

PLAY WITH PURPOSE — GRADE 7 · SMALL PROBLEMS DESERVE REAL ATTENTION

Little Problems: A Cozy Detective Game

Developer: Posh Cat Studios | 2025 | Cozy Mystery · Community Investigation

Steam ~\$14.99 · No time pressure · No fail states · Overwhelmingly Positive on Steam · 4–8 hours · Suitable from age 12

Primary DGO: DGO 15 — Become More Accepting of Others

Supporting DGOs: DGO 10 (Slow Down in Study and Consumption) · DGO 17 (Start to Contribute to Society in a Meaningful Way)

Best For: Ages 12+ · Solo play with discussion after sessions · 2–3 sessions to complete the full game · Ideal before or after Tangle Tower

Grade 7 Theme: Small Problems Deserve Real Attention. Little Problems is the Grade 7 game that takes this theme literally: a whole community of small interpersonal frictions, minor misunderstandings, and overlooked frustrations that the detective takes seriously — because they are serious, to the people experiencing them.

The Game That Breaks the Pattern

Every detective game in the Play With Purpose curriculum before Grade 7 has been about a significant crime — something that demands investigation because the stakes are obvious and high. Detective Grimoire investigates a murder. Duck Detective investigates office theft and political manipulation. These are games where the seriousness of the situation is self-evident.

Little Problems: A Cozy Detective Game investigates a missing garden gnome. A mysteriously rearranged bookshelf. A cat that won't come home. A neighbour who stopped waving.

These are, on the surface, trivial. A twelve-year-old encountering this game after the sharper, higher-stakes detective games earlier in the curriculum might reasonably wonder whether these problems deserve investigating at all. That question — 'is this worth taking seriously?' — is exactly what the game is designed to answer. And its answer is: yes. Always. Because the gnome is not the problem. The gnome is the signal. The problem is the loneliness of the person who owned it, the deteriorating relationship between two neighbours, the community fracture that no one named because it seemed too small to name. The detective's job is to notice what everyone else has decided isn't worth noticing.

The developer story: Little Problems was developed by a small independent studio — Posh Cat Studios — whose stated design intention was to create a detective game for players who wanted to investigate not crime but community. The puzzles are gentle, the tone is warm, and the mysteries resolve through patient conversation rather than confrontation. This aesthetic choice is itself a curriculum statement: the skills required to investigate a missing gnome are the

same skills required to investigate anything. Attention. Care. The willingness to take someone's distress seriously before deciding whether it's justified.

How the Game Works

Your child plays a detective newly arrived in a small, quiet town. Residents approach them with problems — small ones, the kind that most people would dismiss or defer. Each case unfolds through conversation and observation: talking to the person with the problem, talking to people nearby, noticing details in the environment, and gradually assembling a picture of what actually happened and what it actually means.

There are no fail states. There is no timer. There is no wrong answer that ends the game. The investigation proceeds at your child's pace, guided only by their attention and their willingness to take each problem as seriously as the person presenting it takes it.

The community structure: The town in Little Problems is not a setting — it's the subject. The same characters appear across multiple cases. A misunderstanding in one case has ripple effects in another. The detective is not solving isolated incidents but gradually mapping the relationships and frictions that make a community. By the end of the game, your child understands this small town the way they understand a place they've actually lived in: through accumulated attention to the small things that reveal the large ones.

Why This Game for Becoming More Accepting of Others

DGO 15 — Become More Accepting of Others — is the primary DGO for Little Problems because this game develops acceptance through a specific and demanding route: being asked to take seriously the problems of people you don't yet understand, on their own terms, before you've decided whether those terms are justified.

The residents of this town do not present their problems in ways that make them easy to accept. Some present with more distress than the situation seems to warrant. Some present with defensiveness that makes genuine investigation difficult. Some have contributed to their own problems in ways they don't acknowledge. Some are wrong about what's bothering them. Little Problems doesn't ask your child to accept that everyone is right or that every problem is equally serious. It asks something subtler: to extend genuine attention to each person's account of their experience before reaching any conclusions about what actually happened.

That prior-to-judgment attentiveness is the most demanding form of acceptance the game asks for. Not tolerance — which is passive — and not agreement — which requires no movement on your child's part. Active, curious, prior-to-judgment engagement with someone else's experience of the world. The detective who listens to the person upset about their missing gnome and thinks 'that's an overreaction' has already stopped investigating. The detective who listens and thinks 'what does this mean to them?' is the one who will find out what's actually going on.

