

Slain at the Speakeasy

A partially-scripted interactive murder mystery party
By Stefanie R. Austin

HOW TO USE THIS SCRIPT

Slain at the Speakeasy is designed to be a partially-scripted interactive murder mystery party, with all named roles played by actors. Guests are often encouraged to dress up but are not given specific roles to play.

While there is some flexibility in how this is produced, we recommend the following format:

Act I: Introduction

After all guests have arrived and settled, the **Introduction** scene is performed. Then guests are invited to mingle and question suspects using the provided prompts/questions, as well as any questions of their own. At the end of Act, the murder victim should slip out of the room (and change into costume for their Act II character.)

Act II: Murder Investigation

After the murder victim has been “killed” (i.e. left the room), the **Murder Investigation** scene is performed. Guests are given their second round of questions/prompts and again mingle and interrogate suspects and look for clues (props). At the end of the Act, guests are invited to cast a ballot on who they think the murderer is. Once ballots are collected, the **Solution** scene is performed.

We find this works best in an intimate, lounge-like setup with no more than 3-6 guests per actor – so in this case, we’d recommend capping around 50 for the best experience and so as not to overwhelm the actors. Acts I and II may take between 45-75 minutes depending on the size and enthusiasm of the audience. We find that gives enough time so that it doesn’t feel rushed yet guests don’t get bored. The script can be modified to fit the timeline you plan.

Here is a sample timeline:

- 6:00pm – Doors open
- 7:00pm – Act I begins / Introduction scene
- 8:00pm – Act II begins / Murder Investigation scene
- 9:00pm – Collect ballots (if applicable), Solution scene
- 10:00pm – Doors close

Balloting can be eliminated at the production company’s discretion. In our production, we randomly chose one winning ballot to receive a prize.

PRODUCTION TIPS

- Supply the production packet to all production staff and cast. Cast should be intimately familiar with their character’s personality, motivators, goals, and personal knowledge of other characters.

- The number of rehearsals needed will depend on your cast, but we recommend at least 3. In addition to practicing the scripted sections, we recommend character and improv exercises and mock questioning.
- If performing in an open area, scripted sections should not be over-blocked. We have found that flexibility is helpful as you don't know where guests might be when you perform the scenes.
- We recommend creating a packet of question cards for every guest in attendance. Each guest should receive a card per character with their relevant questions on it (or, if printed two-sided, can have two characters per card.) There should be a packet for each Act.
- Props/evidence should be placed strategically around the room to be discoverable by guests, or at a designated evidence table.
- Don't discount the cost of printing: question cards, ballots, certain evidence, and any promotional posters. Any of these items could be made digital or eliminated, but we have found that guests prefer the paper versions.
- Additional activities can be planned during the evening to enhance the experience and to create additional fundraising opportunities. For example: costume contest, silent auction, raffles, etc. You are welcome to modify dialogue to add details about the additional activities.
- It is up to you to decide how much information you want to provide guests prior to their arrival. For example, you might provide just a flyer advertising Ruth's Speakeasy as the best place in town for jazz and moonshine. Or, you might add additional background such as newspaper clippings or a list of character with a short description. Or you provide nothing at all. It's up to you.

OTHER FORMATS

What we love about these scripts and stories is that they are adaptable to all sorts of formats! The details above outline the original design of the script, but there are ways to modify it for larger audiences, a scavenger hunt, train mystery, etc. Please reach out to us at hello@knockemdeadscripts.com to chat about your adaption request or to brainstorm ideas.

Break a leg!