

Secret Hitler Notes and Tips

With thanks to Roxz80, ABC, and ÖÄÜ.

These notes are from are from my own experience playing Secret Hitler offline, on SecretHitler.io, and from watching high-ELO games there. I hope these notes give you some idea of what the more recent strategies for both teams are.

I assume that you know the rules of the game already. As a result, these notes are not comprehensive, but instead focus on strategies and considerations that are less well known to newer players.

To be a good fascist, you should be able to be a good liberal as well. So I'll write the points for liberals first, and add comments for fascists after each section.

That being said, *at the end of the day SH is just a game*, and the goal remains to have fun.

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Why people insist on a Meta

If you play with a group of people repeatedly, what tends to happen is that people tend to insist on a "Meta" (*i.e.* a set of conventions as to what should happen in a game: *who should you nominate as chancellor? who should you investigate as president?*) And SecretHitler.io is practically a definition of playing a game repeatedly. Metas might appear random or baseless to the newcomer, but when a game situation has been seen thousands of times, everybody knows what is generally the best move to make.

You should stick to the meta in your group, for the following reason.

When liberals deviate from the meta, *it's a crapshoot*. Occasionally you get lucky, and you improve your winning chances. Yet other times, you probably made things worse. But when fascists deviate from the meta, they'll pretend they deviated randomly, but *they **always** deviate in a way that helps fascists*.

So if you allow deviations, fascists can take advantage: liberals can't.

If you see someone deviating from the meta, they're either a lib, and the deviation could be good or bad, or they're a fascist, and the deviation is always bad. If you're more competitive, you assume that nothing is ever accidental, and they're hurting the liberal team, and they're not accidentally hurting the liberal team, etc., etc., and so they're probably a fascist.

The current meta is...

...whatever your group is used to playing.

SecretHitler.io meta and some older SH.io meta can be found on the Secret Hitler github. There is also a 7-Player meta on the last page of this guide.

Meta does tend to change every so often, when a slightly newer meta that helps liberals a bit more than normal is "discovered".

A word on the Hitler Zone, the Special Election, and Gunpoints.

“Secret Hitler is just Game of Special Elections”

Hitler Zone

The dynamics of the game change significantly when it enters the *Hitler Zone*, which is when three fascist policies have been enacted. At this point, it only takes a single **bad government** for liberals to have a fatal disadvantage. This makes the stakes of every vote in the Hitler Zone high, and at the end of this section we will introduce *the Golden Rule of Secret Hitler*. (Roxyz, 2019)

Liberals' top priority is to prevent a “**bad government**”. Any government that is not a bad government is a good government. These three things make a government bad:

- One, Hitler is elected chancellor.
- Two, any fascist is elected president.
- Three, any fascist is president *or* chancellor in the Veto Zone.

One seems much scarier than Two, but Two is *much more important* than One. (gw12346)

Focus on the presidency, and get the *most liberal guy in the presidency*. The chancellery will take care of itself, since if you made the correct choice for the presidency, you should be able to trust the president's judgment. (Roxyz) As a fascist, *if plausible*, you should insist that you or your cofascist is the most liberal (gw12346).

Firstly, unless you are *extremely* good, you probably can't tell who Hitler is. Hitler can be quiet or loud, he can be more of a leader, and he can be more of a follower. He can conflict early, and he can never conflict at all. As a liberal, **you just have to live with the risk of a Hitler election**. Unless you realise this, it is far too easy for a fascist to scare people off a liberal president by insinuating that the chancellor might be Hitler.

What's the problem with having a fascist elected president? First, a fascist president will attempt to elect Hitler chancellor if the situation allows it (Roxyz). Also, recall that any president in a government that plays the 4th or 5th red gets to shoot somebody.

The chances of drawing RRR or RRB are good enough for fascists that electing a fascist president in the Hitler Zone means a liberal will likely die providing that Hitler isn't elected.

In a 5p, 7p, or 9p game, shooting a liberal means that the liberals no longer have a majority, and fascists now have a 2nd game-winning strategy if they cannot or don't want to pretend to be liberals anymore: *fascists can top-deck to the end*.

