ESCAPE ROOMS: HOW TO USE PUZZLES AND POP CULTURE TO CREATE MULTI-GENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This Guide is intended to assist libraries in creating and running their own escape room programs for a variety of ages. It was written by two public librarians who combined have put on a total of 17 escape rooms.

We’ll start by explaining what an escape room is and then walk you through the process of making one from scratch. Along the way we’ll pull from our own experiences to provide concrete examples of each step.

Finally, we’ll provide a variety of tips to make the most of your program as well as additional resources you might find helpful for questions, guidance or inspiration.

If you have additional questions or comments about this guide or escape rooms, please don’t hesitate to reach out. Both of us would be happy to talk shop anytime.

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ABOUT ESCAPE ROOMS

An escape room (also called a breakout room) is essentially a kind of role-playing game. Participants are assigned a role in a narrative and are required to solve a series of puzzles within a certain amount of time in order to “escape” the room in which the game is taking place.

Wherever you are, you can probably find a commercial escape room not too far away. These can vary widely in cost and quality, but if you are able to, we highly recommend trying one out if you’ve never been before for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, it’ll be fun! It also will be an incredibly useful learning experience that will help you understand how escape rooms work.

Here are a few things you’ll likely pick up on. Not all of these will be true for all escape rooms all the time, but they are some of the most common characteristics.

- You can’t leave the room until you’ve solved all the puzzles. Hence “escape” or “breakout.” You may be literally locked or barred in the room with an emergency button or some other means of communicating with staff to let them know you need to leave before the time’s up.
- Often the game takes place in a single room. More elaborate escape rooms might utilize additional rooms.
- You’re given a set of rules. Staff will let you know what areas, objects, or behavior are off-limits.
- You’re given an introduction to the story. The narrative and your role in it will be explained. This can be done verbally, by video clip, or by handout.
- You don’t have to get too into your role. Your character in the escape room narrative is mostly given so you understand why you’re involved to begin with. Normally, it does not require any acting.
- Staff are on hand for (limited) help. As mentioned, there’s usually some means of communicating with staff during the escape room. Often, you’ll be allowed a certain number of questions or clues.
- At least some portion of the puzzles will be sequential or cumulative. You might have to solve puzzle A before you can solve puzzle B, etc. Or perhaps puzzles 1, 2, and 3 can be solved in any order, but the solutions to all three are needed in order to move onto puzzle 4.
- Your prize is...bragging rights. Generally, escape rooms don’t have any prizes. Overcoming the various challenges through ingenuity and collaboration are their own reward.
CHOOSING A FANDOM

When choosing a theme for your escape rooms, your options will seem almost limitless. With all the books, comics, movies, TV shows, and video games in existence to choose from, how can you narrow it down? Even when you take into consideration what you know to be popular in your library’s community, you could still be swimming in options. Below are some guidelines to help you narrow it down.

Find something that spans generations

If you’re trying to appeal to as wide a range of ages as possible, you need to find the common ground that all ages have. A franchise like Star Wars is a prime example of a movie series with something for everyone. The original films came out in the late 70s/early 80s, continued in the late 90s/early 2000s, and have come around again in the 2010s. And few shows can top Doctor Who for longevity, which has been on for a total of 40 years starting in the 60s.

But a franchise doesn’t have to be continuous in order to capture the imaginations of the young and old alike. Reboots of older films and TV shows have been a mainstay of the industry for decades, and while opinions may be strong as to which iteration got it “right,” the topic is at least bringing everyone to the table.

Make sure it appeals to a range of ages

Not everything that’s been around for generations, or has had reboots, actually appeals to all ages. Some of them simply appeal to adults back then and adults now. The book Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy by John le Carré was published in 1974, adapted into a miniseries in 1979, followed in 1982 by the miniseries Smiley’s People, and remade as a film in 2011. The Smiley series clearly has staying power, but you’ll be hard pressed to find any child or teen interested.

Look for iconic characters and props

Our goal with this guide is not just to help you create an escape room, but to help you do so efficiently. One of the most efficient ways of communicating your theme is through easily identifiable characters and props. Think Darth Vader and a lightsaber, Hermione Granger with a wand, Captain America and his shield, Wonder Woman and her lasso. You don’t need expensive cutouts or merchandise. You don’t even need great artistic ability. These things are so recognizable that even the shoddiest depiction will immediately convey the world people are entering.

