

*a lucky
lockdown
life sim*

Hikikomori (sampler)

*by Derek
Schranner*

Credits

Hikikomori: a lucky lockdown life sim (sampler)

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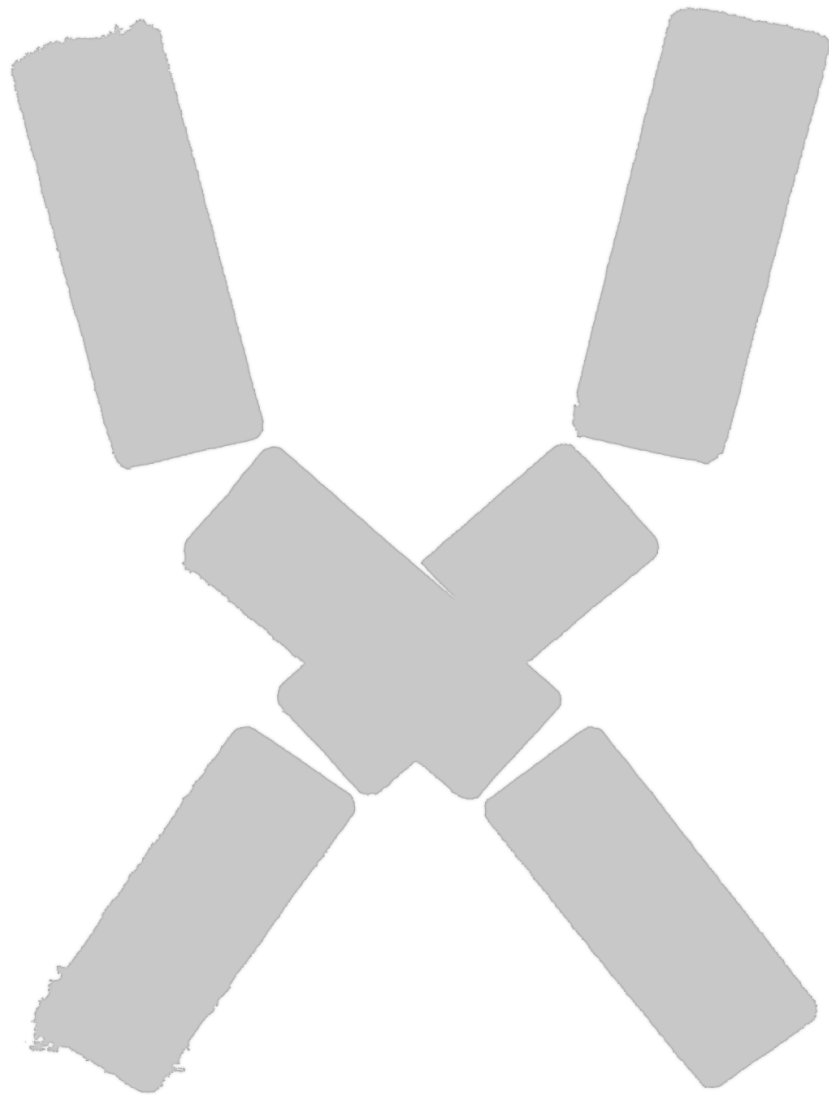
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For information and printable sheets, please visit LockdownLudonaut.com

