

THE OFFICIAL SUPER SCOUT SQUAD HANDBOOK



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Introduction

The 1970s* - the birth of micro-computing and the early years of genetic research, the rise of nuclear power and satellite transmission. Add a sprinkling of the usual suspects: fluoridation, radio waves, the soundtrack of punk rock, and the combined static electricity of too much nylon clothing. Then the catalyst - a huge meteor strike that lit up the night sky like it was midday, except much, much more neon green.

Suddenly a whole generation had super-powers. Well, most of the powers were more "stupid" than "super" - immunity to wood, the ability to shatter glass just by looking at it, being able to mind-read badgers, or moving at super-speed but only while crawling. And these powers came at a price: a lethal vulnerability to kittens, crippling vertigo if more than 6" from the ground, or being suddenly unable to pronounce the letter "C".

However, it soon became apparent that those affected did now have a pre-disposition to powers and abilities beyond the normal human, and with judicious use of the right digital, genetic and drug enhancements they could be given true super-powers. Faced with thousands of potentially lethal teenagers, the authorities looked for ways to simultaneously enhance and control their abilities; for a way to channel their potential power to be a force for good and law rather than evil and chaos.

Thus was born the *Super Scout Squad* or SSS as it is more commonly known. This youth organisation provided a way to marshal the forces of the 'empowered' generation. In return for co-operation, good deeds

and civic duty, the SSS offered greatly increased powers. The hope was two-fold: firstly that the youth movement would provide a positive incentive and moral code for the super-powered youth, and secondly that the SSS would provide an army capable of standing up to the swelling ranks of super-villains.

For not everyone responded to their newfound powers in a positive way. I'm sure you can imagine how many of the hormone-racked teenagers reacted. Some sank into anarchy or depravity, while others saw their powers as a signal that the old establishment should be swept away and the new generation of *Homo Superior* should rule over their parents and former masters.

Super Scout Squad is a tongue-in-cheek, rules-lite roleplaying game of teenage superheroes. Before you begin you'll need to find two decks of playing cards – one for the GM** and one for the players.

*There's absolutely no reason why the game has to be set in the 1970s. Set it in whatever time period you like. See if I care.

**Super Scout Squad can (in theory) be played with or without a GM. This is (hopefully) discussed in a later chapter.

Character Creation

You have four **Attributes**: *Strength* ♣, *Speed* ♠, *Spirit* ♦, *Social* ♥ – share 18 points between them, with no attribute less than 2 or more than 7.

Every character has a **Unique Power** and a **Unique Weakness***. Here's how you get them:

Each player makes up a unique power and writes it down on a piece of paper (or use the cards at the end of this rulebook). These powers should either be silly/weak but generally available (e.g. able to breathe steam at will) or strong/powerful but very limited (e.g. able to run at 50mph but only once a day and only while smoking a cigarette). Once every player has written down a power (which you keep secret while you're doing it), pass it to the player on your left. Each player now has the chance to either accept the power or pass it on. Once a player has accepted a power, they sit out the rest of the drafting power (each character only gets one unique power). If the power you wrote down goes all the way round the table and comes back to you then you have to take it (and give up the power you've already taken if necessary). The logic behind this drafting method is that if you write down something too powerful then someone else will take it – if you write something too stupid then you'll end up with it yourself!

Now do the same for unique weakness – again these should either be minor and general (e.g. you're literally incapable of turning down chocolate, no matter what the circumstances are) or major but specific (e.g. the particular harmonics of cello music makes your brain haemorrhage and causes death in a matter of minutes). Use the same drafting system but this time pass round to the right.

Now look at the chapter on **B.A.D.G.E.s** and choose two level-1 badges – these, along with your unique abilities, will be your starting powers.

Once you have your powers worked out you should spend a few minutes working out your **Real Name**, **Hero Name**, **Moral Code**, **Catchphrase** and **Taunt Gesture**. You don't *need* to have these sorted out before your first game, but they will add to your fun if you do and possibly earn you credits towards advancement.

Real Name – this is obvious (e.g. Bill Weston)

Hero Name – up to you whether it's something abstract (e.g. Zenith) or based on your powers (e.g. SpiceMan). Try not to base it on a B.A.D.G.E. power that you might end up abandoning.

Moral Code – the SSS have a strict moral code, but that doesn't mean you have to stick to it. This should be one or two lines (e.g. no scruples about killing if he can get away with it, but will never hurt an animal)

Catchphrase – again this can be abstract (e.g. “Yippee-kai-yay!”) or related to your powers (e.g. “Hot enough for ya?”)

