

# MAKING A TRAVELING ESCAPE ROOM

Emily Correa, Campbell County Public Library System, VA  
ebcorrea@co.campbell.va.us

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## STEP 1

### Figure out what you want to do

This is a must for any escape room program. Before you do anything else, you need to determine what you want your room to be about. Try thinking about your narrative, your problems & objectives, and what kinds of limits you want/need to place.

#### NARRATIVE

You were accidentally locked in a storage room in your local CCPLS library. The library closes in 30 minutes, and you still haven't found anything on your To Read list! Solve the clues and collect books along the way to Escape into the Library!

#### PROBLEMS & OBJECTIVES

- The door is locked. You need to find a key to get out.
- You need to find the three books that match the list you were given.
- The list is coded. You need to decipher the list.
- The storage room is a mess. You need to locate the correct books.

#### LIMITS

- Time: 30 minutes
- Players: 1-6 at a time
- Age: 16+ (minors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian)
- Players must have signed waiver and be preregistered
- Cost: Free!

## STEP 2

### Make friends, look around, and borrow props

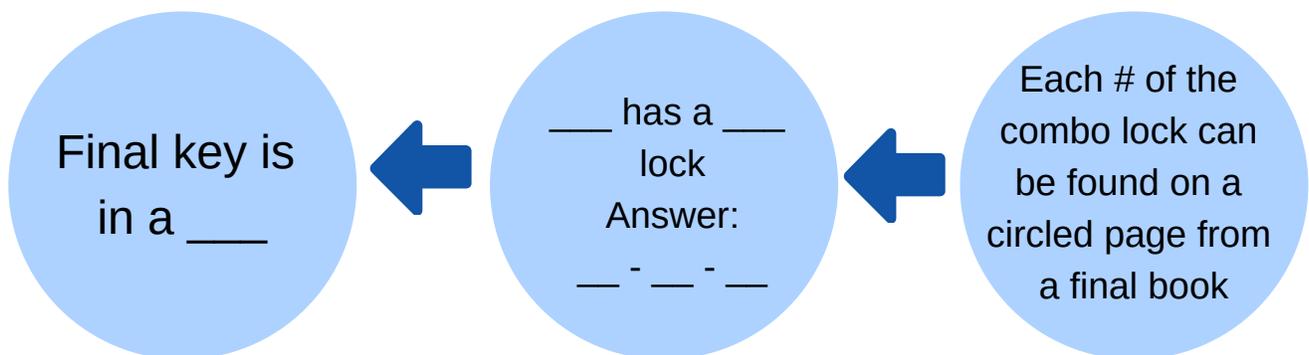
- I reached out to our two local escape room companies and sent them my plans. They gave me some great feedback. In exchange, I had their flyers on hand for patrons to take, if they were interested.
- Our final and clue books came from our donation shelves. I looked for older books with interesting titles, then formed puzzles and riddles based on them.
- Our storage rooms were great for finding extra "library storage room" props! I was able to find extra magazine stands, book stands, brochure holders, book end, and all sorts of dusty props that added to the theme.

## STEP 3

### Figure out the gameflow

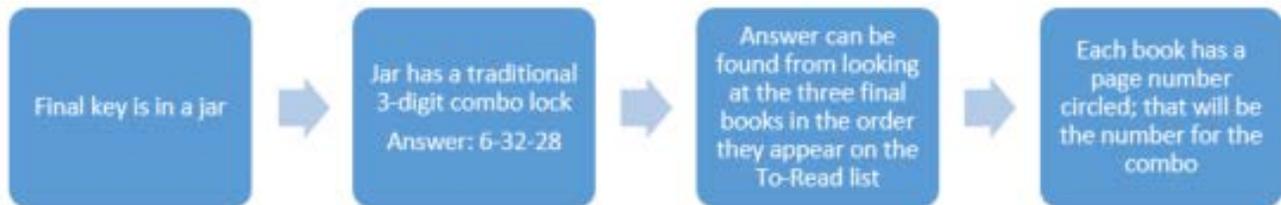
Once you have some basic puzzles and clues ready, you can start working on a game plan. I knew that I wanted players to find three books, and those three books would give them the answers to escape at the end. I also knew the books would have different types of locks and clues surrounding them. But how did I want them arranged? My super organized side kicked into gear and I created a gameflow chart.

When creating your gameflow, you'll start with the end result, then figure out how they'll get there.



From here you can fill in the gaps with specific types of containers, locks, puzzles, and props.

CCPLS | ESCAPE INTO THE LIBRARY!



