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a game by Jonathan A. Leistiko

The Story

It's 2138 AD. You attend an exclusive academy for individuals with psychic talents. For the past two months you've been under consideration for admission to an elite program. Now it's just down to you and a handful of others: The best of the best. If you pass this final test, you'll be sent on an important mission to an outpost outside the solar system!

In this test, you will choose a sequence of four concepts, or "keys". This specific sequence of keys is your "cypher". You and your fellow applicants will be locked in an isolation chamber. Your mission is to use your telepathic abilities to probe the minds of your rivals to uncover the keys to their cyphers while protecting your own cypher from discovery.

Success means a promotion and adventure. Failure means another 21 sessions of Dr. Quinto's "Meditation Under Extreme Duress" class.

Do you have what it takes?

Object

To end the game with the most status by guessing the keys to the other players cyphers while keeping your cypher's keys as much of a mystery as possible.

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Psi Squad

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You Need

- a Psi Squad play sheet (You can download copies of the sheet for free from www.invisible-city.com/bazaar/index.htm#psisq, or you can use a piece of paper with all of the important info on it)
- scratch paper and a pencil for taking notes during the game

Setting Up

- Pick a four-digit number. In the real test, the cypher keys are much more complex concepts, but for this game each digit in the number represents a key in your four-key cypher.
- Jot down your cypher's keys on your play sheet and fold it over so no one else can see it.
- Start your status at 12.
- Set the starting Value of your cypher to zero.
- Leave all other spaces blank.
- Pick someone to go first.

Play

On your turn, pick a player and announce what you think the four keys in their cypher are. Your target will tell you the results of your guess (described below), and how many points you scored. Add that to your status. Remember that adding a negative number to your status reduces your status.

Play passes to the left.

When someone makes a guess on your cypher:

- Write their guess on the next empty Guess line on your sheet.
- Compare their guess to your cypher.
- How many keys in their guess are in your cypher? This is their "number correct;" enter this number in the Number Correct space on the same line as their guess.
- How many keys in their guess are identical to keys in your cypher (same number, same position)? This is their "number spotted;" enter this number in the Number Spotted space.

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Play, continued

- Tell them their number correct and their number spotted.
- Add one point to your Value for each key they got correct and two points for each key they spotted. Enter the new Value of your secret number in the Value space.
- Subtract the last Value of your cypher from the new Value. Tell your guesser the difference; they get to add this to their status.

Winning

The game ends when only one player's cypher has not been guessed. That player gets to subtract the current Value of their cypher from 12 and add the result to their status.

The player with the highest status at the end of the game wins.

Origin and Credits

When I was about 6 or 7 years old, my parents took me to the Franklin Institute. While we were there, we played with a very early electronic game. The game would think of a four-digit number from 0000 to 9999 and you'd have to guess it. For each guess, the game would tell you how many digits were correct and how many digits were in the right position. After we left the museum, we continued to play the game in the car. The game is a lot like Mastermind, but with numbers instead of colors. This version of the game takes it to the next logical level, I believe.

Credits:

Concept, development : Jonathan A. Leistikio
Editing : Sharon J. Cichelli
Design : Jeremy P. Bushnell

Enjoyed this game? Let us know: jonathan@invisible-city.com

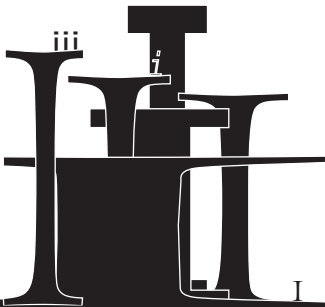
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Appendix A : Variants

- You can play this game with two players, but it's not nearly as interesting. It becomes more of a race game.
- For a shorter game, you can play with three-digit cyphers, but change every reference to "twelve" in these rules to "nine."
- For a longer game, you can play with five-digit secret numbers, but increase every reference to "twelve" to "fifteen."



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Pen & Paper
Games

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a logic game for three or more players
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