Stick to what you know (or what you can get to know quickly)

By no means do you have to be a Harry Potter superfan in order to put on a Harry Potter escape room but being familiar with the books and movies is going to make things significantly easier on you. You need to have a general sense of what the world includes (witches, wizards, and magic) and what it doesn’t (spaceships, lasers, and aliens). You should know who the main characters are and what the overarching storylines are. Iconic characters and props are key, but you’ll want to dive in a little deeper and plant some Easter eggs in your escape room. Perhaps most importantly, kids and adults who come to themed escape rooms are going to want to talk to you about it. This is something they’re excited about, and they want to share that with you and everyone else there. If all else fails, if nothing you’re interested in matches up with what your community is interested in, consider enlisting a volunteer to help you out.
A word about inclusivity

Ideally, you want to find a theme whose source material includes a diversity of characters and cultures. Unfortunately, most major franchises are lacking in representation in one way or another. But where they fall short, you can help pick up the slack. As mentioned before, a lightsaber is such an iconic part of the Star Wars universe that people can immediately identify a person holding one as a Jedi (or a Sith, depending on your mood), regardless of whether that person is an established character or not. This means you could easily create new Star Wars characters that more accurately represent the diversity in your community without taking away from the established world.

In Our Experience

Stranger Things Escape Room

Stranger Things has obviously not been around for multiple generations. The entire show, however, is built on nostalgia for the 80s and has countless homages to classic 80s films. In that sense it has a sort of manufactured multi-generational appeal. Similarly, nothing from Stranger Things has quite reached iconic status, but it had a few things going for it: the 80s setting makes for some very distinctive music, clothing and décor; and there are a few props that get a lot of use.

Teens at the Central Library expressed an interest in the show (they liked the inclusion of Dungeons & Dragons), but this show does admittedly skew dark in its themes and visuals. It works for teens and adults, but probably wouldn’t do well for a younger crowd.
BUILDING A NARRATIVE

Narrative might be a misleading term. You won’t be writing a novel, or even a short story, for your escape room. There are, generally speaking, two ways to approach an escape room narrative:

- A premise. In this scenario, the narrative consists only of the premise that you give the participants in the introduction. You’re setting the stage, explaining what has happened that has brought these people together to solve these puzzles, what solving the puzzles represents, and what the outcomes would be if they fail or succeed. Once they are let loose to try and breakout, there will be no new additions to that narrative.

- A series of plot points. In this scenario, after providing the premise of the escape room, you will chime in with additional twists, usually after a particular puzzle has been solved. You keep the narrative rolling throughout the program and are continually setting the stage for the next clue or puzzle.

Both work, both have their pros and cons. A premise obviously takes less time to craft than a series of plot points, and you might feel that the escape room you’ve put together stands well on its own without the additional story. But a more directed narrative can be a lot of fun too! It can help keep people rooted in the world and connect what might otherwise feel like disparate parts of the room.

Whichever option you choose, use the following guidelines to make the most of your narrative.

Keep it simple

Even if you opt for a series of plot points instead of just a premise, your narrative doesn’t need to be complicated. In fact, it shouldn’t be. You want to paint a quick picture of your escape room’s world, but you don’t want to bog the participants down with unnecessary details. Unless you’ve provided a clue, no one should be thinking too hard about what you’ve said.

Use your source material

Whatever your theme, your source material will have tons of storylines, meaning you don’t have to reinvent the wheel. Keeping with the idea of simplicity, you can break those storylines down to the most basic elements or narrow in on a subplot. You don’t necessarily even need to replicate a storyline, but instead use the themes and common tropes of the source material to create something newish.

Incorporate iconic characters if you can

Major characters aren’t just useful because they’re easily recognizable. People are invested in these characters and care a great deal about them. Including those characters is a good way to get them invested in your narrative. That said, you don’t have to try to force characters into a narrative if they don’t fit.

Your participants are key

Whatever roles your participants are assuming for the purpose of the escape room, make sure they are the ones driving the narrative. Don’t let them take a backseat to a known character. After all, everyone wants to be the hero of their own story.
In Our Experience

Stranger Things Escape Room

Premise: Young Will Byers has gone missing. Using Detective Hopper’s files, search for clues at the three most promising places of interest: Will’s house, the house of his friend Mike Wheeler, and the Hawkins Laboratory. Piece together what you can and bring Will home!
FINDING YOUR SPACE

This may seem like the most important part of the process (what’s an escape room without the room?), but really it might be the easiest. That’s because the space is the most flexible element of an escape room. Truly, you can have an escape room anywhere. Below are a few myths we’re here to bust.

