

Game Instructions

Thank you for purchasing the large group game format of “Pop Music, Murder and Mayhem!” by Danny Hamilton. We hope you find this mystery unique and fun.

Hosting a large group murder mystery is time consuming, but with ample preparation and a good cast it is really quite simple and great fun!

In large group games it is impossible to give everyone a part, instead the mystery involves “cast members” who are fully in the know and act out the mystery, and the guests act as detectives trying to solve the murder.

As a rough guide this mystery takes approximately 2-3 hours to complete.

Brief introduction to the format of this game.

During the evening you will have your nominated cast members, who do not necessarily know who the killer is, and the rest of your guests will take the role of detectives working to solve the case.

During the evening questions are provided on paper to the guests each round and can be either shouted out to the cast who can be seated at different tables with the guests, or standing at the front near the inspector.

During the game your guests will listen to five short sets of dialogue and pose questions to each member of cast. There are five rounds which can be evenly spread throughout the night or, if preferred, rounds 1, 2, and 3 can be bunched together into one large round – however care must be taken to ensure the questions are revealed in round order to allow progression of storylines.

At the end of the final round the guests are given time to decide who is the murderer, and once the guests have decided who did it, how and why (i.e. the murderer, means and motive) they will complete the answer sheet and hand it in.

The mystery closes when the solution is provided. Expect the mystery to take around 2-3 hours to complete when conducted in separate rounds.

Guidelines for running the event.

The mystery is split into 5 “acts”:

- Introductory Round: Introductions by the cast and Deputy Sheriff Elvish,
- Rounds 1, 2 and 3: questions and answers,
- Concluding Statements and solution: conclusions by the cast and solution by Deputy Sheriff Elvish.

The timing for these “acts” does not need to be precise, you may even want to bunch rounds 1, 2 and 3 together; however it is critical that the guests are given a

reasonable amount of time to question all the cast in rounds 1, 2, and 3 before they are asked to make a decision as to who the murderer is and the mystery is concluded.

Deputy Sheriff Elvish acts as facilitator during the event and if you are hosting this game yourself and want everyone else to take part – then you do not need to reveal the solution to the cast in advance of the night.

If you plan to run the mystery with all five rounds then suggested format is as follows:

Introductory Round:

When all the guests have arrived give them time to read their guest instructions before you begin.

The game begins when Deputy Sheriff Elvish delivers his opening speech. Deputy Sheriff Elvish’s speech announces the murder and sets the scene. After this the cast should speak their introductory dialogue in the order given in their cast booklets.

Round 1: If you wish to use the shared dialogue, then the cast should speak round 1’s dialogue before the questioning begins.

Deputy Sheriff Elvish should now read out the instructions contained within his character booklet.

Each table / team is provided with a selection of questions for each round, and the guests take it in turn to ask cast their questions with all guests listening to both the questions asked and the answers given. This works best if cast are sat at tables with the guests, however you could also have the cast sat on a table by themselves, visible to all participants.

Once everyone has finished Deputy Sheriff Elvish should deliver his second speech which introduces the next round.

Round 2 Format as above but using Round 2 dialogue, questions and answers and inspector speech.

Round 3 Format as above but using Round 3 dialogue, questions and answers and inspector speech.

Concluding Statements and Solution:

Cast members should now speak their concluding statements. Once they have done so each team should be encouraged to guess who committed the murder.

Once a team thinks they have the solution they should fill in the answer sheet and hand this back in, either to a drop box, or to some nominated person. It is up to the host to decide if these answer sheets will be used to give out prizes, and how this will be decided, e.g. first correct solution handed in, or quickest time, etc.

As an alternative you may simply want the person playing Deputy Sheriff Elvish to ask for answers from each team verbally before providing the solution.

Once everyone has finished Deputy Sheriff Elvish should deliver his solution speech which will reveal the real murderer.

If you are conducting the mystery as part of a three course meal the rounds should be arranged as follows:

Introductory Round: Should occur once all guests have assembled in their teams.

Round 1: Before, during or after the starter

Round 2: Before, during or after the main course

Round 3: Before, during or after the pudding

Concluding Statements and Solution: During or after tea/coffee and mints.

The end of act 5 concludes the Murder Mystery.

Preparations

As mentioned before, this mystery requires a lot of advance preparation. However all the extra effort you put into running this event will be more than worth the effort.

Time, Location and event format

Before you do anything else try and fix a date for the event. Everyone involved in the preparation needs a date to work towards, and given what is involved, please set a date well in advance to give you ample time.

With regards to location, basically your only deciding factor is that you need one large room capable of holding all your guests. In order to solve the mystery the guests will be visiting cast members to find out answers to clues. It is wise therefore to ensure when setting the mystery up, that you have ample space for guests to walk around. You may want to have a member of cast sit at a table with the guests during the mystery. This helps with ambience.

If this mystery is conducted at a very large event do think about sound. You may want to give the cast microphones so that their spoken parts are easily heard by all attending.

Decide on the format of your event. Will you have food and drink? Or is it part of a team building exercise? Is it a main event, to be acted out at one time, or do you want it spread over a longer period to be concluded at the end of a conference etc?

