

shot in the dark mysteries

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host guide

welcome to your murder mystery package

First of all, I would like to say thank you for choosing an interactive Mingle Mystery from Shot In The Dark Mysteries.

Please take a moment to read Shot In The Dark Mysteries' official disclaimer. Shot In The Dark Mysteries does not guarantee results and will not be held in any way accountable for any personal injury, death and/or loss to the players, Hosts or observers. This mystery party and the materials herein are solely for entertainment purposes and cannot be reproduced or reused after one play without the express consent of Shot In The Dark Mysteries. The characters and story are fictional. Any similarity to actual living or dead people or events is purely coincidental.

Whew! Now that we have that over with, here are a few suggestions for making your party a roaring success.

[Play Site](#)



host guide

thank you for being a host!

I think that party hosting is a rare art - something that many people don't do anymore. As our social networks grow, it seems our opportunities to gather friends and loved ones together face-to-face are becoming fewer and fewer.

This fact became startlingly obvious to me recently, when I emailed a "friend" in a different city to ask her how she was and what was new. She replied with, "Hi Leigh! Great to hear from you! To know what's new with me, just check my Facebook, it's all current." Ouch!

Now more than ever it's so important to pull together people - real people - face-to-face to create memories that will get us through the months we don't see one another.

You may be using your mystery for a company event, fundraiser, a party in your home or just an excuse to bring together family or friends. Whatever the reason for your party, know that we have designed all of your mystery materials with YOU, the host, in mind. Pulling people together for some fun is noble, and I think you're totally rad for doing it.

Play Site



host guide

you can participate too

So, to answer the # 1 frequently asked question we receive: Yes, you as the host can play too - in fact, we want you to take a character and have fun solving the mystery with everyone else. You deserve it!

All of your materials are designed so that you don't have to read through the mystery and risk "spoilers". Your Host Materials are in files completely separate from everything else so you don't get confused and accidentally open something you shouldn't.

"The Big Reveal" solution is contained in a separate file. If your mystery came with Audio Files, you will find both Audio Files and the transcript (more on that later) in well-marked files so you can avoid them. Each Suspect receives their own individual Suspect Guide with their character, clues and instructions on how to be a Suspect. Simply attach them to an email and send them to the appropriate guest! You don't even have to open the files.

Not sure which guest to assign to which role? Our exclusive Character Complexity Rating (found for each character in the Suspect List in your Host Materials folder) will tell you how complicated each role is, so you can better assign roles for your wallflowers, curmudgeons, born actors and everyone in between.

Of course, if you don't want to participate in your mystery, that's fine too. Read through anything you want! Some hosts prefer to know what is going to unfold before the party, and that's cool - it's all part of your unique hosting style.

Play Site



host guide

the host checklist

Your Host Materials include a Host Checklist that you can use if you like to help you get organized before your party, and before the mystery begins. Print off a copy and check off the tasks as you complete them.

we are here if you need help

If you have any questions prior to the event, please send us an email on our help desk at hello@shotinthedarkmysteries.com. We are here to help both you and your guests. We often have guests message us to get clarification or help when they are trying to keep the mystery a surprise for their host.

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host guide

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about your mystery

Your mystery is classified as an interactive “Mingle” mystery, perfect for getting your guests interacting! It’s up to the guests to question the Suspects, identify holes in their story and determine who had the motive, means and opportunity to commit murder!

Here are the items you have, and will need, for the mystery:

- Suspect Guides – to be delivered to each Suspect before the date of the party, or as soon as they arrive on the day of the event, although we do recommend sending them in advance. The more time your guests have to get familiar with their material and the instructions, the better.
- Host Guide – you're reading it right now!
- Host Checklist
- Announcement of Murder
- The Big Reveal – This reveals the killer
- Invitations
- Accusation Forms
- Name Tags
- Suspect List
- Floor Plans
- Notes Pages with Starter Questions (For your guests to use while sleuthing)



host guide

printing your mystery materials

All of your mystery materials have been custom designed to be visually pleasing to you and your guests, but also designed to keep printing to a minimum. By emailing your Suspects their information, you can considerably cut down on the amount of printing you have to do, which we encourage, because everyone at SHOT is a proud tree-hugging, hippie-type.

things to print

Name Tags

Accusation Forms (1 for each guest attending)

Notes Pages (At least 1 for each guest attending)

Host Checklist

Optional Printing

Announcement of Murder (Only print if you're not using the audio files)

The Big Reveal (Only print if you're not using the audio files)

Suspect Guides (We strongly recommend emailing each Suspect their information pre-party. Please see "How To Use The Suspect Guides" for more options)

Suspect List for Introductions

Any bonus materials for your particular mystery theme (if your mystery has bonus materials, you will have a "Bonus Materials" document in your Host Materials folder)

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So, depending on what you choose to print and how many people will be attending, the number of pages you will need to print will be between 10 and 100.