You need a room.
False! Counter-intuitive as it may be, you don’t need an actual room. You don’t even need an alcove or a corner. Four walls will certainly make it easier to demonstrate to your participants the bounds of the escape room, but they’re by no means required. Any way you can cordon off a specific space within your library for the program, go for it. This is when clear rules and instructions come into play.

You need a big room / a lot of space.
False! A closet probably will not do, but as long as there’s enough room for your group to move around and interact with the puzzles, then that’s all you need. Your narrative, puzzles, props and decorations are what make your escape room come alive. In fact, the larger the space, the more you’ll feel inclined to fill it, which is not always the right move (see below).

You need a lot of expensive, time-intensive props and decorations.
False! Props and decorations are definitely integral in creating the world of the escape room, but they neither have to be expensive nor time intensive. (If you have excess time and money, then by all means: use it on your escape room.) If you’ve been to a commercial escape room, you’ve witnessed how slick and intricate their rooms can be, and that can make the prospect of creating your own extremely daunting. But remember: you’re a library, not a commercial escape room company. Finding cheap or homemade solutions to props and decorations requires imagination, and people appreciate the effort.

In Our Experience

Stranger Things Escape Room

We are fortunate at the Central Library in Des Moines to have three large meeting rooms in addition to several smaller conference and storytime rooms. We used one of our meeting rooms and divided it into five different areas, but admittedly, it was quite a bit more space than we needed.
PICKING YOUR PUZZLES

Puzzles: the toughest part of the escape room. In part because they’re the most important. This is the reason people go to escape rooms. Creating puzzles is a balancing act. They should be challenging, but not impossible. The guidelines below will give you some things to consider when choosing your puzzles, but actual examples are always the most helpful. Go to the In Our Experience at the end of this section for puzzles that we’ve used and the Tips and Tricks section for even more examples. You can also refer to the Additional Resources section for websites with extra examples.

Variety is key
No one wants to solve the same puzzle five times over. People want to test their minds in different ways, so make sure your escape room has a good mix. Variety also lends itself to inclusivity. Different types of puzzles demand different types of skills and thinking, which means everyone, no matter their strengths, gets a chance to shine.

Use your source material
Some themes will seem to have puzzles tailor made for them (e.g. a “Potions class” with a color mixing puzzle for a Harry Potter escape room). But most puzzles can be adapted for any theme, as long as you pull from your source material. A word puzzle might seem out of place in Jurassic Park, but what if it was a coded set of instructions for a paleontological dig site? Or maybe it’s part of a genetic sequence scientists are using in a lab. Or it could be part of a map for finding your way around the park.

Not every puzzle needs a box
The most common trope of an escape room is the lockbox. A puzzle’s solution reveals a code to open a box...which leads to another puzzle whose solution will also open...a box. But solving a puzzle doesn’t have to involve anything tangible. As the master of the escape room overseeing the participants’ efforts, you could make the solution anything you want. Perhaps the participants must perform a specific action or recite a specific phrase. Perhaps the entire group needs to do something simultaneously or do something together in order to move forward. Get creative!

Stick to common knowledge
We’re placing a lot of emphasis on pulling details from franchises for your escape room, but this too is a balancing act. You can all too easily make your puzzles inaccessible by requiring too deep a knowledge of the source material, especially if you are passionate about the subject matter. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself “Would someone who’s never heard of this fandom be able to solve this puzzle?” If the answer is no, reconsider the solution. Keep in mind: this doesn’t mean no themed puzzles or solutions! If within the realm of your escape room, you establish on-theme facts or variables, it’s perfectly reasonable to expect people to put two and two together. But a puzzle shouldn’t hinge on a detail that’s nowhere to be found within the room or information provided. Inevitably, your program will draw a mix of people who love the theme, and those who don’t know much about it. Make sure the latter group does not feel left out.
**In Our Experience**

**Stranger Things Escape Room**

The room contained 5 puzzles and 3 lockboxes spread between 5 areas.

**Hopper’s Office**
- **Clue:** Hopper’s board shows the sequence of the locations/puzzles
- **Puzzle 5a:** The 1st of 4 waffles is on Hopper’s desk
- **Lockbox 3:** The final lockbox with 4 locks from Puzzles 3, 4, and 5

**Will Byer’s Living Room**
- **Puzzle 1:** On the wall is the alphabet with Christmas lights strung around it so that each letter corresponds to one light. Five of the lights were missing the outer bulb: E, I, K, M, S. This was an anagram of MIKES.
- **Puzzle 5b:** The 2nd of 4 waffles is on the Byers’ couch
- **Lockbox 1:** The 5-letter code opens Lockbox 1, which contains Dungeons and Dragons figurines and a black light.

