

OUTSCORED

A LAOG about social credit scores and beautiful light effects

This is a LAOG, a live-action online game, i.e. we will play connected through a video call.

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Technical requirements:

- Being able to completely darken one's room
- Having access to a Google Spreadsheet (and having a Google account) while playing
- Second device or second screen from which to establish the video call
- In its standard setup, the game is not playable if differentiating colours is difficult for you. I'm working on a version improving on that.

Link to the Google Spreadsheet template (make a copy) necessary to play:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_pNIN898aoxwnc9t9JcRvEk_ajMq1R2uqrndzoyF3Vc/edit#gid=181732991

Nr. of players: 3-5

Play time: ~<2h

30 minutes orientation, check tech

70 minutes actual play time (shorter with fewer players)

10 minutes debrief / de-role

Content notes:

Oppressive regime, betrayal of friends, losing hope, being judged, reference to violence against citizens from the government

After reading the outline, discuss how you all feel about these elements, and how much focus you prefer bringing to them in your game. Pick safety tools suitable for you and your group.

Main mechanism:

With an online spreadsheet, we control the light colour on our fellow players' faces: we use the brightness of their screens as the only light source to illuminate their faces in a specific colour. For having this effect, we need to be able to darken completely the room from where we play. We use a second monitor or second device for still being able to see each other.

OUTLINE:

In a dystopian future, your social score, your Sound, decides about your opportunities in life, your destiny. You and your friends apply for university. There is a perfect course, exactly on the subject you have all been excited about for years and which bonds you together. And it's a way out of the depressive region / town you are living in. Beside a good application, all it needs to be accepted is a proper citizen-score – when talking about it, it's often referred to as 'how sound you are'. Think: credit score, but for behaviour. The general score level of your region is currently deteriorating and some of you might miss the mark. However, you can support each other by up-voting. If only there were enough votes to push everybody over the mark. However, you can down-vote somebody for bad behaviour. Each down-vote earns you one extra

up-vote you can spend. So some of you will be outscored and miss a proper score. Or worse: send to correction centre – to be made ‘sound’ again.

After setting and character creation, you will enter actual play. In a video diary format, you introduce your characters to each other. After that, there will be 5 gatherings of you and your friends, each with probably a week in-between them. In these meetings you talk about your shared passion, your friendships, how to act on the fact that your scores are deteriorating and what you will do when the final meeting has passed and some might have made it to university – and others not.

The game ends with a round of video diaries (which function as an in-character epilogue).

TECHNICAL SET-UP

As this is a LAOG, we will stay in-character as soon as the actual play time begins. That means you should take your time now to orient yourself in the spreadsheet. You can still use a chat everybody has access to while playing for trouble shooting. Or just pause the game if you need to. The spreadsheet has a separate tab for each player. While in the game, you will only stay on your tab and will find all information you need there.

Player 1 has the special role of updating the number of the gathering. Nobody else should change the number of the gathering in their tab. The only input area for you are the checkboxes to up and down-vote other characters.

If you have two screens connected to your device, put the spreadsheet on full screen on the brighter one and the video stream on full screen on the other hand. With only one screen at hand, use your mobile device as a second screen and do the video call through your mobile device.

Darken your room enough that the effect is strong. You don’t need to type anything while in play, so no worries if you can’t see your keyboard anymore in the dark. Test the light effect by going to the Test tab and switch the light in there by changing the score value through the dropdown menu.

The colour on your face reflects your score. Your soundness

There are five colours: black, pink, green, blue and white. They indicate your current the score, in ascending order. At the bottom of each player sheet, you find a little description of each colour and its reputation. If you ever are illuminated black at the end of a gathering, which means having a score of 0, you will be taken to the correction centre by the local authorities.

LAST PREPARATIONS

Assign Player 1 and debrief moderator

Decide together who plays Player 1. Player 1 keeps track of the time of each scene and controls the counter of the gatherings. Player 1 also plays opens the game by providing the first video diary.

Also decide who will moderate the debrief. Instructions for the debrief moderator are to be found further below.

Decide about the length of each gathering:

Make a decision together how long each gathering shall be. The standard length for a game with 5 players in 10 minutes per gathering (with a total of 5 gatherings). With fewer players you could reduce the meeting time down to 5 minutes per gathering. Player 1 is responsible for calling out the end of a gathering (in-character) when the time is over.

STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

1. Create your setting
2. Create your characters
3. Character introduction: video diaries
4. 5 gatherings, each 10 minutes or whatever time you have agreed on
5. Epilogues (video diaries)

1. SETTING CREATION

Go to the spreadsheet tab of the respective name. Choose from the dropdowns – or come up with your own ideas for the following questions:

1. What is the name of the region / town you are all from
2. Why is the average score deteriorating in the region?
3. What is the shared passion among the characters?
4. What is the name of the university course related to your passion?
5. What rumour have you heard about the correction centre?

