

****These rules may continue to evolve, so please check back here for updates**

SWAT First Response

Rules V1.8 Last updated 12th June 2025

1 Player - Approx 20 - 40 minutes playtime

Setup approx. 4 - 5 mins, Game Reset Approx. 2 - 3 mins, Tear Down Approx. 3 - 4 mins

Grid movement, tactical re-programming puzzle, hand management and memory game
(suggested age 14+)

Story:

Congratulations Officer! You're our latest candidate to complete the rigorous SWAT basic training programme. We hope your training has given you a good understanding of how to deal with the many life-threatening situations that SWAT officers face on an almost daily basis. Everything from hostage situations to taking down organised crime rings. Let's hope you don't see one of these dire situations anytime soon!

Best regards

Your Commanding Officer

3 Days later.... Tuesday May, 5th. 18:52hrs

The radio in your patrol car crackles: "We have a 10-31D taking place in an abandoned house just off 3rd and Main. Can any units respond?"

You're the closest unit to the scene, unfortunately, you're alone as your partner has called in sick today and the rest of your team are dealing with a situation on the other side of town. You were just about to go and join them. However, it's up to you alone to assist. You're sure your new SWAT training will see you through. You radio back - "10-17 dispatch, SWAT Officer 55G responding."

The radio crackles: "10-4 Officer 55G. Be advised shots have reportedly been fired and witnesses say there appears to be three suspects who could all be armed and very dangerous. Further reports indicate that two civilians may have been taken hostage."

Looks like your quiet evening on patrol has just been shattered! Better pick up your weapon, rescue the hostages and take down the criminals!

Objective of the game

Using tactics cards that represent your intensive SWAT training, you'll carefully move around the 10 rooms in the abandoned house, trying to find and save the **two hostages** whilst taking down the **three known criminals** that are hiding out there.

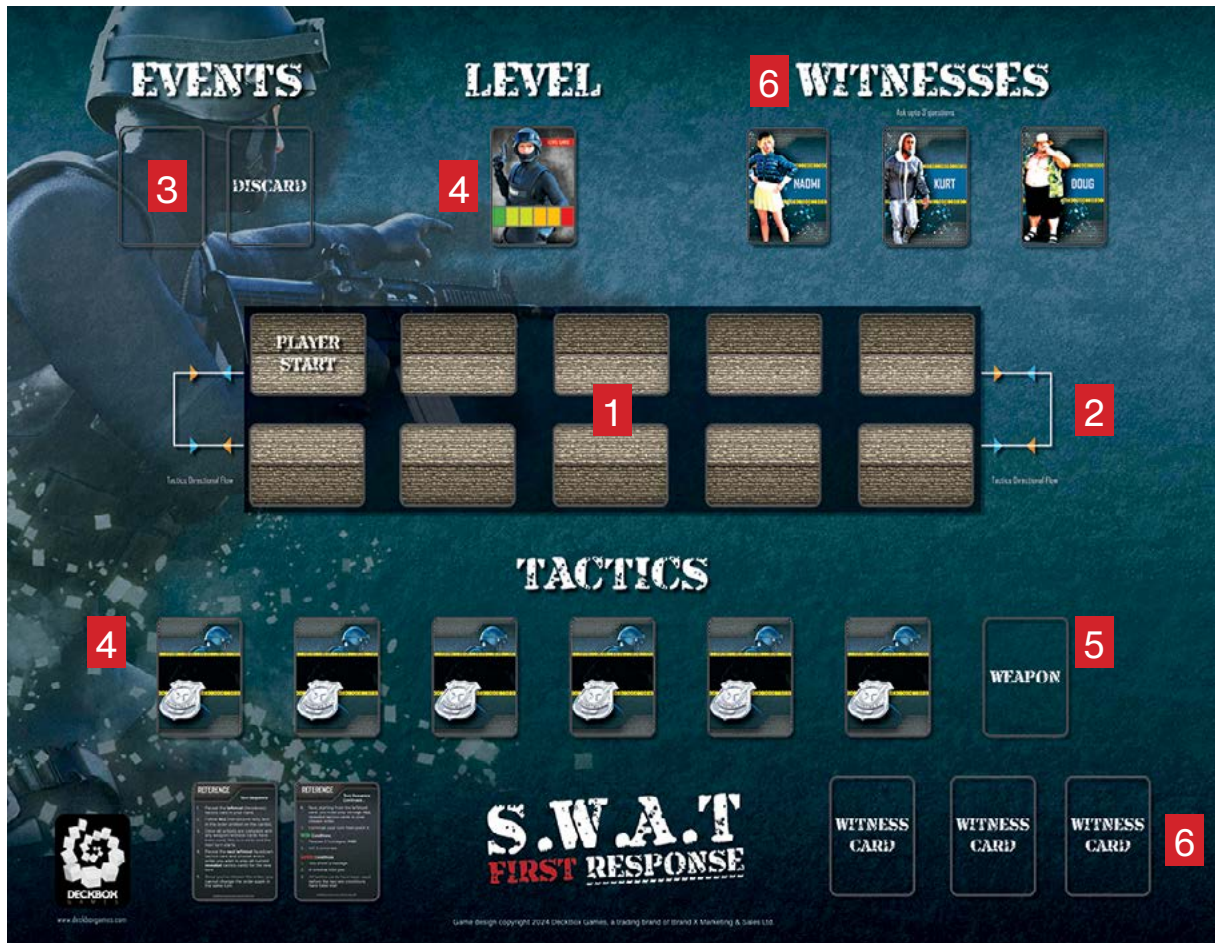
Be careful not to run in all guns blazing as you might shoot the wrong person. Take it too carefully and you'll either run out of time, or be seen by a criminal and become a casualty of this dire situation.

