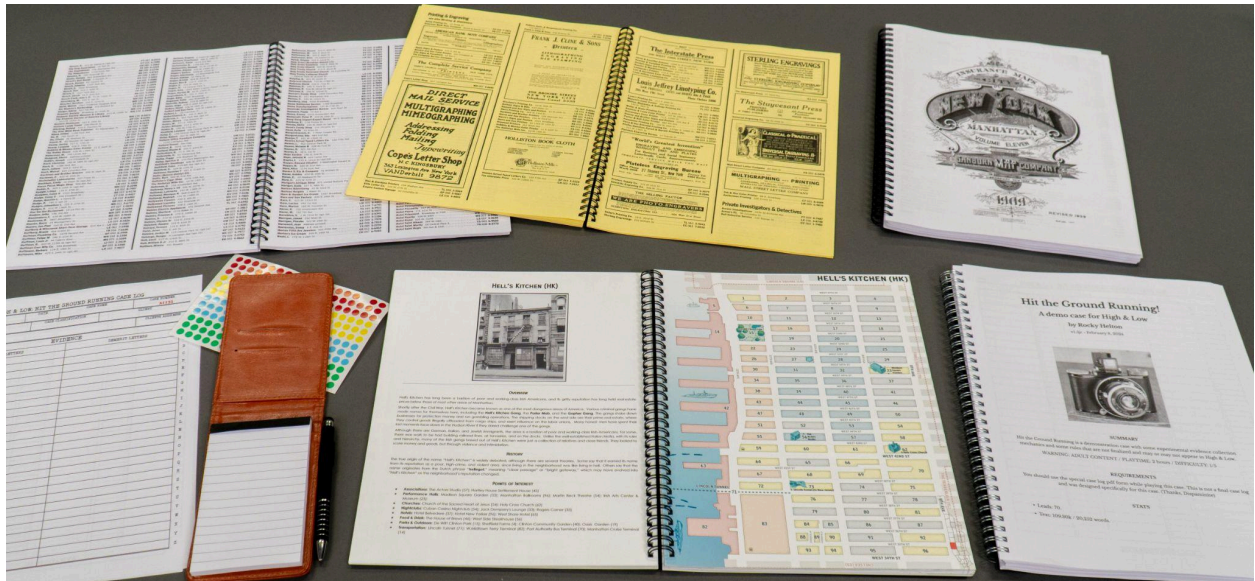


# NEW YORK NOIR RULEBOOK

v4.2, 11/17/24



## Introduction

New York Noir is a narrative mystery detective game, in the spirit of **Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective**, set in gritty **New York City** in the 1920s through 1950s.

In New York Noir, solving mysteries is only half of the job. You'll also need to gather sufficient evidence to prove your theory of the case. Figuring out the identity of the killer is a good first step – but without a motive and a murder weapon, you won't go far.

And while decisions about who to arrest and prosecute won't always be entirely in your hands, if you make a bad recommendation, your reputation is going to suffer.

At the end of each case or campaign chapter you'll answer questions, make choices, and be scored based on your performance and understanding of the case. You'll also read an epilogue, often told through newspaper articles and trial transcripts, that explains how the story unfolds in the days, weeks, and months after your participation in a case ends. And sometimes the results won't be pretty.

It's a harsh world – sometimes the guilty escape punishment, and the innocent pay for someone else's sin. Sometimes the best you can do is learn to live by a code of your own.

# Contents

The New York Noir base box contains the following components:

- Full Rulebook (this document)
- Quick Start Rules (1 double-sided sheet)
- Advanced Mechanics Rulebook
- Bound map atlas book (size varies by edition, from 8.5"x11" to 13"x19") and combination neighborhood guidebook.
- Three (3) Directories: White, Yellow, and Reverse
- Research Guide and Navigation Guide
- Twelve (12) campaign chapter booklets (8.5x11)
- A stack of Case Log Forms.
- Secret Evidence Folders (open only when instructed)

## Solo/Cooperative vs. Multiplayer Rules

New York Noir is a fully cooperative game where players make decisions as a team and experience the same story together. There is essentially no difference in the basic rules between playing solo or cooperatively with multiple players.