Consider how you are inviting your guests. Will it be invitation only, or open house? Do you have enough space for them all to arrive at once, or will you stagger arrival times? Will it be ticket only basis, e.g. for a fundraiser?

And finally dead body or no dead body? Sometimes it is a nice touch to either lay out a crime scene with chalk outline, or cart a “dead” body through the venue at the start before the Deputy Sheriff Elvish makes his first speech. A word of caution however – don’t leave a real person playing dead throughout the event. One, it is very boring for the person involved, and two, it is distracting for the guests as they nearly always try to make them move / laugh etc.

Preparation for Mystery:

Questions for the guests:

Print out the entire file.

Cut up the questions, taking care to keep them in a pile for their correct rounds.

When distributing the questions on the night try to make sure the questions do not pertain to the cast member sat at the table, and also that each table has questions for as many different cast members as possible during the evening.

Cast:

Firstly select your cast members. If you plan on running this on a grand scale, it may also be worth selecting understudies, in case of accident or illness.

Cast can take part with the guests when it comes to solving the murder, as unless they read the solution script contained in the Inspector’s booklet, as they won’t know who did it.

Give each cast member their character booklet which contains their instructions, background history, scripted dialogue, introductory and concluding statements and the answers to questions they will be asked.

No rehearsal time is needed as cast can simply read from their booklets, however, you may prefer to put in the additional time required to be able to recite information without the booklet as this will improve presentation for the guests.

Costumes:

Find costumes for the cast appropriate to the event. You may also want to secure costumes for any extras you need on the night, e.g. waiters, waitresses, or other assistants who can mingle and point guests in the right direction when they get stuck. Any extras will add to the ambience, but make sure the guests know they aren't part of the mystery.

Dressing up the Venue:

Do your best to dress up all the rooms you plan on using for the event. Again this can be simple, or you can go all out. And again, the more effort you make, the more enjoyable the mystery will be for the guests. As a general point, do watch out for anachronisms within the rooms, (things that are out of place e.g. a clock for a mediaeval mystery, or something post 1920's for a 1920's event.) See ***Making the most of your theme*** for specific suggestions.

Music

Do think about music. Music can do a lot to add ambience. Obviously you can just use a CD, but if you are producing this mystery on a large scale and have sufficient funds and space for a large gathering then do consider a band. See ***Making the most of your theme*** for specific suggestions.

Guest instructions and answer sheets

Make sure you have ample copies available of the guest instructions and answer sheet. Depending on the size of the tables it might be useful to have two or more instruction sheets per table as well as notebooks/paper and pencils/pens to allow guests to keep track of information. However there should only be one answer sheet provided per team (though you might want to keep a few spares handy in case of spillages during the night!)

On the day:

Your last minute checklist for the mystery is as follows:

- Cast should get into costume and ensure they either know their parts, or have their booklets to hand.
- Questions for the guests for rounds 1, 2, and 3 stored in different piles for the different rounds.
- Decorate the room appropriately.
- Make sure you have enough guest handouts and answer sheets for each table.
- If you are serving refreshments then get these all ready.
- Make sure all the cast are in the right place.
- Start the music
- Let the fun begin!

Cast Guidelines:

It is important that cast members familiarise themselves with the information provided in their booklets.

Cast can take part with the guests when it comes to solving the murder, as unless they read the solution script contained in the Inspector's booklet, they won't know who did it.

However, if the cast want to remain "cast" and interact in more depth with the guests then they may want to read the solution speech contained in Deputy Sheriff Elvish's character booklet prior to the event to ensure they do not inadvertently give away the murderer!

The character booklets contain:

- A small amount of background information to help them act their part.
- Scripted dialogue, and introductory and concluding statements
- Answers they must give to questions in rounds 1, 2 and 3

Cast are not required to memorize the information word for word, but they should be familiar with the sequence of events and what is expected of them – and they should also be prepared to paraphrase their responses as these are currently written as 2nd person statements to allow them to improvise.

Cast are encouraged to make the most of their parts, and any ad lib work is encouraged, providing they don't inadvertently give away the murderer, or fail to give away the information they should be providing in their answers.

Cast can be selected on the evening, as no prior rehearsal is necessary.

Your job as host

As host it is your job to make sure everyone is comfortable with what they are being asked to do, and that the event passes off without a hitch. Remember the five P's: Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance. Make sure you have adequate time to prepare for the event, that all cast are happy with their scripts and that anything else you plan to run at the same time as the mystery e.g. refreshments, has been adequately thought through.

Although the guests will have been given their instructions, sometimes these are simply not enough, especially if they are nervous of their role in the mystery. As host it will be your job to make sure they understand what is expected of them. During the event you might want to ensure that, either the person playing Deputy Sheriff Elvish is available to move around the tables to ensure each team understands their instructions, or that you have a few extra "cast" who can perform this role. The cast should also be prepared to point people in the right direction.

If you have decided to award prizes to the winning and losing teams, think about how you will do this if more than one team reaches the right answer, or if no teams get the solution. Will you award on closest match? Or will you have a deciding question up your sleeve?

Running a large group murder mystery is really is not as difficult to do as you might think, and if you get stuck why not email Red Herring Games? We're here to help after all!

Finally and most importantly: Have fun!