- The odds of fascists winning via top-decking range from fifty-fifty (often when the score is 4 blues to 4 reds) to 75% (4-5) to 100% (there are less than 4 blues already enacted or the deck has no more blues).
- Taking some time to learn how to calculate topdeck odds can improve your play as either team by helping you make smart choices. (Roxyz)

The fascist strategy is split between trying to install any fascist as president and trying to elect Hitler as chancellor.

The liberal strategy is to stop Fascists from taking the Presidency.

Special Election

The Hitler Zone almost always begins with the fascist power that grants the special election. The special election, by logic and convention, is considered to belong to the table. The special election should only be made once a single liberal vote is confirmed for it. As soon as a group of people who can't *all* be fascist agree on a Special Election, it can be made. (Roxyz)

As a liberal, **you should always Special-Elect (or try to special-elect) the most liberal player to be president**. If you trust them enough to give them a potential bullet, then you should also trust that they won't deliberately nominate Hitler as chancellor. Trust their judgement here.

If, however, the president whose govt. played the 3rd red Special-Elects a president who claimed RRR or somebody in conflict, and the table „nein“s the SE'ed president, the SE is said to have been *thrown*. In fact, anyone who chooses somebody dodgy to SE is probably a fascist.

It used to be suggested that the most trusted player be made the *chancellor*, instead of the president, in order to avoid *heiling* (Tartanllama). This is no longer best practice (gw12346, Roxyz), since it is usually far better to avoid a slow and certain death via top-decking than to be paranoid of accidentally dying by electing Hitler chancellor.

You should make sure that the person you Special Elect will have enough votes to pass a govt. If four people in a 7-player game say they will never Ja a govt. with the person you want SE'd as president, then you need to persuade somebody to back your SE first. **Theoretically, you should always be able to convince at least one person to change their mind**, since if there are four people opposed to your SE, by the pigeonhole principle, at least one of them has to be a liberal.

“The Golden Rule”

A quick note about the notation used online: every player is numbered 1, 2, 3, ... in the order they would get the presidency. Each successfully elected govt. is notated with XY, with X president and Y chancellor. For example, 15 means the player in seat 1 was president, and the player in seat 5 was chancellor.

The so-called “Golden Rule” takes the fatalistic view that since it doesn't matter if SOMETHING BAD™ passes by one vote or by a 10-0 margin, as soon as you *know* a liberal is Ja'ing something, you should do. If the government is good (e.g. a liberal as president with the gun), then you might need every single liberal vote to pass it. If the government is bad, the reasoning goes, just one or two liberals voting with all the fascists will pass it *with or without your vote*. (gw12346)

Say that a 7p game enters the hitler zone, and let's suppose that there were two conflicts (15 and 26), and that 3 investigated 4 and said that 4 is liberal. 4 is therefore a confirmed liberal, because 4 can only be fascist if 3 is also fascist, which is impossible when 15 has a fascist and 26 has a fascist.

Let's say that 4 decides to pick 7 as their chancellor, and 3, who is a liberal and knows that 4 is a liberal from the investigation, believes that 7 is Hitler. 3 fails to change 4's mind, and 4 declares a “ja” vote.

3 must always vote Ja here, no matter how much they think 7 is Hitler.

If 7 *is* Hitler, then there is no benefit to 3 voting Nein; with 4's liberal vote, and every fascist voting Ja, the government passes without 3's vote.

If 7 *is not* Hitler, then 3 can join the fascists to shut down the government. In that event, the liberals lose out on a good government. Liberals can lose to a bad deck, now, even if they can assume that the 4 no votes contain all the fascists.

The foundation of the Golden Rule is that fascists will most likely be able to pass bad governments and shut down good governments if liberals vote differently from each other.

The only wiggle room associated with the Golden Rule of Secret Hitler is (1) in the situations where Hitler wouldn't be in government and might vote against the fascist interest and (2) in even number player games where liberals can tie the vote even with a single liberal defecting. Don't worry about the wiggle room. Follow the rule. If you think a government is bad and has a liberal voting for it, the only thing you can do is change their mind, otherwise you still vote with them. (example by Roxyz)

Honestly, if you're a liberal, your job is to stop situations where other liberals can get misled into thinking a fascist is a liberal, or that a liberal is fascist. In other words, if one liberal is hopelessly misled, then liberals have already lost.

