

IMPOSTER!



THE AFTER-DINNER MYSTERY GAME

RULES

Contents

50 cards
1 post bag
1 game card
1 post disc
1 score card
1 pencil

Players: 3 - 16

The Object of the Game

The Earl of Simpleton is entertaining weekend guests at his country estate in Gameston. Unfortunately, one or more imposters have infiltrated the castle disguised as guests or members of staff, intending to steal some of the Earl's valuable possessions. If treasure is successfully smuggled out by post, the imposters win.

The game can be played with 3-16 players, some of whom will be genuine, and some imposters. Players may interrogate each other (preferably in character) at any point in the game to try to unearth the imposters, and lying and creative answers are encouraged in order to keep identities secret. Imposters themselves may well wish to join in the questioning in order to divert suspicion.

During each round, post is sent out of the castle, which may contain innocent letters, or may include one or more smuggled treasures. Every time only letters are posted, the innocent characters win a point, but if just one treasure is in the post bag the imposters win the point. The first side – innocents or imposters – to win five points wins the game, so a game may be over in just five rounds or may take a little longer. The skill of the game is in the innocents attempting to identify the imposters, and the imposters trying to hide their identities, in both cases so that they can influence what is sent out of the castle.

In each round there is a different postmaster who chooses which characters send out the post in that round. There will always be fewer characters allowed to post than there are players (see the Game Card). If the postmaster is an imposter he will usually include a fellow imposter in the postal group – or post a treasure himself – to win a point, but if he is an innocent he will try to pick only innocent characters.

Setting up the Game

The players sit in a circle. The cards must be sorted into their 6 categories, and, all except the veto cards, shuffled separately and placed face down on the table. The Veto cards should be placed face up. A dealer should be chosen, who will pick the correct number of cards from each category according to the number of players (see the game card), still keeping them separate. He then deals a character card to each player, including himself, which is placed face up in front of him, and a secret identity card which each player looks at privately and then places face down on the table. The players now know their names and which team they are on: the innocents or the imposters. They keep these identities for as many rounds as it takes for one team to win.

The dealer now gives the following instructions, pausing for a few seconds between each. No cheating is allowed – eyes must be firmly closed!

1. Everyone, close your eyes.
2. Imposters, open your eyes and acknowledge each other.
3. Imposters, close your eyes.
4. Everyone, open your eyes.

The imposters now know each other without having revealed themselves to the innocents.

The Game Begins

In each round, one player will be the postmaster, who will pick the characters to send post out of the castle. In the first round the dealer is postmaster, and he displays the post disc on the table in front of himself. Going by the game card, he chooses the correct number of players to send out the post, and gives each of them a treasure card and a letter card. The postmaster is permitted, if he wishes, to choose himself to be one of the players to send out post. Beginning with the player to his left and moving round the circle in a clockwise direction, the postmaster gives the bag to each posting player, who covertly puts either a letter or a treasure inside and returns the bag and the unused card - face down - back to him. Finally, the postmaster adds his own choice of card to the bag if he needs to.

Guests must always post a letter (never a treasure) but imposters can post either a treasure or a letter.

The postmaster then takes the cards out of the bag to see what was posted.

If no treasure has been smuggled out, the guests get a point, but if a single treasure card - or more - was put in, a point is awarded to the imposters instead.

The postmaster then shuffles the treasure cards and the letter cards separately and puts them on the table face down in two piles and passes them, together with the post disc, clockwise to the next player, who becomes postmaster for the following round.

If one treasure card or more is found in the post bag, it means at least one player in that post group is an imposter, so remembering the members of the group can help towards identifying the imposters. That is why it can sometimes be useful for an imposter to resist posting a treasure, but to send a letter instead, to divert suspicion.

Veto cards

When an innocent thinks they have identified the imposter(s) and it's their turn to be postmaster they can try to win a point for their team by choosing only other innocents to send out the post. Equally, if the current postmaster is an imposter, then he will either add a treasure himself to the bag or pick a fellow imposter to do so, thus gaining a point for his team. But veto cards can be used to stop this in either case. Once the postmaster has made his choice of postal group, a majority of the other players can decide to use one of the veto cards to stop the post going out. Each veto card can only be used once, whereupon the post disc is passed clockwise to the next player, who thus becomes postmaster.

How to Win

The first team to win five points wins the game, so Imposter! can be over in as few as five rounds, or may take as many as nine. Remember that at any point in the game, players can debate with or quiz each other to try to establish each others' identities - it's a free-for-all and several conversations may go on at once. Players should attempt to ask and answer in the voices of their characters. The results of these discussions, together with carefully watching the post that gets sent out, will enable sharp eyed innocents to quickly work out just who are the imposters.