*The her in hermit
speaks to me in Japanese.
Tell Tanya hello.*

*Dad, Emily, Myk:
They may not agree with us,
but they've indulged us.*

Hikikomori



Derek Schraner

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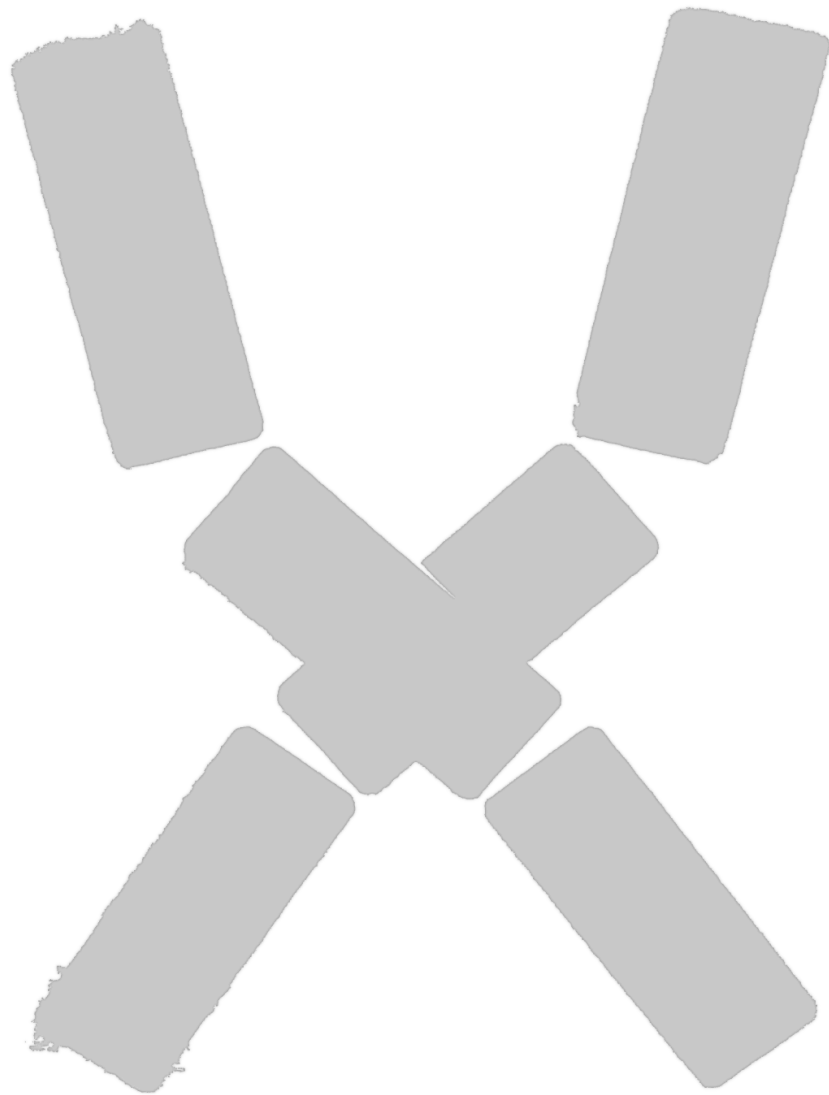
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Hikikomori



Derek Schraner

Introduction

From time to time, my father has recounted checking on me, in the basement of our family home. I was young, probably under ten, playing quietly with LEGO. Apparently my solitude concerned him.

Wasn't I lonely? No.

Wasn't I bored? No.

Didn't I want to go outside? Heck no. (I didn't say "Heck".)

Nearly five decades later, not much has changed. I currently live two doors down from that very same childhood home and, for most of my professional life, I have worked off-site, remotely. In my view, one of the few good things to come of the COVID pandemic has been a wider recognition of such practices. (We certainly learned precious little about health.)

On Saturday, March 14, 2020, our household locked down indefinitely. We have done so voluntarily, to protect a vulnerable member, but I also do so gladly, because I am still that little boy.

As if to gift us a more romantic label than "recluse" or "shut-in", we learned the new-to-us word "*hikikomori*". Applied to a person or their behaviour, it involves the avoidance of contact, or even withdrawal from society.¹

