The Stocking Alibi

An original fictional Christmas murder mystery. 7-10 participants: six suspects, one non-playing host, and optionally one to three detectives. Host suggestion: ages 16+ and 60-90 minutes, not a measured completion time. No gore, real substances, food handling or physical contact is needed.

Host setup - keep this page

The host reads the final solution first. Print pages 2-4 single-sided, cut the six role cards apart and give one to each suspect. Keep pages 5-6 hidden. Put the three public-clue cards in separate numbered envelopes. Start with round 1, allow discussion, share role statements in round 2, then release round 3 before voting. Use fictional paper clues only. Detectives ask questions and vote without changing evidence. The host may read a card aloud for accessibility. Never use real poison or ask guests to drink a clue.

Print single-sided. Role/clue cards follow. Host solution is on a separate final page.

Idris - guest pass 1

Elliot promised to repay you tonight. At 7:10 you were in the dining room arguing over the seating plan. Your private clue: Paul was there throughout the argument. Reveal it in round 2.

Ruth - guest pass 2

You planned to resign from Elliot's company after dinner. At 7:10 you were in the hall. Your private clue: you saw Cole enter the kitchen alone at 7:10 carrying a gold stocking ribbon. Reveal it in round 2.

Paul - guest pass 3

You moved the seating cards to avoid Helen. Admit this when asked. Your private clue: Idris stayed in the dining room with you between 7:05 and 7:15. Reveal it in round 2.

Helen - guest pass 4

Elliot was going to announce your failed project. Your private clue: your 7:05 photograph shows six untouched cocoa cups with blue name bands on the kitchen tray. Reveal it in round 2.

Sam - guest pass 5

You arranged the drinks and dislike Elliot's criticism. Your private clue: you left six ordinary cups on the tray at 7:00. Cole asked which blue band named Elliot before you left. Reveal it in round 2.

Cole - guest pass 6 - private, do not read aloud

You killed Elliot by replacing his cocoa cup during your 7:10 kitchen visit. This is fictional; use no real substance or drink prop. Elliot had taken credit for your work. You used a gold ribbon to mark the replacement, then hid the rest in your stocking. You may deny the accusation until the solution, but may not invent witnesses, alter printed evidence or withhold a public clue. Reveal your motive when round 2 asks everyone for a motive.

Public clue cards - host releases in order

Round 1 - the incident

At 7:20 Elliot is found dead in the study. A fictional police note says only the cocoa in his cup contained a harmful substance. The cup has a gold name band. Nobody is asked to touch or drink anything. The six guest passes remained with their named owners all evening; none was lost or lent.

Round 2 - share the statements

Each suspect reads their private clue or motive as directed on the role card. The study clock and the kitchen log agree. All cups were blue-banded at 7:05. The replacement happened between 7:05 and 7:15, when Elliot collected his cup.

Round 3 - the log and ribbon

The kitchen door log records exactly one entry between 7:05 and 7:15: guest pass 6 at 7:10. The remaining gold ribbon in Cole's stocking has an unusual notch that matches the cut edge on Elliot's cup band. Other stockings contain red or green ribbon.

HOST SOLUTION - keep separate

Cole is the murderer. Only pass 6 entered the kitchen during the replacement window, and the passes were never transferred. Ruth independently saw Cole there. Helen's photo establishes that Elliot's cup originally had a blue band; the matching gold ribbon links Cole to the replacement. Idris and Paul corroborate each other, while Sam left before the replacement. Each player votes for a suspect, method (replacement cup), and two clues. Then read this answer. The culprit may reveal the role card after the vote.