However, should you wish to add a *minor* competitive element to the game, allow each player to answer final questions separately, and calculate their own score.

## Gameplay Sequence

A game of New York Noir will either involve playing a **standalone** case, or playing one chapter of a longer **campaign**. A standalone case is played similarly to a single chapter of a campaign. In both cases, a **chapter booklet** (sometimes known as a "case book") will be what you are reading from. Most cases involve multiple game days with **events** occurring between days.

### Chapter Booklets

Begin your game by reading any **instructions** in the **Chapter Booklet** corresponding to the campaign chapter or standalone case you wish to play.

A Chapter Booklet consists of several parts:

- The **cover page**, with the chapter's title, author, and basic information
- A **table of contents**, which you will refer to frequently and will be used to quickly look up leads, hints, etc.
- **Instructions**. Read these to get started. The instructions will remind you of everything you need to play. They will typically instruct you to use a standard "**Case Log Sheet**" to record your progress during the game, but it may have additional instructions specific to the scenario you are playing. A case log form will usually be included in the booklet, but you may find it more convenient to use a separate log sheet. Instructions on how to use the Case Log Sheet are described below.
- Next you will find an **introduction** to the story. This will set the stage for the **first day** of your case. Most cases span multiple days, and the booklet will walk you through when to stop reading and begin searching for leads.
- Most cases span multiple **game days**, with **events** occurring between days. The introduction to each subsequent day will follow the previous one in the first half of the

case booklet. Some days may even be broken into day and night phases. It is important that you do **not** read ahead in the story, and proceed only when instructed.

- After the day sections, comes the **Lead Section**. This section makes up the bulk of the case booklet. It is an alphanumerically sorted collection of numbered paragraphs that you will look up as you investigate the case. You should avoid reading any leads other than the ones you are explicitly looking up as you play. Always use the table of contents to check for a lead before bothering to search for it in the lead section.
- After the Lead Section there will typically be a **Documents** section (unless all Documents for the case are contained in a separate standalone envelope). You will be instructed when you have access to a page in the Documents section.
- After that you will find additional sections for the **Conclusion** which includes **Questions**, and an **Epilogue**, and possibly other end-game content. The game will instruct you when to access these sections.
- You will also find a **Hint Section** at the end of the booklet. If you get stuck looking for a specific item that the game requires you to find, you can read a hint for that item. Again use the table of contents to find the hint you are looking for. Note that you will pay a score penalty whenever you read a hint.

## Basic Gameplay

Gameplay is broken up into one or more days. Each day plays identically. You will be told a list of items (markers) that you must find before the end of the day, and then you begin searching for Leads.

To search for a lead, identify a lead # that you wish to visit, look up that lead, and read that entry. Then repeat this process until the day ends. Therefore, the bulk of the deduction element of the game is figuring out what lead #s to visit. To do this, you will use the directories. For example, if someone is mentioned by name, you could find their lead# in the White pages directory. Instructions below explain in detail how to use the directory. See below for complete details on **visiting leads**.

In most New York Noir cases, you will be told to record the start and end times for each day, and each lead you visit will instruct you on how much time has passed reading that lead. You should record this information on your Case Log Sheet (see below).

Your day can end in one of two ways. First, if you find all the required items BEFORE the designated end time for the day, you may choose to end your day early. Second, if the designated end time for the day is reached and you have not found all of the day's required items, then you enter **overtime** for the day, and you may not proceed to the next day until you acquire all of the required items (markers), and must proceed after you do. More on this in the section below about **Overtime**.

When the final day ends you will be instructed to proceed to the conclusion where you will eventually have to answer questions and be evaluated on how well you understand what's happened.

## Markers

On each day you may be instructed that you are **required** to find certain "**markers**" before you may end the day. Each marker is represented by an uppercase letter or an uppercase letter-number pair. Markers represent knowledge you gain while reading, or events that occur. You will always be explicitly told when you have found a marker, and instructed to record it on

your case log. You will find a list of markers on the front of your case log sheet and you should circle them as you acquire them.

## Tracking Time and Overtime

Time is a little unusual in New York Noir. You will be told the starting time and ending time of each day, and how much time passes as you visit each lead.