# STEP 4

## Assemble your materials

Item	Qty	Acquired From	Total Cost
To Read list	1 + 2 backup	Created in-house	0.00
Wheel cipher	1 + 1 backup	Created in-house	0.00
Cryptogram puzzle	1 + 1 backup	Created in-house	0.00
Riddle	1 + 1 backup	Created in-house	0.00
Word puzzle	1 + 1 backup	Created in-house	0.00
To Read books	3	Picked from donations	0.00
Clue books	3	Picked from donations	0.00
Books (props)	30+	Picked from donations	0.00
Whiteboard (small)	1	Donated by staff	0.00
Whiteboard marker	2	Branch supplies (SR) - borrowed	0.00
Whiteboard eraser	1	Branch supplies (SR) - borrowed	0.00
3-digit combo lock	1 + 1 backup	Purchased (Walmart)	7.82
Wheel combo lock	2	Purchased (Walmart)	6.94
4-letter combo lock	1	Purchased (Target)	7.51
Blacklight marker	1	Purchased (Amazon)	4.99
Blacklight light	1	Purchased (Amazon)	4.99
Dummy key	1 + 1 backup	Donated by staff	0.00
Pencil pouch	1	Purchased (Dollar General)	1.00
Pencil case (able to lock)	1 + 2 keys (1 backup)	Purchased (Walmart)	4.50
Tool box (able to lock)	1	Purchased (Walmart)	6.20
Jar (able to lock)	2	Purchased (Walmart)	2.00
Puzzle w/ handwritten clue	1 + 1 backup	Purchased (Amazon)	10.99
Index card box	2 (1 dummy)	Branch supplies (SR) - 1 borrowed, 1 given	0.00
Library props (misc.)	Misc.	Branch supplies (SR) - borrowed	0.00
Wooden puzzles	3	Purchased (Amazon)	4.99
Metal puzzles	2	Purchased (Dollar Tree)	2.00

**TOTAL COST OF THE  
EVENT: \$58.94**

**TOTAL PARTICIPANTS:  
95**

**COST PER  
PARTICIPANT:  
\$0.62**



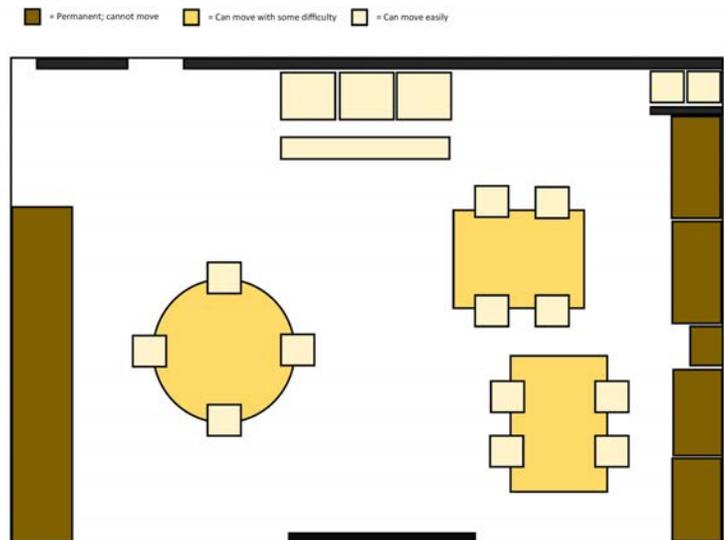
## STEP 5

### I'll have that "To Go"

Before you set this on a traveling rotation, you need to come up with a plan. Are you going to move everything from branch to branch, or just the puzzles and clues? Will you have the same staff/volunteers, or will you need to retrain at each event? Who will transport everything back and forth?

#### THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Make it work for each branch. At one location we had plenty of tables and chairs, but needed a bookshelf. At another we had to ask for staff to clear off a cart. At another we didn't have room for anything extra (which was nice because we didn't have to bring anything extra), but we also had to pare down what we did bring to accommodate.
- If you're going to have different staff members/volunteers helping out at each room, make sure you have roles written out for what they need. I had a half-sheet attached to a clipboard for staff so they knew what they were supposed to have and what they needed to do. I gave them a stack of blank waivers and a laminated sheet of rules that traveled with the clipboard/half-sheet to each branch. I took the finished waivers and replenished the blank stack for each room.



