How to Play



STRANGEVILLE FILES

→ ABOUT ⊶

In this lighthearted storytelling-focused game you'll improvise supernatural mysteries in the style of Gravity Falls, Scooby Doo, Inside Job, X-Files, Men in Black, SCP Foundation.

In a world where every conspiracy theory is true, you will protect people from the weirdness of the world (or the weirdness of the world from the people).

o Hero and Narrator o

One player roleplays as the Hero investigating the mystery. Another plays as a Narrator, describing the world around them and introducing the clues. Any other players play as Support - portraying supporting characters and adding details to the story.

Each new scene, the players switch their roles.

SETUP THE GAME

o DEAL THE CARDS o

Deal 3 location cards and 3 character cards, place them where everyone can see.

→ DEFINE THE SETTING →

Together, describe a setting where your mystery takes place (inspired by the cards).

• OEFINE THE HERO ◆ •

Together, describe the Hero of your story: their name, appearance, personality, occupation, special skills or powers they have, and a reason for being in this place.

They should be someone who could encounter and investigate a mystery in this setting.

Take turns. On your turn, select one of the cards, and describe a place or a person inspired by the card. Any player will be able to use these ideas during the story.

Avoid creating locations or characters that are overtly supernatural or too unusual for this setting.

Discard the card you've used and draw a new one.

Keep taking turns until you've created three locations and three supporting characters.

• DRAW THE CLUE CARDS • •

Each player draws 3 clue cards. During the game you'll introduce clues inspired by them.

IMPROVISE A MYSTERY

⊸ HOOK ⊶

The player decides where the Hero is and what they are doing when they encounter the mystery.

The Narrator describes the scene. During the scene they introduce the first clue the Hero encounters (place a clue card and describe a clue inspired by it).

• SPECULATE ○

After each scene, each player privately makes up a **theory** about what's going on, who/what is behind it, what they're doing, why, and what their endgame is.

Don't share your theory with the other players, don't discuss the direction the story is going.

Update your theory based on each new clue you've discovered. When it's your turn to be the Narrator, you'll introduce clues based on your theory.

• INVESTIGATE ◦

The player describes what Hero does to investigate the mystery - where do they go, how do they search for clues, what do they hope to learn about the mystery.

The Narrator introduces a **challenge** - some obstacle or complication that makes the investigation difficult.

If the Hero successfully overcomes the challenge, the Narrator reveals the next clue based on their theory. Place a clue card and create a clue inspired by it, or reveal something new related to an existing clue.

The clues should become progressively more obvious.

RESOLVE THE STORY

——— THE REVEAL ←

Investigate the mystery until someone is ready to reveal the truth, explain what's going on, and establish the location where the climax of the story takes place.

The Hero or the Narrator may describe how the main character discovers the solution to the mystery.

Once the truth is revealed, the investigation story turns into a mission-based save-the-day scenario. If there's a culprit, their evil scheme is nearly complete. If there's a victim, they're in grave danger. The cause of the weirdness may need to be contained, protected, it may need help to escape or to stay hidden.

The Hero rushes to confront the culprit, help the person in need, solve the problem at the root of the mystery, protect the cause of the weirdness, or have some other dramatic resolution.

The Narrator comes up with the final challenge the Hero must overcome in order to succeed.

----- The epilogue $\circ--$

Play out the final scene that shows the consequences of the mystery and the fates of the characters.

Describe how things go back to normal, explain how the supernatural stays hidden from the world at large.

After the game, the players share their theories.

