



# SHOTS IN THE DARK

A game of social deduction.

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*A brutal murder. A crime scene full of contradictions. A team of daring investigators in pursuit of justice. Only one thing is for certain: this killer knows too much to be an outside agent...*

## THE GAME

*Shots in the Dark* is a virtual social deduction game for 5 to 15 players (and 1 Judge) in which a team of investigators attempts to identify the murderous leader of a crime syndicate hiding in their midst. *Shots in the Dark* can be played over any text/video client such as Zoom, Discord, or Skype.

Gameplay is divided into three phases: Trial, Judgment, and Recess. During Trial, players attempt to identify the members of the Syndicate. During Judgment, players may vote to find one player guilty. If the Investigation team finds the Mastermind guilty, they win the game. During Recess, the Syndicate sows destruction and chaos. If the Investigation team fails to find the Mastermind guilty before time runs out, or if the Syndicate team succeeds in killing enough Investigators, the Syndicate wins.

Every player in *Shots in the Dark* has a public Investigator role with a special ability that aids their team by gathering information, disrupting or assisting other characters, or killing members of the opposing team. Players on the Syndicate team cannot use their Investigator abilities and instead have a second, secret role which grants them different abilities. Because any player might be a criminal genius in disguise, everyone is a suspect.

## ROLES

*The Witness claims she saw the Detective and the Archivist at the scene and thinks they had something to do with the killing... but has someone intimidated the Witness? The Journalist says that the victim identified the killer in their final interview... but is the Journalist the one who struck the killing blow? In the midst of all this chaos, the Mastermind is laughing, while the Judge sees all...*

One player takes on the role of the Judge. The Judge does not play, but is critical to the game: they are the narrator, facilitator, and final say on any questions or disagreements that arise during play.

All other players have a randomly selected Investigator role. Syndicate players have an additional secret role.

5 to 8 players: 1 Mastermind, 1 Henchling, 3-5 Investigators

9 to 12 players: 1 Mastermind, 2 Henchlings, 6-7 Investigators

13 to 15 players: 1 Mastermind, 3 Henchlings, 9-11 Investigators

## SETUP

Before the game begins, all players mute their microphones and turn off their webcams. The Judge messages players individually with their role(s). The Judge assigns an Investigator role to each player, then chooses the appropriate number of players to be secret Syndicate members and assigns each of them a Syndicate role.

During Setup:

- Members of the Syndicate team are identified to each other. Henchlings know who their Mastermind is, and vice versa, but Syndicate players do not know the specific roles of their teammates. (For example: Jared knows that he is the Mastermind and that Devin and Simone are his Henchlings, but does not know that Simone is the Enforcer and Devin is the Sweep.)
- If there is a Spy, they are identified to the Syndicate team as a Henchling. (For example: Kelli is the Mastermind and knows that she should only have one Henchling, but both Keri (the Spy) and Danny (the Hacker) are identified as her Henchlings.)
- If there is a Sleuth, they are given the list of roles in play and choose an unused role to be their public Investigator role.
- All other players are informed of their role.

## RUNNING THE GAME

*Shots in the Dark* is played over a series of cycles. If the Investigators have not caught the Mastermind by the end of the final cycle, the Syndicate wins. However, any time the Syndicate kills a member of the Investigation team, the game is extended by another cycle.

For 5-8 players, the initial number of cycles needed for the Syndicate to win is 3. This increases to 4 cycles for 9-12 players and 5 cycles for 13-15 players.

Each cycle consists of three phases: the Trial, the Judgment, and the Recess.

At the beginning of the first Trial, the Judge announces the Investigation roles of all players and invites them to begin the first Trial phase.

### ***TRIAL***

During the Trial phase, videos are on and mics are unmuted. At the start of each Trial, the Judge immediately announces any characters who have been killed during the previous Recess and reminds the players how many Trial days remain until the Syndicate wins. Players can freely discuss and strategize amongst themselves. Players may have side conversations via text during the Trial but must announce to the entire group when they are beginning a side conversation and state who they are talking to.

Players have 5 minutes for discussion during each Trial phase. This can be shortened or extended depending on your group; it may be best to set an 8 or 10 minute timer to accommodate larger groups, new players, or any access needs.

### ***JUDGMENT***

During the Judgment phase, videos are on and mics are unmuted. Players may only speak at the direction of the Judge. No side conversations are permitted during the Judgment.

Each player may submit a nomination for one other player to be found guilty. When making a nomination, a player cannot explain or defend their reasoning - they must simply state, for example, "I nominate Paul." The nominated player has 30 seconds to argue their case before voting begins. The Judge asks each player in turn (including the nominated player) to share their vote: GUILTY or NOT GUILTY. If a majority of living, non-guilty players vote GUILTY, the nominated player is Condemned - unless another player is Condemned instead.

Voting continues until there are no remaining nominations. In order to be Condemned, a player must receive a majority of votes from living players *and* at least one more vote than the last player to be Condemned during that Judgment phase. For example, if AJ has been Condemned with 3 votes, then Tracy must receive at least 4 votes to be Condemned in his place.

Players who have been killed or found guilty may use their Final Will and Testament to vote GUILTY on any nomination. Whether or not the nomination succeeds, the Will is expended.