However, if the current time passes beyond the **designated end time for the day**, but you have **not** found all of the day's required items, then the next lead you visit will trigger **Overtime** for the current day.

When this happens, mark the checkbox on your Case Log Sheet that indicates that you have entered overtime (noted as OT in the lower right) for the current day. Note that this will typically incur a small penalty in your final score.

And now, for the remainder of the day, you no longer need to record the time of lead visits, and the clock no longer advances (ignore any instructions telling you to do so). Essentially **time stands still when you are in overtime**.

- If you visit a lead that asks what the current time is while you are in overtime, you should consider the current time to be the day's official end time.
- If you are in overtime and find all of the day's required items (markers), your day ends after you finish reading that lead.

## Flextime Mode

Flextime mode is an optional way to play for those who dislike having to micro-manage the passage of time.

- Ignore all time tracking instructions during the game. Do not record lead times or track the current time. Take as long as you want on each day. You are never in overtime.
- Should you encounter text asking you what time of day it is, simply pick a time of your choice which is: 1) Within the start and end time for day, and 2) Later than any previously chosen time on the same day.
- You still may not move on from the current day until you find all of the day's required items, but after you find them you may continue the day for as long as you like.

Playing in Flextime mode may reduce the tension you experience but will not otherwise reduce the richness of your experience, and may be more enjoyable for people who would rather focus on the narrative experience without being distracted by record keeping.

## Using the Case Log Sheet

Keeping good notes is an essential skill for a detective, and each detective has their own techniques for keeping notes. This section discusses some good practices for using the Case Log Sheet while you play New York Noir.

Here's what the **front** of a case log sheet should look like:

HIGH & LOW CASE LOG:		DATE:			
MARKERS		DOCUMENTS			
A	A2	1			
B	B2	2			
C	C2	3			
D	D2	4			
E	E2	5			
F	F2	6			
G	G2	7			
H	H2	8			
I	I2	9			
J	J2	10			
K	K2	11			
L	L2	12			
M	M2	13			
N	N2	14			
O	O2	15			
P	P2	16			
Q	Q2	17			
R	R2	18			
S	S2	19			
T	T2	20			
U	U2				
V	V2				
W	W2				
X	X2				
Y	Y2				
Z	Z2				
CAMPAIGN LOG		FINAL SCORE: <input type="text"/>			

CULTURE		?	
1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
11-20	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	11-20	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
21-30	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	21-30	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
31-40	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	31-40	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

DEMERITS		DAY TIME SUMMARY			
DAY	START	END	OT		
1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1		<input type="checkbox"/>	
11-20	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	2		<input type="checkbox"/>	
21-30	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	3		<input type="checkbox"/>	
31-40	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	4		<input type="checkbox"/>	
41-50	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	5		<input type="checkbox"/>	
51-60	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	6		<input type="checkbox"/>	
61-70	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	7		<input type="checkbox"/>	
71-80	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
81-90	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
91-100	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				

At the top, you can write the name of the chapter being played and the current date (your date or the game date, as you wish).

### Marker Area

On the left hand side you will see two columns with 26 rows each, for tracking Markers. You can use this space as you wish, but one recommendation would be to circle a marker when you acquire it. To the right of the marker you might write down the lead # where it was acquired so that you can re-read that lead later if you feel it might be useful to refresh your memory. Note that A and A2 are different markers.

You might also use this space to help you keep track of which markers are required to be found for the current day, perhaps by putting a little dash in front of the day's required markers (remember that you are not allowed to end the current day until you acquire all of the day's required markers).

Sometimes you will visit a lead that checks if you have acquired a marker that you haven't yet acquired. You will want to remember that lead# so that you can return to it later. You could also record that information here (or on the other side of the case log sheet; see below).

## Document Area

On the right hand side you will see rows from documents #1-20. You can use this space to track the acquisition of documents in the same way that you track the acquisition of markers.

## Demerit & Culture Checkboxes

On the bottom right of the front of the case log sheet you will see **checkboxes** for **demerits** and **culture**. When you are instructed to mark these, simply put an X through them on this sheet. Your score may be impacted by these at the end of the case, and other events may trigger based on them.