Taunt Gesture – if you've played any PvP video game you'll know about these – a way to reinforce to a recently conquered foe that you can not only defeat them, you can do it in *style*. A slow handclap, a blown-kiss, a cheeky wink-and-salute or perhaps something more traditional-but-obscene - pick one and make it your own...

*I've just realized you'll want to give the unique power a suit/value as explained for other powers later in these rules. For your unique weakness, draw a card at random to give a suit/value for the weakness. The relevance of this will be explained later.

Your Super Scout Squad

Although the SSS has a strict over-arching formal structure and rules, each troop of scouts has its own unique **salute**, **handshake** and **motto**. Before your first session, spend 5 minutes working these out – it's up to you whether you work on these together or get everyone to come up with ideas of their own and then take a vote on which idea you like best for each category.

Salute – this is used when scouts are lined up for formal inspection or to greet each other at a distance (e.g. salute as normal except with only the two first fingers extended*, then put the fingers to the lips as if blowing smoke from a pistol)

Handshake – used to recognize a fellow scout – this may be a secret, masonic-style handshake or something a bit more ostentatious (e.g. three fist bumps followed by arm-wrestling style hand clasp).

Motto – something to help scouts remember the troop's moral code or to strike fear into the heart of the enemy (e.g. Do No Evil. Or Else...)

New recruits have to go an introductory 'tutorial' mission before they are given full membership of the super scouts. Once they have successfully completed this mission, they are allowed to wear the SSS membership badge (as shown on the cover of this handbook), and are given a 'woggle'** - this is a small, practically invisible device that acts in a similar way to a Bluetooth headset and allows squad members to talk to each other even when they're on opposite sides of the city – if you've seen *Avengers Assemble*, I guess that's what they must have been using in that final battle sequence.

Super Scout Squad is open to both male and female prospective heroes. Each SSS troop is led by two adults called Father Owl (often informally known as Daddy-O) and Mother Fox (or Mofo, as she is more affectionately known, leading to the common phrase on returning from a successful mission; "B.A.D.G.E. me, Mofo!")



B.A.D.G.E. for **Mind Control** – level 1

*This is the actual official salute of the British scout movement

**I swear you really do actually get these in the British scout movement. A real 'woggle' is a thick plastic ring that you wear round your scarf to keep it in place.

Basic Gameplay

At the beginning of the game, shuffle the players' deck and place it in front of the players. Each player draws a hand of five cards. The GM sorts their deck into three piles containing the cards 2-5, 6-9 and 10-A. These are, respectively, the easy, medium and hard challenge decks – shuffle each one separately and place it face down.

Super Scout Squad is intended to be rules-lite. Therefore the default assumption is always that the players succeed at mundane actions, so in most cases just talk your way through the action and describe what happens. The rule of thumb is: don't get bogged down in feeling you have to play out every situation – if it's fun, just let the player succeed.

When an action is not mundane – when it is something out of the ordinary or involves testing your ability against an opposing challenge (either another or an inanimate object such as a lock, a brick wall or a computer a security system), then use the cards to resolve things.

Every challenge has a *base difficulty*, represented by a playing card. The value of the card shows how difficult it is (the higher the value the more difficult the challenge), while the suit shows what type of challenge it is. Black cards show physical challenges – Clubs ♣ for things to do with brute force, strength and stamina, while Spades ♠ represents speed, dexterity and accuracy. Red cards stand for challenges with a mental angle – Hearts ♥ for charisma or any task involving social interaction, Diamonds ♦ for intellect, mental abilities and spirit.

So, the base difficulty for say, jumping across a 10' gap between rooftops might be a 4♠, while lifting a car off a trapped pedestrian

would be a 9♣. Hacking into the Pentagon's security system would be a Q♦, while talking your way into the VIP only part of a nightclub might be a 7♥. Don't get too strung up on exact values though – it's easy make up rough figures for challenges if your scenario* doesn't specify them. If in doubt, you can just decide whether the challenge is easy, medium or hard and draw a card from the applicable GM draw pile. That gives you the value – treat the suit as if it were the kind that matches the type of challenge.

A player attempting the challenge chooses either one of their attributes or one of their powers as their *base attempt**. However, the chosen attribute or power must be applicable to the challenge – you can't talk a meteor out of hitting the earth, nor can you hack a computer by just punching it (though sometimes it's tempting to try).

This base attempt value can be *augmented* by adding additional (applicable) attributes or powers and by playing cards from their hand. This works thus: cards/powers/attributes that share a suit with the base attempt add +1 to its value, if they share a value they add +2, if they share both (i.e. are an identical card) they add +3. If the final value is equal to or higher than the challenge value, the player succeeds.