Each player can only nominate and be nominated once per Judgment phase. Only one player can be Condemned at the end of each Judgment phase.

When voting has finished, the Condemned player (if any) is pronounced guilty. If no players receive enough votes to be pronounced guilty, play proceeds to the Recess.

At the end of the Judgment phase, the Prosecutor and the Defense may use their abilities.

### ***RECESS***

During the Recess, all cameras are turned off and all mics are muted. The Judge messages each player individually in the order that the roles appear in on page 7. No side conversations are permitted during the Recess.

If a team has won, the Judge announces their victory at the end of the Recess.

### **FINAL WILL AND TESTAMENT**

A character who is killed or found guilty can no longer use their ability, including during the Recess immediately following their death or judgment. However, they may continue to testify throughout the remainder of the game and can make one final nomination and issue one final GUILTY vote during Judgment. A guilty player can be exonerated by the Defense, in which case they will immediately regain their ability to nominate and vote if they have already expended their Final Will and Testament.

### **WINNING AND LOSING**

The objective of the Investigation team is to catch the Mastermind by finding them guilty during the Judgment phase on any day. The Investigation team immediately wins if the Mastermind is found guilty, or if the Vigilante kills the Mastermind.

The objective of the Syndicate is to get away with murder - either by having the Mastermind avoid judgment on the final day or by killing all but two players (one of which must be the Mastermind). If at the end of any Recess the living Syndicate members outnumber the living Investigators and the Investigation team has used all of their final votes from dead or guilty players, the Syndicate wins.

# ROLE LIST

## THE INVESTIGATORS

**ARCHIVIST:** Once per game, during any Recess, the Archivist chooses a player (alive or dead) and learns if they have received any false information during the game.

**BODYGUARD:** The Bodyguard chooses one player to protect during each Recess. If that player would be killed, the Bodyguard is killed instead, and the surviving player learns that their killer was one of two players.

**CLERK:** Each Recess, the Clerk learns if the Mastermind voted 'guilty' in the previous Judgment.

**DEFENSE:** Once per game, at the end of any Judgment, the Defense may choose a living player who has been declared guilty. That player is pronounced innocent and may resume voting and nominating.

**DETECTIVE:** Each Recess, the Detective chooses a living player. If this player would receive false information during that Recess, they instead receive true information.

**DOCTOR:** During each Recess, the Doctor chooses a player. If that player is killed during the Recess, they instead stay alive until the following Judgment, receiving any final information from their ability. At the start of the Judgment, they die.

**FORENSIC SPECIALIST:** If a player is killed during a Recess, the Forensic Specialist learns the role of the killer.

**INFORMANT:** During each Recess, the Informant chooses two characters (not themselves) and learn if both characters are on the same team.

**JOURNALIST:** Once per game, during any Recess, the Journalist chooses a player (alive or dead). If they are a member of the Investigation team, the Journalist learns a piece of information that they received from their role during the game.

**PROSECUTOR:** At the end of each Judgment, the Prosecutor may publicly announce that they are detaining one character. This character may not use their ability during the following Recess.

**SLEUTH:** At the start of the game, the Sleuth chooses an Investigator role that is not in play and publicly claims that identity. They cannot use that role's ability.

**SPY:** The Spy is randomly assigned another public Investigator role but cannot use the ability for this secondary role. They register to Syndicate players as a Henchling. They do not learn the identities of the Syndicate players.

**STENOGRAPHER:** Each Recess, the Stenographer learns if a Henchling nominated someone during the previous Judgment.

**VIGILANTE:** Once per game, during the Trial, the Vigilante can kill any living player.

**WARDEN:** Each Recess, the Warden learns which character (if any) was judged guilty during the previous Judgment.

**WITNESS:** Each Recess, the Witness chooses a character. If that character is killed during the same Recess, the Witness learns that the killer was one of two players.

### THE SYNDICATE

**FALL GUY:** Any time the Mastermind would be identified by an ability, the Fall Guy registers as the Mastermind instead if they are alive and not guilty.

**HITMAN:** Once per game, the Hitman chooses one player to kill during a Recess.

**HACKER:** During each Recess, the Hacker chooses one player. If this player uses an ability during the Recess, it malfunctions: their ability gives false information, chooses a different target, or is canceled out.

**INFILTRATOR:** Once per game, the Infiltrator may use their Investigator ability. If their Investigator ability can be used during the Recess, refer to the Order of Operations (p.7) to determine when it activates.

**SWEEP:** During each Recess, the Sweep chooses one player. No information about that player can be gained by any role.

**MASTERMIND:** During each Recess, the Mastermind may take one or both actions from the following options:

- 1) Kill one living player.
- 2) Intimidate one living player. If the intimidated player reveals or discusses any truthful information related to their role in the following Trial and Judgment phases, they will be killed during the following Recess.

## ORDER OF OPERATIONS (DURING RECESS)

**Sweep**

**Hacker**

Detective

Witness

Doctor

Bodyguard

**Mastermind**

**Hitman**

Forensic Specialist

**Enforcer**

Warden

Journalist

Archivist

Stenographer

Informant

Created for the 2021 Megaman Game Jam.

Thanks for playing! <3