

THE COMPLETE GOLDEN RULES

Hey detective. Welcome to the Complete Golden Rules. You hopefully read the "short" golden rules online in your code breaker. Consider that a sneak preview. In this printable version, you'll find everything you need to know, or - need to ask. Take this with you on your next code-cracking adventure.

Rule One: ANALYZE IT

Start ANALYZING by thinking about, talking about, and writing down what you already know about your mystery. Write down a list of EVERYTHING you can think of, even if you don't think it's important.

Then, read the questions below and record your answers.

Try and answer all of them but skip the ones that don't apply to your topic. If you don't know all the answers yet, don't worry. You will find out!

Question: What do you want to discover?

Do you want to know the date your house was built? When your grandfather was born? If your ancestors were on the Mayflower? If that crater-like shape in the desert was made by a spaceship from Mars? What do YOU want to find out?

Your Answer:

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What interests you the most about your mystery?

Is there something special or unique about it? Is there a detail or particular thing that you just have to find out?

Your Answer:

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Question: What interests you the most about your mystery?

Is there something special or unique about it? Is there a detail or particular thing that you just have to find out?

Your Answer:

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Question: What category does your mystery fall into?

First, place it in a big category. Is it a person, place, or thing? Then, get specific. Is it an animal, a vegetable, or a mineral-- something found in or on the earth that is not an animal or plant?

Your Answer:

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Question: Is your mystery object dead or alive?

Or is it an inanimate object--a thing such as a chair, house, or mysterious key--that is not living at all and never was?

Your Answer:

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Question: How old is your mystery?

If this is an object, do you know the date it was made? If it's a person or an animal, do you know when it was born?

Your Answer:

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Question: Where is it from?

Is it from a particular place? Is this place close to where you live or far away?

Your Answer:

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Question: How was this object produced?

Was it made? Was it grown? Was it assembled from pieces?

Your Answer:

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Question: Who made it?

If your object was built or created, who did it?

Your Answer:

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Question: How does your mystery compare to something similar?

Have you "cracked the code" for something similar? If you have, compare this mystery to the one you've already solved. What you learned then, might help you now!

Your Answer:

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Question: Do you have any more questions?

Write them here!

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Code Breaker Tip

Before you start your detective job, you might want to team up with a partner, and work together to crack the code of the mystery at hand. Two detectives are always better than one.

Tools to Use

Magnifying glass
Microscope

RULE 2: INVESTIGATE IT

OK Detective, it's time to start INVESTIGATING. This means snooping around, uncovering and examining clues, and sizing up the situation. Get ready to "roll up your sleeves" and search for your evidence--specific information that helps you crack the code and prove your ideas.

Figure out where to look for answers.

We didn't expect you to know all the answers in Rule 1. Now it's time to find them!

Can you look the answer up in the library? Can you find clues in a record or document in your town's historical society or municipal office? Is there a person you know like your parent, teacher, or other expert who might specialize in your topic? Team up with a friend and start detecting!

Use the Internet with your parent's permission.

First, get the "OK" to go online and research your topic in a website appropriate for kids your age. Print what you find online and look up the same topic in an encyclopedia or dictionary to check for accuracy. Do your online facts seem similar or different than what's in your reference books? This is important because not everything online is well-researched. So you need to do some detective work to make sure it's true.

Organize your evidence.

Write down everything you find out, or paste copies of documents in the printable Super Sleuth Evidence-Collector in your Super Sleuth Detective Notebook.

Think like a detective and be very specific in your investigation.

If you are looking at an object, consider the size, the color, and if it's in a container. Look for evidence of who made it for example, a copyright--which lists the name of the manufacturer and the date.

Ask detailed questions and write down your facts.

Once you've found the answers to the basic questions from Rule 1 and assembled some evidence it's time to ask some more questions. Take careful notes in your printable Super Sleuth Fact Chart.

Make sure your conclusions are based on fact, not imagination.

Check your ideas against the information in your sources - your reference books, the Internet, and the experts.

When you hit a brick wall, ask for help.

It's not important to know the answer, it's important to ask questions. Librarians, teachers, newspaper reporters, and experts in specific fields are available for questions. If you don't ask, you won't find out!

Now, you will probably be thinking of more questions.

Write them down in your printable Super Sleuth Question-Collector.

Code-Breaker Tip

One question will always lead to the next, down a path you may never have expected to travel. That's what investigating is all about.

Tools to Use

Dictionary
Encyclopedia
Internet
Library
Magnifying glass
Microscope
Newspaper

RULE 3: UNDERSTAND IT

Now it's time to start UNDERSTANDING and making sense out of your discoveries. Look through your Super Sleuth Detective Notebook. Reread your notes. Examine the documents and other evidence you have collected. Read everything carefully.

What specific facts seem most important? Why?

Underline your important facts. Discuss them with your detective team, or share them with your parents and teachers.

Hunt for clues in your evidence.

Look at the answers to the questions you've asked and the evidence you've collected. Are there any answers or pieces of evidence that repeat themselves in a pattern? Are there any answers or pieces of evidence that contradict each other? Does anything seem related?

Come up with a theory.

Do you have a hunch about your mystery? It's time to come up with your hypothesis--or theory--for what happened. Start by writing down your idea and summarizing your conclusion--or findings. Then, list five good reasons why you think this way. For every reason, you should have a fact to back it up. Use your printable Super Sleuth Summarizer and fill in the blanks.

Code-Breaker Tip

Don't jump to conclusions. Facts that don't seem important might actually be really important so consider every clue as you unravel your mystery.

Tools to Use

Your Detective Brain

Your Super Sleuth Detective Notebook

Rule 4: TEST IT

It's time to TEST your hypothesis--or theory. Start by explaining your ideas to a parent, teacher or friend. Does your hypothesis ring true when you discuss it? What happens when you try to explain your case?

This not the end of the journey. In fact, testing can take you back to the beginning, because you learn what you still need to know.

Testing will probably make you think of MORE questions.

This means your detective brain is really cooking because you are thinking about what you still need to discover. Write down your questions in your printable Super Sleuth Question-Collector.

Take the time to update your findings.

Once you learn more through testing and asking new questions, make sure you rewrite your summary to reflect your latest discoveries. You can reprint your Super Sleuth Summarizer and write them again.

Finalize your hypothesis.

Write your final conclusion on your Super Sleuth Summarizer.

Code-Breaker Tip

Going back to old sources is a good idea. Sometimes asking one more question will simply do the trick and crack that mysterious code.

Tools to Use

Your Detective Brain

Your Super Sleuth Detective Notebook

And All the Other Tools Mentioned in These Rules!