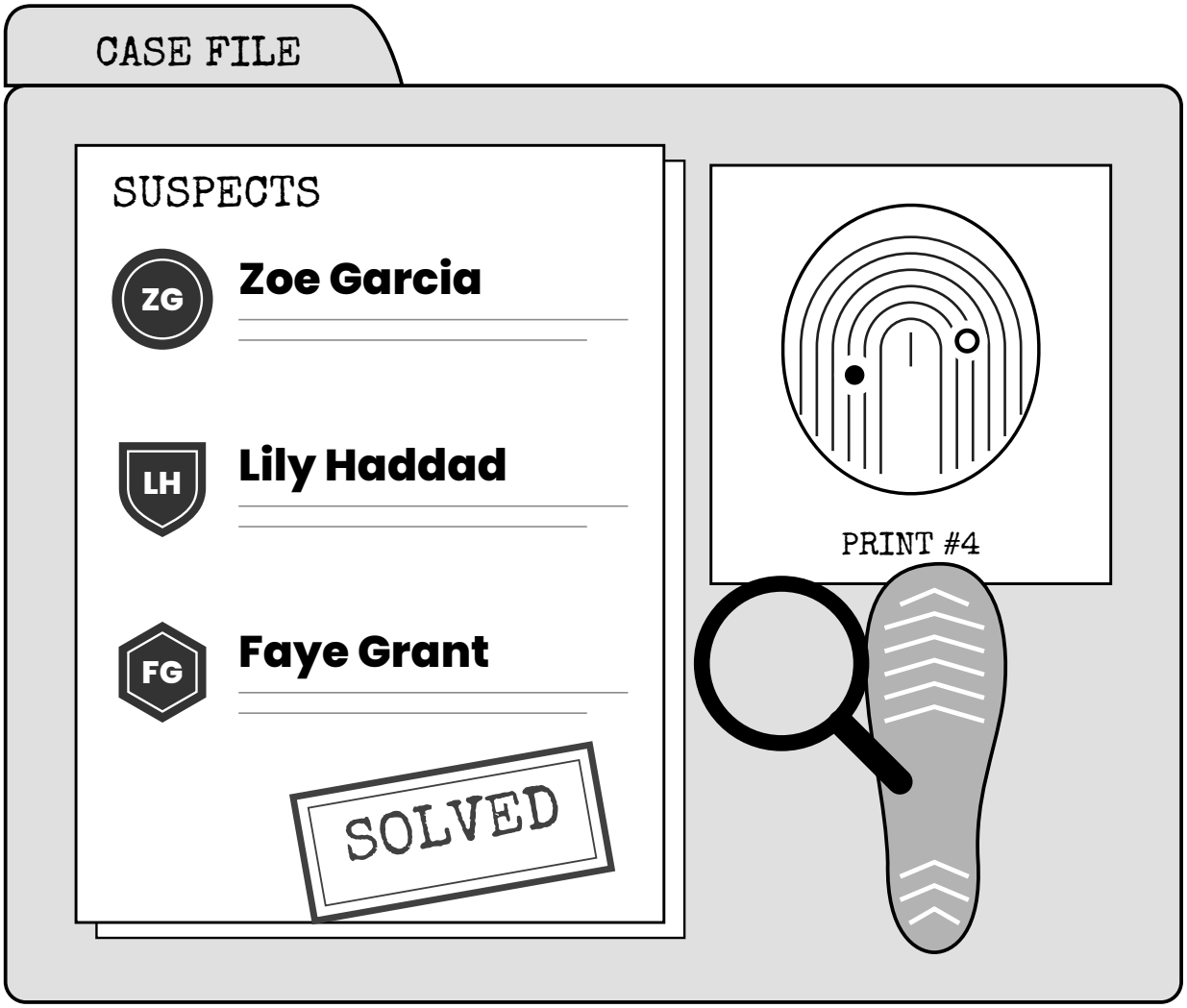
A MYSTERY ACTIVITY BOOK

THE BIG BOOK OF KIDS DETECTIVE CASES

30 Mystery Case Files with Secret Codes, Fingerprints, Timelines, Maps and Logic Grids, Ages 8 to 12



Harper Lane

Sample pages

The Big Book of Kids Detective Cases

30 Mystery Case Files with Secret Codes, Fingerprints, Timelines, Maps and Logic Grids, Ages 8 to 12

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All 30 cases in this book are original. All names, places and events are made up. Each case has exactly one culprit, and every piece of evidence is needed to find them. Every code, map trail and logic grid has exactly one answer.

