



**URL:** [www.readwritethink.org/materials/mystery\\_cube/](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/mystery_cube/)

Everyone loves a good mystery, but what makes a mystery story work? Most mysteries follow a formula: There's a crime or mystery, someone who's trying to figure it out, clues along the way, and finally, a solution. This activity asks children to separate a mystery into its distinct elements, like ingredients in a recipe. By listing the elements—one on each side of a cube—children will begin to see how a writer constructs a mystery. They can even use the cube to cook up some mysteries of their own!

### Here's What to Do

Children will use the online tool to identify the setting, the crime or mystery that occurs, the detective, the victim, the clues, and the solution. The cube template can be printed, cut out, folded, and taped together to form a cube (see [sample](#)). A [planning sheet](#) is available to help children prepare for the online exercise.

### More Ideas to Try

- During a vacation or field trip, enlist children as detectives who should look out for anything unusual. When they spot something—like a limousine waiting outside a fast food restaurant—ask them to use it as inspiration for a mystery story.
- When watching a mysterious movie, stop at key points so children can identify elements on the mystery cube. After the movie, discuss what they did or didn't like. How would they change the setting or clues if it were their movie?
- Have children write their own mystery stories and then bring them to life using PowerPoint or video clips. See the [PowerPoint Instruction Sheet](#) and [instructions for Windows Movie Maker](#) for ideas and tips.
- In a mystery, someone attempts to use clues and reasoning to answer a question. Ask children for other occasions when those same strategies are employed to answer questions or solve problems. This can include their own experiences as well as inquisitive professions, such as research science, journalism, or cooking in a test kitchen.

\*This tool uses the free Flash browser plug-in (version 8 or later), which can be downloaded from the ReadWriteThink [Site Tools](#) page.

To view this tip sheet online, go to [www.readwritethink.org/materials/mystery\\_cube/MysteryCube.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/mystery_cube/MysteryCube.pdf).

**Intended for: Grades 3–8**  
**Ages 8–14**

**Technical requirements: Flash 8\***

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