

Playing Effectively as Town: The Anti-Potato Guide

by Schiavetto



Population: You!

Overview.

You've probably heard the complaints: *Sigh, town was bad. Another loss for potato town. Town threw.* Whether it's choking in lylo, mislynching PR, or letting scum gain too much influence, it can be tempting to blame town losses on a lack of ability.

The truth, however, isn't so straightforward: most town misplays are not owed solely to a lack of skill or experience--more often than not, they're a culmination of smaller breakdowns in communication and collaboration, the social aspects of the game. Fundamentally, you see, mafia is a game of *social* deduction. You'll find that the game is most enjoyable when everyone is interacting and problem-solving *together*, as a unit.

With this guide, I hope to offer some ways that all users--regardless of experience level--can comfortably and consistently collaborate with the rest of the town, using a townie's greatest weapons: their vote and their voice.

Don't lurk. No exceptions.

The worst thing you can do for your team is to do nothing. You may have your reasons for lurking--maybe you're in a large game and feeling intimidated, maybe you just don't have any reads yet, maybe you're a power role trying to avoid the radar--but by remaining silent, you put your teammates at a disadvantage. Quiet players are harder to read, and more likely to get mislynched, since they're not directly helping town. By talking and interacting with the other players, you give town important behavioral cues--things like tone, reactions, and post content--that can help turn null reads into townreads and scumreads, moving the game forward.

Say what's on your mind.

Some of you are probably out there thinking to yourselves, “But Schia, I don’t have any reads yet, so there’s nothing for me to say!” If you don’t have any reads, try commenting on what you notice other players doing. Speaking up about things you notice from other players, such as their voting behavior (“Oh, catliquor seems to be really committed to his lynch on OM”) or the way they’re pushing their reads (“Wow, moto seems to be changing his votes a lot, not really pushing his read on Snaq”), can be a good way to contribute when you don’t have any reads of your own yet. Even if you aren’t sure what to make of something another player is doing, you can direct the town’s attention to it--often, this can help other players to solidify reads they aren’t quite sure of. By being observant and sharing the things you notice, you’re giving your teammates a lot more to work with.

Ask questions.

As a townie, you generally want to know the motivations behind other players actions, and asking questions is generally one of the better ways to go about that. Try asking other players why they lynched a certain person, or who they’d be willing to shift their lynch to. This can be a quick way to get an idea of other players’ reads, even if they don’t say them outright. When you notice a player’s answers don’t always add up, or they’re taking too long to give a justification for their actions, this can be an indication that they’re scum. By asking questions, you help stimulate interactions that lead to stronger and more reliable reads.

Explain your thinking.

One of the best things you can do as town is explain the thought process behind your reads. By explaining your reasoning, you stand a better chance of convincing others to follow your reads--and if your reads are off, giving an explanation can help other townies point out the breakdown in your logic or even come to your defense if one of your reads leads to a mislynch later on.

You have a vote: use it!

At the end of the day, your reads can only get you so far. Even if you correctly guess all scum on the first day, your goal as a townie is to get them *eliminated*, and you do this by lynching. That means you need to actually vote for them at some point!

That being said, you should make sure that your vote is thoughtful. Don’t just vote for someone because everyone else is, or because you can’t think of anyone better to vote for--try to have a decent sense of why you’re lynching a player, and what it might mean for the game if that player is eliminated.

Be flexible.

Especially in the early game, not everyone is going to have everything all figured out at once. You might be pretty certain about your reads, but it never hurts to consider the alternatives. This is especially important when the deadline is approaching, and town needs to quickly come to a decision. Having a solid backup plan can make it much easier to shift off of last-minute PR claims, or prevent last-second plurshifts by scum.

Read up.

Possibly the most important advice you'll ever receive is to read up on what happened earlier in the game. Taking the time to read back over logs from earlier in the game can help highlight inconsistencies in player's playstyle, or help shed some light on events that happened later in the game. You might notice, for example, that some players' lynchings don't line up with their reads--or maybe it's lylo, and you're starting to have second thoughts about one of your townreads. Taking the time to rethink their early-game behavior with added context (role reveals, voting patterns, inspections, etc.) can give you a new, more accurate perspective of the game.

In general, you should take some time to read back at the start of every new day phase. Looking back to see someone's scumreads can give you an idea of who killed them and why. This is even more important when power roles die, as they often leave breadcrumbs that can help narrow down your list of suspects.

Conclusion.

You'll notice some common themes here: be observant, be thoughtful, be vocal, etc. This guide is not meant to be completely exhaustive--each player has their own style, and town dynamics will reflect this, varying from one playerlist to another. These qualities, however, can mean the difference between a coordinated town victory and a steamroll by scum. By encouraging these habits, you can play a part in getting your town on the same page, and leading your team to success.