Escape Game Outline

In an escape game, participants hunt for clues throughout the library and complete a series of self-directed challenges, puzzles, and other activities in order to complete a goal.

Crack the Safe Activity – The combination is 532. “Both” are #3, #6 (have at least one backup of each component); “Escape Room” are #5, #7, #10.

In an Escape Game, activities can be completed in any order; therefore clues are not cumulative throughout the game. Also, keep in mind that any one puzzle or challenge should be able to be completed in no more than three or four steps. For example, in the Harry Potter game, in order to “solve” the puzzle of what was in the Boggart’s cupboard, participants had to 1) Obtain the Quidditch score by watching the announcement boards; 2) Report the correct score to a desk staff member to receive the key; 3) Unlock the cupboard and write down what was inside. Some puzzles should only require one step to solve. It is also good to put in activities which don’t require a solution, but are just enjoyable for participants (i.e. crafts, creating something using an I-pad app; a game; photo props; etc.)

Brandon Sanderson Game (next year)

DIY secret messages

Created on Publisher. Best results were obtained by typing message in 11 pt font in Pantone 291 C blue. Print this out. Next, layer 5 or 6 random generated text blocks in red, yellow and pink, adjusting so that white spaces between lines are filled in with text. Feed the sheet with the message on it into the printer so that this layered block prints over your message text. When you look through red “decoder” glasses, the text in red, yellow and pink will disappear, revealing your message!

“Easter Eggs” are special things that some participants may discover (or appreciate) that most players will miss. For the Brandon Sanderson fandom game, a message participants decipher will be from Hoid, a character who appears in some incarnation in all Cosmere novels. Hoid’s signature will also be on the paintings used in another puzzle. A fake quote in the brief bio of Sanderson on the game sheet (“Sanderson has earned a place on the shelf next to Tolkien”) is an easter egg in that a fake book with a code inside will be shelved next to Tolkien for any patrons who find it.

Escape from Mr. Lemoncello’s Library

Anyone who participated received a bumper sticker “I Escaped @ AF Library”. I intended to do a leaderboard with fastest times, but never did. If doing a timed game, make the timed part optional so that families/groups who don’t want to hurry (or need several intervals over many days) can still comfortably participate.

Harry Potter

I posted “leader boards” with the house points, which I updated daily. At the end of each month, the “House Cup” was awarded to the House with the most points, and all points zeroed out.

DIY blacklight reveal messages

The Marauder’s Map (the second floor of our library) was printed on goldenrod colored paper. Small notations (I used an “x”) made with a regular highlighter do not show up on this color of paper. Participants had to locate a black light mounted on a wall in the library. When their map was held under the light, the highlighted “X” glowed prominently and they were able to find Peter Pettigrew’s hiding spot.
**Hogwart’s Hunt** – a scavenger hunt for 10 items hidden around the library was also available during the Escape Game. This is great for younger players, patrons who don’t have enough time (about 30-45 min.) for the Game, or for participants who wanted to earn additional points for their “House.”

**Star Wars**

The table on the mission sheet is the same for all three missions. The three cargoes are: plans for the death star; princess Leia Organa; Han Solo in carbonite. The secret message is “May the force be with you.” For the bonus challenge, when all the letters used for all three cargoes and the secret message are crossed out, seven letters remain. Three of these letters are “Z”. The remaining four letters spell out the name Ella. Ella Vader. Get it? The first part of the other missions involved searching for wanted posters and identifying your co-pilot by the person with the highest bounty, and identifying the planet with the Rebel base. I used the sun pattern on the floor of the rotunda to make a star map for this activity.

**Zombie Escape (this fall)**

Here is the premise: You’ve been infected and only have 30 min. to find the antidote. Everyone gets a prize – candy or a food coupon “antidote” if they complete the game in 30 min or less; a zombie eye patch or plastic finger if not.

**Other Notes:**

- Keyed locks are usually less of a hassle than combination locks, which easily get reset
- To help prevent game components that are not part of the library from disappearing, attach them to permanent fixtures (i.e. I chained Newt Scamander’s briefcase to a pillar), require participants to obtain/return component to a staff member (i.e. key to Boggart’s cupboard), or have them be used in staff presence (microscope in Zombie game).
- Have staff run through the tricky parts of a game so that they know how to offer hints. Make an answer key, along with the location of all components and clues, available to staff members.
- Have someone who does not know the answer to each puzzle review your clues for clarity.
- The goal is for everyone to successfully complete the game. Some participants may need to skip some challenges. If you are tracking time or awarding points, you can penalize time or points awarded for skipped items, but prizes, if awarded, should go to ALL participants. It’s all about exploring the library and having a positive experience there, so make sure staff knows that they can help or provide answers as requested.
- 2 ½-3 months is a good amount of time to make sure everyone that wants to has a chance to participate. You can take a month or few between games, but keep the excitement going by “Coming Soon” advertising.

Email me, Lori Bonner, with any questions (or if you design a Game that I could use!): lbonner@afcity.net