Good luck Officer!

Fact: 10-31D is a kidnapping/hostage situation code as used by the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials-International (APCO).

Setup

This setup example is for a player taking on a game at the 'Officer' level. There are easier and harder levels of play within the game, but this is our recommendation for your first game. Simply change the number of tactics cards drawn according to the information shown on the level card.



1 - Shuffle the 10 room cards face down and lay them out face down in a 5x2 grid as shown. Place the player's standee on the top lefthand room as shown. This is the player's starting position. Do not reveal this room card when starting the game.

2 - Place the 'Direction' tokens at the ends of the room rows as shown. These are NOT rooms that can be entered, but serve as a reminder of direction of flow (for peek and shoot commands) during the game.

3 - Shuffle the 15 standard event cards without looking at them (see witnesses for more).

4 - Take the 4 tactics decks (face down) and shuffle them individually according to their level. Now - according to the play level chosen - take the relevant number of tactics cards from each of the piles and place them face down in front of you in the positions shown on the level card. Return all unused tactics cards to the game box.

5 - Choose 1 weapon card (unless instructed to choose more - or less - from the level card) from the selection of 5 cards and place it face up at the side of your tactics cards. Place any unused weapons cards back in the game box.

6 - If you wish to include the 'Witness Expansion,' shuffle the individual witness decks and place them as shown, otherwise skip to the turn sequence rules. Now follow the rules on the next page for taking witness cards and adding extra danger to the event deck through new criminal and hostage cards.

Place the 7 'Target Neutralised' criminal cards to one side along with the 'Destroyed Room' card and the rope special item card. You may need these during play.

WITNESS Expansion:

This is done after the set up phase, but before the game starts turn 1.
Shuffle each Witness deck individually and place them as shown above.

You may approach witnesses up to 3 times.

To do this, simply choose a witness and take the top card from the deck. You may take a card from each witness, or multiple cards from a witness or witnesses. You may not take more than 3 in total - unless a card instructs you to do so.

Why might you choose to not take any witness cards from this expansion?

The witness cards can make the situations you come across in the game easier, however you must start to mix in extra criminals and a hostage making 'empty rooms' suprisingly more deadly. The 12 standard cards do not feature anything that will kill the player, but may hinder or help the player. If you prefer this, then take no witness cards. Taking witness cards, adding up to 4 extra criminals and one extra hostage increases the difficulty, but statistically could mean you may be able to take bonus cards without actually facing an extra criminal! It could be a win-win if luck is on your side! How far you push your luck is up to you!

If you did choose cards, then read the cards you picked (you may have an immediate action to take prior to the game starting), and then place them faceup next to your tactics cards for use when applicable during the game.

If you do decide to take a one or more cards, you must follow the extra setup instructions below:

1st Witness card taken - add the additional criminal card marked '1 rated criminal' to the event deck. You may stop here, or select more witness cards. Shuffle the event deck now, regardless of whether you add more cards or not.

2nd Witness card taken - add the additional criminal cards marked '1' and '2 rated criminals' to the event deck. You may stop here or select one more witness card. Now shuffle the event deck again.