It's best to have the materials printed at a printer or local printing shop. This will ensure quality and save you ink and wear and tear on your own printer. We recommend colour printing on a high quality stock, but what paper and ink you decide to use for your mystery materials is entirely up to you.

what to expect at your mystery party

This is an overview of how your mystery is designed, but remember that all of Shot In The Dark Mysteries' packages are designed to be flexible, so that you can integrate them into your vision for your party.

Guests/ Participants arrive Mingling Announcement of Murder Guests/ Participants interact to gather clues from Suspects for the predetermined amount of time (The amount of time you allow is up to you, and unique to your event).

Sleuths cast accusations (encourage dialog about accusations, their reasons for accusing the Suspect they chose and their feelings about the motives. For a smaller group, each person can have a moment to sling their accusation. For a larger group, you may want to ask a few people for their accusation and reasons).

The culprit is revealed (The Big Reveal).

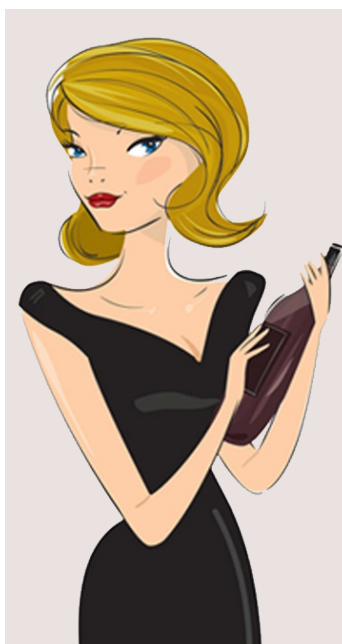
Play Site



the killer doesn't know they are the killer

Some mysteries inform the guilty party that they are guilty. We don't do this for two reasons. First, not knowing allows all Suspects to be completely honest with the information they receive. Second, it allows all players to piece together the mystery equally. With one Suspect not investigating, it quickly becomes clear to the other players who the culprit is and your mystery ends up ruined. In our experience, your mystery is more successful when the culprit isn't aware they are the culprit.

host
guide



HOST TIP

REMIND YOUR GUESTS TO BRING READING GLASSES IF THEY WEAR THEM SO THEY CAN REFER TO THEIR SUSPECT GUIDES AND SEE WHAT THEY HAVE WRITTEN ON THEIR NOTES PAGES.

Play Site



host guide

you can have unlimited participants

In the case where you have more guests than Suspects, don't worry! This is an interactive "Mingle Mystery", which means that it can be played by an unlimited number of guests without anyone being left out. As long as you have enough people at your party to play Suspects, the number of people "investigating" (asking the Suspects questions to piece together the mystery) is unlimited!

Investigators can work together in teams as well. You could pair up your extra guests with a Suspect so they can be privy to the Hide information and also interrogate Suspects to piece together the mystery.

If you have a few extra guests that you want to be as involved in the mystery as the Suspects, consider having them read the Announcement of Murder and/or the Big Reveal at the end.

optional witness packs

Each mystery has an Optional Witness Expansion Pack available. Depending on whether your mystery is Co-Ed or All Female, you will either have two optional females or one female and one male witness. These can be purchased at a different time than when you purchase your mystery package, so if you find out at the last minute one or two people will be attending, or if you have one or two people who can't quite commit but want to be involved if they can make it, the Optional Witness Pack is for you. We cap the number of Optional Witness per mystery at two in order to ensure the quality of your mystery experience, however if you're in a pickle, don't hesitate to contact us – we are happy to help if we can!

