Garden Mail Mystery

HOST ONLY - preparation and story

Includes answers. Keep these pages and all hint pages with the adult host.

Welcome to the garden post office. A rain shower mixed the delivery notes before the mail round. Your team has the original records on the table. First recover five pieces of information, then use the final plan to reconstruct the mail round. Keep every result beside its badge so another teammate can check your reasoning.

1. Print the six player sheets and two record sheets for each team. Keep answers and hints with the host.

2. Lay out Event cards, Envelope list, the remaining clue sheets and the final plan. All task records are printed inside the sheets; no extra prop is needed.

3. After each clue, pass roles one seat clockwise. With two players, combine Reader with Recorder and Checker with Builder. With five or six, add a second checker and a source finder; everyone explains one decision.

4 players; 1 team. Give each team 6 player sheets and 2 record sheets. Share one host guide and one set of three hint levels.

Paper and pencils are enough. Keep whole sheets at one table; nothing needs cutting, folding or hiding.

Optional: 4 invitations or certificates, only if selected.

Garden Mail Mystery

HOST ONLY - solution guide

1. Order: D

The before relationships connect all four events. Place linked cards, check any immediate handoff and then read the specified position. Result: D.

2. Record: RING

Check source status first, then join the matching tag and bay. The useful information comes from separate records, not their printed row order. Result: RING.

3. Route: 1

The route ends at row 2, column 3. That cell gives 1. Result: 1.

4. Post: 3

Known stock: 10 + 4 - 1 = 13. Closing stock 16 minus 13 gives the missing return 3. Cancelled +7 never arrived. Result: 3.

5. Slots: 6

The decoded word is MAIL; its row gives 6. Result: 6.

6. Final: B-D-A-F-C-E

The five recovered order notes link all six events. Arrange them into one continuous order. Removing any link leaves two neighboring sections without a known order. Checked result: B-D-A-F-C-E.

Garden Mail Mystery

HOST ONLY - timeline, story and ending

3 minutes: Read the opening. Show the evidence record and choose starting roles.

5 minutes: Solve Order. Offer one hint at a time and rotate roles after checking.

5 minutes: Solve Record. Offer one hint at a time and rotate roles after checking.

5 minutes: Solve Route. Offer one hint at a time and rotate roles after checking.

5 minutes: Solve Post. Offer one hint at a time and rotate roles after checking.

5 minutes: Solve Slots. Offer one hint at a time and rotate roles after checking.

7 minutes: Build the six-event run sheet using all five results.

3 minutes: Read the ending. Ask each teammate to explain one rejected alternative.

After Record: One time window can fit the work but fail the journey. Keep each order note beside its source. Pass the record sheet to a new checker before opening the next clue.

After Post: Four results are recorded. Each teammate points to a source supporting one result. Complete the fifth check before building the six-event run sheet.

Check every result using the solution guide. Offer the next hint only when requested; save the answer reveal until the group is ready.

The crew uses run sheet B-D-A-F-C-E; every recovered order note is respected. Thank each teammate for a different piece of reasoning.

Explain one tempting wrong choice and the evidence that ruled it out. Show how each of the five results affected the six-event run sheet. If a clue is missing, say what remains uncertain before reopening that sheet.

Duration and ages are estimates. Adjust the pace and offer help for your group.

Garden Mail Mystery

Player clue 1: Order | Team 1

A rain shower mixed the delivery notes before the mail round. We will use the records on the table to reconstruct the mail round. Share the reading, explain each choice and keep the five results for the final plan.

Arrange the four event cards using every witness note. "Immediately before" means there is no event between them. Report the requested position after the whole order has been checked.

Event cards

A: Load satchel

B: Sort letters

C: Visit pond

D: Check addresses

Witness notes

A is immediately before C.

D is before A.

B is immediately before D.

Report the event ID in position 2.

Order result: _____

Garden Mail Mystery

Player clue 2: Record | Team 1

Use the envelope list and forwarding book to follow the completed record. Match printed keys, then report the requested field. A planned or cancelled entry cannot prove a move.

Envelope list
item: Pond | tag: PINE | status: draft
item: Oak | tag: WAVE | status: checked
item: Gate | tag: STAR | status: cancelled
Forwarding book
tag: STAR | bay: NORTH
tag: PINE | bay: EAST
tag: WAVE | bay: WEST
Delivery notice
bay: WEST | seal: RING
bay: NORTH | seal: KITE
bay: EAST | seal: LEAF
Cross-check
Match A.tag to B.tag.
Match B.bay to C.bay.
A.status is checked.
Report C.seal.

Record result: _____

Garden Mail Mystery

Player clue 3: Route | Team 1

Route desk: Start at S. Follow EVERY arrow one square, including revisited cells. Record only the endpoint digit.

S: 4	**6**	**8**	**0**
7	**9**	**1**	**3**
0	**2**	**4**	**6**

right > down > right > down > left > up > right

One arrow = one square. S = start.