3rd Witness card taken - add the final additional criminal card marked '4 rated criminal' and the additional '+1 hostage' card to the event deck. You cannot take any further witness cards. You must shuffle the event deck a final time.

After this phase, you will not be allowed to take or change any cards from the witnesses.

Example witness cards:

Left to right:

A helpful card

A second chance card

An unhelpful card



Setup is now complete. If a card requires you to use one of the cards that have been put in the game box during set up, retrieve the card(s) as instructed and replace the other unused cards back in the game box. Read on for the turn sequence!

TURN SEQUENCE:

1 - When play starts, turn over your **leftmost tactics card only**. You **MUST** do all of what it says on the card. If you are instructed to move 4 spaces, you **MUST** do all 4 spaces orthogonally and without crossing over the same path you took in that turn. If you feel it helps, use the footprint tokens to remind you where you've been. Movement can also be between the top and bottom row of room cards.

This ends the first turn. Your second turn starts now:

2 - You can now turn over your second tactics card (leftmost facedown card next to the previously revealed card). Now you have two cards revealed. Before taking the card actions, you can decide what order you'd prefer to take the cards in. Maybe you want to use the second card first and the first card second this time. This reordering phase takes place on every turn to suit your evolving tactics.

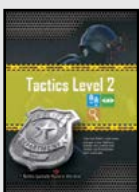
3 - Play continues with the player revealing a new tactics card, reordering the revealed cards if desired, following all instructions on them in turn, finding the hostages and eliminating the criminals. Don't forget, you must **always play every revealed card each turn and in order from the leftmost card**.

Overview of the tactics cards:



Level 1 tactics cards:

These cards are all about **MOVE** and **PEEK** actions. Using a level 1 card will **not** get you killed! Use these cards to find safe spaces and uncover the criminals and hostages. These cards carry no ballistics skill though ('ballistics' skills are explained in the **SHOOT** section on the next page with an example on page 6).



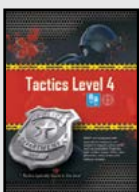
Level 2 tactics cards:

These cards carry the **MOVE**, **PEEK** and **SEARCH** actions. Using a level 2 card allows you to fully uncover a room with the **SEARCH** action. When you uncover a room you may rescue a hostage if there's one there, but beware that a criminal will kill you if they're revealed on a **SEARCH** action.



Level 3 tactics cards:

These cards have a bit of everything - **MOVE**, **PEEK**, **SEARCH** and **SHOOT**. When using a level 3 card, you'll probably be aware of where most of the criminals and hostages are. These cards have a higher ballistics skill too, so they enable you to take out criminals - even unexpected ones that might pop up!



Level 4 tactics cards:

You want to **SHOOT**? Well, these are your cards. Whilst they may have a small mix of the other actions, they focus heavily on **SHOOT** actions.

While you won't know what cards you've drawn at the start of your game, the descriptions above should give you a small insight into what each card is capable of. Now, let's take a look at how the tactics cards work!

TACTICS CARD SKILLS:

Move, Peek, Search and **Shoot** are the four keywords used on the tactics cards in this game. They are your keys to creating a winning strategy, but what do they do?



MOVE - You'll be instructed to '**MOVE**' x number of rooms. You may **MOVE** in ANY direction in an orthogonal way as long as you don't cross your own path this turn. Don't forget, you can also move freely between the top and bottom row as many times as you choose. You will **never** uncover a room by moving onto it.



PEEK - When you **PEEK**, the tactics card will show you which card you can **PEEK** at. The room with the dotted line around it is the room card you are standing on/in. The card may show rooms to the left and/or right with **PEEK** instructions on them. When you get this command, you are allowed to reveal the card(s), view (and remember) what it is and then place it back facedown. You may have seen a criminal, a hostage or just an empty room. This intel gives you the chance to plan out your strategy.



SEARCH - If you get a **SEARCH** command, you must reveal the card and leave it face up. A **SEARCH** command will always be for the room you're standing in. Flip it over and deal with the consequences. If it's a hostage, then you may rescue them, if it's a criminal, then you're dead as you didn't shoot. Maybe though, you used your weapon card to change your **SEARCH** to a **SHOOT**. If you did that, your game continues, but your weapon is now exhausted. If the room you're in is an empty room, you must take an **EVENT** card and read, then action it's instructions. Just because it seems like an empty room at first, doesn't always mean that's what it is!