First edition, 2026

CONTENTS

Welcome, Detective! . . . 4

Your Detective Kit . . . 5

Your Detective ID and Badge . . . 9

Rookie Cases ★☆☆ . . . 11

01 The Purple Headphones Puzzle . . . 12
02 The Smiling Portrait . . . 17
03 The Kazoo Surprise . . . 22
04 The Glitter Paper Trick . . . 27
05 The Missing Paint Brushes . . . 32
06 The Missing Fishing Net . . . 37

Junior Detective Cases ★★☆ . . . 42

07 The Talking Flower Pot . . . 43
08 The Upside-Down Dinosaur Signs . . . 49
09 The Missing Paint Palette . . . 55
10 The Swapped Name Tags . . . 61
11 The Pancake Plate Mix-Up . . . 67
12 The Backward Slide Sign . . . 73
13 The Mixed-Up Book Covers . . . 79
14 The Missing Rocket Cookies . . . 85
15 The Goat in a Hat . . . 91
16 The Missing Triangle . . . 97

Master Detective Cases ★★★ . . . 103

17 The Rubber Duck Parade . . . 104
18 The Case of the Watering Can . . . 111
19 The Missing Puzzle Pieces . . . 118
20 The Upside-Down Painting . . . 125
21 The Missing Microphone . . . 132
22 The Silent Drum . . . 139
23 The Bracelet Mix-Up . . . 146
24 The Bubbly Fountain . . . 153
25 The Book Return Mix-Up . . . 160
26 The Missing Dinosaur Tooth . . . 167
27 The Green Lemonade . . . 174
28 The Cookie Count Mystery . . . 181
29 The Rubber Frog Surprise . . . 188
30 The Missing Bird Feeder . . . 195

The Reveals (answers) . . . 202

Case Log . . . 216

Master Detective Certificate . . . 218

Sample pages

WELCOME, DETECTIVE!

Something has gone missing. Somebody played a trick. Somebody mixed things up. 30 cases are waiting for you, and only you can crack them. Nobody gets hurt in these cases, but somebody always has some explaining to do!

EVERY CASE FILE HAS

1. **The Case Brief**
   What happened, where and when. Read it twice!
2. **The Suspect Board**
   Every suspect, with their shoe size, backpack, pet and favorite spot.
3. **The Evidence**
   Two to four mini puzzles: codes, footprints, fingerprints, sign-in sheets, maps and logic grids. Each one clears at least one suspect.
4. **The Detective Notebook**
   Track who each piece of evidence clears. The one suspect left is the culprit.
5. **The Reveal**
   At the back of the book. Check your answer and see how every clue fits.

THREE DETECTIVE LEVELS

★☆☆

Rookie
Four suspects and two pieces of evidence. Easy codes, a footprint to count and a map to read.

★★☆

Junior Detective
Five suspects and three pieces of evidence. New codes, a sign-in timeline and a logic grid join in.

★★★

Master Detective
Six suspects and four pieces of evidence. Clock times, compass trails, scale footprints and harder grids.

Use a pencil, so you can change your mind. Stuck? Look at the Detective Kit pages that come next. Then try again before you peek at the reveal.

Sample pages

DETECTIVE KIT: CODES

Culprits sometimes leave notes in code. Here is every code in this book and how to crack it. Come back here any time.

BACKWARDS CODE

Read the whole message from the last letter to the first.

TAC A SAH = HAS A CAT

NUMBER CODE

Each number is a letter. 1 = A, 2 = B, all the way to 26 = Z.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

MIRROR CODE

Flip the alphabet. A becomes Z, B becomes Y, C becomes X.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Z	Y	X	W	V	U	T	S	R	Q	P	O	N	M	L	K	J	I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A

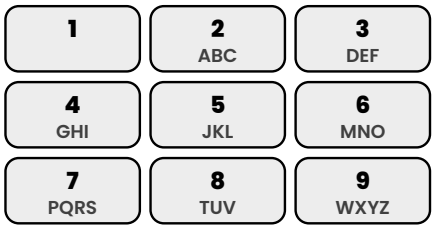
SHIFT CODE

Every letter moved forward. To read it, count back the same number of places. With a shift of 3, D becomes A and E becomes B.

Shift 3: FDW = CAT

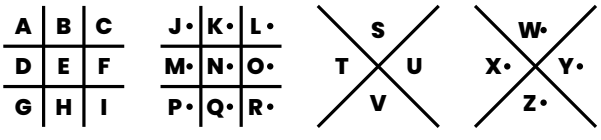
PHONE CODE

Each group of digits is one letter on a phone. 2 = A, 22 = B, 222 = C, 7777 = S. Count how many times the key was pressed.



