25 Murder Mystery Riddles

Short whodunits for adults and teens — read the story, find the clue, name the culprit. Answers at the back.

1. Fresh Snow

EASY

At seven o'clock on a winter morning the cook found Lord Ashby dead in his library. It had snowed all night and stopped at six. The gardener said: "I walked up the drive at half past six, saw the library lamp on and went straight round to the potting shed." Through the library window the inspector could see the long drive, white and perfectly smooth. Why did she arrest the gardener?

2. The Steaming Cup

EASY

Mrs. Ward told the police she found her business partner slumped over his desk at three o'clock, fainted from the shock and only came round at five, when she telephoned for help. The police arrived at ten past five. On the desk, beside the body, a cup of tea was still steaming. Why don't the police believe her?

3. Into the Sunset

EASY

Felix says he couldn't have been at the lake house at six that evening: he was driving east along the coast road, "squinting into the setting sun the whole way home." What's wrong with his alibi?

4. Lights Out

EASY

The storm knocked out the electricity across the whole village from nine at night until dawn. Miranda says she spent the evening in bed reading by her electric bedside lamp and never heard a thing until the screaming started at midnight. Why does the detective doubt her?

5. Said Too Much

EASY

Inspector Dove gathered the family in the drawing room. "I'm afraid your aunt was found dead this morning," she said — and nothing more. The niece burst into tears: "Who would poison a sweet old woman in her own greenhouse?" Who does the inspector want to question first?

6. The Sunday Deposit

EASY

The chauffeur says he spent Sunday morning, from nine until noon, at the bank in town paying in his wages — so he couldn't have been at the manor when the safe was emptied and the baron struck down. Why don't his employers believe him?

7. Mud in a Dry Summer

EASY

It hadn't rained in three weeks; every lane in the village was dust. The only muddy ground for miles was the bank of the leaking millpond, where the miller was found. Three suspects were brought in. The tailor's boots were dusty, the baker's were covered in flour and the schoolmaster's were caked in wet mud. Who was at the millpond?

8. Frosty Pete

EASY

Frosty Pete was found at noon in the middle of the lawn: a carrot, two lumps of coal, a top hat and a scarf, lying in a puddle. There were no footprints anywhere near him. Who's responsible?

9. The Thirty-First of April

EASY

The victim's notebook ended with one last entry in a shaky hand: "Thursday 31 April — meet K. at the boathouse." His housekeeper explained that she had written it down for him because he had hurt his wrist. Why did the detective take the notebook as evidence against the housekeeper?

10. One Glove

EASY

A single right-hand leather glove lay under the open study window. The butler showed the inspector his pair: "Both here, you see." The gardener had only one glove left, a left one: "Lost the other last week." The cook said she never wears gloves at all. Whose glove was under the window?

11. The Fast Watch

MEDIUM

The heiress was found in the garden maze. Her wristwatch had smashed when she fell, stopping at 11:15 — and her cousin, who was at the club from 11:10 onwards, looked safe. But the whole family knew she kept her watch twenty minutes fast "so I'm never late." Is the cousin in the clear?

12. The Candle Clock

MEDIUM

When the body was found at midnight, the candle on the dinner table — eight inches tall when new — had burned down to three inches. That kind of candle burns one inch an hour. The butler insists he lit it at nine, after the last guest had gone home. What does the candle say?

13. The Rolling Pin

MEDIUM

The inspector told the kitchen staff only that the head chef had been found dead in the cold store. "Stabbed, I suppose," whispered the maid. "Don't be silly," snapped the pastry cook, "nobody gets stabbed with a rolling pin." Who's the suspect?

14. Footprints the Wrong Way

MEDIUM

The nephew insisted a burglar had climbed in through the study window: "Look at the footprints in the flower bed!" The bed had been dug over that morning and the prints were deep and clear — but every one of them pointed away from the house. What really happened?

15. The Tide Table

MEDIUM

The body lay on the sandbar, which can only be reached on foot around low tide. Low tide was at six in the morning and high tide at noon, when the sandbar is under two metres of water. The beachcomber said he waded out at half past eleven to look for shells and found the body. Why is his story impossible?

16. No Sugar, Thanks

MEDIUM

Two sisters shared a pot of tea in the conservatory. Both drank two cups from the same pot, but only one of them died. The poison wasn't in the pot, the cups or the milk jug. How did the poisoner make sure only one sister died — and who is the obvious suspect?

17. Only the Killer Lies

MEDIUM

One of three cooks poisoned the soup. The two innocent cooks tell the truth; the killer lies.

- **Ada:** "Cleo is innocent."
- **Bruno:** "Ada did it."
- **Cleo:** "Bruno is lying."