LOCATION CARDS



ANCIENT PLACE

· EXAMPLES ·

Imposing castle with dark secrets

Dilapidated mansion or crumbling estate

Archaic tower or obelisk of unknown origin

Overgrown ruins of an ancient temple

Primordial cavern or subterranean labyrinth

Ancient solitary oak with gnarled branches

1 Location



REMOTE PLACE

O EXAMPLES O

Solitary lighthouse on a distant shore

Secluded mountain peak or hidden valley

Desolate tundra or frigid arctic landscape

Isolated outpost or remote research station

Uncharted island with weird flora and fauna

Unexplored jungle or untamed wilderness

2 Location



SACRED PLACE

• EXAMPLES

Candlelit shrine tucked away in an alley

Fog-shrouded cemetery at the edge of town

Humble monastery perched on a cliff side

Ancestral burial mound or old battlefield

Holy spring hidden in a tranquil grove

Cliffside monk retreat

1 Location



UNDERGROUND

• EXAMPLES •

Network of caverns below a mountain

Dank catacombs beneath an old cathedral

Mineshaft that goes deep underground

Smuggling tunnels under a city

Ancient burial chambers carved into bedrock

Cluttered basement of a run-down house

4 Location



NATURE

O EXAMPLES O

Tall mountain peak or dormant volcano

Serene lake, turbulent sea, or winding river

Dense forest or misty, treacherous swamp

Majestic, snow-capped mountain range

Lush valley or windswept coastal beach

Fog-shrouded bayou with twisted trees

5 Location



Abandoned Place

→ EXAMPLES →

Deserted amusement park or carnival

Abandoned mental asylum or prison

Ghost town or forgotten village

Derelict factory or warehouse

Overgrown train station or vacant city lot

Vacant manor or estate

6 Location



URBAN PLACE

→ EXAMPLES →

Dimly-lit dive bar, nightclub, or casino

Gloomy alley, underpass, or train tracks

Lively park, stadium, or playground

Subway station or underground parking lot

Corporate offices in a skyscraper

Busy street corner or a mall

2 Location



SPOOKY LOCATION

· EXAMPLES ·

Foggy graveyard with crumbling tombstones

Decaying mansion with creaking floorboards

Abandoned asylum with rusty metal beds

Misty swamp with half-submerged trees

Eerie doll shop with glass eyes watching

Condemned church with boarded windows

B Location



PLACE OF KNOWLEDGE

→ EXAMPLES →

Dusty stacks of an old library or a book shop

Imposing observatory or astronomical tower

Cluttered office of an eccentric professor Prestigious school or university

High-tech lab with cutting-edge equipment

Secured vault in an antiquities museum

1 Location



RURAL PLACE

→ EXAMPLES →

Quaint village, rural farm or sprawling ranch

Small-town diner or old-fashioned shop

Rickety wooden water tower or windmill Volunteer fire station or tiny post office

Roadside produce stand

Charming bed-and-breakfast or country inn

1 Location



FORBIDDEN PLACE

→ EXAMPLES →

High-security military base or missile silo

Remote research station or secret lab

Contaminated exclusion zone or waste dump

Invitation-only private club or secret society

Off-limits government facility or power plant

Location

Sealed-off crime scene or restricted vault



COMMERCIAL PLACE

→ EXAMPLES ↔

Bank vault or bustling stock exchange

Supermarket, mall, or corner bodega

Treasury or exclusive auction house

Busy port or cargo ship laden with goods

Car dealership lot or mechanic's garage Pawn shop or antique store



OPULENT PLACE

O EXAMPLES O

Grand ballroom or lavish banquet hall

Exclusive country club or old mansion

Luxurious penthouse suite or rooftop garden

Prestigious high-end auction house Five-star restaurant or sophisticated lounge

Location

Extravagant yacht or sleek private jet



PUBLIC SPACE

→ EXAMPLES → Crowded town square with a fountain

Busy public library with towering shelves

Lively farmer's market filled with stalls Packed sports stadium during a big game

Bustling airport terminal with long queues Noisy public swimming pool on a hot day

14 Location



WORKPLACE

→ EXAMPLES →

Office cubicles with flickering lights

Grease-stained auto repair shop

Pristine research lab with microscopes

Musty antique store with creaky floorboards

Cozy bakery filled with the scent of bread

Eerie mortuary with shiny metal surfaces

15 Location



TRANSIT HUB

→ EXAMPLES → Deserted train station at midnight

Abandoned subway station Quiet bus station at the edge of town

A bustling port with ships and boats

Old-fashioned airfield

Hiking trail

16 Location



INDUSTRIAL PLACE

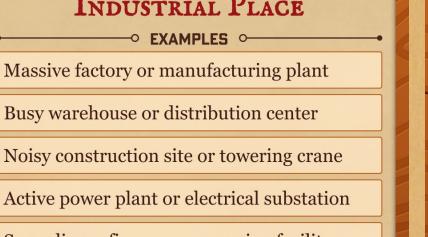
EXAMPLES 0 Massive factory or manufacturing plant

