



# HOW TO HOST YOUR OWN MURDER MYSTERY AT THE THEATRE

## Host's INSTRUCTIONS





You are about to embark on a fun-filled evening of  
**intrigue, deceit and wrongdoing!**

It's 1922, the height of the flapper era, and Art Deco is all the rage. There has been a murder in the Full House Theatre, and all your guests, here to audition for a part in the popular play *Tickle My Fancy*, are in the frame. **Can anyone work out whodunnit?**

You can host your Murder Mystery over dinner, but this isn't essential. Ideally though, you will need a table to set up the various components of the game.

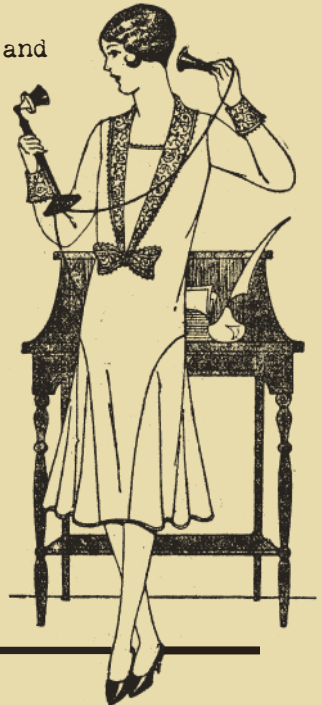
You will act as the host; however, you may want to ask a friend to help with the hospitality side whilst you are busy orchestrating the game.

## WHAT'S IN THE BOX

- 13 Name badges
- 13 Pins (1 for each name badge)
- 12 Character name cards
- 12 Secret trait cards
  - 9 Murder weapon props
  - 1 Detective notepad
  - 1 Police crime file
- 12 'Round 1' cards (YELLOW)
  - 3 Sets of 'Round 2' cards (6 BLUE cards, 6 RED cards and 6 GREEN cards)
  - 3 Sets of 'Round 3' cards (6 BLUE cards, 6 RED cards and 6 GREEN cards)
- 1 Accusation and voting pad
- 3 Solution sheets and 3 Solution envelopes (1 for each time you play the game)
- 3 Award trophies
- 1 Instruction booklet

Extra items you will need to provide:

- 1 pen per guest
- 1 red item of clothing for setting up the crime scene



# GAMEPLAY

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Preparing your murder mystery party is simple. Just choose a minimum of four friends or family members to invite, set the date, and send out your invitations! This game can be played by a maximum of 12 people but needs at least five players (inclusive of the host) to run effectively. It can be played up to three times with a different solution each time you play.

- Select which colour gameplay you want to play; each colour relates to a different gameplay and a different ending - you can choose from **BLUE**, **RED** or **GREEN** gameplay.
- The game is split into 6 sections:
  1. Introduction
  2. Crime Scene & The Missing Murder Weapon Hunt - The Murder!
  3. Round 1 clues - Yellow cards (the same for every game)
  4. Round 2 clues - Blue, Red or Green cards according to the gameplay colour chosen.
  5. Round 3 clues - Blue, Red or Green cards according to the gameplay colour chosen.
  6. Finale - The accusations, The Solution and the Awards
- There is a CONVERSATION STARTER at the beginning of each round of clues to determine which of your guests should go first and are intended to be played in character.
- Have a quick read of the whole booklet before the evening.

## INVITATIONS AND ALLOCATION OF CHARACTERS

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There are a few things you might like to do to make your party go with a bang!

- Send out invitations for the evening to your chosen guests to tell them their character name and occupation in advance.

You should include the following details in your invitation:

- Time & date
- Character (tip: you could take a photo of the character card to send to the guest)
- Information on the 1920's theme
- Request your guest dresses up and brings a suitable prop, inspired by the character card
- Let them know there will be an award for best; detective, costume and acting.

- **IMPORTANT:** There are 12 possible characters but you **MUST** allocate Taylor Stummi, Sue Zennywon, Victoria Sponge & Juan Iron every time you play. Once you've taken those four out of the pile, randomly choose as many as you need to give all your guests a character to play.
- Visit [talkingtables.com](http://talkingtables.com) for printable/emailable invitations to send to your guests.

## BEFORE YOUR GUESTS ARRIVE

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### 1. SET UP THE CRIME SCENE

Place the following in an area where people can easily gather round, preferably out of sight when they first arrive:

- Pillows in the shape of a body, under a sheet. Alternatively, a willing friend not taking part in the game can play the body!
- A bloodstain area, next to the back of the 'body' (create using an item of red clothing).
- Hide the 9 murder weapons provided around the area/house, in a different area to the crime scene.

### 2. CHARACTERS

- Take the relevant NAME BADGES out of the box for the characters who are attending along with the CHARACTER NAME cards, ready to give out to your guests when they arrive. If using the game for the first time, place a PIN on the back of each NAME BADGE.
- Place all the SECRET TRAIT cards face down on the table.

### 3. LAYOUT THE ROUNDS

Set out the 3 Rounds of clue cards in separate piles, face down, on the table correlating to the colour of game you are playing.

