

EGOS

This game is a love letter to competitive social mechanics, superheroes, and Joe McDaldno.

Egos is a parlor game about the dual lives of superheroes and supervillains. In the game, you'll portray the alter-egos of supers while they go about their day to day life at their mundane cover jobs. The game is set at a workplace where most of the employees moonlight as supers. Nearly everyone who works there is in disguise. During play, you will be trying to guess the secret identities of the other players.

Oh yeah, and there's a big fight at the end. POW!

*As far as Game Chef ingredients go, I was inspired by the diamond-studded tunic (picture 3) and the stylized egg-shaped head (picture 1). The tunic immediately made me think of a superhero's costume, while the head reminded me very much of a symbol that would be emblazoned on said costume. To me, the theme image with its two-sided arrow represents some kind of duality within a person, just like the tension between a superhero and their alternate identity.*

### Play Materials

- Several index cards
- Scrap paper
- Pencils for everyone
- Copy of the Advantage Board
- A bunch of six-sided dice
- At least 5 players; Any odd number above 5 should work

### Character Creation

Creating characters in this game is a group effort. Before starting the game, you and your friends should come up with a number of heroes/villains that *all of you find interesting*. This last part is important, because you'll be randomly selecting a character to play. You don't want anyone to be bored with the hero or villain they get. Don't worry about sticking with a particular Age of comic book history (although you can if you want to), just create some dudes that you'll have fun with. If you have trouble getting inspired, take a look at [TVTropes.com](http://TVTropes.com), or Wiki some popular heroes like Batman or Superman. Be sure to click lots of links and get lost deep in all of the convoluted comic book minutia- you can find some awesome stuff that way. The number of heroes and villains you create does not have to be even (although it's probably better if it is), but it should be equal

to  $N - 1$ , where “N” is equal to the number of players you have in your group.

Each hero or villain should be written down on the front side of an index card (with a separate card for each character), so fill in the information below as you go along.

All characters have 3 Traits that define something about who they are, or give insight into their past. You can think of these Traits kind of like an “origin story” for the character. Traits are one or two words, like “Orphan,” “Temperamental,” “Obsessive Compulsive,” or “Tech savvy.” They should be things that you can potentially fit into your role-playing of the character.

It’s important that everyone feels comfortable with their ability to play to these Traits during the game, because Traits are used to power Abilities, which your character will use during The Final Battle.

Abilities are basically superpowers. They define some special or supernatural thing your character can do better than everyone else. Each Ability is linked to a Trait. So a Trait like “Athletic,” which represents an aspect of the superpowered character’s alter-ego, might be linked to the Ability “Super Strength.” All of a character’s Abilities should be **unique to that character**, and thematically linked to what they are.

Each character must share 1 (and only 1) Trait with another character. It’s up to your group to decide how you want to do this. Knightowl and Mr. Pain might both share the “Athletic” Trait, for example. Note that this does not mean the characters must have the same Abilities. Abilities, once again, are unique to each character. So while Knightowl’s “Athletic” might power his “Super Speed” Ability, Mr. Pain’s “Athletic” may be used to power his “Unstoppable Force” Ability.

Remember how you created less heroes and villains than you have players in your group? That’s because one person will take on the role of the Civilian. The Civilian is a special character without superpowers. This character does not have any unique Traits or Abilities (see below).

Now that you’re done creating all the characters, copy down all the information from the hero and villain cards on a central sheet so that it can be seen and referenced by everyone at the table (alternately, you can scan or photocopy all the cards).

## Setup

Once you’ve finished character generation, you should have a bunch of index cards with heroes and villains on them, and one index card that represents The Civilian. Turn these cards upside down now, and shuffle them well.

Put the reference sheet with all the hero/villain information in the center of the table so that anyone can look at it during the game.

Go around the table clockwise and have everyone draw from the deck of index cards, not revealing what they drew.

### Playing the Game

Take a look at the character you've drawn. If you've drawn either a hero or a villain, take a moment to read their profile over and think about how you might portray their Traits.

Before starting things off, discuss details about where your characters are working. Some examples: an arms factory, a mechanical garage, an office, a Walmart. After the place is established, talk a little about what your alter-egos do on the job. It might be helpful to decide who's in charge (if anyone is), and lay out workplace roles. Do as much or as little prep as you want, but avoid revealing your true identities.

When everyone feels comfortable, you can start the first scene.