Busy warehouse or distribution center

Active power plant or electrical substation

Sprawling refinery or processing facility Bustling shipyard or airport

1 Location





Sleek underground laboratory

Cutting-edge medical facility

Airport control room

Hacker's den with laptops and gaming gear

Advanced highly automated factory

B Location

Inventor's laboratory with weird devices



Embassy or consulate

Tax office or registry Courthouse or town hall

Police station or prison

Border checkpoint or customs office

Public hospital conducting research





EXAMPLES •

Thunder-wracked sky or eternal storm

Toxic swamp or contaminated wasteland

Scorching desert or endless sand dunes Harsh, unforgiving tundra or frozen wastes

Depths of the ocean or abyssal trenches Airless void or extraterrestrial landscape

20 Location

CHARACTER CARDS



WORKER

Gruff mechanic covered in engine grease

Diligent janitor mopping the hallways

Dedicated nurse assisting patients

Hardworking farmer tending to the fields

Friendly bartender wiping down the counter

Cheerful tour guide leading a group

1 Character



AUTHORITY FIGURE

O EXAMPLES O

Town mayor with a passion for history

High school principal known for fairness

Respected elder wielding a lot of influence

Stern judge with a commanding presence

Hospital chief of staff

Revered guru with an enigmatic aura

2 Character



Powerful Person

→ EXAMPLES →

Wealthy CEO in a tailored business suit

Famous actress surrounded by paparazzi

Charismatic mayor with a winning smile

Stern judge with a commanding presence

Respected elder wielding a lot of influence

Charming cult leader with devoted followers

Character



Well-Connected

• EXAMPLES •

Chatty bartender who hears all the rumors

Nosy hairdresser with a gift for gab

Retired neighbor who loves to gossip

Friendly mailman who chats with everyone

Seasoned trucker with friends in every town

Sailor with a lot of stories to tell

4 Character



Keeper of Secrets

· EXAMPLES ·

Librarian with forbidden knowledge

Priest guarding ancient relics

Elder with tribal history

Archivist with classified documents

Lighthouse keeper with nautical tales

Government agent on a mission

5 Character



Dangerous Person

O EXAMPLES O

Ruthless mob boss feared by all

Corrupt politician with powerful connections

Unhinged drifter with a violent streak

Cold-blooded assassin with a code of honor

Unpredictable rebel with a turbulent past

Menacing bouncer with a short fuse

6 Character



CENTER OF ATTENTION

Celebrated author on a book tour

Charismatic influencer with mass following

Spoiled party girl hosting epic events

Rising star athlete in a major competition

Popular DJ with a cult following

Celebrity chef with a popular dining spot

7 Character



Investigator

O EXAMPLES O

Grizzled police detective with a troubled past

Nosy reporter stirring up controversy

Curious archaeologist on a quest

Meticulous historian seeking ancient secrets

True crime podcaster seeking justice

Aspiring mystery novelist

B Character



OLD-TIMER

→ EXAMPLES →

Dapper gentleman with a pocket watch

Prim and proper lady in a vintage dress

Bow-tie wearing professor with dated slang Grizzled prospector panning for gold

Superstitious grandparent

Nostalgic war veteran proud of his medals

9 Character



Member of a Group

→ EXAMPLES →

Protective matriarch of a powerful family

A cult member of a secret society

Passionate enthusiast of an unusual hobby A kid from a visiting tourist family

Member of a local street gang

Mischievous teen in a clique of locals

© Character



BELIEVER

→ EXAMPLES →

Devout priest with unshakable faith

Wide-eyed conspiracy theorist Zealous revolutionary fighting for a cause

Activist championing a movement

Super-fan obsessed with a celebrity Cultist devoted to a charismatic leader

11 Character



Law Enforcer

→ EXAMPLES →

Grizzled detective with no-nonsense attitude

Intimidating bouncer with a stern glare

Cold-blooded hitman with a code Loyal bodyguard with lightning reflexes

Ruthless debt collector with brass knuckles

Tax collector or a government official

12 Character



Suspicious or Secretive

→ EXAMPLES →

Special agent on a secret mission

Reclusive outcast with a hidden past

Mysterious foreigner with a fake identity Soft-spoken librarian guarding a secret