As long as you are not in a conflict, you should go and ask for the SE (i.e. that you receive the special election). It never hurts to ask.

How to get the Special Election as a fascist:

- Play a lot of blues, or the 4th blue. Your co-fascists might be able to conflict with other SE candidates.
- Get investigated as "liberal" by a co-fascist after a "RRR" claim.
- Get investigated as "liberal" by a co-fascist after they take the investigation (i.e. they claim "RRB" after passing their chancellor RR). This works best if the deck is 5b or 6b.
- Be seat 4 (or otherwise not have touched the deck) in a low-blue-claimed deck.
- Play the 6th blue of a deck in a position a fascist would be able to easily claim RRR.

Gunpoint

If everybody agrees that a certain person is the most likely to be liberal, the table will probably let that person *gunpoint* someone else.

That is, the president and chancellor both get elected, and if the president draws RRB and gives his or her chancellor RB, either the chancellor plays the blue, or the

chancellor plays the red, at which point the president can execute him. (Obviously, if the president draws RBB he has to ability to simply force BB, and if the president draws RRR then well, it didn't matter who the president nominated.)

As long as you trust the president, you should „ja“ even if you are certain that his or her chancellor is fascist.

After a gunpoint is made and passes blue, if it's possible, normally the table topdecks in order to repeat that same government. A fascist gunpointed has an important choice to make: they either play blue the first time and red the second, or play red the first time. The better move depends on the odds of topdecking blue, and also the trust of the table.

The thing is, if that top-deck is fascist (which it usually is), there are now at least four reds on the board. Conflicting on the second time around brings the game to the Veto zone, when any fascist in government will usually win the game for fascists. There might also be suspicion in liberals' minds that the President is fascist but drew RBB the first time around. (Benjamin172)

You could get unpleasantly surprised by the deck, if the top-deck is blue! Even worse is if you play the 4th blue, and top-deck the 5th!

However, occasionally, the President doesn't need to TD to play again. He or she will probably gunpoint a second person instead of the term-limited you. **You should consider whether to play red on a case-by-case basis.** You also hope that the president draws RRR.

In general:

1. It is *worth* getting shot for **1 Blue** (you played Blue the 1st time under gunpoint) and **2 Reds** (your second time + a Red TD).
2. It is *not ideal* to get shot for **1 Red** (you play Red immediately).
3. It is *not worth* getting shot for **2 Blues** (you played Blue the 1st time + a Blue TD) and **1 Red**.
4. It is hard to say if there will be no TD.

Card Counting and what to play

In an ordinary game, there are **6 blues** and **11 reds** in the deck. After five govts. pass, the deck is reshuffled. (If you like, you can take 11 hearts and 6 spades, shuffle them, and see how many spades you tend to get in the first 15 cards.)

Roughly half the time, you will get **5 blues** in the first **15 cards / 5 govts**; another half, you will get **6 blues**. Very rarely, (about 11% of the time), you will get only **4 blues**. This is the natural deck, and this is what fascists work with.

As a liberal

Pay attention to the deck.

Always force (pass "BB") to your chancellor if you draw "RBB". If you give your chancellor "RB", you should be and will be under continued suspicion that you made a blue up, which makes it that harder for liberals to verify what you really drew. If you force, two people (you and your chancellor) can confirm that two blues have been seen.

If you give your chancellor a choice and they play the red instead, this is terrible, and any loss will be blamed on you. The normal price for a conflict is the loss of one blue. The price of gaining information through a conflict **through the loss of two blues is way too high**.

A common and generally accepted behaviour is to claim "RBB" when you drew "BBB" even as a liberal. There is no real consensus as to the extent to which this lie helps or hurts liberals.

As a fascist

Pay attention to the deck.

Work out when to gain trust, possibly at the cost of playing a blue, and when to play a red, which is actually your formal job.

Secret Hitler is a card game too, and as such there is an element of luck in this game. *If* there is a liberal-liberal government early on that is destined to never get RRRs, then fascists are potentially screwed *no matter what they play*.

