the turn of the controlling player unless specified otherwise. Some abilities may only be used once per game. In order to play an ability, a player must withdraw the Income cost of the ability from his Reserves before it is activated.

Attacking In order to attack a System, a player moves at least one virus he controls onto either a Neutral System, or one controlled by the opponent. If,

by the end of the turn the number of viruses from both sides on the System does not exceed the Share Differential (initially 0), both sides share it, and can use the abilities and Income jointly. However if the difference is more than the Share Differential at the end of the turn, all the viruses of the smaller side are wiped out and destroyed. This can, of course, be augmented by Programs and Hacks.

2.3 Winning

There are multiple paths to glory in Botnet.

Global Domination In order to win by Global Domination, a player must wipe out all his opponents viruses. This is by far the hardest victory to attain and is quite rare.

Strategic Victory In order to win by Strategic Victory, a player only needs to infect all his opponents' Unix Home Base. Once that system is owned, all viruses of the player who lost turn over to the control of the player who infect the Unix Home Base. In a two player game, this means victory, however for 3 or more players this just makes things interesting.

Market Share In order to win via Market Share, a player needs to complete 5 Mission Cards. The Mission Cards in effect boost the popularity of a specific botnet, and reaching this threshold ensures that only the winning player's botnet will ever be hired for nefarious acts.

3 Alternative Play Modes

In order to expand the game, there are many ways to twist these rules. The easiest way to allow for longer and shorter games is to change the number of Mission Cards required to win. To make a really long, hard game, put the number higher, near 9. To make a quick, cut-throat game, make the number low, such as 2 or 3. In addition, any of the values in the above table could be changed from the start, so long as both players agree. To have a faster start, change the initial Propagation to a higher number.

Another fun 2 player alternative is to start both players with two Unix Home Bases. This gives more Income, as well as faster movement through the network.

4 Glossary

- **Defense** - Defense is the term used to describe how many viruses are defending a certain System. This can be augmented by cards that say Defense + or - some number.

- **Discard Pile** - The Discard Pile is where all players place cards that have been played (i.e., Hacks) and discarded cards due to too large of a hand. Once the Draw Pile is almost out, this pile should be shuffled back into it.
- **Draw** - The amount of cards a player can draw at the beginning of their turn.
- **Draw Pile** - The Draw Pile is where both players draw Mission, Upgrade, Program, and Hack cards over the course of the game.
- **Hack** - A Hack is an instant card that gives a player a special ability or boost for one turn.
- **Hand** - The Hand is the Hack, Mission, Upgrade, and Program cards a player has drawn, but not played yet. This may never exceed the hand limit for that player at the end of their turn.
- **Infected System** - An Infected System lies face up and has the virus of at least one player on it. A system can be infected by more than one player.
- **Mission Card** - A Mission Card is a special type of card that gives alternative ways to win the game. Once a player completes five missions, they win.
- **Network** - The Network is the hex grid of Systems (Nodes) in between the players. It does not include the Unix Home Bases but does include all other Systems.
- **Neutral System** - A Neutral system lies face down and is not infected by any players' viruses.
- **Node** - A Node is any system in the network, regardless of affiliation. One Node is considered one step with regards to speed.
- **Program** - A program is played on a System, normally only an Infected System, that gives the System some new ability.
- **Propagation** - Propagation is the ability to create another virus. This ability initially only yields one virus.
- **Rate** - Amount of Virus Tokens one player can move in one turn.
- **Reserves** - The Cash reserves is how players pay for Hacks, Programs, and Upgrades. It can never be negative, and is only incremented at the start of the player's turn unless otherwise specified.
- **Share Differential** - The maximum difference allowed between the number of opposing viruses on one machine.

- **Speed** - Speed refers to how far a virus can move in a given turn. The initial speed of all viruses is 1 node.
- **Upgrade** - An upgrade is a program that can only be played on a Unix Home Base. These are typically more powerful than normal Programs.
- **Virus Token** - Virus Tokens mark the progress of a player's viruses through the network.

5 Values

Name	Initial Value	Augmentable?
Draw	1	Yes
Hand	3	Yes
Initial Income	\$20	No
Initial Viruses	1	No
Propagation	1	Yes
Rate	2	Yes
Share Differential	0	Yes
Speed	1	Yes