- Place the empty POLICE CRIME FILE on the table - you will need it to keep all the clues safe once they've been revealed, so they are available for review.
- Place the DETECTIVE NOTE SHEETS and some pens around the table so the guests can make their own notes.

- Keep the ACCUSATION SHEETS handy as you will need them towards the end of the game.
- Select the sealed SOLUTION envelope corresponding to your chosen gameplay colour. Keep it handy as you'll need it later, but make sure no one opens the envelope - no peeking!
- Have the trophies somewhere nearby so you can access them easily at the end of the game, when it's time to award them to deserving guests.



#### TIP

The plot is broken down into three main rounds, designed to run as one round over each course of a meal. We recommend that you have a short break at the end of each round so that your guests can make notes and discuss what's happened so far.

## 4. MUSIC

- To add to the atmosphere of the evening, why not put together a playlist of music from the era - use Spotify, Alexa or Google Home to search for 1920s music.

## NOTES TO YOURSELF

- You, the **HOST**, are called **Alex Cited**. You are the Front-of-House Manager of the theatre. Your role is to make sure things run smoothly. You are very good at organising, but you do tend to be rather bossy, and get irritated if people do not do as you say. You particularly hate the sight of blood, which makes you hysterical. Demonstrate these traits throughout the evening!
- All your guests have been invited as actors to the Full House Theatre to audition for a play called **Tickle My Fancy**. The number of actors depends on how many guests you have invited (max. 12). They're all still suspects in the murder. Although you, the host, are not a suspect in this murder, you may still have skeletons in your closet, and you won't know whodunnit until the very end, so you can play along with your guests and try to guess the murderer!

# YOUR GUESTS ARRIVE

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## INTRODUCTION

- **Serve pre-dinner drinks**
- Give out the CHARACTER NAME cards to each of your guests. Ask them to read what's on the card, but not to share this information with anyone else for now.
- Now ask each guest to take a yellow SECRET TRAIT card at random.
- Return the remainder of the SECRET TRAIT cards to the box.
- Tell your guests to read the information on the SECRET TRAIT cards to themselves and don't reveal to each other, until the end of the game.
- When you and the guests are ready to start the game read out the following:

### HOST READ:

'I would like to welcome you all to the wonderful Full House Theatre! My name is Alex Cited and I am the Front-of-House Manager here at the theatre. You are all here to audition for the forthcoming production of 'Tickle My Fancy'. What an amazing opportunity to perform in such an incredible theatre! As we haven't met before this evening, in a moment I'll ask you to introduce yourselves.'

- Now ask your guests to introduce themselves to each other using the information on their CHARACTER NAME cards, remembering their secret traits. Remind your guests to keep their character name/trait cards face down at all times to stop others peeking.
- Encourage your guests to throw themselves into the traits and personalities shown on their cards throughout the evening.



### TIP

This is a good time to remind everyone that award trophies will be handed out for the Best Acting, Best Costume and Best Detective at the end the evening

## CRIME SCENE & THE MISSING WEAPON HUNT - THE MURDER!

- Make an excuse to leave the area/room and go to the crime scene you prepared earlier.

### YOU COULD SAY:

'Oh, is that the phone?' or 'Is that a police car I just heard?'  
Do excuse me.'

- When you reach the crime scene, act alarmed or scream and make it clear there has been a MURDER!
- Go back to your guests and explain that you think it's important that everyone sees what you have seen. Warn those of a nervous disposition that they may need to prepare themselves for a horrible sight. Lead your guests to the crime scene.

HOST READ:

'You can look but not touch! It's probably a good idea to make notes of anything you think is relevant, and you can take photos if you wish. This is exactly how the body was found in the theatre's orchestra pit. Nothing has been touched.'

- Once your guests have had a good look at the crime scene, return everyone to the main room.

HOST READ:

'I'm sorry if you were upset by that awful scene. I have to tell you that the body is that of the man who was to direct our production, Stan Deere. Stan was the Director here at Full House for two years and he had a huge impact on the theatre's fortunes. It was in danger of closing before he took over. Everyone knows that he was a stupendous director. He loved to personally test out everything in the wardrobe and props department before settling on the right look for every character. I for one am going to miss him terribly!

There's very little information at the moment but I have just been told that the police will not allow us to leave the building until investigations are complete. In fact, the police are short-staffed so they want us to help them solve this crime. The audition will just have to wait while this is solved!

One thing that seemed to be missing was a murder weapon! There are, in fact, nine of them hidden around the place. It's time for a little game of 'Hunt the potential murder weapon!' You're looking for 9 potential murder weapons:

A knife, a gun, a book, a stiletto shoe, a bottle of poison, a hammer, a baseball bat, a rolling pin and an axe.

If you find something, bring it back here and make sure you examine it closely. Remember: finding the potential murder weapons will help win you the Best Detective Award at the end of the game.'



TIP

This is a good time to remind everyone that they're going to need to concentrate on clues this evening and write some notes.

**HOST READ:**

'I hope everyone has their wits about them this evening. If there is any chance of this terrible murder being solved, you need to remember that everything you see and hear could be relevant!'