If you are a Hitler who doesn't know lines, it's risky to play blues if everyone else is playing blues as well, because there is the possibility that your fascists are stuck in bad seats. It is *always* risky to play the 4th blue on choice, because the chance of a blue TD winning a game for liberals for free is always a bit too high for my liking.

Claiming RRB when you drew RBB increases trust on you and your chancellor while making any presidents who claimed RRR a bit more suspicious.

If you're Hitler and you receive RBB, you can discard a blue. If your chancellor plays the red, you cover your fascist by claiming RRR. If your chancellor plays the blue, however, you can claim to have drawn RRB.

If your government is fas-fas and the president draws RRB, it is possible for both players in the govt. to lie and claim RBB and BB respectively.

Hitler is not a princess who needs to avoid getting conflicted at any cost. If you are Hitler, you can conflict by claiming "RRR", taking the investigation power, and then lying about your investigation. A riskier way for Hitler to conflict is to just conflict blindly.

If you draw RRB, claiming "RRR", and then Special Elect a liberal, *be prepared to get shot if that liberal then gets a genuine RRR*. As a result, if Hitler wants to play the 3rd red in a 7–10 player game, he needs to conflict and claim "RRB" as president.

The reasoning is that drawing RRR-RRR after a reshuffle is unlikely enough that one of the two "RRR"s might be fake. Yes, occasionally two liberals both get genuine RRRs, and the second one shoots the first. That's simply bad luck.

Fascist-fascist conflicts

On the face of it, fascist-fascist conflicts seem like terrible ideas. You've just taken two fascists out of the game ("frozen" them), and the liberal-fascist ratio has gotten worse for fascists.

There are, however, reasons why you might engage in fascist-fascist conflicts, possibly out of desperation.

If a fas-fas government gets RRR early on (a *really bad* scenario), both members of the government will probably be frozen until it is time to gunpoint. The trouble is, you cannot guarantee that the game will still be going at that time, and even if it is, the SE will almost certainly be a liberal.

By conflicting, you can raise the possibility that either one of you gets gunpointed, and it isn't uncommon for Hitler to get gunpointed and win. If a fascist gets gunpointed, **play the Red if you get a choice**, for reasons outlined previously and additionally because the fascist who didn't get gunpointed now appears more liberal.

The second reason you might do a fascist-fascist conflict is *if* there is a liberal-liberal government early on that is destined to never get RRRs, then fascists are potentially screwed *no matter what they play*. At least a fascist-fascist conflict means one less blue gets played, right? You can **and should** make some noise if the deck and your lines decide that liberals are going to win anyway!

If a liberal-liberal government gets RRR very early on, a fascist-fascist government can afford to set up a fascist-fascist conflict for entertaining results: after all, you're going to get one fascist on each side.

Don't be afraid to blindly conflict as Hitler, Turn 1 or Turn 2. As Hitler, *so what*, if you blindly conflict and accidentally conflict your fascist? No big deal. If you could conflict your fascist, then your lines weren't great anyway. And it might have been that you were the only fascist in play, who needed to play reds right off the bat. After all this is a game in which occasionally you do need to YOLO.

Claimed decks

These are how many blues the first five governments claim to have seen, or the presidents claim to have collectively drawn.

7 blue deck

This is a deck that cannot occur naturally. Somebody has overclaimed (claimed to have drawn more blues than they really have), probably to provide some cover to a fascist teammate who can then claim "RRR". *Those presidents whose chancellors are unable to provide verification are most likely to be under suspicion*, like presidents who claim BBB, presidents who claim to have given a choice to their chancellors, or presidents who claim RRB and have conflicted with their chancellors.

6 blue deck

This is a very good deck for liberals. There will be little to no blame placed on any RRR presidents: they still won't look liberal, but they won't look fas either.

5 blue deck

This is a fair deck for liberals. You probably half-suspect that somebody *underclaimed* (drew "RBB" but only claimed "RRB"), but things are still

looking fine. You probably play people who played blues quite preferentially over anybody who's claimed RRR though.

