

Burn the Witch

SOCIAL DEDUCTION GAME



RULEBOOK



Step back into a dark period in our past, when frenzy and paranoia dominated peoples' perception of 'the other', driving communities across Europe to take the most extreme measures against their fellow man... or woman, as history would have it.

The year is 1590. A century has passed since the publication of the 'Malleus Maleficarum', and the witch hysteria has reached your hamlet. Neighbor has turned against neighbor, and no one is safe from the accusation of witchcraft. A hooked nose or a single wart is enough to warrant a charge, and if convicted your whole house will be ostracized. Zealots are prepared to condemn to the stake as many as it will take to avoid having the tables turned onto themselves.

Will any come out unsinged?

OBJECT OF THE GAME

Burn the Witch is a game of social deduction where players are divided into two factions pitted against each other in a bid for survival. Players represent houses, comprised of two to four villagers, one or more of whom could be a *witch*. The *zealot* faction wins by uncovering the identity of all *witches* in play—a discovery made only through fire. The *sympathizer* faction wins by keeping the *witches* alive. With *witches* forming a small minority in the village, the *sympathizers'* only chance for success rests upon their ability to employ cunning and misdirection. They must outwit the other players by turning the *zealots'* xenophobia and pyromania back onto themselves.

Games typically run for 45-75 minutes and conclude when either every *witch* in the village has been executed or enough *innocents* have been wrongly condemned that the witch hunt is called off, and the *sympathizers* win.

COMPONENTS

- Ballot Box
 - 30 Villager Cards (70mm x 120mm)
 - 36 Identity Cards (41mm x 63mm)
 - 33 Voting Tokens
 - Sand Timer (2-minute)
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ROLES AND SECRECY

In ***Burn the Witch*** players have limited information. *Sympathizers* know which other players are aligned with their faction, but *zealots* do not. Players are allowed to make false claims about their faction and identities. Identity cards remain hidden and are only revealed when a villager is executed.

SETUP

Burn the Witch requires a table to play. Setup is as follows:

1. Remove all cards from the box. Create a deck using the *innocent* and *witch* identity cards that corresponds to the number of players (see table under ***Identities***). Return the remaining identity cards to the box.
2. Take villager cards equal to the total number of identity cards, including both *witches* and *innocents*. Return the remaining villagers to the box.
3. Shuffle each deck separately and deal an equal number of villagers and identity cards to each player.
4. Give each player voting tokens equal to the number of villagers in their house. Return the remaining voting tokens to the box.
5. ***The Witching Hour*** - A designated player should call out and direct all players to close their eyes. Next, the designated player should direct the *sympathizers* to open their eyes and identify the other players that are aligned with their faction. Give some time for the *sympathizers* to make eye contact with one another. At this point, anyone with a *coven* (two witches in their house) should hold up two fingers and tap a player to their left or right (who is not already a member of the *sympathizer* faction). That player will become *bewitched* and join the *sympathizer* faction, even though they do not have any *witches* in their house. Once *sympathizers* have received sufficient time, the designated player will direct the *sympathizers* to close their eyes once again before calling everyone to open their eyes.

The game is now ready to begin! The player who most recently used a broom will be the first accuser. The game continues from there.

IDENTITIES

Identity cards fall into two categories: *innocents* (yellow) and *witches* (red).

At the start of the game every player receives one identity card for each villager in their house. After players have looked at their identity cards **they should be randomized** and afterward one should be placed face-down beneath each face-up villager.



A player that received only *innocents* is a member of the *zealot* faction. A player that received one or more *witches* is a member of the *sympathizer* faction and remains as such even if all *witches* in their house have been executed.