SHOOT - This tactic allows you to **SHOOT**. Beware though, as the three known criminals have a ballistics skill level on them. These are 3, 5 and 7 (shown on their cards in a small circle). All of the tactics cards also have a small circle with a number in it. This is the ballistics skill of the card. When you rescue a hostage, they also provide a ballistics skill bonus too. You need to have sufficient ballistics skill to take the criminals down.

TIP - Don't forget, if you **SHOOT** or **SEARCH** into an empty room, you must take an event card and see what you shot at/or found! Let's hope an unexpected hostage wasn't hiding in there!

BALLISTICS SKILL:

To take down the criminal with 5 ballistics skill on his card, you need to have enough ballistics skill in the tactics cards you have used when you decide to shoot him. Don't forget that successfully rescued hostages provide a constant +1 ballistics skill per hostage for each round of the game. A **SHOOT** example is provided on the next page.

Example SHOOT action:

You know that the 5 strength criminal is 2 rooms ahead (as you've peeked in a previous turn). You've rescued 1 hostage, so have 1 (always available) ballistics skill on the table. You have only revealed 2 tactics cards at this point. One card has a zero and the other a 2 ballistics skill. So, you have only 3 ballistics skill right now.

The third card you reveal has a 2 ballistics skill value on it. You now have a **possible** 5 ballistics skill level. You must rearrange the cards, so that when you reveal and **SHOOT** the criminal you have used cards (and included any hostage bonuses that are on the table) of upto 5 ballistics skill (and not before).

Just having the cards in your hand is not good enough to **SHOOT** the criminal.

EVENTS

EVENT Cards

DISCARD

LEVEL

You are here

Face up Rescued HOSTAGE

+1 Ballistics Skill

WITNESSES

Ask up to 3 questions

HADMI

KURT

DOUG

Face down CRIMINAL with 5 Ballistics Skill needed

TACTICS

Used cards this turn so far

Tactics Card (Revealed) 0 Ballistics skill

Tactics Card (Revealed) 2 Ballistics skill

Tactics Card (newly revealed) 2 Ballistics skill

WEAPON

S.W.A.T. FIRST RESPONSE

You have 5 ballistics skill ONLY when the two '2' skill cards have been played.

DeckBox Games

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Optional Rules: - 'Swap a Card' and 'Burn a Card' - See 'End of game victories' section for game scoring.

SWAP A Tactics Card:

Once per game - you may swap a **revealed** tactics card in your hand with another **facedown** tactics card of any level from the game box. Place your original card in the game box and take the new one and place it in your hand of tactics cards.

BURN A Tactics Card:

Once per game - you may burn a tactics card (discard the tactics card you are currently using from your hand and place it back in the game box) to avoid a fail result. You may only burn the currently active **revealed** tactics card.

When avoiding a criminal shooting you or you shooting a hostage, place the room card facedown again. If you're playing with the WITNESS Expansion and want to avoid an event situation, discard the event card and place the revealed empty room card facedown again.

In both of the above situations, you must now move 1 room in any direction.

WIN and LOSE CONDITIONS:

WIN - Rescue 2 hostages and kill 3 criminals. If a hostage or criminal **appears** in an empty room, then these must be either rescued or neutralised before a win condition is met.

LOSE - Kill a hostage or be killed by a criminal by uncovering them, but not shooting them.

LOSE - You have not achieved the win condition by the time you have played your last tactics card. In the standard game you have 6 turns, playing a total 21 card actions during the game.

End of Game Victories:

Win without burning/swapping cards:

OUTSTANDING VICTORY

Win by swapping a card:

MARGINAL VICTORY

Win by Burning a card:

Nominal WIN

Win by burning and swapping cards:

Questionable WIN

DESTROYED ROOM CARD:

As mentioned before, if you **SEARCH** or **SHOOT** into an Empty Room, you must check if that room was really empty by drawing from the event card deck. One event card will tell you that the room has exploded. At this point, place the 'Destroyed Room' card over the room card that the event happened in and move your standee one room in any orthogonal direction. You do not reveal the room that you move to. You now cannot move through the destroyed room at all (unless you have the 'rope' special item card given to you by one of the witnesses). All of your movements must be around this room in an orthogonal direction.

'Target Neutralised' CARDS:

Place these cards over the matching criminal when you shoot them. It's just a visual reminder that they no longer pose a threat and that you're a bad-ass SWAT Officer! The remaining criminals **should** be frightened of you!

WEAPON CARDS:

These cards give you a **one-time** modification to the tactics cards (unless you were gifted the rope, which can be used throughout the game when needed).