**Mike Wheeler’s Basement**
- **Puzzle 2a:** Using the blacklight, the starting points for each figurine can be found on the board game on the table
- **Puzzle 2b:** Using the Dungeons and Dragons narrative on the table, the end points for each figurine can be found
- **Puzzle 2c:** Adding together the grid numbers for each figurine’s end point provides a 3-digit code
- **Puzzle 5c:** The 3rd of 4 waffles is in the blanket fort
- **Lockbox 2:** The 3-digit code opens a box containing a set of vials with colored liquid

**Hawkins Laboratory**
- **Puzzle 3a:** Using the lab report on the table, the proportions for mixing the liquid from vials can be found
- **Puzzle 3b:** Lining up the beakers from least to most contents provides a 5-color code combination which opens a lock on Lockbox 3
- **Puzzle 5d:** The 4th of 4 waffles is on the table
- **Puzzle 5e:** The number of bites in each waffle make up a 4-digit code which opens a lock on Lockbox 3
- **Clue:** An EXIT sign points to the corner entrance to the Upside Down

**Upside Down**
- **Puzzle 4a:** A box on the table containing 6 cups of black slime has 4 keys hidden inside
- **Puzzle 4b:** 2 of the 4 keys open locks on Lockbox 3
CONNECTING PUZZLES TO STORY

The final step: bringing everything together into a cohesive whole. You’ll want to make sure that when puzzles and story come together, it all makes sense. Does your narrative follow a logical progression? Do the puzzles fit into that narrative? Does it all work within the theme? Will the experience engage a range of ages and skill levels? If anything is off, review and modify. Below are two of the best tricks for taking a macro look at what you’ve created.

Map out your plan

This is especially helpful for puzzles that have multiple parts, or a series of puzzles that need to happen sequentially, but it’s still helpful regardless of the complexity of the room. Using whatever medium you’re most comfortable with (pen and paper, Microsoft Paint, etc.), draw your space. This does not have to be fancy. A simple rectangle will do. Next, add in the major components of your escape room. Again, don’t dwell on the details. You’re just trying to make sure there’s some kind of representation of the puzzles and their placement. Finally, like a treasure map, mark down the progression the participants will have to take to successfully breakout. This allows you to look at the entire room with the complete sequence of events on a single page, and that makes it infinitely easier to suss out any kinks.

Do a run through

Pretend you know nothing about this escape room and go through the whole thing as though you were a participant. Don’t worry about making your space look exactly as it should for the actual program. Like the map, you simply want to make sure all the major components of the room are present. Obviously, you know all the answers, you know what’s coming next, but physically going through the motions of the room and its puzzles can help highlight any issues. If you are able to have someone else who hasn’t been working on the program with you run through it as well, even better.
In Our Experience

Stranger Things Escape Room

Below is the map that Gen made of our Stranger Things Escape Room. It was particularly helpful for us as the room was divided into five different areas, with puzzles spanning all of them. Not all of what you see on the map is representative of what we actually did. And that’s because looking at the map helped us realize what wouldn’t work well.
**TIPS AND TRICKS**

**Ground Rules to Consider**

The restrictions and rules for your escape room are highly dependent on you, your program, your space, and your library. That said, there are a few ground rules that you’ll at least want to consider.

- **The bounds of the escape room.** This is much more straightforward if you’re in a room, but boundaries are just as much about what’s inside a space as what’s outside of it. If you’re using a multipurpose room that includes, say, storage of unrelated materials, make sure everyone knows those areas are not part of the escape room. If you’re in an open space, make sure everyone knows where your makeshift barriers are.

- **The level of interactivity.** Escape rooms often utilize components that must be used up or altered to solve a puzzle. They could even contain elements that must be broken or damaged. Or they might not include any of these. Either way, make sure people understand what to expect otherwise you might end up with all sorts of things broken in the quest for clues.

- **The importance of teamwork.** Escape rooms are meant to be cooperative, but as with any game, people can become competitive and lose sight of the need to work with others. It never hurts to remind everyone before you get started. If your room is designed to get people to divide and conquer, as in people splitting into small teams, make that clear as well.