If a power or attribute *doesn't* share a suit with the base attempt but can be argued to clearly have a beneficial effect, then it may be used to add +1

*You'll normally want to use your highest value eligible power/ability as your base attempt. But if you've got a hand full of 3s, you might try leading with a 3 value power.

Slightly More Advanced Gameplay

Example: GravBoy is attempting to lift a car off a trapped pedestrian. He's not strong enough (6♣) to simply lift the car up, but argues that his Level 1 Gravity Beam power (5♦) clearly helps for +1. He then plays a 6♠ from his hand for +2 (because the value matches the base attempt), to give a total attempt score of 9. This equals the challenge value of 9♣, so the player succeeds.

In most cases, that's that. But where the GM thinks of an interesting twist to the narrative, or where the challenge is an opposed action, the GM can make the challenge more difficult by laying extra cards face down to *augment* the base challenge in the same way that the player augmented their attempt. To do this, the GM turns over a card from the GM pile that matches the challenge (2-5: easy, 6-9: medium or 10-A: hard). If the card doesn't augment the challenge, stop now. If it does, keep turning over cards until you get to one that doesn't augment the challenge. Add the effects of all the turned over cards to the base challenge to give the total challenge value.

The player may choose to play more cards, or use more powers to try to bring up their attempt total. If it makes sense in the current context, other players may add cards from their hands or add their powers/abilities to the base attempt. However, the players may only stop and plan these additional actions if the time pressure of the situation would allow it. For combat, saving people falling from tall buildings, stopping bullets, etc. other players may still contribute cards, but they're not allowed to say things like "I've got a 5♣ if that would

help? Or do you think it's worth me using my last use of Slow Time?" Just DO it.

If the players take too long to decide, or if it makes sense in the context, the GM should start turning over additional cards from the GM pile to augment the challenge. The players will appreciate your attention to detail.

Throughout all of this, narrate. If you add a power or play a card, explain what is happening. Don't just say "I use my 5♦ Magnetic Powers to add +1 to the combat attempt". Say "With a dismissive flick of my hand the guard's pistol turns in his grip and his shot goes wide. He still has a look of confusion in his eyes as I punch him square in the face"

By now you're probably wondering about hit-points. There aren't any. You take someone out, or get taken out yourself. For player characters this means being knocked out but living to fight another day.

The only exceptions to this rule are Bosses (for want of a better word – the 'Boss'). The climactic, final showdown of any scenario isn't decided in a single challenge play. Apply a Zelda/Mario-style Rule of Three when fighting the last battle – only when you've managed three successful challenges against the Boss does s/he go down and stay down.

One more thing: If the GM turns over the card that matches your weakness, there's a chance that it's triggered (this really depends on whether it makes any sense in the context of the challenge – if it does, then narrate it and play it out – it'll be fun!)

B.A.D.G.E.s

B.A.D.G.E. stands for Bio/Android/Digital/Genetic Enhancement. It looks like a rounded triangular sew-on badge, except that it's got a microchip in the back with legs that stick into your skin and give you little electrical pulses and drip feeds drugs and stem-cells into you in just the right way to kick your latent super-powers in a particular direction (imagine William Gibson's *Neuromancer* made by someone on Etsy).

B.A.D.G.E.s work like this: you get a badge on loan/probation. It gives you a number of abilities – shown here in a checklist. In order to actually gain the badge permanently, you have to do each of the things on the checklist *in the line of duty* (this is really important – you can't just jump off a building and tick that off the list – you have to be doing it while pursuing a villain or something similar). Once you've done them all, you get to keep the badge. Get your mum to sew it on your uniform. This also qualifies you for the next level of that badge.

To recap – the B.A.D.G.E gives you a list of abilities. Once you've used all the abilities you get to keep the B.A.D.G.E, permanently.

I had wanted to make a huge list of super-powers and the checklist for each of them. I don't have time for that, so I've done a few detailed examples, and a list of other available B.A.D.G.E.s (though I'm sure there are plenty of others you could think of) – I'm afraid you'll have to work out your own checklists for these. I also suggest you look at the real Scout list* for inspiration – they work just the same way (I mean the checklists, not the genetic-enhancement-jumping-off-building stuff)

* e.g. <http://scouts.org.uk/supportresources/search/?cat=12,67,127>

Fire/Heat Energy – level 1 - 5♦

- Cause a small flame to appear within 10 feet
- Cause metal to become uncomfortably warm to the touch
- Cause a small amount of liquid to boil
- Cause a person to mop their brow, loosen their collar, etc.