PIGPEN CODE

Each letter is drawn as the shape of its spot in the grids. A dot means the letter comes from a grid with dots.

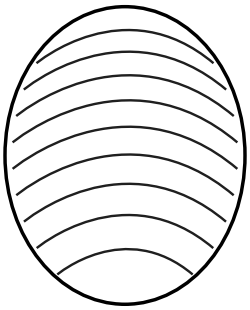


Sample pages

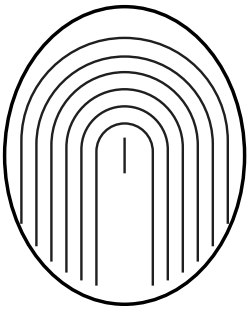
DETECTIVE KIT: PRINTS

No two people have the same fingerprints. In this book, every print has a shape and up to two little marks.

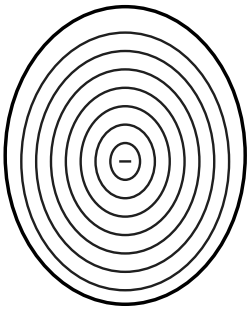
THREE PRINT SHAPES



Arch
Lines go over like a hill.



Loop
Lines go up and curve back down.



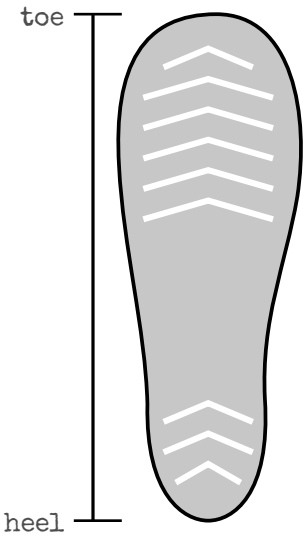
Whorl
Lines make circles in circles.

LITTLE MARKS



A smudged print only shows one half. Check the shape and the mark on the half you can see. Every print on file that matches that half is still a suspect.

FOOTPRINTS



Measure heel to toe

Line up the heel with 0. Read the number at the tip of the toe.

Look it up

Find that length in the shoe size chart. Bigger feet wear bigger sizes.

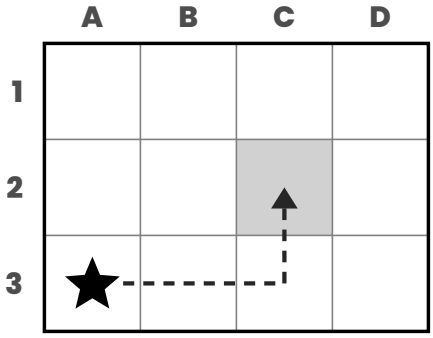
Scale drawings

Some footprints are drawn smaller than real life. If each square is 2 cm, count the squares and multiply by 2.

Sample pages

DETECTIVE KIT: MAPS & TIMES

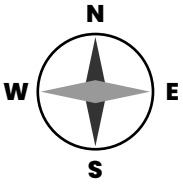
MAP SQUARES AND TRAILS



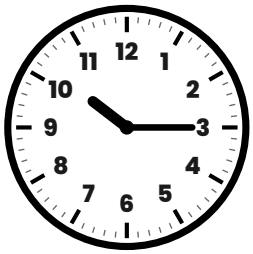
Squares are named by their letter, then their number. The shaded square is C2: column C, row 2.

To follow a trail, start at the star in A3. "Go 2 squares right" takes you to C3. Then "Go 1 square up" takes you to C2. Move one square at a time and count out loud.

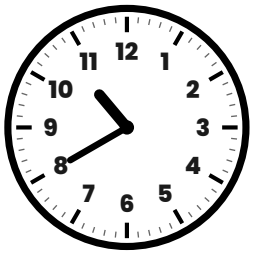
Master Detectives use a compass: north is up, south is down, east is right and west is left.



READING CLOCKS



10:15

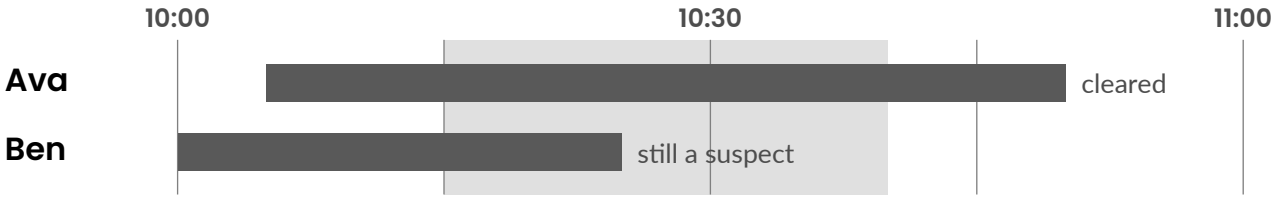


10:40

The short hand shows the hour. The long hand shows the minutes. Each number on the clock is 5 minutes for the long hand: 3 means 15 minutes, 6 means 30 minutes, 8 means 40 minutes.