- **Valid resources.** What resources can your participants use in order to breakout? Solely what you’ve provided? Are you a resource they can turn to for help? Are they allowed to use the library’s collection (physical or digital)? Could they use their phones? Some of the fun of a puzzle is figuring these things out for yourself, but if there are any absolute no-no’s, those should be made clear at the beginning.

- **The time limit.** Sadly, the escape room can’t last forever. Whatever your time frame, make sure everyone knows what it is, and provide them with updates throughout the game.

**Breakout Kit**

There are a number of materials that get used over and over again in escape rooms, and if you’re interested in putting on multiple programs, you might want to invest in an assembled kit. Breakout EDU (more information below in Additional Resources) makes just that. The cost ($150) might be prohibitive for your library, or its contents might be excessive for your needs, but if nothing else, it’s a good reference for common escape room components. Here’s what comes in a kit:

- Lock boxes of varying sizes
- Locks
  - Alphabet
  - Directional
  - Color wheel
  - Shape wheel
  - Number wheel
  - 3-digit
  - 4-digit
  - Key
- Hasp (allows multiple locks to be put on a single lock box)
Décor & Props
How you decorate your space can go a long way in creating the world of your escape room. But as mentioned before, this doesn’t have to be expensive or time-consuming. Below are some tips to help you be as efficient and cost-effective as possible.

- Make what you can. If you’re a librarian, then you are already an extremely resourceful person. Look around at what materials you have readily available and get creative about how you can use those tools to create things for your escape room.
- Reduce, reuse, recycle. If you’re a programming librarian, then you have probably already made or bought props and decorations for other programs. Don’t let them go to waste!
- Ask for donations. Other staff members might have an excess of cardboard or paper or plastic bottles or any other item you might be looking for. And for purely decorative items, consider your own home. A quilt, pillow, or a lamp might be just the thing to strike the right ambiance.
- Use your mind palace. If you just aren’t able to get the props and decorations you need due to a lack of time or resources, don’t fret. This is when a strong narrative can save the day. If you can paint a vivid picture with your own words, people will be transported to whatever world you like.

Types of Puzzles
There are many different types of puzzles, but we’re going to focus on three broad categories.

- Transparency and Paper. These puzzles are quick and cheap to create, which also makes them easy to replicate and share. Paper and word-based puzzles tend to encourage literacy and logic skills, while transparency-based puzzles also emphasize spatial reasoning.
  - Word Search
  - Rebus or shape puzzle
  - Word scramble or anagram
  - Files or dossier
  - Layer transparencies to reveal characters
  - Color-changing transparencies
- Ciphers and Maps. What’s more classic than using a cipher to crack a code? Both ciphers and maps are useful to add additional layers of complexity to another puzzle. Both also encourage collaboration.
- Sensory. These puzzles test a different type of intelligence and are excellent for a more inclusive experience. These are the puzzles that will more likely be used up, taken, altered, or destroyed during the escape room, which does make them more resource-heavy and less likely to be reused.
  - Digging for keys (or other objects)
Adapting Puzzles

Regardless of the type of puzzle you’re working with, the methods for adapting them all boil down to the same few things:

- **Build your onion.** Start with a base puzzle and build from there. For example, you can start with a puzzle as a clue. To add complexity, have that clue written in code, so they then have to translate it using a cipher. The puzzle is the base, the cipher is the added layer of complexity.
- **Use your senses.** Creating clues that rely on your senses can help with inclusivity. Not everyone may be skilled in decoding anagrams, but everyone is able to dig through sand to find a fossilized key. Puzzles that rely on sense of smell, taste, sight, touch, and sound can make the room interactive and engage larger groups. They provide an inclusive environment where not all the puzzles rely strictly on book or logical intelligence.
- **Not every puzzle has to work for everyone.** Each participant is going to have strengths and weaknesses. Varying the types of puzzles you use will ensure the likelihood that there is something for everyone. That being said, don’t stress too much about pleasing everyone. The point is for them to work together and have fun.

Registration

First thing’s first: you will absolutely need to limit the number of people participating in an escape room at once for the simple fact that a group will cease to function as a group if it gets too big with nothing to engage it. But what sets the limit depends on the space available and the nature of your puzzles. If you have a large space to host the escape room and lots of puzzles that can be worked on independently of one another, you could certainly support a larger group. If your space is on the smaller side or your puzzles follow a strict sequence, you’ll probably want no more than 6, maybe 8 people tops.

To register or not to register, the eternal library programming question. And escape rooms will be no exception. Ultimately, it’s up to you. There are pros and cons to requiring people to sign up ahead of time.