Who poisoned the soup?

18. Exactly One Truth

MEDIUM

Three suspects, one killer — and this time only **one** of the three statements is true.

- **Dora:** "I didn't do it."
- **Eli:** "Dora did it."
- **Fay:** "I didn't do it."

Who's the killer?

19. The Card Table

HARD

Four card players, one dead host. The killer lies; the other three tell the truth.

- **Ash:** "Either Bryn or Dina did it."
- **Bryn:** "Cole is telling the truth."
- **Cole:** "Ash is telling the truth."
- **Dina:** "Bryn and I are both innocent."

Who did it?

20. Two Liars

HARD

This time the killer had an accomplice: exactly **two** of these four are lying — the killer and the one covering for them. The other two tell the truth.

- **Ulla:** "Vance did it."
- **Vance:** "Yusuf is lying."
- **Wren:** "Ulla did it."
- **Yusuf:** "Ulla is lying."

Who's the killer, and who's covering?

21. Last to Leave

HARD

Five guests left the dinner party one at a time, at 10:00, 10:20, 10:40, 11:00 and 11:20. The host phoned his sister at 11:10, alive and well, and was found dead at 11:30 — so the killer was the last guest still in the house.

- Noor left before Lena, and Lena left before Mo.
- Otto left exactly forty minutes after Lena.
- Pia left twenty minutes after Noor.

Who was the last to leave?

22. The Connecting Door

HARD

On the night train, six passengers slept in cabins 1 to 6, cabin 1 being nearest the engine. Cabins 1–2, 3–4 and 5–6 share connecting doors. Vera was killed by someone who came through her connecting door.

- Vera's cabin number is even.
- Cal is in the cabin nearest the engine.
- Dot is further back from the engine than Vera.
- Abe and Bea are in cabins side by side, with no connecting door between them.
- Eve is not in either of the last two cabins.

Who killed Vera?

23. Knights and Knaves at the Manor

HARD

Every guest at Ravenhurst is either a knight, who always tells the truth, or a knave, who always lies. The killer is a knave.

- **Ross:** "Sam is a knave."
- **Sam:** "Tia did it."
- **Tia:** "Ross is a knave."

Who's the killer?

24. Exactly Two Truths

HARD

Exactly **two** of these four statements are true.

- **Gil:** "Either Hope or Ivan did it."
- **Hope:** "Ivan is innocent."
- **Ivan:** "Jade did it."
- **Jade:** "Gil is innocent."

Who's the killer?

25. The Lock on the Safe

HARD

The stolen necklace is in a safe with a three-digit lock — three different digits. The thief scribbled their failed attempts on a notepad, with what the lock told them:

- **147** — one digit is right, but in the wrong place.
- **189** — one digit is right and in the right place.
- **964** — two digits are right, both in the wrong places.
- **523** — nothing is right.
- **286** — one digit is right, but in the wrong place.

What's the code?

Answer key

1. **Fresh Snow.** The snow stopped at six, so anyone walking up the drive at half past six would have left a trail of footprints. The drive was untouched: the gardener never came up it. He had been inside the house all along.
2. **The Steaming Cup.** A cup of tea goes cold long before two hours are up. A steaming cup had been poured minutes before the police arrived — so Mrs. Ward was up and about long after she says she fainted.
3. **Into the Sunset.** The sun sets in the west. Driving east at sunset, the sun is behind you — nobody squints into it. Felix made the drive up.
4. **Lights Out.** There was no power after nine o'clock, so her electric lamp couldn't have been on. Her quiet night of reading never happened.
5. **Said Too Much.** The niece. Nobody had mentioned poison or the greenhouse. Only someone who was there — or who planned it — could know both.
6. **The Sunday Deposit.** Banks are closed on Sundays. His alibi is three hours spent in a locked building.
7. **Mud in a Dry Summer.** The schoolmaster. Wet mud could only have come from the leaking millpond.
8. **Frosty Pete.** The sun. Pete was a snowman, and he melted. (Not every riddle needs a murderer.)
9. **The Thirty-First of April.** April has only thirty days. Nobody books a meeting for the 31st of April — the entry was invented, and the only person who admits writing it is the housekeeper.
10. **One Glove.** The gardener's. His missing glove is a right-hand one — exactly the glove found under the window.
11. **The Fast Watch.** No. A watch twenty minutes fast that shows 11:15 means the real time was 10:55 — a quarter of an hour before the cousin walked into the club. (And a killer who knew about the fast watch might have smashed it on purpose.)
12. **The Candle Clock.** Five inches had burned at an inch an hour, so the candle was lit at seven, not nine — while the last guest was still in the house. The butler moved the time by two hours to make that visit disappear: he's protecting the guest, or himself.
13. **The Rolling Pin.** The pastry cook. The inspector never said what the weapon was — the pastry cook gave it away while trying to sound sensible.
14. **Footprints the Wrong Way.** Nobody climbed in. Footprints that only lead away from the window were made by someone walking out of the house to fake a break-in — which is exactly the story the nephew was so keen to tell.
15. **The Tide Table.** At half past eleven, half an hour before high tide, the sandbar was almost completely under water — nobody wades out to look for shells then. If he found the body, he found it early that morning, at low tide, and kept quiet for hours.
16. **No Sugar, Thanks.** The poison was in the sugar bowl. The sister who died took two sugars; the survivor always drinks her tea black — and she's the one who knew exactly who would take the sugar.
17. **Only the Killer Lies. Bruno.** If Ada were the killer, her statement would be false — making Cleo guilty too, which is impossible. If Cleo were the killer, she'd be lying about Bruno, so Bruno would be truthful and Ada guilty: two killers again. Only Bruno works: he lies about Ada, Ada truthfully clears Cleo, and Cleo is right that Bruno is lying.
18. **Exactly One Truth. Fay.** Dora and Eli contradict each other, so exactly one of them is telling the truth. That uses up the only true statement, so Fay's must be false: she did it.
19. **The Card Table. Dina.** There's only one liar. If Ash were the killer, Cole (who says Ash tells the truth) would be lying too. If Cole were the killer, Bryn (who vouches for Cole) would be lying too. If Bryn were the killer, her lie would make Cole a liar as well. So Ash, Bryn and Cole are all honest — and innocent. Ash says it was Bryn or Dina; it wasn't Bryn, so it was Dina, and her statement is the lie.
20. **Two Liars. Ulla is the killer and Vance is covering for her.** Ulla and Wren accuse different people, so at least one of them is lying. If Ulla were honest and Wren lying, Vance would be the killer and the second liar — but then Yusuf would have to be honest, and he says Ulla is lying. If both Ulla and Wren were lying, Vance and Yusuf would both be honest — but Vance says Yusuf is lying. So Wren is honest: Ulla did it, Yusuf rightly calls her a liar, and Vance, who calls Yusuf a liar, is the accomplice.
21. **Last to Leave. Otto.** Otto left forty minutes after Lena, so Lena left at 10:00, 10:20 or 10:40. Not at 10:00 — Noor left before her. Not at 10:20 either: then Noor left at 10:00 and Pia at 10:20, the same time as Lena. So Lena left at 10:40 and Otto at 11:20, the last guest in the house. (Noor 10:00, Pia 10:20, Mo 11:00.)

22. **The Connecting Door. Cal.** Vera's cabin is even but can't be 6 (Dot is further back), so it's 2 or 4. If it were 4, Abe and Bea — neighbours without a door between them — would need cabins 2 and 3, leaving 5 and 6 for Dot and Eve, and Eve can't be in either. So Vera sleeps in cabin 2, and the only cabin behind her connecting door is cabin 1: Cal's.

23. **Knights and Knaves at the Manor. Sam.** If Ross were a knave, Tia's statement would be true (so Tia is a knight) and Ross's lie would make Sam a knight — whose "Tia did it" would then be true, but killers are knaves and Tia is a knight. So Ross is a knight, which makes Sam a knave and Tia (who called Ross a knave) a knave too. Sam is lying, so Tia is innocent — the killer is Sam.

24. **Exactly Two Truths. Ivan.** Test each suspect. If Gil did it, only Hope's statement is true. If Hope did it, Gil, Hope and Jade are all right — three. If Jade did it, Hope, Ivan and Jade are right — three again. Only Ivan gives exactly two: Gil and Jade are right, Hope and Ivan are wrong.

25. **The Lock on the Safe. 679.** 523 rules out 5, 2 and 3, so 286's right digit is 8 or 6. If it were 8, 964 would need both 9 and 4, and there's no way to place 8, 9 and 4 that satisfies both 189 and 147 — so 6 is in the code, and not last. 964 needs one more of 9 and 4. If it were 4, 189's right digit would have to be 1 in first place, and then 147 would have two right digits. So it's 9, and 189 puts it last. 964 says 6 isn't in the middle, so 6 comes first, and 147's one right digit, 7, takes the middle: 6-7-9.

Want a bigger mystery?

A new free floor-plan murder mystery every day at **roomformurder.com** — place the suspects, find who was alone with the victim. Free printable cases with answers at roomformurder.com/printable.