Play Site

Buy Witness Pack



host guide

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how to use the invitations

Your Host Materials folder contains two files for invitations: one for printing, designed to go on standard invitationsized stationary, and one digital invitation file. If using the print invitations, simply print them on whatever paper you prefer, fill in the information about your party and give them to your guests! The digital invitations are designed to be filled in on a computer, saved and then emailed to your guests digitally. You will need Adobe Acrobat to work with the digital invitations. Here are the steps to use the digital invitations for your mystery!

Open in Adobe Acrobat Fill in the forms with the information, eg, Date and Time, Place etc.

Click FILE in the top left hand menu, Click SAVE AS and name it name it anything original. When you open this original file, you will see that your content is filled out. You can now attach this PDF to an email and send it to your guests and start gathering your RSVPs!

how to use the suspect list and character complexity ratings

Your Host Materials folder contains a file called “Suspect List”. Below each Suspect is a “Character Complexity Rating”, which gives each character a 3, 4 or 5 rating. These are designed to help you assign characters to your guests based on how “complex” the role is, with 5 being more complicated and three being less complicated. You might assign a 3 role to someone who is shy, apprehensive or worried they might do something to jeopardize the mystery (which is impossible, so don't worry about that). A '5' rated role could go to someone who loves the spotlight, is outgoing or is really excited about your mystery party. Use the 4 roles for everyone in between. Remember, these are only guidelines. A '5' role is not difficult, there is just more information than a 4 or a 3 character.

Many guests and hosts often think that because a character is a 5, they are probably the killer, but this is rarely the case. A “3” role is just as likely to be the killer as a 4 or 5 role.



host guide

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how to use the suspect guides

Suspect Guides are provided in your mystery materials in a separate file for each role. These guides describe the character, their hidden motives, what information they know that can be shared with everyone else and instructions for how to play. The Guides are formatted in individual files so you can easily send the .pdf file to each guest playing a character. Even better, if you, as the host, would like to participate, you don't have to worry about handling the clues and potentially spoiling the mystery for yourself.

Each person playing a Suspect will receive a Suspect Guide. These guides tell each Suspect how to play and what to expect... so that you don't have to!

We strongly recommend emailing each Suspect (guest playing a role) their Suspect Guide to cut down on printing. Sending them their information ahead of time allows them to get familiar with their information. Some Suspects have a complicated back story, and most guests find it helpful to have time to let all of the information sink in, but ultimately, what you do for your party is entirely up to you. Some hosts like to email the Suspect Guides and then print the vital information (found in the last few pages of the Suspect Guide) for their guests to refer to at the party. Others allow their Suspects to print their own information, and still others print everything to give to the Suspects at the party. Find the option that fits your party, your guests and your hosting style and go with it!

how to email the suspect guides

It's easy to email the Suspect Guides to your guests. Simply attach the Suspect Guides to an email to each guest and click "send". We use a .pdf format because most computers already have a .pdf reader program, like Adobe Acrobat, making it easier for your guests to use their Suspect guides.



host guide

how to use the clues (found inside the suspect guides)

There are two types of information the Suspects will receive. The first is “Hide” information. This type of information is to be kept secret as much as possible, and not offered freely. If the Suspect is asked directly about the hide information however, they must answer truthfully.

The other type of information is called “Share” information. Share information **MUST** be shared with others, and includes things like alibis and suspicious things they saw others doing around the time of the murder. The Share information is what the Suspects will use to direct suspicion away from themselves and toward the other Suspects.

All clues are directed at the player (for example, “you saw the culprit running down a dark hallway”). For the sake of getting everyone into the mystery, share clues should be transferred into the first person (for example, “I saw the culprit running down a dark hallway”) and into the player’s own words.

how to use the name tags

Your mystery package includes Name Tags. They are standard name tag size and will fit inside plastic name tag holders and most name tag stationary. This way you can print the name tags and use them as is, with standard name tag holders or print them on sticker name tags that can be purchased at any stationary store. Each Suspect has a name tag with their Suspect name. You are also provided an extra sheet of name tags for additional guests with eight name tags per page. Simply print off as many copies of the blank name tags page in the “Name tags” file as you need for your guests.