## Tracks

The case log sheet may have space to note the progress of one or more "tracks" in the bottom right. You will be instructed how to use this space if necessary.

## Day Time Summary Table

This table in the lower right corner of the front page of your case log sheet simply helps you remember the start and end times of each of the chapter's game days. Simply record the start and end times that are given to you at the start of each day. If you enter overtime on a day (because you failed to find the required markers by the designated end day time), record on this table that you have entered overtime. This may affect your score or trigger events between days.

## Campaign Log Notes and Final Score

At the bottom of the front page of your case log sheet you will see space to record any **Campaign Log** entries and to record your final score. You will calculate your final score at the end of each chapter. If your chapter is part of a campaign, you will be told what to record in the Campaign Log area.



# Visiting Leads

Gameplay in New York Noir consists almost entirely of visiting leads found in the directories.

Visiting a lead should be thought of as traveling to that location to speak with someone at that address (or sometimes simply calling them on the phone). Occasionally you may be given a lead number explicitly in the course of a chapter that is not to be found in the directory (e.g. finding a phone number on a scrap of paper).

Lead numbers are formatted as 5 digit numbers of the form “#-####”. When you have a lead number you want to visit, you look up that lead number in the **Table of Contents** in the Leads section of the **Chapter Booklet**.

If there is no entry for a given lead in the chapter booklet, it means the lead was not noteworthy. *Note that there is no penalty and no time passes if there is no entry for a lead #.*

## Types of Leads

You will come across several different kinds of leads in your investigations:

- Most leads will simply be story text to read.
- Some leads may indicate that you have acquired a marker, and that should circle the corresponding letter on your case log sheet. Future leads may check whether you have certain markers. You may be told that you are required to find certain markers before the end of the day (see earlier discussion).
- Some leads may tell you that you have gained access to a document, and will include instructions on how to record this information on your case log, and where to find the document so that you can read it. Sometimes documents will be located at the back of the chapter booklet; other times you may be instructed to retrieve them from a separate envelope/folder.
- Some leads will inform you that without a certain marker you should stop reading or jump to a different paragraph. Unless instructed otherwise, you may return to these lead later, after you have acquired the marker, to read the paragraph that you initially had to skip.
- Some leads may require you to make an arbitrary narrative choice. Typically you may **not** return to these leads to make a different choice later, though you may always re-read a lead to refresh your memory about what it said.
- Some leads will instruct you to **record annotations** in the chapter booklet or case log sheet, in order to track certain conditions, discoveries or consequences.

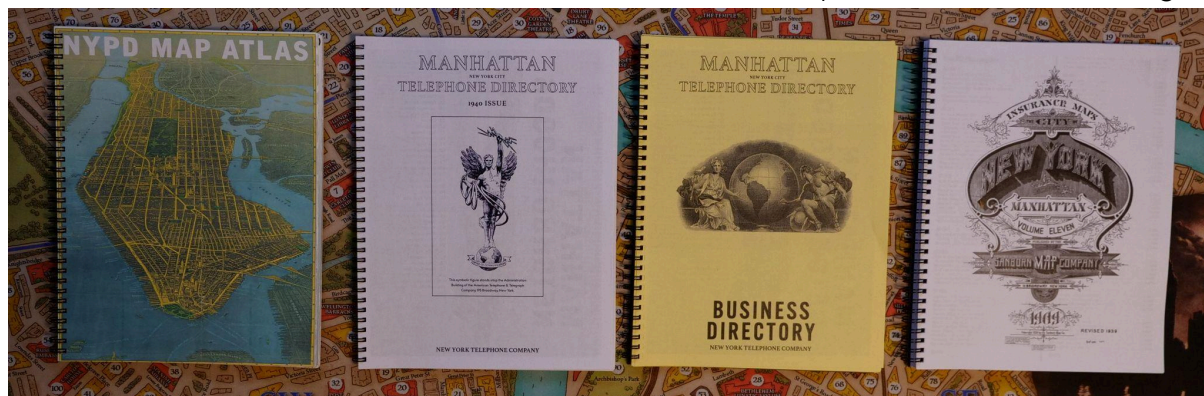
## Things to Remember:

- You can always go back and re-read a lead to refresh your memory, this does not cause additional time to pass.
- Unless directed otherwise, or thematically inappropriate, when a lead checks whether you have a marker, you may return later after you acquire it.
- Unless directed otherwise, or thematically inappropriate, when you are tasked with making a choice, you are required to make the choice immediately, and cannot come back and make a different choice later.