4 blue deck

This is where things get serious. Since naturally occurring **4 blue** decks are so rare, you assume that any RRR president could have dropped a blue, or that a fascist has underclaimed. You do not nominate or play any president who claimed RRR. *If the game is "rebalanced", this is a deck that cannot occur naturally.*

3 blue deck

This is a deck that cannot occur naturally. The game is almost certainly in the Hitler Zone after five governments. Scream at every RRR president, interrogate every RRB president, and intimidate every RBB president. I assume that you, the reader, are yourself beyond reproach. There is *no way* on earth you even remotely trust any president or chancellor who was part of a RRR government.

Conflicts

If two people disagree on what just happened in a government, if two people accuse each other of being fascist, do not take sides. Liberals shouldn't know who to trust, and therefore fascists should pretend they don't know who to trust either.

Do not Ja any government with people in conflicts as either president or chancellor, except under gunpointing and possibly in the veto zone.

If a liberal-seeming president gunpoints your conflict in the Hitler Zone, can you Nein?

- No, you probably shouldn't:
 - what if the alternative is to top-deck? Who cares if your conflict plays a red, they'd get shot, right?
- Yes, you can: who cares?
 - If you're the swing vote and the only reason the government doesn't pass: congratulations, you've just found your liberal teammates. High five!
 - If, however, the government gets Neined *by a lot*, then there's an idiot liberal somewhere who isn't you. *Unless* everyone has agreed to TD, if the deck is supposedly very blue heavy.

Everything else said, however, as the game continues, based on voting and behaviour, you should probably have some inclination *but only occasionally* complete certainty.

Delayed Conflicts

Delayed Conflicts work for both teams. Honestly, they usually help fascists more than they do libs, so *delayed conflicts* and *fake conflicts* are never held for very long at higher ELO level games.

Fake Conflicts

A fake conflict is when somebody who draws RRR claims RRB initially, and only after some time claims RRR. The purported aim is to gather reactions and reads. If the President SE's or investigates the Chancellor, that is tacitly saying that the conflict was fake.

Counting the Number of Conflicts

Be aware of how many conflicts there are at any point. For example, in a 7p or 8p game, there are only three fascists, so if there are three conflicts, then you should have one or two confirmed/guaranteed liberals.

Bearing in mind the number of conflicts also helps you when you are mentally weighing up possible fascist teams.

If there are three two-person conflicts in a 7-player game, for example, the only person not in conflict is confirmed liberal. If there are two two-person conflicts in a 7-player game, and one of the three not in conflict investigates another of the three as liberal, then the person investigated is confirmed liberal.

Miscellaneous Tips

Peeking at the Deck [5/6p]

If the peek is claimed to be Blue-something-something, you should Top-deck. Either you get a free blue or the president who peeked is outed as fascist. *Having a confirmed outed fascist is a significant disadvantage in a 5 or 6 player game.*

If the peek is claimed to be Red-Blue-something, you can still consider Top-decking.

If the peek is claimed to be Red-Red-Blue, be aware that liberals can lose if the peek is actually RRR.

Peek Table for Fascists

Real Peek (“ <i>what you see</i> ”)	Safe claims	Risky claims	Really risky
BBB	BBR (td)		BRR (td), RRB, RBB
BBR	BRR (td)		
BRB	BRR (td)	RRB	
BRR		BRB (td)	RRR, BBR, BBB
RBB		RRB, RBR	
RBR		RRR	
RRB		RRR	RBR
RRR		RRB (td)	RBR

- A *safe* claim will never out you as fascist. That is not to mean that *safe* claims are always the right move.
 - Telling the claim truthfully is always safe.
- Claims marked with (td) mean you should, if nobody is already, push for a top-deck.
- All *risky* claims become *safe* if your teammate ends up being the next president after you.

Veto Zone

In the veto zone, unless a president draws RBB, **liberals need a govt. of a liberal president and a liberal chancellor** in order to not lose immediately. In particular, the orientation of the govt. does not matter, *i.e.* $XY = YX$.

As a result, Confirmed Not-Hitlers become less important, because the risk of a fascist victory through passing 6 fascist policies outweighs the risk of electing Hitler chancellor.

