



On a stormy night, the mysterious package arrives. The lights go out. When the power is restored, the lights flicker on to reveal that the box has been ripped open and its contents stolen. All of us have something with us in our backpacks, handbags, satchels, etc., but one of us is The Thief.

The Thief must make up a story about why they have the stolen item to fool the innocent. The innocent use a prompt to explain why they have their item and try to catch The Thief!

TO START

All players need something to write on, and something to write with.

Take the sleeves out of the box, one for each player. Make sure one of them has the "Stolen" insert.

The dealer draws an Item Card for each player and puts them in the sleeves. The cards and the sleeves should be face down, so no one, including the dealer, sees them.

The dealer mixes them up and deals one to each player face down.

TO PLAY

Players look at their card long enough to understand what they have and why they have it. The player to the left of the dealer starts by saying "I am not The Thief, but I have ____."

That player reveals the picture on the card with the bottom covered by his or her hand then puts the card down, not to be looked at again until the end of the round. Each player does the same, going clockwise around the room, including the dealer.

The players then go around the room again. Each talks about the reason why they have their item.

The player's story is based on the prompt on the card. The Thief's card reads "Stolen!" so he or she must make up a narrative from scratch that is believable.

Players should not just read the card, but embellish and make the story their own. They must, however, stick to the facts and not make up an entirely different explanation. Interesting, funny, and creative explanations may earn a point from The Thief. Players may ask questions of each other in order to get more details to figure out who is guilty.

Everyone writes down who they think The Thief is. The Thief writes "Thief". On the count of 3, everyone reveals what they wrote. The score for that round is written down; the cards pass to the left, and the new dealer starts the next round.

SCORING

At the end of each round, every player who correctly picked The Thief gets 1 point for every innocent player. *For example, in a game of 5 players, a player who picks The Thief gets 4 points. In a game of 8 players, that player would get 7 points.*

The Thief gets 1 point for every player whom The Thief fooled, plus an extra 2 points if everyone was fooled.

The Thief gives one point to the player who came up with the best explanation. If cards have Special Instructions, they are scored accordingly.

EXAMPLE

In this example there are three players: Mike, Kim and Jeff. Jeff has the "Stolen!" insert, obscuring the text on his card and making him The Thief.

Each player states his or her innocence and the item they have, showing the picture and covering the bottom of the card with their hand.

Mike says: "I am not The Thief, but I have a Cowbell."
Kim says: "I am not The Thief, but I have an Ant Farm."
Jeff says: "I am not The Thief, but I have a Safety Pin."



The cards are then set face down on the table for the duration of the round and the players explain why they have what they have.

Mike's Cowbell: "I'm a drummer and when my band broke up, I wanted to jam with anybody. I would see a guy with a guitar busking on the corner and, having my cowbell handy, would play. At first, my feelings were hurt when they were annoyed, but now it's a good second income when they pay me to leave them alone."

Kim's Ant Farm: "Sometimes I feel small and insignificant in a huge scary world. With my ants, I am their god. They go about their little lives unaware that I am watching them, and on a whim, I can shake their world and destroy them all."

Jeff's Safety Pin: "Since I got my new tapeworm installed, my pants fell down all the time. I've tried smaller pants, but they still sag now and then. I carry a safety pin with me so I can pin them if they start slipping down."

Everyone writes down who they think The Thief is, except for Jeff. He writes down "Thief". Mike guesses Kim, and Kim guesses Jeff. Kim gets 2 points for correctly guessing that Jeff was The Thief. Jeff gets 1 point for fooling Mike, and Mike gets no points. Jeff, as The Thief, awards 1 point to the story he likes the best, so Kim gets another point.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

A few cards have *Special Instructions in italics*. They may change the rules and affect scoring. Special Instructions must be followed. If there are objections to a player following Special Instructions, he or she should be assured that it's "Ok". Special Instructions are not to be read out loud until the end of the round.

CHARACTER CARDS (OPTIONAL RULE)

Character Cards give each player a unique way to behave during a game. After about 5 rounds, or if you are bored with your friends not being annoying enough, everyone draws a Character Card. After a few games, you may decide to use the cards for the whole game.

WINNING

The score to win is the number of players X5. *For example, if there were 4 players, the game would be played to 20.* The first player to reach that score is the winner. If there is a tie, another round is played and the highest score wins.

Designed by Matt Hollensbe
Developed by Matt Hollensbe and Nick Hollensbe
Artwork by Google. Layout by Matt Hollensbe.
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