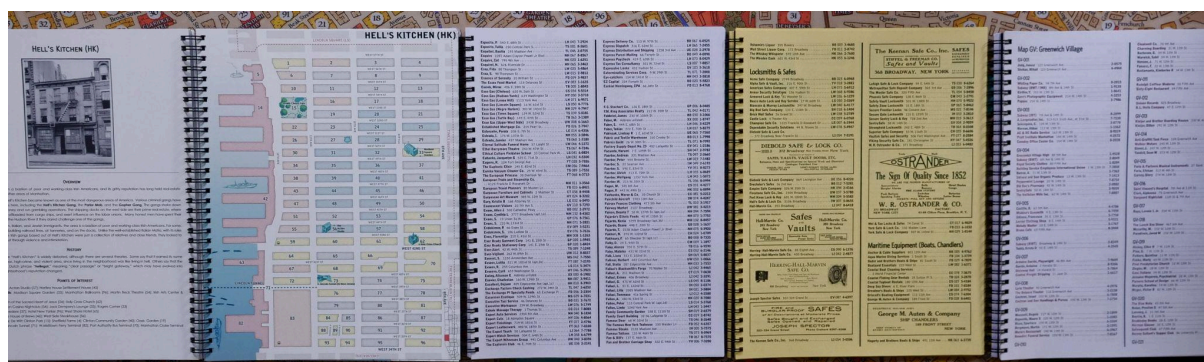
# Using the Directories

There are 3 main directories in New York Noir, as well as a Map Atlas and several extra guides.



- **The White Pages Directory:** This is an **alphabetically** ordered listing of residents, businesses, government offices, and organizations in the city. If you know the name of a business or office, or the last name of a person, you can look them up here. Each entry specifies the a) name; b) street address; c) neighborhood map & block number; d) lead number used for looking up leads in the chapter booklet. Most residents will be listed by their full name; others may include only an initial and last name. If you encounter an entry with an unlisted address, you can use the lead # to call them on the phone.
- **The Yellow Pages Directory:** This is a listing of all businesses, government offices, and organizations, organized by category. If you know the kind of business you are interested in locating, but not its name, this is the directory you would use.
- **The Reverse Directory:** This is a listing of all people and places organized **by spatial location**, with an entry for each numbered block in a neighborhood (see maps). If you want to find out which people and companies are located near each other, you can find that information here. **With this directory you can also identify an apartment resident's next-door neighbors.** The base lead # for an apartment building can be used to contact the **doorman or maintenance worker** for the building.
- **Map Atlas (w/ Neighborhood Guide):** The map atlas provides a map of each neighborhood, with block numbers corresponding to entries in the directories. Each neighborhood has a two-letter abbreviation code found in the directory, and the atlas is sorted alphabetically by this code. This document also contains a brief description of each neighborhood as well as notable points of interest.

Note that while you do not need to know the actual **street address** of a lead in order to look it up in the Chapter Booklet, it may sometimes be useful to have a spatial understanding of where a certain person lives or where a business is located.



## Reasonable Directory Searches

Sometimes you will encounter a clue that gives you partial information about a person or place – such as their surname or profession – and you will need to make a judgment call about whether to visit multiple directory leads in order to find them.

- In general, the game will never expect you to visit more than a half-dozen or so leads in order to find someone, without there being a smarter way to narrow your search. **Extensive brute-force searches will never be required.**
- As an example: If you find a pill bottle prescribed by a Dr. Smith, and there are **100** doctors with that name in the directory, you can be confident that the game will not expect you to check the leads for all 100 doctors named Smith. In such cases you will need to find a way to narrow down the number of leads under consideration.
- As another example: You might notice that there are only **four** doctors with the last name Smith who work in the suspect's neighborhood and specialize in the right field. At that point it would be reasonable to "visit/contact" each of these doctors, in order to ask each one if they prescribed the pills.