Lines

Lines are proposed *and possible* fascist teams. As an observer, you might hear someone claim that lines are "345" (that 3, 4, and 5, are the three fascists) or that lines are "14X" (that 1, 4, and somebody else are the fascists). As a liberal in seat three, you might hear someone say that lines are "345" but that is not a line to you, because *that's not possible*. As a vanilla fascist, you know the lines already.

As a liberal, figuring out who to trust and which is the real "line" can feel overwhelming, but bearing in mind that in a 7p game there are only ever 20 possible fascist configurations, a good liberal player will quickly discard many of the 20 possibilities.

One of the most common ways for liberals to figure out what the fascist team is when an inexperienced fascist team votes as a bloc. The further along the game is, the more likely it is that the voting blocs reflect the teams. That being said, in higher-elo games this is shakier to go with.

If you get a liberal RRR freezing two liberals, then fascists should usually win the game.

“Cucu”

Cucu is the term for when **Player X investigates Player Y** and claims that Player Y is liberal after an RRR. *This means that if Players X and Y ever conflict, then Player X is “outed” as fascist.*

In general, Player Y is fascist if and only if Players X and Y are *both* fascist. Note that Player Y isn't necessarily liberal even if X outs.

A government with Y as president and X as chancellor that isn't a RRR should give you a blue on the table, since X cannot contradict Y, as X has claimed to see that Y is liberal.

There is a stigma against doing a Cucu in the Hitler Zone, due to a fear of electing Hitler chancellor and Heiling. There is also a stigma against gunpointing a chancellor who was investigated and claimed to fascist. I am unsure whether *either* stigma is really deserved, but at least the second seems to be a remnant of early days in Secret Hitler when Hitler would never conflict at all, so anyone who chose to conflict was obviously not Hitler!

7-PLAYER SECRET HITLER LIST OF LINES

		Lines	Remarks for Fascists
I	Classical One fas in 15, one fas in 26, last fas in 347 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 is fas, 5 is lib 	123 124 127 136 146 167	The best lines for fascists. There is maximum freedom to play blues, claim RRR, and conflict.
II	Classical (continued...) One fas in 15, one fas in 26, last fas in 347 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 is fas, 1 is lib 	235 245 257 356 456 567	
III	“Doubled-up” 15 fasfas or 26 fasfas, last fas in 347	135 145 157 236 246 267	If the fascist president draws RRB, there is about a 54% chance that the lib-lib pair in 1256 will never draw RRR. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you play blues, you hope that the lib-lib pair will draw a RRR at some point or that the third fascist in 34 gets chosen as chancellor. If you play red off the bat, the president can claim “RRR” or claim “RRB”. You are hoping that the SE will gunpoint the fas-fas pair.
IV	One fas in 1256, two fas in 347 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fas in 12 	134 137 147 234 237 247	The vast majority of the time, the fascist in 1256 silent drops a blue and claim “RRR” or outright conflict <i>immediately</i> . Two fas in 347 only come into play after reds appear. Conflicting sooner rather than later might mean liblib govts play the 2nd and 3rd blues instead of the 3rd and 4rd blues, for example. If Hitler is in 1256, how aggressively does he try to play reds? From Hitler’s POV, there is a 40% chance that the 15 or 26 pair he is not in is liblib. There’s a 20% chance that he’s the only fascist in 1256. In practice, Hitler usually bases his choice on whether the other pair in 1256 has played blues or reds.
V	One fas in 1256, two fas in 347 (continued...) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fas in 56 	345 346 357 367 457 467	
VI	Three fas in 1256 or no fas in 1256	125 126 156 256 347	On 15/51 “RRR”, inv chancellor and claim Liberal, obtain se. Try overclaiming? On 26/62 “RRR”, inv chancellor and claim Liberal, obtain se. Difficult to win.

Notes:

- The split between Groups I and II and between IV and V is fairly arbitrary. The split is to emphasise the probabilities of getting the different fascist seat distributions (“lines”).
- The meta this table is based on is 15 26, with 51 following if 15 is blue, or 37 / 47 following if 15 is red. If 15 26 are both red, 34 47 follows. If 15 26 51 are all blue, 62 plays. Otherwise 14 (13) or 24 (23) follows from 51 or 62.