Flying – level 1 - 5♠

- Survive a fall of 20 feet
- Jump across a 10' gap between buildings
- Jump over a 6' tall obstruction without touching it
- Hover for three seconds

Brutal Force – level 1 - 5♣

- Punch someone in the face and knock them out
- Break a chair/table with someone's head, or vice versa
- Hit two enemies simultaneously
- Take on three enemies in a fight, and win

Mind Control – level 1 - 5♥

- Cause an enemy to greet you as a friend
- Make someone give you a low-value, low-importance object
- Make someone answer truthfully one low-importance question
- Make someone forget a low-importance interaction with you

♣ – Super Strength, Super Stamina, Invulnerability

♠ – Super Speed, Invisibility, Shapeshifting, Super Reflexes

♦ – Ice/Cold Energy, Magno-Electric, Beam Energy, Atomic Alteration

♥ – Telekinesis, Telepathy, Enhanced Senses, Animal Empathy

Tutorial – Your First Badge

This was meant to be a scenario, but there just isn't time (this section is the last bit I'm writing and there's only twenty minutes left). So I'll use this space instead as a dumping ground to describe what should be in your first scenario and all the other aspects of the game which I realise I haven't actually explained properly yet...

The first scenario should be pretty easy stuff, jump between a few rooftops, beat up a few poor-quality bad guys, smash down a few doors, or maybe break a password, and finally beat up a pitiful 'super'-villain in an ill-fitting costume. The scenario should be short and sweet - just long enough for players to get used to the rule system. Also remember that the characters aren't full members of the *Super Scout Squad* until after they've completed their first mission, so it's quite possible that Father Owl or Mother Fox will be nearby to lend a hand if things start to go wrong. Hopefully by the end of the scenario you'll have ticked off all the boxes in at least one of your starting B.A.D.G.E.s – and try to remember to use your unique power and weakness and your motto, taunt and moral code.

Remember the game should be about fun more than anything else – the action should definitely be more Adam West than Christian Bale. Do remember to use all the fun unique stuff you created for your character at the start of your first session. Don't say "I use my 9♦ Radioactive Energy to beat the challenge value of 7". Do say "Eat plutonium death you disgusting alien weirdoes" while slamming down the card and triumphantly performing your Taunt Gesture.

If you have less than five cards in hand you draw one new card at the end of a challenge. You don't draw cards in the middle of a challenge.

A 'scene' probably has several challenges. Open the door, fight the bad guys, find the stolen documents – that's a scene. It's probably a page or two in a scenario. Refill your hand to five cards at the end of a scene.

You only get to use each B.A.D.G.E a maximum of *once* per scene. I probably should have mentioned this somewhere earlier!

'Bosses' don't have to be villains, or even sentient. There's no reason why the climax of the scenario couldn't be the *Super Scout Squad* trying to save a city from a natural disaster.

Sorry that I didn't explain Equipment/Costumes/Weapons at any point. The summary – you buy them with XP, and they have a value and suit just like everything else. Depending on the item, it'll be usable once-per-scene or once-per-scenario.

I also wanted to have a character sheet and cards at the back of this rulebook, but time didn't allow. In an ideal world you'd have a card for each B.A.D.G.E. and unique power/weakness. Your character sheet would list your abilities, have each of your B.A.D.G.E.s along with their checklists, and have a checklist for the list of things you can use each scenario for extra XP (e.g. Moral Code).

I'm out of time. There was so much more I wanted to do, and I know I'll be cringing at every typo and unworkable rule when I re-read this. But I hope you have fun with what's here...

Character Advancement

The summary: things you do in the game earn you XP. XP acts as a sort of currency that you can use between adventures to buy cool abilities and other stuff for your character.

There aren't any levels as such in the game – if you really want to know what level your character is, you're the level of your highest level B.A.D.G.E.

Higher level B.A.D.G.E.s have a higher level base value (e.g. **Flying – level 1 - 5♠, level 2 - 7♠, level 3 - 9♠, level 4 - J♠, level 5 - K♠**)

How you earn XP:

Each time you tick off something on a B.A.D.G.E. checklist, gain an XP (note that you only tick something off the *first* time you do it).

Gain an XP for each of the following (you can only get XP the *first* time you do each thing during a particular scenario, and only if it is done in context and in the course of the mission):

- Show adherence to your personal **Moral Code**
- Use your personal **Catchphrase**
- Use your personal **Taunt Gesture**
- Use your **Unique Power**
- Suffer the effects of your **Unique Weakness**
- Use your scout troop's **Salute, Handshake** or **Motto**

Gain an XP for surviving each significant encounter

Gain 5 XP for defeating the final 'Boss'

What you can spend XP on:

Spend 10XP per level to start on a new B.A.D.G.E (e.g. 20XP to start on Flying – level 2) – you must have already completed the previous level.