ANATOMY OF THE TACTICS CARDS:

The tactics cards represent your skilled SWAT training. Here's what you'll find on them:



1 - Card Name & Level

The card name and the tactics level appears here.

2 - Card Tactics

The card tactics appears here. You must complete all actions in the order shown. The keywords and icons will show here. These relate to the locations in part 3.

3 - Rooms affected by the tactics

The colours relate to the tactics above. The room with the dotted outline shows which room you are currently in. If you're on the end of a row, follow the directional flow tokens.

4 - Ballistics Skill

This is the Ballistics Skill level of the card. Add these up as you use them to take down a target!

Note: Some tactics cards will have a red box over the image of the SWAT Officer (as show above). These boxes do not affect gameplay, but show real life hand signals used by SWAT officers during close combat situations.

FAQs:

1 - Can i shoot multiple criminals in one turn by using the available ballistics skill multiple times?

NO. When you shoot a criminal, your ballistics skill for the cards (and hostages) you used have been exhausted for that turn. The only time you may shoot multiple criminals in one turn is if the have enough ballistics skill for each one in turn. Eg: you shoot a '3' criminal by using 1 hostage and 1 tactics cards with a '2' value, but you have (maybe) three more cards to play that turn which gives you a further 5 points, so you decide to kill the '5' criminal as well.

2 - What happens if i revisit a room where i saved a hostage, but upon revisiting that room, i get the shoot command? Do I ignore it?

NO - whilst the hostage has been rescued, you can't safely get them out of the property until all of the criminal threats are neutralised. A SHOOT command in this room would kill the hostage you found earlier - delivering a LOSE condition (you may opt to burn a card - see optional rules).

3 - When i save a hostage, do i remove the room card?

NO - the room card and the hostage remain on the board throughout the entire game. Don't forget that the hostages give you a **+1 Ballistics Skill Bonus** that is always available and counted immediately when working out your ballistics skill score.

4 - What happens if i can't make my full movement without crossing over my path?

You must always try to plan where you're going to move, meaning you should never trap yourself intentionally. If, however, the way the game unfolds it forces you into a corner where you can't do anything but cross over your path, then you've become 'dazed and confused' from the incredible tension of knowing a criminal could be just in the next room, about to shoot a bullet with your name on it. End your movement just before crossing your path and lose a tactics card from your hand (remove a tactics card - can be either face up or facedown) for the remainder of the game. Place this card away from the play area. This removal happens immediately - regardless of whether you've played that card or not. You now have one less card for the remainder of the game!!

5 - If i'm in an empty room (searching or shooting) and i draw an event card that says 'empty room', do i keep drawing event cards until i get something else?

NO - Sometimes an empty room is just that! You only need to draw 1 event card for empty rooms. They only activate once per game when revealed, so you do not need to redraw an event card if you should re-enter the same room at a later point.

6 - If i have to shoot into multiple rooms on one tactic card, do i flip the card and reveal the room, drawing an event card for each one (if it's not a hostage or criminal)?

YES - A couple of the tactics cards make you shoot into multiple rooms at the same time (Level 3 cards: Hurry Up and Rapid Fire and Level 4 cards: Run & Gun and Shotgun). Hopefully you've had tactics which have given you intel into where it's safe to shoot. Turn over each card in turn and draw an event card for each of the empty rooms. Resolve each one in turn.

7 - If i've neutralised all 3 criminals and rescued the 2 hostages, but i'm only partway through my turn, do i finish immediately as a WIN or do i need to continue to the end of the turn?

You must finish the hand of revealed cards you have for that turn. You may still turn a corner and get an itchy trigger finger and accidentally shoot a hostage you freed earlier in the game, or activate an Empty Room, which may - if you're using the WITNESS Expansion - throw in a surprise criminal or hostage that you must deal with!

Component List:

10 Room Cards

20 EVENT Cards (12 in the core game and 8 in the WITNESS Expansion)

: 12 standard event cards, 3 witness events, 4 extra criminals and 1 extra hostage

7 Target Neutralised Cards (3 in the core game and 4 in the WITNESS Expansion)

20 Tactics Cards (5 per level)

5 Player Level Cards

15 Witness Cards (5 per witness)

1 Quick Reference Rules Card

1 Win Status Card

5 Weapon Cards

1 Rope Card

1 Destroyed Room Card

86 Cards total

3 Tokens (1x Player token and 2x Room Direction Flow Tokens).

1 Folded Rule Book

Note: layout shots have been created using the deluxe neoprene playmat, available to purchase separately (not included with the base game).

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