Scenes in this game are freeform. They involve players moving around the room, pantomiming work tasks and speaking as their characters. You don't have to ask before taking an action, assuming it is something that fits into the workplace environment that you and your friends have agreed upon. Use of props is encouraged, and you may even want to rearrange the room's furniture to make it more like the particular work area you've chosen. Feel free to change where the action takes place between scenes. **Each scene lasts 10 minutes.**

As a hero or villain, your job during each scene is to play your character as you feel they would act. While you are doing this, you should be trying to drop subtle hints about your true identity. This is done by "playing up" one of your Traits. This could mean doing any number of things.

Let's say that you are playing Dr. Demonic, who has the Trait "Orphan." There are many ways you could drop hints that your character is an orphan. You could be direct about it and, in a conversation with your co-workers, respond with fear or anxiety at the mention of parents. This may, however, be too obvious and could easily get you found out. A more subtle way to drop a hint might be to change details about your parents each time you mention them. As an example, you might mention that your mother was a politician in one conversation, and in another mention her "losing a wrench at work." You could get important dates mixed up, giving a slightly different answer each time you're asked. You might even get away with trying to change the subject every time parents are brought up.

Whatever you do, keep in mind that you must balance dropping hints with the need to conceal your identity. After each scene, pause the game and look over your character's card. Put a checkmark next to any Trait that you dropped a hint about, and make a note about what you did to drop that hint. These notes will become important later, as after the last scene you must go back and explain the hints you dropped to your fellow players.

If you are playing as the Civilian, you don't have to worry about keeping track of how many hints you've dropped. You may use any Trait that is listed on the reference sheet (so, any Trait in the game), and your main task is confusing the other players.

At the end of each scene, you get the opportunity to out other players. Go clockwise around the table and let everyone make one guess about the other players' secret identities if they want to. If you are outed, you must admit it. Once outed, you do not show up in workplace scenes (though you still participate in The Final Battle). Beware: if you guess wrong, you must erase all the checkmarks you accumulated during the scene.

### Ending the Workplace Scenes

Once all but 2 people are out of the game, the remaining players reveal their identities. At this point, go around the table clockwise and have everyone discuss which Traits they checkmarked. For each checkmark, everyone should explain how they dropped the corresponding hint (this is where the notes may become helpful, if you can't remember all of the hints you dropped). If there is any dispute on whether or not the dropping of a hint was "strong enough," you should vote on it, but in general, obvious effort to drop hints should be rewarded.

### The Final Battle

After everyone's secret identity is revealed, a grand final conflict happens. With their true selves exposed, the villains decide to attack the Workplace. Oh no! The heroes must oppose them, for the good of all. Meanwhile, the Civilian- a normal dude who just wants to do his 9-5- is caught in the middle.

During the Final Battle, the heroes and villains compete to gain advantage. They do this by doing what comes naturally to them: beating on each other and destroying property. Found below is the Advantage Track. You'll see that it has a center, labeled "Mid," and two sides with 12 spaces each. One side is labeled "Heroes," and the other "Villains."

In the battle you'll have access to a number of dice, corresponding to how many checkmarks you have, for each Ability. You'll go around the table, taking turns declaring actions, and spend dice on the Abilities you use. When you declare something like "I'm going to scorch him with my

eye laser Ability,” you must decide how many of your dice you want to spend. Your opponent will do the same and defend themselves (if they want to). You declare your actions before revealing how many dice you want to spend. Then, after everything is in place, you and your opponent reveal your dice at the same time. The shift in the dice (that is, the difference between the highest and lowest rolls) decides narratively how the actions turn out.

The Advantage marker starts in the center of the track, at “Mid.” As dice are rolled, it moves back and forth. The Heroes win if the marker is moved all the way to their side of the Track, while the Villains win if the marker is moved all the way to their side. If neither side can do this by the time all the dice are used, the Civilian wins.

In addition to the label “Mid,” there are a total of four other labels on the Track. These are known as Bonus markers (represented by a star when written on the track), and they must be placed by the players before movement on the Track starts. Each side, Heroes and Villains, gets access to 2 Bonus markers, which they may place on any square *on their side* of the Track. When someone lands on *any* Bonus marker, they may move forward (towards their goal) a number of spaces equal to the roll that landed them there if their action involved using some part of the environment (like, throwing a car or something), or if they can use a catch phrase, goofy pun, or something else that makes at least one of the opposing players laugh. Optionally, Mid may be counted as a Bonus marker after the first turn of the game.

The order of play goes something like this:

(pre-Battle): Place Bonus markers

1. A hero declares an action
2. A villain declares their response
3. Both parties reveal their dice and roll
4. Subtract the lower result from the higher one. The player with the higher result moves the marker that many spaces towards their side.
5. Repeat 1-4 until everyone is out of dice or one side has won

HEROES

VILLAINS