## Making Choices

During the course of the game you will occasionally be asked to make a decision from several options. When thinking about such decisions you should consider the following:

- Many decisions will be moral or psychological in nature. Here your choices may affect how the narrative of the game unfolds, and have consequences for yourself or other characters. Such choices are rarely objectively right or wrong, or better or worse. They will not affect your ability to understand the nature of the mysteries, but they may affect your relationships with different characters, or have *ethical, psychological, emotional, social, and reputational consequences* to the unfolding narrative.
- For other decisions there may be a logically preferable outcome. Choosing correctly will depend on your understanding of the underlying mystery or the motivations of characters in the story.

Remember that, as in life, the choices you make may have unforeseen consequences, BUT assuming you have understood the details of a case fully, you will not be "penalized" for making a choice you could not have anticipated the outcome of (though bad things may follow if you misunderstand an important element of the case that would have changed a decision you made).

## Evidence

In New York Noir, understanding the mysteries surrounding your case is only your first step. It's also important that you locate and understand the significance of **evidence** that will prove your theory of the case. Note that this will not always take the form of explicit markers; for example it might be important for you to notice that your suspect had the pack of matches in his hand that matched those found at the crime scene, so that you can mention this when you fill out your final report.

*With insufficient evidence, your superiors may decline to follow up on any charging recommendations you make – or worse yet, blame you for a failed prosecution.*

Use your understanding of the case and your deduction skills to figure out where to look for, and how to gather the evidence and witness statements you'll need to convict your suspect.

## Winning, Losing, and Final Score

In a New York Noir, life is rarely as simple as winning or losing, but you will receive a detailed scoring guide at the end of each chapter.

You will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- **How well you answered final questions** (this will be the bulk of your score).
- **How much overtime you acquired** (reflecting how inefficient you were; minor impact).
- **Demerits you acquired** (reflecting how many hints you needed).
- **Other choices you have made.**

The nature of your final evaluation at the end of a case will vary depending on the nature of the case. And what about those ethical decisions you had to make during the course of your investigation? In the end you'll find out the consequences of those too, but there are no right and wrong answers, and no man has a right to pass judgment on you. You'll have to decide for yourself what justice means to you, and live with the consequences. After all, we only get one shot in this life.

## Tips

- There are dozens of neighborhoods in Manhattan, and tens of thousands of locations. But most people stick to the neighborhood where they live or work. So if you figure out that a person lives in the "LW" neighborhood and learn that they went to a grocery store, you can look up "Grocery Stores" in the Yellow Pages and quickly scan for those located in the "LW" neighborhood. All directories list the neighborhoods that the person or business is located in.
- It's sometimes important to understand where a neighborhood sits in relation to other neighborhoods. To help you get your bearings, the first page of the map atlas illustrates how all the neighborhoods in Manhattan are arranged, and on the bottom right of each map you will see an outline showing where the current neighborhood is spatially located. Furthermore, you will see the names of bordering neighborhoods on each map. In this way, if you are trailing a suspect who leaves your current neighborhood, you should be able to figure out where he would emerge in an adjacent neighborhood map.
- Keep notes of people and places you hear about that you don't want to forget to locate and visit; keep track of leads you have already visited so that you can go back and re-read them later. Taking good notes is part of being a good detective.
- If you're not sure what category a business is in, check the index of the Yellow Pages for a complete list of categories. Being familiar with the different business categories can help you brainstorm possible avenues for investigation.
- When searching for a location, the game will never expect you to exhaustively check more than a handful of businesses of a given type. For example, if you find yourself tempted to check every grocery store in the city to see if your suspect went there, then you are missing something; there will always be a way to narrow down your search to a small number of candidates.

- People will, with very few exceptions, choose to patronize businesses within the neighborhood where they live or work, or *with slightly less likelihood, an adjacent one*. Unless someone has a very good reason to do so, or has no other choice, they will rarely visit a business more than one neighborhood away from their home or work neighborhood. People frequently (though not always) will work in the neighborhood where they live, or one nearby.