Play Site



host guide

Play Site

how to use the audio files

Your mystery comes with audio files. These audio files are optional, and we have also provided the transcripts of these audio files (the "Announcement of Murder" or "Announcement of Theft" and "The Big Reveal"), which can be used in the case where you don't have access to an audio system.

how to use the notes pages

Before you begin, distribute a "Notes" page to each participant. You may have noticed that you have two versions of the Notes pages in your Host Materials. Both versions provide participants the sample questions from the Announcement of Murder to get them started with their investigations, but the first version provides a "Motive-Means-Opportunity" chart to allow sleuths to write the names of each Suspect in the appropriate box as they investigate. So, which one should you provide your guests? That depends on whether you want your mystery to be "Beginner" (The "Beginner Notes Pages") or "Intermediate" (The "Intermediate Notes Pages"). Pick the one you want and then print off one for each participant.



HOST TIP

BE SURE TO PROVIDE ENOUGH PENS AS YOU WILL HAVE GUESTS, AND THAT YOUR PENS ARE WORKING SO THAT YOUR GUESTS CAN FOCUS ON CHASING DOWN THE CLUES TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY INSTEAD OF SEARCHING FOR A WRITING INSTRUMENT!



host guide

how to use the floor plan

Your Host Materials folder in your mystery kit may contain a Floor Plan. This is designed to help each investigator determine where the Suspects were around the time of the murder as they investigate. Print these with your materials so that each guest can have one as they investigate. If you are having additional guests who aren't playing a Suspect, ensure you include them in the number of pages to print to get them engaged in their investigation in a unique and unforgettable way! The Floor Plan is also located on the PLAY! Site (see below) so your guests can view it before the party!

the play site

The PLAY! Site is a place you can send your guests preparty to get information about the mystery you've chosen. Here they can view the trailer, see the Suspect List, find out what to expect and more. The PLAY! Resources are always being expanded, and will vary from mystery to mystery (for example, some mysteries don't require costumes, and are classified as "Costume Casual", so they won't have costume ideas, whereas others may have resources like "1920's Slang". The PLAY! Site is located here:

<http://www.shotinthedarkmysteries.com/play/>

Play Site



host guide

Play Site

costume themes

Costumes are an important part of a themed mystery party, and for the “themed” mysteries, you will find a discussion about costumes on the PLAY! Site for your particular mystery. We also have costume ideas on our Pinterest boards at:

<http://www.pinterest.ca/mysterymaiden/>

if your mystery is “costume casual”

Some mysteries have themes that are obvious (ie: A Flapper Murder at the 1920's Speakeasy and The Masquerade Murder) and hopefully costume ideas for your guests will be obvious as well. But if you have selected what we call a “Costume Casual” mystery, you will not have costume suggestions, or they will be vague. We do this on purpose so that you, the host, can set a theme as you see fit, and instruct your guests accordingly without having them limited by the restrictions of preset costume requirements from us. So, for example, let's say you are hosting The Getty Affair, The Birthday Party Murder, The Halloween Party Murder or The Christmas Party Murder. These are great examples of mysteries that are designed to fit into YOUR party, not the other way around. You can select costume themes for your guests or experience the mystery as is, with your guests dressing in their street clothes. If your guests still can't decide what to wear for a “Costume Casual” mystery, we are always here to help!



host guide

Play Site

when you are ready to begin

Begin your mystery experience with the Announcement of Murder. Your mystery comes with audio files. We encourage you to use the audio files, however they are optional (See “How To Use The Audio Files” section). If you are using the audio files, press “Play” on the “Announcement of Murder” file. If you aren't, have someone read the transcript of the “Announcement of Murder” (in your Host Materials folder).



HOST TIP

IF YOU ARE SERVING ALCOHOL AT YOUR PARTY, BEGIN THE MYSTERY EARLIER IN THE EVENING. IN OUR EXPERIENCE, THE LONGER PEOPLE DRINK THE LESS COHERENT THE SUSPECT INFORMATION BECOMES!



host guide

Play Site

how the sleuths ask questions

The Announcement of Murder provides some questions that will get the investigators going. These are also provided for quick and easy reference on the Notes pages. Based on what they learn from asking these initial questions, they will naturally come up with questions of their own.

