

# Step-by-step: murder mystery

**Great for:** Adults **Fun factor:** ★★★★★ **Effort:** ★★★★★ **£ potential:** ★★★★★

As far as adult social events are concerned, murder mystery nights promise lots of fun for a modest amount of effort. They're particularly good for bringing friends together – after all, who can resist a night of spirited super-sleuthing?

## Step-by-step

1. **Six months before:** Agree a date with the school or alternative venue and ensure a key-holder is available on the day. Book a supplier and decide on the play and theme.
2. **Two months before:** Start advertising the event and selling tickets through an online platform or in person, and consider offering an early bird discount. Decide whether you will be providing a meal and begin sourcing costumes, if needed. Cast the play, getting the staff involved if possible, and start rehearsals. Approach local companies to ask for donations of prizes for the winners, and put out a request for volunteers to help on the night.
3. **One month before:** Continue promoting the event, both at school and publicly through social media. If planning to sell alcohol, apply for a Temporary Event Notice. Increase the number of rehearsals in the run up to the event.
4. **Two weeks before:** Send a press release to local media. Ensure you have enough helpers on the day. Collate a list of volunteers and allocate roles. Source any additional costumes and props, free-of-charge if possible.
5. **One week before:** Compile a list of guests' names to tick off on the door. Hold a dress rehearsal.
6. **On the day:** Set up the hall for the event, including seating and decorations. Ensure all props and prizes are at the venue. Have a final run-through of the play after school and provide a group meal for the cast.
7. **After the event:** Have a post-event debrief to discuss what worked well and what may need tweaking for next time. Thank your volunteers and ask for feedback. Give details about how much was raised and how this will be spent.

## Tips & advice

**Venue:** Make sure there is enough room for a performance area and for your guests to sit around tables.

**Theme:** Choose which murder mystery play you want and theme the rest of your event

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around it. Use your theme to help define the dress code.

**Meal:** Consider whether to provide food or ask guests to bring their own. Discuss how the play will be broken up so that you can plan food and refreshments around intervals.

**Ticket options:** Sell individually priced tickets, as well as group tickets (i.e. a table of eight) in advance.

**Suppliers:** Employing the services of a specialist supplier will mean you have an initial upfront cost, but it will be worth every penny! Go to our suppliers directory ([pta.co.uk/supplier-search](https://pta.co.uk/supplier-search)) to find murder mystery companies.

**DIY:** If you're feeling ambitious, you could write and perform your own play. Give yourself plenty of time to work out the logistics and recruit actors. Local amateur dramatics societies or secondary school drama students may be able to help.

**Prizes:** Source prizes for the winning team - the table who successfully guess the murderer and motive. If guests are wearing fancy dress, offer a prize for the best outfits.

**Boost profits:** Raffles make a great profit booster, as do quizzes.

**Personalise it:** Make it fun by personalising the script to include jokes about your school staff and PTA, etc.

**Costumes:** Ask local theatre groups if you can borrow or hire items. Ask for sponsorship from companies for any bought items.

**Casting:** Be firm and decide on the casting rather than asking people to decide who they want to play, as this is the easiest way to ensure you have the best people for the parts.

**Event length:** This can be a long evening with two intervals, a meal, a quiz and the denouement, so aim to start early and stick to your timings. Remember, there needs to be a long enough interval to give attendees time to choose their killer and reasons, plus time for you to mark these so the winner can be announced after the big reveal in the second act.