2. CHARACTER CREATION

Again, enter your choices in the respective tab. The dropdown menus are proposals to come up with something quickly.

Your character consists of:

- A name
- A role in the group – this is like a semi-secret agenda
- A score-problematic behaviour – what's not sound about you – bring that up at least once per gathering
- A relationship towards the passion – this gives you some fodder how to talk about the passion with your friends

As the government's data scientists found out, your soundness as a member of society is strongly correlated to the length of your first name. Hence, your character's starting score is adjusted to the number of letters of your first name. Mind you, that goes for your name, not your character's name. The spreadsheet is calculating that automatically for you.

This is the end of preparation. Take a short break and stretch your body as we will sit for a full hour afterwards. From the next step on, you will all be in-character without break.

3. CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS: VIDEO DIARIES

When you are ready to play, darken your room. Then switch off your cameras and mute yourself. Switch to your character tab and read again through what you know about your character. Especially look at the role description you have selected and how you want to play that out.

Player 1 will log in and start with a video diary of 3-5 minutes. Continue with Player 2 and so forth.

Video diary means that your character talks openly to themselves in a diary format. Use this opportunity to tell us about your character and imply what you want to see from them in the game. Keep your Role for yourself in the sense that your character might also not know yet what their stand in the decisions to come is – some foreshadowing would be great.

4. THE GATHERINGS

There are five gatherings, each of 5 to 10 minutes (whatever you agreed on at the beginning of the game). The game will give you some guidance per gathering about what has happened in the region around you and a question you could use to start the discussion. These are informal meetings between friends, maybe you are following your passion there, or gather in the break at school or from a factory job you all share.

While in the meeting, you can up and down-vote other players, depending on their behaviour – or just simply because you have strategic plans on your mind. However, try to make it look that your voting is a consequence of someone's behaviour. Your decision might be obscure, but be careful not to draw a government agent's attention to you for 'false voting'. If you take the score serious, think about if your friends' behaviour is 'sound', i.e. appropriate in the sense this society has established.

Votes can be given and taken away any time and as often as you like. Just click on the checkboxes and they will automatically update. You can only give out 2 up-votes. Every further up-vote can be bought by down-voting somebody. Down-votes on people in correction centre don't count.

Try to bring in your own inadequacy towards the proper score behaviour **at least once per meeting**.

Between gatherings

1. If a player has a score of 0 at the end of a gathering, they are not sound enough for society anymore. See below what happens then.
2. When the time of a gathering is over, Player 1 calls for an end. This can and should be happening abruptly. Player 1, you could use a timer which rings, or check your device's clock.
3. Switch cameras off for the time between the gatherings. Everybody should have some time to breathe and personally re-capitulate what has happened – but one minute should be enough.
4. In the fiction, approximately one week passes between the gatherings.
5. Then everybody returns on-camera for the next meeting.
6. Player 1 puts the meeting counter on their sheet one higher right before the next meeting begins. That will come with some changes to everybody's score based on the government's assessment of the region where they live in general.

Characters not sound anymore (score 0)

If your character has a score of 0 **at the end of a gathering**, you are considered as not sound enough for society anymore. You are sent to the correction centre. That means you don't participate in meetings any longer and will only appear again for the final video diary (epilogue).

While the others meet, you can still up- and down-vote them. But now base your decision on their actual behaviour as if you were a government artificial intelligence (friendly, helpful, correct: up-vote, inappropriate behaviour: down-vote).

5. EPILOGUES (AFTER THE 5TH GATHERING)

After the fifth meeting, you stay on-camera but mute yourself. Your scores can't be changed anymore. Take in a moment of silence. Then Player 1 starts with a video diary recorded one year in the future from now. Describe what has happened since then to you. What you think retrospectively about these weeks of your gatherings for the university course application. Then turn your camera off and Player 2 continues etc.

6. DEBRIEF

When everybody is done with video diaries, go switch your lights on in your room. Stretch yourself, get something to drink if necessary. You are not your character anymore. Leave them behind by explicitly saying so to yourself. Return latest after 3 minutes with camera and mic on.

When everybody is back in the call, the player responsible for the debrief takes over.

Debrief moderator: thank everybody for having played. Allow people to go and skip the debrief. Ask the remaining players these two questions, one by one. Ask that nobody will comment on somebody else's remarks if it's not their turn.

- i) What moment is still on your mind when thinking back of the game?
- ii) Does the game or something you experienced while playing, relate to your life?

APPENDIX

Screenshots on how the face colouring should look like:

