# THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY HEIST

A 45-minute printable escape game
for libraries, youth groups and team events.

2-6 players | ages 10+ | 45 minutes
No actor, no locked door, no special props -
just paper, envelopes and everyday items.

*Sample kit for idea #54: licensed printable escape games.*
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# Puzzle : Host Setup Guide

*Difficulty: read before printing*

Welcome, Game Master. Everything below fits in six ordinary envelopes. Print this kit single-sided on regular paper (cardstock recommended for clue cards and hint cards). Total print: 14 pages.

## What goes in each envelope

- Envelope 1: Story intro page + Puzzle 1 (the torn bookmark) + section directory card
- Envelope 2: Puzzle 2 (the thief's coded note + cipher strip)
- Envelope 3: Puzzle 3 (the librarian's checkout log)
- Envelope 4: Puzzle 4 (the overdue list)
- Envelope 5: Puzzle 5 (ordering the digits) + combination lock entry sheet
- Envelope 6 (SEALED): the reveal page. Do not let players peek early.

Stick the matching envelope label (last page - cut along the dashed lines) on each envelope. Seal Envelope 6 with tape and write OPEN ONLY WHEN THE CODE IS ENTERED across the flap.

## Everyday prop list

- 6 envelopes (standard letter size) + the 6 cut-out labels
- Pens or pencils for each player, plus scratch paper
- Scissors (for hint cards and labels)
- A phone or kitchen timer set to 45:00
- Optional atmosphere: dim the lights, one flashlight per team
- Optional prize: hide a small book, a chocolate coin, or a printed 'Aurora Codex' cover where the reveal page says the book is hidden - players love a physical payoff.

## Timing guide (45 minutes)

- 0:00 - Read the story intro aloud. Start the timer. Hand out Envelope 1.
- 0:05 - Puzzle 1 (warm-up wordplay) - nudge with Hint 1 if stuck past 5 min.
- 0:12 - Puzzle 2 (cipher) - the cipher strip is on the page; Hint 2 names the shift.
- 0:20 - Puzzle 3 (number pattern) - Hint 1 points at the rows.
- 0:28 - Puzzle 4 (hidden message in titles) - Hint 2 names the trick.
- 0:35 - Puzzle 5 (ordering the digits) + entering the code.
- 0:42 - Envelope 6: the reveal, the certificate, photos.
- If a team is stuck more than 8 minutes on any puzzle, hand them the next hint tier. Tier 3 always gives the answer - a finished game beats a perfect one.

## ENVELOPE 1

Open first. Read the story, then solve Puzzle 1.

# The crime

The clock in the reading room has just struck midnight. Somewhere above you, a window clicks shut. By morning the police will dust for fingerprints and file their report - but the Midnight Library does not call the police. It calls you.

The Aurora Codex - the library's rarest book, a hand-illuminated atlas said to chart lands that do not exist - is gone from its glass case. The night librarian found only this: a torn bookmark, a coded note, a doctored checkout log, a suspicious overdue list, and one sealed envelope the thief apparently meant to destroy.

The thief is still in the building. Or the book is. Either way, the trail is 45 minutes cold and getting colder. Work the clues in order, open each envelope only when the last puzzle tells you to, and recover the Aurora Codex before dawn.

***Your first clue is the torn bookmark below. The thief fancied himself a poet - and poets always hide something in their lines.***

# Puzzle 1: The Torn Bookmark

*Difficulty: Easy - warm-up*

The bookmark is torn from a poetry collection. Read it the way the thief wrote it - he loved hiding messages in plain sight.

```
Silent the hall when the clock strikes ten,
Catalogs whisper of thieves and men.
Ink-dark windows hide the moon,
Every footstep fades too soon.
None may enter, none may leave,
Candles gutter - still I believe
Even thieves leave tracks behind.
```

**Section directory (found taped inside the returns bin):**

```
HISTORY      -> 1
SCIENCE      -> 2
POETRY       -> 3
MAPS         -> 4
FICTION      -> 5
RARE BOOKS   -> 6
```

**Solved it? Your answer tells you which envelope to open next: Envelope 2.**

## ENVELOPE 2

Open only when Puzzle 1 sends you here.

# Puzzle 2: The Thief's Note

*Difficulty: Easy-Medium - cipher*

Folded into a paper crane (the thief had flair), this note is written in cipher. A scribble in the margin reads: "the clock runs three hours fast."

```
WKUHH VKDGRZV FURVV WKH IORRU
```

Cipher strip - line up the alphabets to decode. The note was encoded by shifting each letter forward; the margin scribble tells you how far.

```
PLAIN :  A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
CIPHER:  D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C
```

*To decode: find each cipher letter on the bottom row and read the plain letter above it. The decoded note names a number - that number opens the next envelope.*

**Solved it? Your answer tells you which envelope to open next: Envelope 3.**

## ENVELOPE 3

Open only when Puzzle 2 sends you here.

# Puzzle 3: The Checkout Log

*Difficulty: Medium - number pattern*

The night librarian's checkout log. One entry is smudged - but the thief touched this page, and thieves are creatures of habit. Every complete row follows the same rule. Find the missing number.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 1 | 5 |
| 2 | 6 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 | ? |

*The missing number is a single digit - and it opens the next envelope.*

**Solved it? Your answer tells you which envelope to open next: Envelope 4.**

## ENVELOPE 4

Open only when Puzzle 3 sends you here.

# Puzzle 4: The Overdue List

*Difficulty: Medium - wordplay*

Four books, months overdue, shelved out of order by someone in a hurry. The thief reshelved them himself - and, being a poet, could not resist leaving one more hidden message in the titles.

1. Fog Over the River
2. Ivory and Ash
3. Vanishing Ink
4. Echoes in the Stacks

*The message names a number. That number opens the next envelope.*

**Solved it? Your answer tells you which envelope to open next: Envelope 5.**

## ENVELOPE 5

Open only when Puzzle 4 sends you here.

# Puzzle 5: The Combination

*Difficulty: Harder - logic*

You now hold four digits, one from each puzzle you solved. Write them here:

**Digits found:** ____ ____ ____ ____

The archive box needs the digits in the right order. The thief's envelope held one last scrap - four clues about the order:

1. The 2 leads the way - it is the first digit of the code.
2. The 5 brings up the rear - it is the last digit of the code.
3. The 4 comes somewhere before the 3.
4. The 3 is not the second digit.

**COMBINATION LOCK - enter the 4-digit code:**

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

*Self-check: your four digits add up to 14. If they don't, recheck puzzles 1-4.*

**Code entered and checked? Open Envelope 6 - the sealed one.**

## ENVELOPE 6

SEALED - open only after entering the code.

# The reveal

The code clicks. Inside the archive box, folded small, is the thief's confession - and a map pin stuck through one word: MAPS.

The Aurora Codex never left the building. It is inside the hollowed-out atlas on the MAPS section's bottom shelf, right where the thief shelved it between two books nobody ever borrows. He meant to come back for it at dawn. He will find you waiting instead.

Take the certificate from your Game Master, write in your team name and your time, and bow to your fellow sleuths. The Midnight Library thanks you.

*Game Master note: the correct code is 2-4-3-5. If the team opened this early, no harm done - hand them the certificate anyway.*

# Hint Cards

*Cut along the dashed lines. Reveal one tier at a time - Tier 3 always gives the answer.*

### Puzzle 1 - The Torn Bookmark

**Tier 1 (nudge):**

The thief loved hiding messages in plain sight. Don't just read the words - look at the shape of the lines.

**Tier 2 (strong hint):**

Read the FIRST letter of each line, from top to bottom.

**Tier 3 (answer):**

The letters spell SCIENCE. The directory card says SCIENCE = 2. Open Envelope 2.

### Puzzle 2 - The Thief's Note

**Tier 1 (nudge):**

It is a substitution cipher: every letter is shifted by the same amount. Use the cipher strip on the page.

**Tier 2 (strong hint):**

The margin says the clock runs three hours fast: shift each cipher letter BACK by 3 (find it on the bottom row, read the top).

**Tier 3 (answer):**

It decodes to THREE SHADOWS CROSS THE FLOOR. The number word is THREE - open Envelope 3.

### Puzzle 3 - The Checkout Log

**Tier 1 (nudge):**

Look at each row of numbers as a group. The two complete rows follow the same rule.

**Tier 2 (strong hint):**

Add up the numbers in each complete row.

**Tier 3 (answer):**

Each complete row adds to 10, so 3 + 3 + ? = 10 and the missing number is 4. Open Envelope 4.

# Hint Cards

*Cut along the dashed lines. Reveal one tier at a time - Tier 3 always gives the answer.*

### Puzzle 4 - The Overdue List

**Tier 1 (nudge):**

The message is hidden in the titles themselves - not in the stories, the authors, or the order.

**Tier 2 (strong hint):**

Take the FIRST letter of each title and read them top to bottom.

**Tier 3 (answer):**

They spell F-I-V-E. Open Envelope 5.

### Puzzle 5 - The Combination

**Tier 1 (nudge):**

You need all four digits in the right order. Write the four clues out and test them one at a time.

**Tier 2 (strong hint):**

Clues 1 and 2 fix the first and last digits (2 first, 5 last). Only the middle two are left to place.

**Tier 3 (answer):**

The 4 comes before the 3, so the code is 2-4-3-5. Check: the digits sum to 14. Open Envelope 6.

### The Finale - Entering the Code

**Tier 1 (nudge):**

Double-check each digit against its puzzle before blaming the lock.

**Tier 2 (strong hint):**

Puzzle answers: bookmark = 2, coded note = 3, checkout log = 4, overdue list = 5.

**Tier 3 (answer):**

The order is 2-4-3-5 (see Puzzle 5's clues). If the sum isn't 14, one digit is wrong - recheck that puzzle.

# Solution Guide

*Game Master only - worked answers for every puzzle.*

### Puzzle 1 - The Torn Bookmark -> 2

Take the first letter of each line: S-C-I-E-N-C-E spells SCIENCE. The section directory maps SCIENCE to 2. Envelope 2 opens next.

### Puzzle 2 - The Thief's Note -> 3

Shift each cipher letter back by 3 (the clock runs three hours fast): "WKUHH VKDGRZV FURVV WKH IORRU" decodes to "THREE SHADOWS CROSS THE FLOOR". The number word THREE gives 3. Envelope 3 opens next.

### Puzzle 3 - The Checkout Log -> 4

Each complete row sums to 10 (4+1+5, 2+6+2), so 3+3+? = 10 and the missing number is 4. Envelope 4 opens next.

### Puzzle 4 - The Overdue List -> 5

First letters of the four titles: F-I-V-E spells FIVE, giving 5. Envelope 5 opens next.

### Puzzle 5 - The Combination -> 2-4-3-5

The four digits are 2, 3, 4, 5. Clues fix 2 first and 5 last; 4 before 3 places the middle pair as 4, 3. Final code: 2-4-3-5 (digit sum 14). Envelope 6 opens next.

### Finale - The Reveal

Code 2-4-3-5 opens the archive box. The Aurora Codex is hidden in the hollowed-out atlas on the MAPS section's bottom shelf.

# Certificate of Deduction

This certifies that

_____

*(team name)*

solved THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY HEIST,
recovered the Aurora Codex, and escaped before dawn.

Solved in _____ minutes  Date: _____

***Rank: Master Sleuth of the Midnight Library***

# Envelope Labels

*Cut along the dashed lines and stick one on each envelope.*

## ENVELOPE 1

*Open first - the crime scene*

## ENVELOPE 2

*Open when Puzzle 1 sends you here*

## ENVELOPE 3

*Open when Puzzle 2 sends you here*

## ENVELOPE 4

*Open when Puzzle 3 sends you here*

## ENVELOPE 5

*Open when Puzzle 4 sends you here*

## ENVELOPE 6

*SEALED - open only when the code is entered*