- As the weapon props are found, the interesting information on the back of each one will need to be shared with the group - the person who finds the weapon should read the information aloud to the group. Make sure all 9 weapons have been found & examined. Put them in the POLICE CRIME FILE.

**HOST READ:**

'Those items have been taken away by police for forensic testing.'

## ROUND ONE

- When everyone is ready, ask your guests to sit down at the dinner table.
- **Serve the starter.**
- Make sure the ROUND ONE clues are easily accessible.

**HOST READ:**

'Now it's time to start looking at the clues and evidence that's gradually coming to light. The first round will highlight some history between each character and the deceased victim, Stan Deere. Take some notes to help with your investigations.'

- CONVERSATION STARTER (optional) - Decide who is to go first by asking each guest in turn 'As your character, what were you always getting into trouble for at school?' The best or funniest answer (in your opinion) goes first.
- That person should now take the top ROUND ONE card and follow the instructions on it. The next person round the table takes a card and follows the instructions. Repeat until all ROUND ONE cards have been used up. When all those clues have been revealed, put them in the POLICE CRIME FILE.



**TIP**

It is a good idea to recap for your guests at the end of this round on some of the juicy bits of information that have just been uncovered.



## ROUND TWO

- Serve the main course.
- Make sure the ROUND TWO cards are accessible.

### HOST READ:

'The second round will give you some forensic and character clues, it would be a good idea to take notes!'

- CONVERSATION STARTER (optional) - To decide who should start, ask your guests 'As your character, what illegal act have you carried out and got away with?' Whoever comes up with the most impressive answer should take the first ROUND TWO card and follow the instructions on it. The clues must come out in the specific order marked on the reverse - from Clue 1 to Clue 6. If there are more than six guests, you might like to select which guests reveal the other five clues. If not, your guests can simply take it in turns. When all the ROUND TWO cards have been used and the contents read/acted out, put them in the POLICE CRIME FILE.

## ROUND THREE

- Serve the dessert.
- Make sure the ROUND THREE cards are accessible.

### HOST READ:

'The final set of clues will provide statements from the witnesses and some physical characteristics of the suspects. Use these clues to draw your conclusions on who the murderer is!'

- CONVERSATION STARTER (optional) - To decide who should start, ask your guests 'As your character, if you could get away with it, who would you murder, and why?' Whoever comes up with the best/funniest answer should take the first ROUND THREE card and follow the instructions.  
Again, they must come out in the specific order marked on the reverse - from Clue 1 to Clue 6. If there are more than six players, give players who did not reveal a clue in Round Two the opportunity to reveal the ROUND THREE clues.
- After all the clues and information have been revealed, invite everyone to review their notes and all the evidence contained in the POLICE CRIME FILE.

# FINALE

## THE ACCUSATION

- Serve coffee and after dinner drinks.
- Give each guest an accusation form and a pen.

### HOST READ:

'So - all the evidence is in and the time has come to make your accusations. Complete your accusation form and be ready to reveal and justify who you think murdered poor Stan.'

- Each person should now complete their form with their character name, who they believe murdered Stan Deere, what they believe was the motive behind it and how they reached their conclusion. Remind every one that apart from you (the host), everyone in the room, as well as any other characters mentioned in the course of the game, is a suspect. As the host, you can play along and guess the murderer if you wish, as the solution is contained in a sealed envelope.
- Once everyone has written down their proposed solution, work your way around the guests, starting wherever you choose, and ask them all to reveal out loud what they've noted on their accusation form. They should all be prepared to justify and defend their proposed solution!

## SOLUTION

- You may now open the sealed SOLUTION envelope corresponding to the colour of the cards you used in Rounds Two and Three. Read the contents aloud to the room.

## AWARDS

- Once the murderer has been unveiled, collect everyones accusation form and tally up the votes.

It's time to hand out the trophies based on:

- Person/s who guesses the murderer wins the Best Detective Award
- Best dressed gets the Best Costume Award
- Person to act their Character the best gets Best Acting Award

## SUBSEQUENT GAME PLAYS

Simply choose a different gameplay colour, which will lead to a different solution. Don't forget to use the appropriate coloured cards in Rounds 2 and 3.

THE END

# HOST'S CHECKLIST

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## ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Decide whom to invite (minimum of 4 and maximum of 12 guests).
- Send out your invitations in good time, ensuring you've invited the obligatory characters and then added others.
- Encourage your guests to dress to impress in 1920's costume.
- Perhaps buy a few 1920s accessories to add to your guests' costumes.

## PARTY FOOD AND DRINK:

- If much of your menu can be prepared in advance, you will have less to do on the night.
- Prepare as much as you can the day before and during the day of the party.

## THE ROOM:

- Arrange the furniture, making sure there is plenty of space for everyone and for all the components of the game.
- Decorate the room to fit the theme.
- Set the table in advance.
- Set up the crime scene as per instructions.
- Have a small separate table for the Police Crime File so that the evidence is easily accessible for review during the evening.

## ON THE NIGHT:

- Get everything ready at least an hour before your guests are due to arrive so you can make any final touches.
- Remember to document the evening. Take photos and videos and encourage guests to do the same.
- Capture the moment and share your memories #HostYourOwn #MurderMystery #TalkingTables