Spend 5XP per current points in an Attribute to raise the Attribute by 1 (e.g. Strength is currently 5♣ - spend 25XP to raise it to 6♣)

Spend 10XP per level to be permanently able to use a B.A.D.G.E an additional time each scene.

Spend 5-50XP to gain new equipment/weapon/costume depending on power of the item. Discuss XP cost with your GM and/or other players.

Example higher level B.A.D.G.E.:

Flying – level 2 - 7♠

- Survive a fall of 40 feet
- Jump across a 20' gap between tall buildings
- Jump over a 12' tall obstruction without touching it
- Glide for five seconds

Games Mastering

Because of the relatively rules-lite, narrative nature of *Super Scout Squad*, you have some flexibility as to how you GM it.

The advantage of going for a traditional GM-led game is that you will have a coherent storyline running through the scenario, have someone actively laying traps for the player characters and coming up with devious plans for the final Boss. In an ideal world the GM will have put some work in writing and preparing the scenario and giving sensible base challenge values to all the likely challenges that the player characters are going to have to face.

You do, however, have to alternatives to playing this traditional way. The first is to have a rotating GM. Players take it in turn to GM each *scene*. Their player character is present, but does not play much of an active role. The characters hand of cards is laid out on the table, and other can be used to provide support for other characters, but does not initiate any actions during the scene*

Perhaps most interesting of all, you can try playing *Super Scout Squad* without a GM at all. Here's how it works**:

If you have a scenario to hand, work your way through it and use the challenge values shown there. If you don't have a scenario to hand, make up the story between you as you go along – when you get to a challenge (an obstacle, fight, etc.) just decide whether it's easy, medium or hard (usually things get harder as the scenario continues), and flip over the top card from the appropriate GM deck. The value of the card is the *difficulty* of the challenge; ignore the actual suit shown and assign

a suit depending on the nature of the challenge (e.g. the players have to break down a door to get into the abandoned warehouse. You decide this is an *easy* challenge. You flip over the top card of the easy GM deck – it's a 4♥, but because of the physical nature of the challenge you treat it as a 4♣).

When it comes to augmenting the challenge, just flip over the next card from the same GM deck. Add to the challenge value if it matches either the suit (+1) or the value (+2) and flip over the next card. Stop flipping cards when you get to a card which matches neither suit nor value.

When you're playing without a GM, you need to rely on players to come up with fun ideas for the environment and enemies. You can either do this by consensus, or take it in turns.

A couple of untested*** variations for both GM'd and GM-less games:

- Only make the base challenge value visible until after the player has made their initial attempt (i.e. the player knows the challenge is *easy*, but doesn't know *how easy*).
- Make a final, additional, single card flip from the GM card pile *after* the players have made their final moves.

* Though you can be flexible about this and allow this character to initiate an action if their controlling player – i.e. the current GM – agrees to it.

** I have no idea whether this will actually work. Think of this as a map of the area that you'll be traversing – I'd be very grateful if you could just fill it in as you go along.

*** Just like everything else in this rulebook.

Notes

I've never tried to write an RPG before. I guess it's ridiculous trying to write a set of RPG rules in 24 hours even if you *have* written some before (and, in retrospect, maybe I should have spent less of that precious time on designing the *Super Scout Squad* logo!). None of these have been playtested, and all I've really done is written pointers towards how I think a game *might* work. Apologies if it all falls apart if you try to play it. But I'm quite proud a couple of the game mechanics, and it would be nice to use them in a proper game some day. Any feedback would be much appreciated.

The actual badge 'checklist' system and the ideas of motto, handshake, etc. were taken pretty much straight from the real UK scout website: <http://scouts.org.uk/supportresources/>

I was a cub scout for a total of six weeks in 1974. The only things I remember about the experience is that I gained no badges but I was forced to appear in the annual "Gang Show", dressed as a housewife, in the Esplanade theatre in Bognor Regis, singing the song "With a Little Bit of Luck" from *My Fair Lady*. I'm not sure it counts as a life skill.

Films:

Moonrise Kingdom (2012), *Up* (2009), *Kick-Ass* (2010), *Avengers Assemble* (2012), *Despicable Me* (2010), *Megamind* (2010), *The Incredibles* (2004)

Comics:

Kick-Ass (2008-present), *Hit-Girl* (2012), *Marshal Law* (1987-88), *America's Got Powers* (2012), *The Umbrella Academy* (2007-08), *The Death Ray* (2011), *Axe Cop* (2009-2012)

This game was designed for the 2012 RPG Geek 24-Hour RPG Contest