DGO 10 — Slow Down in Study and Consumption — is the first supporting DGO because the investigations in Little Problems are paced entirely by attention rather than by urgency. There are no clues that expire, no conversations that close off, no investigations that fail because your child moved too slowly. The game makes patience not just a virtue but the only viable approach. A child who rushes through conversations — who asks the minimum necessary questions to advance the case — will miss the texture of the community that makes the cases meaningful.

DGO 17 — Start to Contribute to Society in a Meaningful Way — is the second supporting DGO because the detective's work is a form of community contribution. Your child's investigation doesn't just solve individual problems — it repairs community relationships, surfaces misunderstandings that had calcified into hostility, and demonstrates to the residents of this town that their small problems are worth someone's serious attention. That demonstration is itself a contribution. The detective is showing the community what attentiveness looks like.

Six Moments to Watch For

Little Problems is best played with a brief conversation after each case — while the case is fresh but the game isn't running. These moments are worth checking in about.

Their first reaction to the case.

When the first case is presented — something minor, something a reasonable person might dismiss — watch your child's initial reaction. Do they take it seriously immediately? Do they seem uncertain about whether this deserves investigation? That initial response reveals their starting relationship with the grade theme. Whatever it is, the game is about to develop it.

Whether they ask follow-up questions.

The game allows your child to ask more questions than are strictly necessary to advance the case. Watch whether they do. A child who asks the minimum is solving the puzzle. A child who asks additional questions — who wants to understand the person, not just the problem — is practising the accepting attention that DGO 15 describes. The follow-up question is often where the real information lives.

When they encounter a difficult resident.

Some residents in Little Problems are prickly, defensive, or hard to engage. Watch how your child responds when the person they're trying to help makes that difficult. Do they persist with curiosity? Do they give up on understanding and just solve the surface problem? The willingness to stay engaged with a difficult person — to keep trying to understand rather than to get past them — is the most demanding form of DGO 15 the game requires.

The moment a small problem reveals a larger one.

Every case in Little Problems has a moment when the stated problem reveals its actual underlying cause: the missing gnome is the eruption of a two-year tension between neighbours; the cat that won't come home is a child's response to change in their family. Watch for when your child notices this — when they say 'oh, the gnome isn't really the problem.' That transition from surface to substance is the investigation's most important moment, and it requires the attentiveness DGO 10 builds.

How they feel about the resolution.

The cases in Little Problems don't always end with dramatic resolutions. Sometimes a conversation is had, a misunderstanding is clarified, and two people agree to try again. Watch how your child responds to resolutions that feel anticlimactic by detective game standards. A child who finds these satisfying has understood what the game considers important. A child who wanted more — a more decisive ending, a clearer conclusion — may be applying standards from other detective games that don't fit here.

Whether the community feels real by the end.

By the end of the game, the town should feel inhabited rather than scenic — your child should know people, understand tensions, have feelings about residents they find difficult. Ask: 'Does this town feel like a real place? Do you have opinions about the people who live there?' The presence of genuine opinions — including negative ones — is the sign that the community mapping has worked.

How to Play With Purpose

After each case, ask about the person, not the problem: 'What did you make of the person who had the problem — not whether they were right, but what was actually going on for them?' This question redirects from case-solving to person-understanding, which is the game's actual subject. The answer your child gives reveals how well the accepting attention of DGO 15 is developing.

Name the moment the surface reveals the substance: When your child identifies the real underlying problem in a case — the thing beneath the stated complaint — name it explicitly: 'You just found the actual problem. The gnome was the symptom.' This naming makes the transition from surface to substance conscious and articulable, and it reinforces the attentiveness that produced the insight.

Compare to earlier detective games: At some point during or after the game, ask: 'How is this different from Duck Detective? What does this game think detective work is for?' The comparison makes explicit what Little Problems is doing differently — and why the 'cozy' register isn't absence of seriousness but a different kind of it.

Family Discussion Questions

These questions work best after individual cases — the community detail is richer in the immediate aftermath of each investigation. Ask them while the case is still fresh.

1. The first case involved a problem that some people would dismiss as unimportant. Did you take it seriously from the beginning? What made you decide to?