Paranoid conspiracy theorist

Enigmatic mastermind pulling strings

(B) Character



TROUBLEMAKER

→ EXAMPLES →

Angsty teenage rebel looking for trouble

Passionate activist, hacker, or whistleblower Cunning schemer manipulating others

Ill-tempered graffiti artist or vandal

Attention-seeking diva creating drama

14 Character

Former government agent gone rogue



Untrustworthy Figure

→ EXAMPLES →

Imaginative child with a knack for tall tales

Red-nosed drunkard with slurred speech Experienced con artist or fraudster

Criminal mastermind, hacker, master thief Corrupt politician or bribed official

(B) Character

Forgetful senior with a wandering mind



ADVENTURER

→ EXAMPLES → Rugged merchant with exotic wares

Enigmatic diplomat on a secret mission

Wide-eyed tourist snapping photos Seasoned explorer seeking lost ruins

Daring smuggler with hidden compartments Free-spirited backpacker following the wind

(B) Character



EXPERT **EXAMPLES** 0

Scholar on the brink of a breakthrough

Master craftsman creating exquisite works World-class athlete shattering records

Master craftsman creating exquisite works

Veteran detective cracking unsolvable cases

T Character

Acclaimed artist painting masterpieces



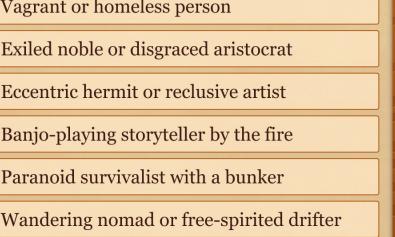
Vagrant or homeless person

Exiled noble or disgraced aristocrat

Banjo-playing storyteller by the fire

Wandering nomad or free-spirited drifter

(B) Character





O EXAMPLES O

Wide-eyed student or eager apprentice

Rookie cop or detective-in-training Fledgling artist or struggling writer

Intern or entry-level employee

Protégé or mentee seeking guidance

Novice craftsman or budding entrepreneur

(B) Character



Antiquities dealer with a hidden collection

Shady black market merchant

Cunning information broker trading secrets

Exotic animal trader with rare beasts

Traveling merchant peddling cursed wares

Friendly innkeeper with an unusual hobby

20 Character

CLUE CARDS



Tracks or Remains

→ EXAMPLES →

Unusual tracks, footprints, or trail marks

An unknown material or substance

Strange scorch marks, stains, or residues

Remains of ritualistic offerings or sacrifices

Sounds, smells, or leftovers

Trail of destruction, signs of damage

1 Clue



STRANGE ARTIFACT

○ EXAMPLES ○

Statue or painting with unsettling qualities

Bizarre music, dance, or performance

Unusual mask or an amulet

Device or instrument of unknown origin

Art depicting unnerving scenes

Object seems designed for non-human use

2 Clue



Weird Specimen or Sample

Bones or fossils of an unknown creature

Mummified corpse in strange state

Eggs, or cocoons of an unidentified species

Bizarre plant or fungus specimen

Pulsating cocoon of an otherworldly insect

Seeds that grow into carnivorous plants

3 Clue



TECHNOLOGY OR DEVICES

O EXAMPLES O

Quantum computer with powerful AI

Anachronistic clockwork device

Self-replicating nanobots

Holographic projector

Old laptop covered in spiderwebs

Microscope with strange properties

4 Clue



STRANGE BEHAVIOR

O EXAMPLES O

Keeps nervously glancing at a tower

Is seen where they don't belong

Attends secret midnight gatherings

Obviously lying or acting strangely nervous

Exhibits strong unexplained emotions

People speaking in unison

5 Clue



REVEALED SECRET

O EXAMPLES O

Character stole something valuable

Character has keys to all locked rooms

Character attends secret meetings

Character has a rare or dangerous item

Character conceals a famous identity

Character has an unusual pet

6 Clue



Mysterious Sighting

→ EXAMPLES →

Ghostly figure appears in an old photograph

Enormous creature swims in the town lake

Floating lights moving through the forest