**Pros:**

- You know approximately how many to expect
- It’s easier to create consumable puzzles and props
- You can plan to host multiple groups
- There’s a more even disbursement of people
- You can adjust for various ages, groups, or personalities

**Cons:**

- You limit who can attend a program
- Sometimes people are no-shows
Maximizing Participants

Quantity doesn’t trump quality when it comes to library programs. However, numbers often still rule our professional lives, and a single session of an escape room might not justify the time and money spent to create it either in your own eyes or those of your superiors. There are a number of ways to get the most bang for your buck.

- Multiple sessions
  - Back to back. Are you able to set aside a certain space for several hours? You could set up the escape room and run it several times with different groups, resetting everything quickly in between.
  - Across multiple days. Do you have a space that doesn’t get much use, or is your escape room quick and easy to set up? In either situation, you could hold a session several days, weeks or months in a row.
  - Multiple rooms simultaneously. Do you have multiple rooms or spaces that could be used at the same time? Is your escape room easy to duplicate? Run two (or more!) identical escape rooms at once. This minimizes the total span of time needed for the program, but obviously increases the number of staff/volunteers and resources needed.

- Sharing resources
  - Within your system. Are you part of a larger library system with multiple branches? Pack up your escape room, write out clear instructions, and send it along to someone else.
  - Outside your system. Are you part of a library consortium or have good relationships with untethered libraries nearby? Start a resources exchange! Send your escape room to other libraries and perhaps inspire others to do the same.
  - Online. Write up a description of your room, lay out clear instructions, add some pictures, and share it with the world!
### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### General Guidance and Kits

If you’re looking for more help creating escape rooms, these are both great places to start. Both also have a variety of materials, resources and supplies for download and/or purchase.

- **Breakout EDU**: [https://www.breakoutedu.com/](https://www.breakoutedu.com/)
- **Lock Paper Scissors**: [https://lockpaperscissors.co/](https://lockpaperscissors.co/)

#### Puzzle Resources

You don’t have to come up with everything from scratch. Here are a few generators to help you out.

- **Word Search Generator**: [https://www.puzzlemaker.com/WS/](https://www.puzzlemaker.com/WS/)
- **Rebus Puzzle Generator**: [https://rebus.club/](https://rebus.club/)
- **Maze Generator**: [http://www.mazegenerator.net/](http://www.mazegenerator.net/)

#### Recipes

A few recipes that have gotten a lot of use in our escape rooms. Both bath bombs and slime are fun ways to conceal objects and provide a sensory experience. Salt dough makes good fossils and can be morphed and baked into essentially any shape.

- **Bath Bomb Recipe**: [https://www.100daysofrealfood.com/homemade-bath-bombs/](https://www.100daysofrealfood.com/homemade-bath-bombs/)
- **Slime Recipes**: [https://www.elmers.com/slimes](https://www.elmers.com/slimes)
- **Salt Dough Recipe**: [https://m.wikihow.com/Make-Salt-Dough](https://m.wikihow.com/Make-Salt-Dough)

#### Copyright

If you take our suggestion to use established franchises for your escape rooms, you may wonder about the issue of copyright. Unfortunately, neither Gen nor Katie are lawyers or legal experts, and we cannot advise anyone on legal matters. However, we’ve compiled a list of resources that should help you wade through the waters of copyright and fair use.

**U.S. Copyright Office**

- **Copyright Law**: [https://www.copyright.gov/title17/](https://www.copyright.gov/title17/)
- **Fair Use Section**: [https://www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap1.html#107](https://www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap1.html#107)
- **More on Faire Use**: [https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/more-info.html](https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/more-info.html)

**Other Tools**

- **Fair Use Checklist**: [https://copyright.columbia.edu/basics/fair-use/fair-use-checklist.html](https://copyright.columbia.edu/basics/fair-use/fair-use-checklist.html)
- **Fair Use Evaluator**: [https://librarycopyright.net/resources/fairuse/index.php](https://librarycopyright.net/resources/fairuse/index.php)
1. Write either the alphabet or numbers (in sequential order) on one of the rings.
2. On the other ring, write out your cipher symbols, letters, or numbers.
3. Create a clue or hint that leads players to determine the trick to identifying the first letter.

Example:

If you’re using letters and a symbol text for a Harry Potter ER, leave a note like this:

“You’re a wizard, Harry! The number of houses at Hogwarts will help you translate the strange script carved into the cover of the book of spells you stole from the restricted section of the library.”