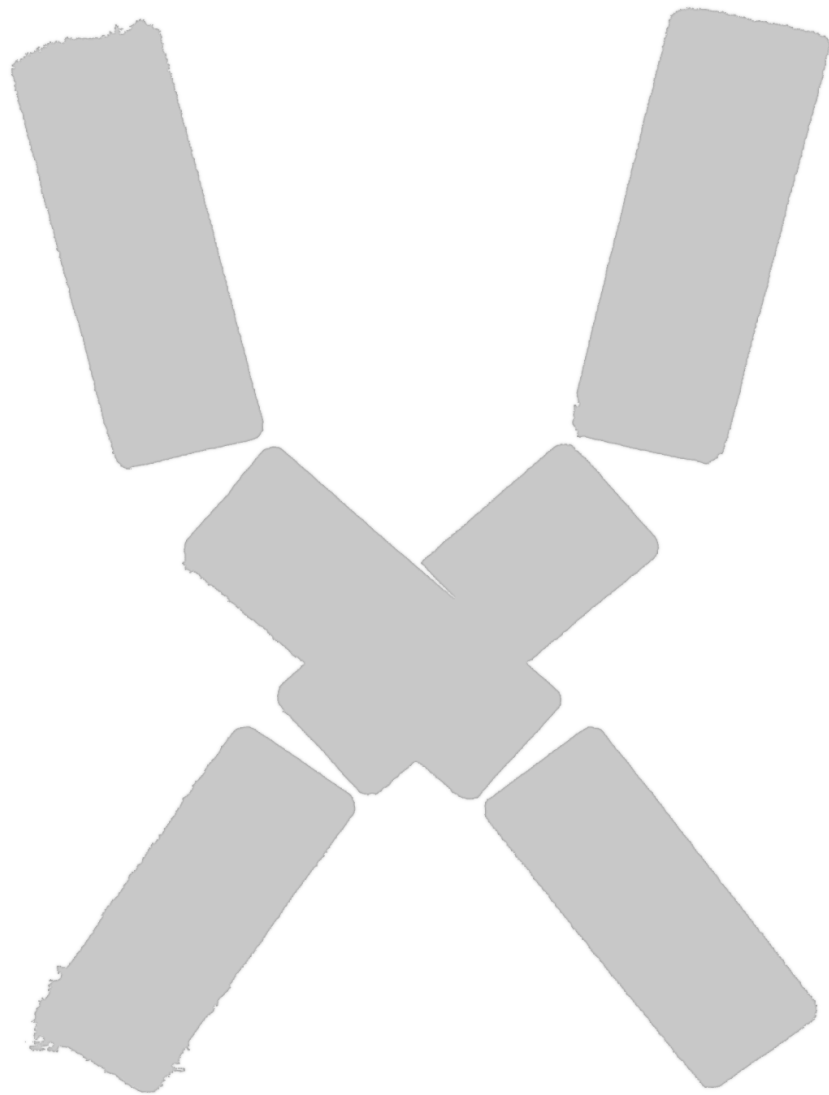
Now my waking hours are often alike, with little distinction between days on or days off. My daily schedule has gradually evolved into a comfortable routine so consistent that any change has deleterious effects.

I hope to share this "lucky lockdown life sim" as a meditation on balance. It combines addressing multiple – even conflicting – obligations with the seeking of fulfilment in routine. It's the "days in the life" of me, but gamified.

And does it need me to go outside? Hell no.

¹ Trust the Japanese to coin a perfect term with no English equivalent, as they have done with *fuubutsushi*, *ikigai*, *irusu*, *kaizen*, *karoshi*, *kintsugi*, *majime*, *shibui*, and *tsundoku*, among others.

Hikikomori



Derek Schraner

Overview

Hikikomori is the name of a campaign, an extended simulation of day-to-day life, and all its constituent **activities**. Each activity is, in turn, represented by a simple minigame called *Ino*. However, what distinguishes each activity is that *Ino*'s common rules will change slightly from time to time.

As such, before embarking on the main campaign, be sure to learn the basic rules of *Ino* in the following section. Once those rules are clear, then move on to the subsequent section, which explores the different ways that they may change. Navigating those **variations** is key to the *Hikikomori* experience.

When you play *Ino*, you will need something to write with, in order to keep notes and draw your own play area, usually in the form of a **3x3 grid**. You will also need at least one six-sided **die**, usually abbreviated as **1D6**. (Multiple **dice** are represented in other ways, such as **9D6** for nine six-sided dice.)