BUILDS: DGO 15 — PRIOR-TO-JUDGMENT ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS' EXPERIENCES

This question asks your child to examine their initial orientation toward the person with the problem — specifically, whether they extended serious attention before deciding whether the problem deserved it. The game's design requires extending this attention regardless of initial judgment. This question makes that choice conscious.

"Think about people in your own life who bring you problems you sometimes think are bigger than they need to be. Do you extend serious attention before deciding that? Or do you decide first and then listen accordingly? What would change if you reversed the order?"

2. When you talked to residents who were difficult — defensive, prickly, or not easy to understand — how did you handle it? Did you stay curious about them, or did you just try to get the information you needed and move on?

BUILDS: DGO 15 — ACCEPTING ENGAGEMENT WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

This is the most demanding DGO 15 question the game raises. Staying curious about difficult people — continuing to try to understand them rather than just extracting information — requires the active acceptance DGO 15 describes. Your child will have encountered at least one resident who made this genuinely difficult.

"Think about someone in your life who is hard to engage with — who is defensive, prickly, or responds in ways that make you want to give up on understanding them. What does it take to stay curious about someone like that? Is curiosity something you can choose, or does it depend on how the other person behaves?"

3. Every case had a surface problem and an underlying one. The gnome, the rearranged bookshelf — these were symptoms, not causes. When did you notice the gap between the stated problem and the actual one? And what helped you see it?

BUILDS: DGO 10 — PATIENT ATTENTION THAT REVEALS WHAT'S ACTUALLY THERE

This question asks your child to identify the moment of depth — when the investigation moved from surface to substance. That moment requires the slow, attentive investigation that DGO 10 describes. Noticing the gap is a direct product of not rushing — of staying with the information long enough for the pattern to emerge.

"Think about problems people bring you in your own life — complaints, frustrations, worries. Do you usually respond to the stated problem or do you ask what's underneath it? Is there a person in your life whose surface complaints you've noticed are usually about something else entirely? What helped you see that?"

4. By the end of the game, did the town feel like a real community to you? Did you have genuine opinions about the people who live there — including people you found difficult?

BUILDS: DGO 15 + DGO 17 — COMMUNITY AS THE PRODUCT OF ACCUMULATED ATTENTION

This question checks whether the community mapping has worked — whether your child has developed genuine relationships with fictional characters through the quality of their investigative attention. The presence of genuine opinions, including critical ones, is a sign that the community felt real rather than scenic.

"Think about a community you're actually part of — your school, your neighbourhood, a group you belong to. Do you have the same kind of detailed, relationship-based understanding of it that you developed of the Little Problems town through investigation? What would it take to develop that? What would you need to pay attention to that you currently don't?"

5. The detective takes problems seriously that most people would dismiss or defer. What does that choice — to take small problems seriously — actually contribute to the community? Why does it matter?

BUILDS: DGO 17 — THE CONTRIBUTION OF TAKING SMALL THINGS SERIOUSLY

This question asks your child to articulate what the detective's work actually provides to the community — what the contribution of serious attention to small problems is. The answer involves the experience of being taken seriously, the repair of community relationships, the surfacing of things that had been left unnamed. This is DGO 17 made explicit: the detective's contribution is a form of civic and social work.

"Think about someone in your life — a teacher, a parent, a friend — who takes your small problems seriously. What does that feel like? What does it produce? And conversely: what does it feel like when a problem you have is dismissed as too small to matter? What gets left unresolved when small problems don't get attention?"

6. How is this detective game different from Duck Detective or Tangle Tower? What does Little Problems think investigating is for — and does that match what you think it's for?

BUILDS: DGO 15 + DGO 10 — REFLECTING ON WHAT DETECTIVE WORK MEANS

This question invites your child to articulate the difference in purpose between the detective games in the curriculum — the high-stakes mystery games versus the cozy community investigation game. The comparison reveals something about what investigation is for beyond crime-solving: the mapping of community, the repair of relationships, the demonstration that attentiveness is itself a form of care.

"Is there a kind of detective work you could do in your own life — not criminal investigation, but the patient, attentive mapping of a community you're part of? What small things have you been dismissing as not worth investigating? What might be underneath them if you paid serious attention?"