Devout: A devout is an innocent that when executed triggers a special event called *Trial by Fire*. When a *devout* is executed justice must be served! The timer should be immediately turned-over, signaling that players have two minutes to discuss and determine whose house will suffer the loss of a villager. Before the timer runs out all players must point to a player. The chosen player must then select a villager from their house for *execution*. In the case of a tie, the players with the most remaining villagers in their houses win. If a house with a *hex* is targeted, the player may resolve the retributive *hex* effect on any house that cast a vote against them (see **Factions: Sympathizers** for more on *hex*). If a *devout* is uncovered in this way, proceed directly to another *Trial by Fire*.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS	TOTAL VILLAGERS	VILLAGERS PER HOUSE	INNOCENTS (DEVOUT)	WITCHES	WRONGLY CONDEMNED
5	20	4	18 (6)	2	13
6	18	3	16 (4)	2	12
7	21	3	19 (5)	2	14
8	24	3	21 (5)	3	16
9	18	2	15 (3)	3	11
10	20	2	17 (3)	3	12
11	22	2	19 (4)	3	13
12	24	2	21 (5)	3	15
13	26	2	22 (5)	4	17
14	28	2	24 (6)	4	18
15	30	2	26 (6)	4	19

FACTIONS

ZEALOTS

For *zealots* to win the game, all *witches* in play must be executed!

It is not necessary to eliminate all the villagers in a *sympathizer's* house. It may even be considered unwise to do so, as any house with a revealed *witch* gains the *hex* condition, described below.

SYMPATHIZERS

For *sympathizers* to win the game, a number of *innocents* must be executed corresponding to the chart on the previous page. *Innocents* executed from a *sympathizer* house count towards this total. *Sympathizers* accuse, vote, and execute no different than *zealots*.

Hex: Once a *witch* has been executed, the house to which it belonged is *hexed*. Any player who uncovers an *innocent* in a house with a *hex* immediately and retributively loses a villager, selected by the player whose house is *hexed*.

Coven: A player who is dealt two *witch* identity cards has a *coven*. When this occurs, the player bewitches another player to join the *sympathizer* faction. See **Setup** for more on *covens*.

VILLAGERS

Each player receives an equal number of villager cards, identity cards, and voting tokens. All villager cards in a player's house should be positioned face-up in front of a player, in plain view of all other players. Each villager should have one randomly assigned *identity card* face-down beneath it, and one voting token placed on top.

When a villager is executed it is removed from the game along with the voting token assigned to it. The identity card beneath the villager is turned face up and placed at the center of the table, indicating that the villager has been burned. This way, players can track progress toward their faction's victory condition.



PLAY STRUCTURE

Burn the Witch follows the three phases listed below, repeated until one faction's win condition is met. Play begins with the player who most recently used a broom—whether to sweep with or for any other purpose.

1. **Accuse:** The player acting as the accuser names a trait depicted on one or more villagers, face-up on the table.
2. **Vote:** Beginning with the accusing player, the ballot box is passed clockwise. All players secretly cast votes equal to the number of villagers in their house. The ballot box ends with the player seated to the right of the accuser, who will also act as executioner. The executioner opens the ballot box and reveals the outcome of the vote, limiting the executioner's choices. A vote to burn limits the selection to villagers that possess the named trait while a vote to save limits the selection to villagers that do not possess the named trait.
3. **Execute:** The executioner selects a villager to burn that complies with the outcome of the vote. When a villager is burned it is removed from the game, along with its voting token, and the identity card assigned to that villager is turned face-up and placed in the center of the table. Check if win condition has been met. If neither faction has won, play continues with the player who acted as executioner becoming the accuser.

Players with no villagers remaining in their house may contribute to discussion that affects the outcome of the game and may participate in the *Trial by Fire*. However, without a voting token, players may not accuse, vote, or execute.

ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATIONS

In an 8-player game, it is possible for a player to be dealt three *witch* cards. If this occurs, re-distribute the identity cards.

If a player has two *witch* identity cards but is seated next to a *sympathizer*, in the witching hour they may direct that *sympathizer* to tap the player opposite themselves, who will then become *bewitched*.

Players can agree to utilize the timer during each phase, to speed up gameplay. If your group decides to, you may implement the following optional rules:

- **Accusation:** If an accusation is not made in time, the accusing player must select a villager from their own house for execution.
- **Voting:** If the vote does not conclude in time, the player who held-up the vote must select a villager from their own house for execution.

- *Execution:* If a villager is not executed in time, the executioner must select a villager from their own house for execution.

The player seated to the right of the person who last accused becomes the next accuser, providing they have at least one villager remaining in their house.

CREDITS

Game Design: James I. Fazio

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SPECIAL THANKS

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No witches were harmed in the making of this game.

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