Hikikomori will need the same basic components but, because it involves numerous connected minigames, the sheets are shared in the Appendices, each associated with a specific time of **day**, **month**, or particular variations. The sheets may be used as reference, or copied, as you may need more than are provided here. Which specific sheet to use will be shared as appropriate.

You will be guided through the process by a "choose your own adventure" style structure, so there are no rules to learn upfront, aside from *Ino* and its variations. To be clear, however, the structure is not intended to present a narrative in the traditional sense of a hero's journey, or similar; it is a mechanism to guide you through an experience of day-to-day activities, and their variations. Some "flavour text" will share how game elements relate to my own experiences, but isn't strictly necessary in engaging with *Hikikomori*.

Different decisions – referred to as **approaches** – result in different rules variations and combinations. Complete a day's worth of *Ino* in a specific way, before moving on to the next day's approach. Over time you may find preferred combinations, leading you to choose branches for their particular approaches.

In truth, it is unlikely that any one approach will be "better" or "worse" than any other. Each is a different combination of factors you'll become familiar with, and may leverage depending on your strategy.

As in life, no single path remains consistently successful. One must constantly choose, try, and adapt. On some days, working carefully is more important than doing so quickly; on other days, the opposite may be true. As much as I'd like predictability and consistency, things don't always work that way...

In any case, there are eight activities (minigames) per **phase**, and two phases (**AM** and **PM**) per day; there are five days per week, an optional **skill** upgrade between weeks, four weeks per month, and three months in the campaign. As a result, with hundreds of such activities, you may wish to spread out your campaign, not unlike the actual experience of a lockdown routine.

Save up points to pay the **overhead**, at least 100 points per month. If you can't pay this **expense** for three months, then the game is lost. However, if you have earned at least 300 points by the end then, notwithstanding expenses, the remainder is your score. Just remember, you may have spent additional points along the way, for example, upgrading skills, to help you vary the rules.

Other optional **modes** (**Daydream** or **Nightmare**) are also available, to make the experience easier or more difficult (respectively), as well as "**New Game Plus**" (sometimes called **NG+**) to continue the challenge after three months. More information about them follows in the variations section.

Also note that any terms which first appear in **bold type** may be found in the Glossary section for later reference.

To begin, however, start small by learning the *Ino* minigame rules...

Ino, the Minigame

Components

To play the *Ino* minigame, you will need the following:

- Something to write with
 - Some may use paper and pencil. Others may prefer a more high tech solution, such as a tablet and stylus, or similar. Each has pros and cons. Use whatever you prefer but, keep in mind that, when you introduce variations, and follow the full *Hikikomori* campaign, you may need to erase and update your notes.
- 1D6 (one die, six-sided)
 - This component should be readily available in many common games. As with writing materials, you may prefer a digital tool, which can be found by searching app stores for a "dice simulator", "die roller", "random number generator", or just googling "1D6". Also keep in mind that the campaign and variations will increase the number of usable dice (all six-sided) to as many as nine (9D6).

General Description & Goal

As part of the initial **setup**, you will draw a 3x3 grid. Then, you will roll 1D6 to generate one random number (from 1 to 6) at a time. Choose any empty **space** in the grid to place the number. Repeat the rolling and placing process until all nine grid **squares** have been filled with a single number each. (It's fine that the same number will appear multiple times.)

When setup is complete, you will begin **selection**, rolling 1D6 for as many times as there are distinct values in the grid. Each time you roll, circle all placed numbers which match the latest roll result. Once a number is already circled, you need not circle it again.

The goal of the basic *Ino* minigame is to form at least one straight **line** connecting any three circled numbers, whether diagonal, horizontal, or vertical. If you manage to form at least one such line, you win.