Brief glimpse of a portal in the night sky

Mysterious cloaked figure stalks the streets

Unexplained silhouette on a rooftop

7 Clue



DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

→ EXAMPLES →

Photographs, paintings, rough sketches

Blueprints for an unusual device

Ancient deeds or strange contracts

Newspaper stories or classifieds

Books, journals, or maps

Scientific studies and reports



SURVEILLANCE INTEL

→ EXAMPLES →

Suspicious patterns in data or records

Anomalies in security camera footage

Discovery of hidden monitoring devices

Eyewitness reports of covert activities Intercepted communication

Unexplained gaps in surveillance logs

9 Clue



CRYPTIC MESSAGE

→ EXAMPLES →

Mysterious code or cipher

Puzzling riddle or enigmatic phrase

Message hidden in plain sight Incomplete or interrupted transmission

Clue hidden in a work of art or music

Clue

Message from an unknown sender or source



STORIES AND MYTHS

→ EXAMPLES →

Rumors or gossip of strange events or people

Local myths or folklore with a grain of truth

Eyewitness accounts or urban legends

Overheard conversations or stories

Whispers of a secret society's dark rituals Legends of a cursed object or place

OClue



WITNESS TESTIMONY

→ EXAMPLES →

Child claiming they saw a monster

Homeless man raves about alien beings

Fisherman's tale of a mysterious catch Reports of people vanishing into thin air

Shopkeeper's account of a strange customer

Hiker's description of eerie sounds at night



CUSTOMS AND RITUALS

→ EXAMPLES →

Bizarre local customs or taboo practices

Enigmatic sayings or coded messages

Unsettling midnight procession

Abandoned ceremonial circle Faint, rhythmic drumming from the woods

Enigmatic town motto carved in wood

13 Clue



HIDDEN PLACE

O EXAMPLES O Sealed cave behind a waterfall

Forgotten wing in an old mansion

Forgotten subway station, tracks sealed Attic room with a locked, mysterious door

Underground bunker from a past era

Hidden passageway in the local inn

14 Clue



Anomalous Structure

→ EXAMPLES →

Impossibly large building or monument

Structure made of unknown materials

Building with an impossible layout or design

Structure predating known human presence Black obelisk that defies gravity

Underground pyramid

(E) Clue



DISAPPEARANCE

→ EXAMPLES → Missing person's belongings left behind

Unexplained absence from work or home

Abandoned vehicle or mode of transport Unfinished meal or drink

Cryptic message or clue left behind

(Clue

Unusual behavior before disappearance



Unusual Creature

EXAMPLES •

Stories about a monster stalking the woods

A huge nest with several eggs Vampire squirrels with glowing eyes

A swarm of rats forming a larger creature

Parrot reciting unsettling prophecies

Moths drawn to people instead of light

OClue



○ EXAMPLES ○

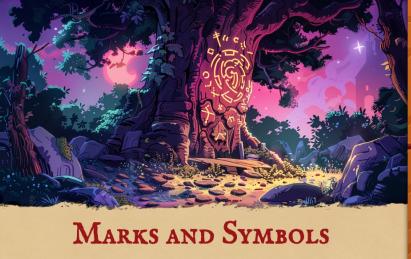
Exposure to an unknown drug or poison

Outbreak of a mysterious disease or illness Abnormal craving for strange substances

Odd symptoms like insomnia or high fever

Abnormal traits like glowing eyes or odd gait Speaking in unknown, ancient tongues

(B) Clue



O EXAMPLES O

Carvings depicting bizarre scenes Impossibly ancient or futuristic symbols

Images hinting at a terrifying truth

Glyphs that glow or move when touched Cryptic sigils that induce unease or dread

Marks made of an otherworldly substance





Ancient ruins unearthed during construction

Skeletal remains found in the town square

Perfectly preserved vintage car in a barn

Diary of a long-dead resident surfaces

(19) Clue

Intricate tunnel system below an old factory Unusual creatures in a newly dug well

20 Clue