If a sleuth asks something that is not explained in the Suspect information, the Suspects should reply with the answer, “I have nothing to say about that.” This phrase is designed to keep the questions moving along and convey to the person asking the question that they need to change their line of questioning without the interrogator or the Suspect having to break character to explain that there is nothing in their information to answer the question posed. This is explained to the Suspects in their Suspect Guide as well as to the participants in the Announcement of Murder, and is provided on their Notes page for quick and easy reference.

the investigations

The investigations portion of the mystery follows, and there are a few ways you can run the investigations. Some hosts will eavesdrop on the questioning to determine when a lull occurs, at which case they will “Call In The Accusations” (more on this below). Others will walk around asking guests if they are ready to cast their accusation or if they need more time. While both of these methods work well, I personally prefer the third method: putting a time limit on the investigations. I find that it creates a really fun sense of urgency on the questioning, and prevents the investigations from hitting a lull as people get all the information they receive. Any of these three methods work, and since our mystery format is designed to work around your party, you can choose the method that you like best.



host guide

If you choose to set a time limit though, how long you set is up to you. Here is the way I determine how long to let the investigation last:

1. Determine how long you want the mystery to last in total (for example, 2 hours)
2. Allow 15 minutes for the Announcement of Murder, and for the Suspects to introduce themselves
3. Allow 15 minutes for accusations to be cast at the end and for the “Big Reveal”

In this example, your investigations would last 90 minutes.



HOST TIP

THE MORE SUSPECTS YOU HAVE, THE LONGER YOU AND YOUR GUESTS WILL NEED TO INVESTIGATE. FOR 6-8 SUSPECT VERSIONS, AN HOUR OF INVESTIGATION TIME IS FINE. FOR 10- 14 SUSPECTS, 90 MINUTES SHOULD SUFFICE AND FOR 16 OR 18 SUSPECT VERSIONS, 90 MINUTES TO 2 HOURS WILL BE ENOUGH. THESE ARE JUST GUIDELINES THOUGH - YOU CAN MAKE IT WORK FOR YOUR UNIQUE PARTY.

beware the tight-lipper

There always seems to be one Suspect at the party who wants to appear to be the guilty party and will try to bait people to interrogate them harder by not giving any of their share information away.

After serious psychoanalysis, we have determined this person craves attention, be it positive or negative. But since we're not throwing a mystery party to deal with people's personal issues, let's just say this person is not cool. Don't fret though, because all Suspects are advised in their Suspect guide that they have to share their “Share” information. If you have a tightlipped Suspect who still insists on being evasive to the point of partywrecking, gently remind them that the Share information needs to be shared or they'll ruin everyone's good time.

Play Site



host guide

the accusations

Your mystery includes accusation forms. Print off and/or copy that page as many times as needed to ensure everyone attending your mystery party has a form on which to cast their accusation at the end of the mystery. Before the "Big Reveal", hand out the accusation forms and ensure every participant has one. If you are awarding prizes or trophies for best sleuth etc., you will want to give your players enough notice to finish their questioning and fill out their ballot form. From there you can have each person tell the group who they accused and why, or gather the accusation forms and put them in the ballot box. After The Big Reveal you can peek through the accusations and award prizes/titles etc. as necessary.

If you have a smaller group and/or the time to do it, it's always fun to have everyone tell the group en masse the name of the person they have accused, and the reasons why. The purpose of writing down the accusation before casting it is so that no one can change their mind after hearing the others' accusations and reasons behind their accusation.



HOST TIP

AWARD PRIZES FOR "BEST SLEUTH", "BEST SUSPECT" AND MORE! FOR LARGE GROUPS, HAVE PARTICIPANTS PLACE THEIR ACCUSATION FORMS IN A BALLOT BOX FOR PRIZE DRAWS/DOOR PRIZES

Play Site



host guide

the big reveal

The end of the mystery is marked by The Big Reveal. Once everyone has cast their accusations against the killer, it's time to reveal the guilty party! If you are having guests cast their accusations in a ballot box, you will want to announce the deadline for casting accusations before The Big Reveal in order to give everyone time to get their vote in the box. The Big Reveal is included in a separate file so you can print it on its own without the worry of stumbling across it as you read the rest of your Host Materials. This way, you can solve the mystery too! You can use the audio file titled "The Big Reveal" or read the transcript called "The Big Reveal", included in your Host Materials.

be social with us!

We are on social media with tips, tricks and inspiration from our own events, as well as pictures and ideas from other hosts! Come connect with us on your social media of choice we will see you there!



Play Site



host guide

If, after reading this guide you still have questions before the party, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We will do everything in our power to ensure your mystery runs smoothly. Having said that, hosting one of our mysteries is easy just relax and have fun!



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Get in Touch

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