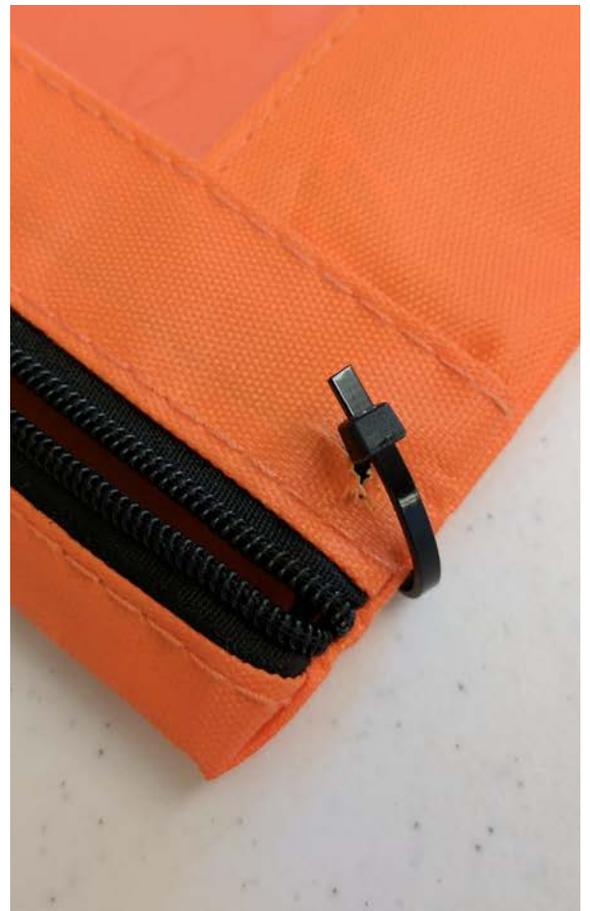
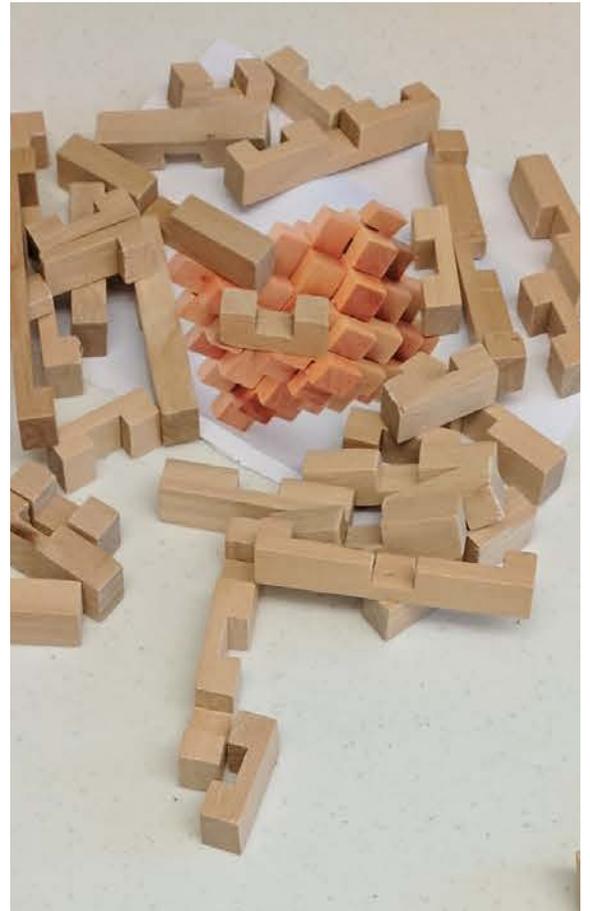
Looking back, I would have made the waiver and rules more user-friendly. Even though I emailed everyone a copy a week before the event, some players were wary to fill it out. We had to assure everyone they weren't signing away their firstborn, and that them signing the waiver was just for everyone's safety.

An employee at an escape room I once went to said it best: "This isn't a contact sport, so if you make it one, that's on you." I wish I would have written the waiver like that, but I did explain the rules in a similar lighthearted way.

## STEP 6

### Basic escape room advice

- You may want to ask participants to preregister to attend. Since this was such a big event and involved so much set-up, we did. We used a Google Form and promoted at all four of our branches. Only one player signed up for one of our branches, so we invited him to come to one of our other sessions and cancelled that one. It saved us staffing for a full day and he ended up enjoying the event elsewhere.
- Most commercial escape rooms ask that participants arrive at least 15 minutes early, so experienced players may do so. Have something for them to do while they wait. We had brain teaser puzzles. I've also seen books, games, and snack stations in waiting rooms.
- Have extras of everything: clues, locks, important props... You don't want to be on your second session of the day and have an important lock break with no backup. We also laminated most of our clues so we could reduce the amount of wear and tear we went through.
- If you have similar locks, mark them so you can reset with ease. We marked the two wheel combination padlocks with different colors so we knew where to put them back. We also came up with a reset map that we could easily refer to. By the end of the event, resetting the room only took one person 10 minutes to do.
- Get crafty! We wanted a cheap way to hide one of our clues, so we took a pencil case, poked a hole in the side where the zipper ends, and added a cable tie. All we had to do was block the clear plastic window with a similar color and it made for a great, cost-efficient case.



# STEP 7

## Packing up

When you're packing up, you'll also want to have a plan. Are you going to need to take everything with you? Can you use different donations as props at each library, cutting down on the amount of books you haul back and forth (which I recommend doing)?

### THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Attach combinations to locks.
- Keep instructions for resetting the locks with them, especially if you want to use them to create another escape room in the future.
- Use your cases and props to pack up your supplies. They aren't just for show!
- If it can't fit in one car, it's too much. Don't go overboard. Keep it simple.