Route result: _____

Garden Mail Mystery

Player clue 4: Post | Team 1

Post desk: A return entry lost its amount. Use the opening and closing stock to find the missing return. Apply DONE entries; ignore the CANCELLED plan.

Opening stock: 10. Closing stock: 16.

Received: +4 DONE
Planned: +7 CANCELLED
Issued: -1 DONE
Returned: ? DONE

Missing return = ? units. Ignore cancelled plans.

Post result: _____

Garden Mail Mystery

Player clue 5: Slots | Team 1

Slots desk: Decode all shapes in message order. Repeated shapes repeat their letter. Convert the full word using the table.

circle = M star = A diamond = I heart = L

circle star diamond heart

MAIL = 6

LAMP = 9

GATE = 2

Slots result: _____

Garden Mail Mystery

Player clue 6: Final | Team 1

Each recorded result recovers one order note. Use all five notes to put the six named events in order. A>B means A happens before B. Write all six event IDs from first to last; check that every note is satisfied.

Use your results from: Order, Record, Route, Post, Slots.

Run sheet
A: Load satchel
B: Sort letters
C: Visit oak
D: Check addresses
E: File receipts
F: Visit pond
Recovered order notes
Order: D=B>D; A=D>B
Record: KITE=A>D; RING=D>A
Route: 1=A>F; 4=F>A
Post: 10=C>F; 3=F>C
Slots: 6=C>E; 9=E>C
Order rule
A>B means A happens before B. Use all five notes.
Report all six event IDs in order, with hyphens.

Final result: _____

Ask your host to check your final result and read the ending.

Garden Mail Mystery

Hint level 1 - HOST ONLY

1. Order

Read the event letters and all three witness notes.

2. Record

Start with the status field in Envelope list.

3. Route

Find the starting square and read the full move list.

4. Post

Find opening stock, closing stock and the DONE or CANCELLED marks.

5. Slots

Find the symbol key and the message strip.

6. Final

Keep the five named results beside the final plan and find the key for each badge.

Garden Mail Mystery

Hint level 2 - HOST ONLY

1. Order

Join immediately-before pairs as a block; other before notes set the direction between blocks.

2. Record

The tag links an item to a bay; rows in separate records need not line up.

3. Route

Each move changes just one square. Keep track of row and column after each move.

4. Post

Only completed entries change stock. A cancelled plan cannot be added or subtracted.

5. Slots

Use the same key every time a symbol repeats. Read the message in its printed order.

6. Final

Each badge controls a different fact, road leg, order note, pulse or habitat layer. Use the matching key exactly once.

Garden Mail Mystery

Hint level 3 - HOST ONLY

1. Order

Try the remaining positions, then check every note against your full order before reading the requested position.

2. Record

Keep only entries meeting every status test. Follow each printed join to the report field; do not guess from row position.

3. Route

Trace the moves one at a time, then retrace them to check the final square before recording its value.

4. Post

Apply every known completed change to opening stock. Compare that result with closing stock to recover the missing completed return.

5. Slots

Write the complete decoded word, check every symbol, then use the conversion row for that exact word.

6. Final

Check the completed product against all five recovered facts. If two answers remain, locate the fact that distinguishes them rather than guessing.

Garden Mail Mystery

Team 1 result record

Write the complete result from each clue. Results can be words, routes, orders, settings or numbers.

Order: _____

Record: _____

Route: _____

Post: _____

Slots: _____

Keep this record beside the final clue. Copy results exactly, including any leading zero.

Reader / Recorder / Evidence checker / Route or model builder

After each clue, pass roles one seat clockwise. With two players, combine Reader with Recorder and Checker with Builder. With five or six, add a second checker and a source finder; everyone explains one decision.

Garden Mail Mystery

Team 1 final result and celebration

Our final challenge: Final

We combined our earlier clues to decide:

_____

_____

We know it works because:

_____

_____

Host: compare the result with your solution guide. Read the ending when it matches, then let the team explain one discovery.

No physical lock or prize is required. Draw a celebration star here if you like.

Garden Mail Mystery

You're invited to a mystery!

Join Birthday Explorer for Garden Mail Mystery.

A rain shower mixed the delivery notes before the mail round. Work together to reconstruct the mail round.

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Bring your curiosity. Paper and pencils are provided. Share ideas and solve six clues together.

Designed for ages 8-10. Estimated 35-50 minutes.

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Garden Mail Mystery

Mystery Explorer

Presented to Birthday Explorer

Team member: _____

For completing Garden Mail Mystery with curiosity, teamwork and kindness.

The crew uses run sheet B-D-A-F-C-E; every recovered order note is respected. Thank each teammate for a different piece of reasoning.

Date: _____

Host signature: _____

Garden Mail Mystery

Mystery Explorer

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