# FAQ

## **Can I revisit a lead in order to refresh my memory, make a different choice, or access an option that I couldn't access initially because I was missing a certain marker?**

- You may at any time re-read a lead entry that you have previously read; there is never a penalty for doing so, and no additional time passes.
- Unless otherwise specified, and assuming you meet all of the conditions specified (time of day, conditions, phase of the game), you may return to a lead in order to follow a condition that you did not originally meet. e.g. If you previously visited a lead that said you were not allowed to read some text (or go to some further lead) because you did not have marker "A", and you later gain marker "A", then you may return to that lead and follow the branch that you were originally not able to do.
- If you are asked to make a CHOICE when reading a lead (typically these will be mutually exclusive choices), then you may **NOT** return to that lead in order to make a different choice.
- If in doubt, use your best judgment based on the narrative situation.

## **What if I am required to find a marker before I can end the current day, but I just can't find it?**

- Read the hints for that marker! You will incur a small penalty, but the hints will eventually tell you where to go so you won't be stuck indefinitely.

## **What if I visit a lead and it seems like the story didn't intend for me to be there yet?**

- Because of the nature of the game, on rare occasions you may find yourself stumbling on a lead that the game did not intend for you to find yet -- for example if you start visiting random places in a neighborhood (in general you should have an articulable reason for visiting any given lead).
- If you do find yourself reading a lead entry that seems like you should not have discovered it yet, simply stop reading and leave. You can make a note of it so you make sure to return to it once you have sufficient information to justify your return.

## **How should I think about which shops a person would patronize?**

- If a person has a choice, they will nearly always go to a business in the neighborhood where they live or work, or with a slightly lower likelihood, in an adjacent neighborhood. That is, someone living in Hell's Kitchen and working in the Upper West Side, is most likely to eat at a restaurant in Hell's Kitchen or the Upper West Side, or, with slightly less likelihood, in the adjacent neighborhoods of Chelsea, The Tenderloin, Times Square, Lincoln Square, or Bloomingdale.

## **When I am answering questions, do I need to proceed in order through the questions? Can I peek ahead at later questions before answering earlier ones?**

- You must proceed through the questions in order. Do not look ahead. If you are directed to head back to searching for leads, do so without reading any subsequent questions. You may want to use a sheet of paper to shield later questions in order to prevent yourself from reading ahead.

**Will the marker system guarantee that I find everything there is to find each day? Will it guarantee I don't miss anything important by the end of the case?**

- Even if you find all **required** markers on each day, you are not guaranteed to have seen everything. However, they will ensure that you have not completely missed central elements of the case.

**I found a marker on day 1 that wasn't required until day 3. Is something wrong?**

- This is completely normal. It's very common to find markers days before they are required to be found.

**I was just told that I found a marker but I had already found it earlier. Is something wrong?**

- This is completely normal. There are often multiple ways to find the same marker. If you are instructed to record that you have found a marker which you have already found, simply ignore the instructions.

**What are some tips for keeping notes while playing the game?**

- Developing a system for keeping good notes is an essential part of doing your job, and you will have to figure out your own system for keeping notes. Here are some suggestions:
- It's very easy to forget a place you wanted to visit while reading a lead. While playing you should write down any places that you don't want to forget to go later. At least right down the name of people and places as you hear them -- you can look up their leads later.
- You can place small colored **removable** stickers to note where things are on the map, then remove the stickers from the map when you are done. Sometimes being able to notice which scenes are close to each other can be important. *Do a test to make sure the stickers come off the map without damaging the paper!*
- If you don't mind writing in the chapter booklets, you can mark up the text as you read it, circle lead #s in the chapter booklet as you visit them, or circle items on the table of contents.
- You may find that writing notes on the storybook table of contents is also a good way to remember which lead went where. You might want to print out an extra copy of the Table of Contents that you can write on.
- If you learn something, don't just record what you've learned -- also note where you learned it, so you can go back and double-check it later. For markers and documents, you should note BOTH where you GAIN them, and any lead numbers that CHECK for them; this ensures that you are able to go back to a lead that requires a condition that you obtain after the fact.