A MURDER MYSTERY PARTY

A Merry Little Murder

HOST GUIDE

Christmas Eve, 1966 · Whitlock House, Vermont
4–8 players · 90–120 minutes · 16+

Welcome, host

You're about to throw a 1960s Christmas Eve dinner where the family is snowed in, secrets are everywhere, and someone is a murderer. The deck holds **three complete cases**, each its own Christmas Eve with a different truth, so the same group can play all three. **You don't need to know the solution.** The cards run the evening, and you can play a character and investigate like everyone else.

In this guide: before the party · running the evening · hosting tips · after the reveal.

IN THE BOX: 74 CARDS

- 3 rules cards, 1 host card and 1 case picker
- 8 character cards and 8 Round I statements
- The Evening, and one card for after the solution
- Cases A, B and C, 17 cards each: 8 secrets, 3 public clues, 3 evidence, 2 twists and 1 solution

YOU'LL ALSO NEED

- 4–8 friends and about 2 hours
- A pencil per player
- These free printables: invitations, name tags, detective notes and the dinner plan

Free printable · for personal use

STEP 1

Before the party

1–2 WEEKS BEFORE

1. **Choose a case.** For a first game, play Case A or B, and save Case C, the hardest, for last. Each case is its own Christmas Eve: nothing learned in one is true in another.
2. **Count your players and choose the characters.** Any mix of the eight works, at any table size from 4 to 8. Characters nobody plays are still suspects, and the killer may not be at your table.
3. **With 4 or 5 players, consider game master mode:** the host doesn't investigate, but gives a voice to the characters nobody plays. The website explains how.
4. **Send the invitations** (free PDF). Each one tells a guest who they'll be and how to dress. There's also a blank invitation if you'd rather give out characters on the night.
5. **Ask everyone to dress up.** Costume ideas are on the invitations and the character cards.

ON THE DAY

Set the scene

- Low lights, candles, tinsel and a twinkling tree
- A record player, or the 1960s Christmas playlist (scan the QR code on your host card)
- Cocktails on arrival, and the supper from the free dinner plan

Print & prepare

- Name tags for each character
- A detective notes sheet and a pencil per player
- Take out the shared cards and your case's cards: their backs say CASE A, B or C. Leave the other two cases in the box (rules card 2).

✦ **Don't read ahead.** Only look at a card when the host card tells you to, and sort and deal by the labels on the backs. The secret cards of characters nobody plays stay in the box, unread, so you can play too.

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STEP 2

Running the evening

TIME	WHAT	HOW
0:00	Arrival & cocktails	Read rules card 1 aloud. Each player takes their character card, face up, then, face down, their Round I statement and secret card. Read aloud the character cards of anyone nobody plays. Everyone introduces themselves in character.
0:15	Round I · *starters*	About 25 minutes.
0:40	Round II · *main course*	About 30 minutes.
1:10	Round III · *dessert*	About 30 minutes.
1:40	Accusations & reveal	Everyone writes **who, how and why**. Reveal the answers, read the solution aloud, then the last card.

EVERY ROUND WORKS THE SAME WAY

1. **The host opens the round**, exactly as the host card shows: The Evening in Round I, the twist in Rounds II and III. Then the host lays the round's evidence face up and reads its public clue.
2. **Everyone reads aloud, word for word:** their Round I statement in Round I, then their secret card's reveal in Rounds II and III. The host reads the statements of characters nobody plays.
3. **Mingle for about 20 minutes:** question, bluff, form alliances, accuse.

THE RULES OF TRUTH

Read your cards exactly as written.

You may keep your secrets until your secret card tells you to reveal them. Dodge, deflect and change the subject.

Only the killer may lie. Everyone else may dodge a question, but never lie. Words the cards quote from earlier tonight may be false. Detective's tip: ask *"What aren't you telling us?"* instead of *"Did you do it?"*

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STEP 3

Hosting tips

Keep it moving

Use the timer on the companion page. When the room gets quiet, start the next round, because the new cards will restart the conversation.

Encourage questions

Shy guests? Ask them directly: "And where were you after dinner?" Detective notes help people keep track.

Let the killer play

The killer may be at the table, or may be a character nobody plays. Bold accusations and dramatic denials are half the fun.

Stuck?

Ask everyone to reread the evidence on the table and compare their timelines. Everything needed to solve the case is in the public cards.

Keep the ending sealed

The solution card stays face down until everyone has written an accusation.

Stay in character

Accents, grudges and long-buried family feuds are all encouraged.

STEP 4

After the reveal

- **Scoring:** 1 point each for the right *who*, *how* and *why*. If nobody names the killer, the killer takes 3 points. For a longer evening, add 1 point for each player whose personal goal the table agrees they achieved.
- **Hand out awards:** Best Detective, Best Liar, Most Suspicious Innocent and Best Dressed.
- **Sort the deck back** by the labels on the backs. Two more Christmas Eves are waiting.
- **Share your photos** with **#AMerryLittleMurder**, and please don't spoil the ending for anyone.
- **Enjoyed it?** A short review on Etsy helps other hosts find the game. Thank you!



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