SIGN-IN SHEETS AND TIMELINES

A sign-in sheet shows where kids were, and when. A grown-up was there with them. If a kid was signed in somewhere else for the whole time between "last seen" and "gone", that kid could not have done it.



shaded: last seen 10:15 to gone 10:40

Sample pages

DETECTIVE KIT: LOGIC GRIDS

A logic grid tells you who was where. Each kid was in one place, and each place had one kid.

TRY IT: A WORKED EXAMPLE

1. Ava was in the Gym.
2. Ben was not at the Pond.

	Gym	Pond	Lab
Ava	O	X	X
Ben	X	X	O
Cy	X	O	X

Clue 1

Ava was in the Gym: put O in her Gym box. Put X in her other boxes, and X under the Gym for Ben and Cy.

Clue 2

Ben was not at the Pond: put X. Ben now has only one empty box left, the Lab. Put O there.

Last step

Cy is left with the Pond. Every row and every column has exactly one O. Solved!

WHO DID IT? THE NOTEBOOK

Every case ends with the Detective Notebook. Put an X under each piece of evidence that clears a suspect. A suspect with no X is still a suspect. When only one is left, you have your culprit.

SUSPECT	EVIDENCE A	EVIDENCE B	STILL A SUSPECT?
Mia	X		no
Leo		X	no
Zoe			**YES**
Sam	X	X	no

Here only Zoe has no X, so Zoe is the culprit. Then turn to The Reveal to check.

Sample pages

YOUR DETECTIVE ID

Fill in your card, then cut out your card and your badge. The back of this page is blank, so you will not cut up a case.

DETECTIVE ID

Case Files Detective Agency

Draw yourself here

DETECTIVE NAME

_____

CODE NAME

_____

BADGE NUMBER

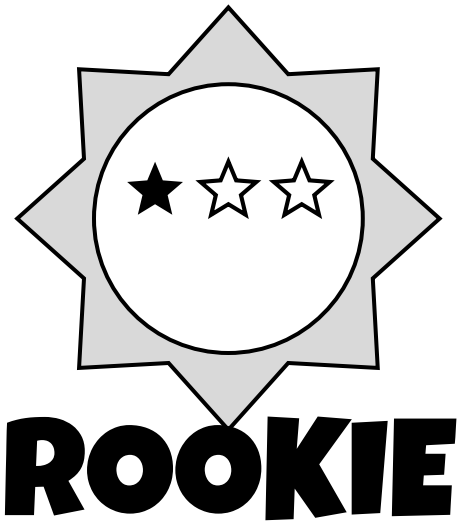
_____

DATE JOINED

_____



Sample pages



Cases 1 to 6

Four suspects and two pieces of evidence. Easy codes, a footprint to count and a map to read.

Sample pages

TOP SECRET

THE PURPLE HEADPHONES PUZZLE

WHAT	WHERE	WHEN
Purple headphones	**Computer Lab**	**10:30 to 11:10**

WHAT HAPPENED

> The Computer Lab has one pair of purple headphones. Mr. Pike hung them on a hook at 10:30. At 11:10, the hook was empty. Someone needs them for a listening game. Four kids signed in that morning.

THE SUSPECTS

CB **Cleo** GS **Gabe** RG **Ruby** RF **Rosa**

YOUR MISSION

Find out who took the purple headphones. Study the suspect board first. Then work through each piece of evidence. Each one clears at least one suspect. When only one suspect is left, you have found the culprit!

IN THIS CASE FILE

- ☐ **Suspect Board** ..... page 13
- ☐ **Evidence A: Footprint** ..... page 14
- ☐ **Evidence B: Secret Message** ..... page 15
- ☐ **Detective Notebook** ..... page 16
- ☐ The Reveal (no peeking!) ..... page 202

Sample pages

The Suspects

Four suspects. Only one is the culprit. Tick the CLEARED box when the evidence clears someone.

Cleo Bauer

CB

Comic book fan

☐ CLEARED

SHOE SIZE	2
BACKPACK	Blue
PET	Rabbit
FAVORITE SPOT	Reading Room

"Is this going to take long?"

