

Balance of Tension

Balance of Tension is a two-player game set during the Cold War. One player controls the Soviet Union (SU) and the other the United States (US). The goal is to strengthen your own side without letting tensions rise to the point where your opponent presses the nuclear button.

The game lasts for 10 turns. Only one player

is active in each turn. A random player starts. Afterwards, players alternate.

At the start of each turn, increase the turn tracker by one. The active player then

chooses one of the three options:

Escalate, *Pass* or *De-escalate*.

A die is rolled and both players'

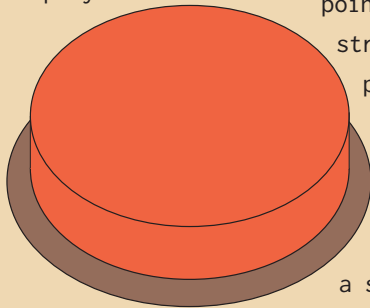
Tension and *Perceived Strength* tracks are adjusted according to the *Action Results Table*. Then, the other player

begins the next turn. The *Perceived Strength* tracks are

open knowledge – the player's *Tension* tracks must be kept secret. If either player's *Tension* track reaches position

15, they must flip the board, shout "Enough!" and press

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the red button. Both players lose immediately – many lives are lost.

When the turn track reaches the *End* position, the winner is determined:

Draw if both players have the same *perceived strength*. A player wins if

they have a strength advantage of 1–2 points. If either player is 3 or more

strength points ahead, the weaker player must press the red button

and both players lose.

For setup, cut out the tracks and markers within the

dashed lines and have

a six-sided die ready.

Initialise all tracks to position 0.



15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Perceived Strength (SU):

15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Track
Mark-
ers:

15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Tension (SU):

Turn Track:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	End
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Turn

Action Results Table:

Roll	Escalate				Pass				De-escalate				
	Tension		P. Strength		Tension		P. Strength		Tension		P. Strength		
	Own	Opponent	Own	Opponent	Own	Opponent	Own	Opponent	Own	Opponent	Own	Opponent	
1	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	
2	+0	+1	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	
3	+0	+2	+1	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	-1	+0	+0	
4	+1	+3	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	-1	-2	+0	+0
5	+2	+4	+2	+1	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	-2	-4	-1	+0
6	+2	+6	+3	+1	+1	+1	-1	+0	-3	-4	+1	+0	

Tension (US):

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

Track
Mark-
ers:

15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Perceived Strength (US):

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15