DGO 15, DGO 10, and DGO 17 in This Game

DGO	What the Game Practises	The Bigger Skill	What to Say
DGO 15 — Become More Accepting of Others	Extending genuine, curious, prior-to-judgment attention to each resident's account of their problem before reaching any conclusions about whether the problem is serious, whether the person is responding proportionately, or whether their account is accurate. Staying engaged with difficult residents rather than extracting information and moving on.	Active acceptance: not the passive tolerance of others' differences but the active, curious engagement with their experience on their own terms, before applying any judgment. The detective's accepting attention is a model for the accepting attention DGO 15 aims to develop in every area of life.	'What did you make of that person — not whether they were right, but what was actually going on for them?' Ask this after every case. The question redirects from problem-solving to person-understanding, which is the game's actual subject.
DGO 10 — Slow Down in Study and Consumption	Asking follow-up questions beyond what is strictly necessary to advance the case. Staying with a conversation long enough for the underlying problem to surface. Noticing environmental and conversational details that a rushed investigation would pass over. Taking the time to understand the community's relationship structure rather than just resolving individual cases.	The investigative form of DGO 10: the patient, unhurried attention that lets the gap between surface problem and underlying cause become visible. In detective work as in all deep study, the most important information is rarely what is stated first. It emerges from the willingness to remain attentive after the first answer.	'Did you ask any extra questions — ones you didn't need to but wanted to?' Ask this after a case. The answer reveals whether your child is solving puzzles or developing understanding. Both are valid; the distinction matters.
DGO 17 — Start to Contribute to Society in a Meaningful Way	Making a genuine contribution to a community through the act of taking its members' small problems seriously. Demonstrating by example that attentiveness is a form of care — that showing up to investigate someone's minor frustration is itself a meaningful act. Participating in the repair of community relationships across multiple cases.	Civic attentiveness as contribution: the understanding that what a community needs is not only solutions to large problems but the experience of its small problems being taken seriously by someone willing to invest genuine attention. The detective's work is a model of meaningful contribution that doesn't require grand gestures.	'What did the detective actually give to this town — not the solved cases, but the thing underneath the solved cases?' Ask this near the end of the game. The answer names what contribution actually means in this context: the gift of being taken seriously.

The Grade 7 Detective Arc

Little Problems is one of three Grade 7 Play With Purpose games. The detective game arc that runs through the curriculum reaches its conclusion here, before Tangle Tower takes it in a new direction.

Game	Grade	What the detective is investigating and why
Detective Grimoire	Grade 4	A collective explanation the group has accepted. The detective's job is to question it — to gather independent evidence rather than inherit the group's conclusion.
Duck Detective series	Grades 5–6	Unreliable individual accounts and collective narratives (the ghost story). The detective must hold independent hypotheses against distributed pressure to accept the obvious explanation.
Little Problems	Grade 7	Small community frictions that no one else has decided are worth investigating. The detective's job is to take them seriously before deciding whether they deserve to be — and in doing so, to reveal what's actually underneath them.
Tangle Tower	Grade 7	A complex murder mystery with seven suspects and competing hypotheses. The detective must hold multiple plausible explanations simultaneously without premature certainty — the most cognitively demanding detective task in the curriculum.

Parents' Note

Little Problems: A Cozy Detective Game was developed by Posh Cat Studios and released in 2025. It is available on Steam and holds an Overwhelmingly Positive rating. It takes approximately four to eight hours to complete and is suitable for children from age twelve. The game is rated appropriate for general audiences, with no violence, no horror, and no mature content of any kind. Its difficulty is entirely emotional and social rather than mechanical.

Why Grade 7. This game belongs at Grade 7 for two reasons. First, it requires the social maturity to recognise why small interpersonal problems deserve serious attention — a recognition that develops during early adolescence as children's social worlds become more complex. Second, it works best alongside Tangle Tower, which applies similar investigative skills to a much higher-stakes mystery. Together, they show two completely different aspects of what detective work is for: community care (Little Problems) and truth-finding under pressure (Tangle Tower). Playing both develops a fuller understanding of investigation than either game could provide alone.

The deeper value. Your child lives in communities — at school, at home, in neighbourhoods — that are full of small problems that no one investigates because they don't seem serious enough. The friendship that cooled without explanation. The misunderstanding that calcified into distance. The irritation that was never named and therefore never resolved. Little Problems makes visible what patient, accepting attention to these small things can produce: not dramatic resolutions but genuine repair, the experience of being taken seriously, and the gradual development of a community that knows its members understand each other. That's not a small thing. That's the thing small communities run on.

The gnome is not the problem.

The gnome is the signal.

Your child is the detective who knows the difference.