Gabe Silva

GS

Chess club member

☐ CLEARED

SHOE SIZE	3
BACKPACK	Green
PET	Goldfish
FAVORITE SPOT	Reading Room

"Why would I do that?"

Ruby Garcia

RG

Story time helper

☐ CLEARED

SHOE SIZE	3
BACKPACK	Black
PET	Rabbit
FAVORITE SPOT	Kids Corner

"I like puzzles too, you know."

Rosa Flores

RF

Puzzle fan

☐ CLEARED

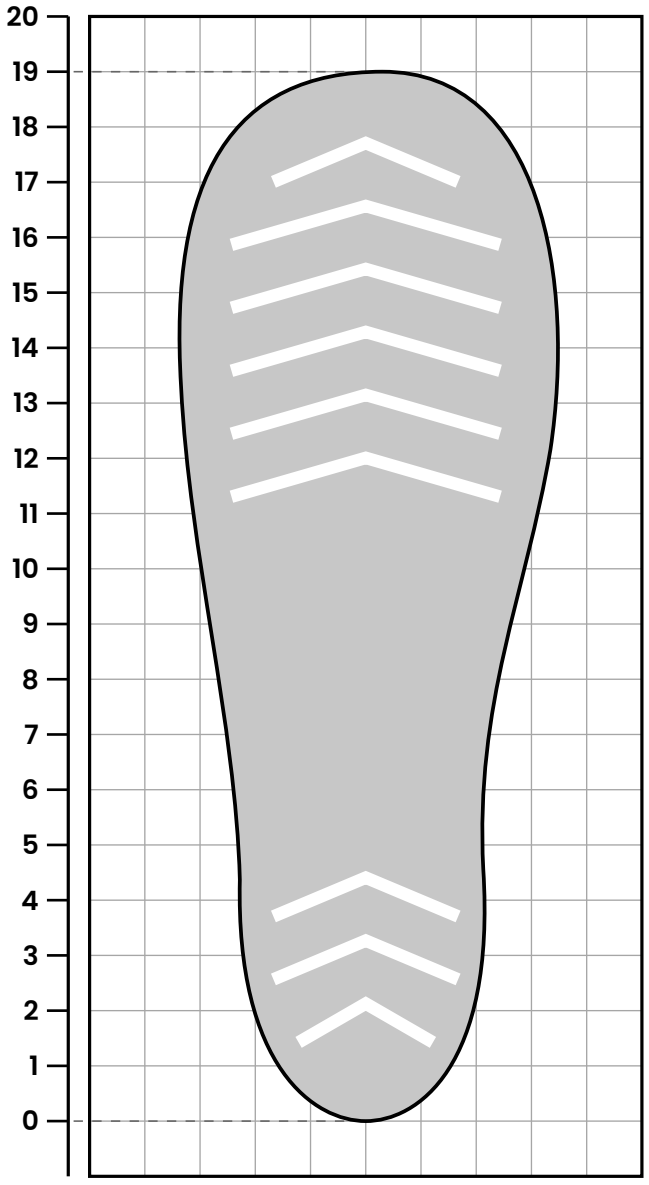
SHOE SIZE	2
BACKPACK	Orange
PET	Cat
FAVORITE SPOT	Story Stage

"Detectives make me nervous."

Sample pages

The Footprint

A muddy footprint was found near the Computer Lab. Count how many squares long it is.



SHOE SIZE CHART

FOOTPRINT	SHOE SIZE
18 squares	Size 1
19 squares	Size 2
20 squares	Size 3
21 squares	Size 4
22 squares	Size 5

HOW TO MEASURE

1. Start at the heel line, at 0.
2. Count the squares up to the toe line.
3. Find that number in the chart.

The culprit left this footprint, so the culprit wears this shoe size.

WHAT DID YOU FIND?

The footprint is (squares): _____

The culprit wears size: _____

Now go to the Suspect Board and tick CLEARED for everyone this evidence clears.

Sample pages

Secret Message

This note was found near the Computer Lab. It is written in Number Code.

HOW THE CODE WORKS

Each number stands for a letter: 1 = A, 2 = B, 3 = C, and so on up to 26 = Z.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N	**O**	**P**	**Q**	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**X**	**Y**	**Z**
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

THE CODED NOTE

20 8 5 3 21 12 16 18 9 20

8 1 19 1 18 1 2 2 9 20

WHAT DID YOU FIND?

The note says: _____

So the culprit: _____

Now go to the Suspect Board and tick CLEARED for everyone this evidence clears.

Sample pages