



presents...

“Who Killed Santa?”

Host Guide

For video friendly versions

by Stephanie Chambers

It is easy to prepare and run a mystery party. We recommend that as host you should also take a role and participate along with everyone else. With our mysteries, not even the murderer knows who did it. But with a little intelligence and a careful ear for important clues, it is possible to solve the mystery.

Preparing for the party

- 1 Work out the eight guests (including yourself) that you want to invite. We have limited it to eight, as any more would make it difficult to manage during an online video party. Download the "sa8-to-10-suspects-witnesses-decor-food-props-nametags-notes" PDF. The clue files are in a separate zipped file. Save it to your computer. Unzip it.
- 2 Decide when you will be having the party, where and who will play each role. You should read the description of each character and try to select a role for each guest. Or you may like to give your guests a choice of the roles and let them decide for themselves who is best equipped to dress up for each role depending on what they have available. It is better if people play roles that are as different as possible from their normal lives.
- 3 We recommend that you tell your guests to: "Please dress up as your character. Over dressing and going to extremes is highly recommended." We generally find that the more people put into the event, the more fun it is. But there is no need to buy costumes.
- 4 Send an email to each guest. Include the date, time, and the video service (e.g. Zoom) you intend to use and the name of the character you want them to play. Attach the JPG invitations image, the "sa8-to-10-suspects-witnesses-decor-food-props-nametags-notes" PDF, and the clue PDF for their character.
- 5 Tell them to read the suspect pages before the party and, if possible to print out their nametag, note page and clue file. The clue page is only one page for each guest. Tell them not to read their clues before the party. They can print their nametag in color or black and white. They may like to print it on thicker or colored paper and to cut it up and attach it with a small safety pin. **Do not send them the Who Did It details.**
- 6 The "Who Did It" files are in a separate zipped file. Download it to your computer but do not unzip it until the end of the party. There are some extra instructions included in one of the PDFs for you as host to read before you start the Who Did It part of the event.
- 7 Decorate the room (see *Décor suggestions* in the "sa8-to-10-suspects-witnesses-decor-food-props-nametags-notes" PDF).
- 8 Prepare or arrange for food (see *Menu suggestions* in the "sa8-to-10-suspects-witnesses-decor-food-props-nametags-notes" PDF).
- 9 Decide whether you are going to have prizes for the party (see *Preparing prizes*). This is optional, but recommended.

Preparing props

Create a body by stuffing red clothes or mark where it was with tape (near the fireplace if there is one). Put up crime scene tape and a chair in a corner and surround it with boxes. Put a sign for "Chatties" on your door.

If you want you can just have everyone imagine these props.

Preparing prizes (optional)

This is optional, but you may like to have some prizes available to give to the people:

- who guess who did it
- with the best costume.

You can reduce the number of people you have to give a prize to by asking for details as to who, how and why the person did it.

If you do have prizes, you should let people know they exist just after you read out “*The Rules*”.

Tip: Don’t assume that only one person will guess who did it. It is best to have a prize you can divide up (e.g., some small online gift cards). If no one guesses correctly, divide the prize up amongst everyone.

If you have a color printer and some T-shirt transfers, you may like to download and print out some of our special T-shirt logos (i.e. “I Gussed Who Did It” and “I Had The Best Costume”). See

<http://www.merrimysteries.com/tmm/prizes.htm> for details. These are free to download.

Running the party

We suggest that you run the party as follows:

- 1 Send everyone details of how to connect to the video program you are using. In some cases, you may have to email everyone a link.
- 2 When everyone has arrived online, read *The Rules* to everyone.
- 3 Have everyone introduce themselves to the group by saying their character’s name and a few words about themselves from their description.
- 4 Check that everyone has read the “*The Suspects*” pages. If they haven’t, give them a few minutes to read them quickly. There may be important clues in “*The Suspects*” pages.
- 5 Serve the First Course of your meal or have dips available. Generally we don’t recommend you continue with the clues while people are eating unless you are pressed for time.
- 6 When you are ready, tell everyone to read their first clue for Act One. You may like to go around the group in the order in which they connected online. Keep going around until everyone has said all their clues for Act One.
- 7 Serve the Second Course of your meal (if applicable).
- 8 Do Act Two. Serve Dessert (if applicable).
- 9 Do Act Three.
- 10 Serve hot drinks and after dinner mints (if applicable).
- 11 Ask each person to think about who did it and why and how they did it. Ask them to write down their final choice. When they are ready, go around the group and ask everyone who they think did it and why and how they did it.
- 12 After everyone has had a guess, unzip the *Who Did It* bundle. Read the Host instructions PDF. Email each suspect their section as they need it (i.e., email each suspect in the order shown in your instructions as the previous suspect finishes reading their section).
- 13 Email the winner's their prizes (if you are providing these). If more than one person guesses correctly, give the prize to the person who has the most correct answers as to how and why the person did it. You may like to also give a prize for the person who has the best (or most creative) costume.

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The Rules

These are to be read out by the host to the whole group at the beginning of the party:

Welcome to “Who Killed Santa?”!

The portly gent who dresses in red won't be going down any chimneys this year. He is dead – possibly murdered – yes, it's scandalous but true. It happened just before the company Christmas party being held at Chatties Restaurant. Did someone not want him to be there? Was it revenge for an unwanted present from Santa last year? Or was it just old age catching up with him?

We're here to find out the real juicy truth. I will introduce you to the suspects shortly.

I will ask you to look at your clues for each act just before each act begins. Only read the section for each act as required and please don't read the other acts ahead of time. During each act you must reveal all of your clues for that particular act.

We will go around the group and let everyone say a clue. We will repeat this until everyone has said all their clues for this act. If you are asked a question, say the response from your clue sheet. This will count as your turn in this round.

There is no need to hurry through this and you can adlib a little if you want. You do not have to read each clue exactly as it is written – embellish it if you want. You might like to speak in slang or with an accent. For example, if you are playing a snob, you might speak as if you have a plum in your mouth. If your character is distressed, you could reveal your clues in between sobs. Act it out to the fullest. This is your chance to be dramatic!

At the end of the party you will be asked to guess who performed the crime and how and why they did it. If you work out who did it before the party ends please keep it to yourself. *Optional:* There is a prize for the people who guess who did it. There is also a prize for the person with the best costume.