Basic Rules (Steps)

- A. Begin setup by preparing a 3x3 grid of nine spaces (blank squares); sketch a play area, as in a game of tic-tac-toe, or similar.
- B. Continue by rolling 1D6 (one six-sided die), or otherwise generating a random number from 1 to 6.
- C. Place the result rolled in any single space of your choice.
- D. Repeat Steps B and C until all nine spaces have been filled with one number each. (Some numbers will be repeated.)
- E. End the setup process by counting the number of distinct values placed.
 - An example: if you roll at least one of each number, then the count would be six.
 - Another example: if you roll nine of the same number, then note a count of one.
- F. Continue with the selection process by rolling 1D6.
- G. Deduct one from the current count (originally noted in Step E).
- H. Does the result rolled in Step F match the value of any numbers placed in the setup process?
 - If so, then continue to Step I.
 - If not, then go directly to Step K.
- I. Circle all matching numbers on the grid (possibly as many as nine at once) and continue to Step J.

- J. Do any of the circles form at least one straight line of three circles, whether vertically, horizontally, and/or diagonally?
- If not, then continue to Step K.
 - If so, then go directly to Step L.
- K. Has the remaining roll count (Steps E and G) been reduced to zero?
- If so, then continue to Step L.
 - If not, then go back to Step F.
- L. Gameplay ends when all allotted rolls have been used (Step K) or the victory conditions have been satisfied (Step J). If you were able to form at least one valid **pattern**, then you win.

Example

1. For the setup process, I sketch a new 3x3 grid. (See Basic Rules, Step A.)
2. I roll 1D6 and get a 6, which I place in the centre space. (Steps B, C)
3. I continue rolling eight more times, getting 2, 5, 5, 1, 2, 1, 5, and 1, which I arrange in a clockwise order around the outer ring of the grid, from the "one o'clock" location (in the top-right) to the "twelve o'clock" location (in the top-middle). (Step D)
4. I count four distinct values: 1 (three 1s), 2 (two 2s), 5 (three 5s), and 6 (one 6). This will allow me up to four rolls during the selection process. (Steps E, G, L)
5. I use my first of four selection rolls; I roll 1D6 and get a 3. (Step F)
6. The result rolled does not match any of the placed numbers, so I do not circle any of them. (Step H)
7. I still have three rolls remaining. (Step K)
8. I roll 1D6 again and get a 2. It matches two placed numbers, in the top-right and bottom-left corners, so I circle them both. (Steps F, H, I)

9. The circles do not form a valid pattern (a complete line of three circles), but I still have two rolls remaining. (Steps J, K)
10. I roll 1D6 again and get a 5. It matches three placed numbers, in the top-left and bottom-right corners, as well as the right-middle square. I circle all three of them. (Steps F, H, I)
11. A valid pattern is formed along the right edge of the grid: by the top-right 2, the right-middle 5, and the bottom-right 5. Even though I still have one roll remaining, I stop, having already won. (Steps J, K, L)

⑤	1	②	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3
1	6	⑤	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5
②	1	⑤	<input type="checkbox"/> -

Also included in *Hikikomori*...

Thank you for trying the *Ino* minigame! The sampler ends here, but the full version of *Hikikomori* is available for sale now, and includes the following:

- **From *Ino* to *Hikikomori***
 - Evolve the basic game, with variations and their combinations: patterns, positions, skills, mitigation, scoring, and other modes... building to the ultimate campaign.
- ***Hikikomori*, the Campaign**
 - Hundreds of sections supply an entire three-month experience, and even beyond, if you reach the New Game Plus mode.
- **Eighty peeks inside**
 - Excerpts from my recent ramblings, surveying a lockdown life.
- **Movies & Music for a Lockdown Ludonaut**
 - An audio/visual journey through the world of *Hikikomori*

For information, please visit LockdownLudonaut.com

About the Author

In 1979, Derek Schraner didn't know the word "*hikikomori*" yet, but he did know he didn't want to go outside. He was happier making his own fun, like a styrofoam spaceship, a crankable scroll-based television, or games cobbled together from whatever he could find. So, not much has changed.

Between then and now, he has obtained undergraduate degrees in Cinema Studies, English and Philosophy from the University of Toronto, as well as Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Media Production from Ryerson University.

He has been a writer, producer, instructor and, circumstances permitting, a musician, a blogger and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a gamer.

