

The Candy Bowl Caper

SIX GUESTS. ONE PUMPKIN MASK. NO CANDY.

It is Halloween at Maple House. Six guests have come dressed for the occasion, the music is playing, and the candy bowl is full. At 7:12 PM the host switches off the main lights for a planned spooky entrance. The little safety lights stay on.

When the main lights come back on a minute later, every piece of candy is gone - along with the bowl! A camera catches someone wearing the photo booth's grinning pumpkin mask carrying it away. But that mask does not belong to any one guest.

The host asks your detective team to find the masked guest and recover the treats before the next game begins.

How to play

Work together with 2-4 players, or investigate on your own. Print these six pages single-sided in black and white, or read them on a screen. Bring a pencil and scrap paper. No cutting, costume knowledge or internet searching is needed. Younger readers may enjoy playing with an adult.

Read every exhibit, compare the records, and write your verdict on page 6. Keep the separate hints and spoiler answers closed until you need them. All players may see every clue.

The rules of this mystery

Exactly one of the six guests took the bowl, wore the pumpkin mask and hid the candy, working alone. The host and helpers did not assist. No one left the house. Nobody ate or unwrapped the missing candy, and it was not moved again after being hidden. There are no secret passages, supernatural tricks or unlisted containers.

All characters and events are fictional. Photographs, maps, logs and independently confirmed observations are reliable. The guests' spoken accounts may be mistaken or misleading. All times are PM on the same evening.

A / The party photograph

At 7:00, everyone posed for a photograph without the pumpkin mask. The host recorded the details below. Every sleeve pattern is printed as a word; you do not need color vision to solve the case.

Guest / costume	Sleeve pattern	Pin at 7:00
Maya / witch	Stripes	Star
Arlo / pirate	Stripes	Round moon
Ben / vampire	Plain	Round moon
Nia / astronaut	Plain	Star
Owen / scarecrow	Checks	Round moon
Zoe / magician	Checks	Star

All six costumes have long sleeves. Nobody covered, rolled up, changed or exchanged costumes that evening. Pins can be detached, however. Read the later records before using this early photo to accuse anyone.

What the guests said afterward

Guest	Interview extract
Maya	"Everyone saw a star pin and immediately looked at me!"
Arlo	"A little surprise would have made the party more exciting."
Ben	"I heard someone mention a treasure hunt earlier."
Nia	"I borrowed the pumpkin mask, but I returned it."
Owen	"I saw the bowl going through the east doorway."
Zoe	"A magician is an obvious suspect. That does not make me guilty."

B / A borrowed face

The booth helper kept this mask log. The pumpkin mask is the only one of its kind at the party. It covers the whole face and has a black hood that hides hats and hair, but leaves sleeves and chest pins visible.

Time	Verified booth record
7:02-7:06	Maya wears the pumpkin mask for photos, then returns it.
7:06-7:09	Nia borrows it, then returns it to the hook.
7:09-7:10	Zoe uses it for a picture, then hangs it up.
7:10-7:15	The helper is away. The hook is out of the camera view. Any guest can reach it.
7:15	The helper returns; the mask is back on its hook.

A small exchange at 7:08

A separate photo shows Maya and Arlo swapping their chest pins. The host saw the whole exchange: Maya put on Arlo's round-moon pin, and Arlo put on Maya's star pin. Those two pins stayed with their new wearers until 7:20. No other pins changed hands.

The camera image at 7:12

The masked person carrying the candy bowl has STRIPED sleeves and a STAR pin on their chest. Both details are clearly visible. Nobody else touched or carried the bowl during the lights-out minute.

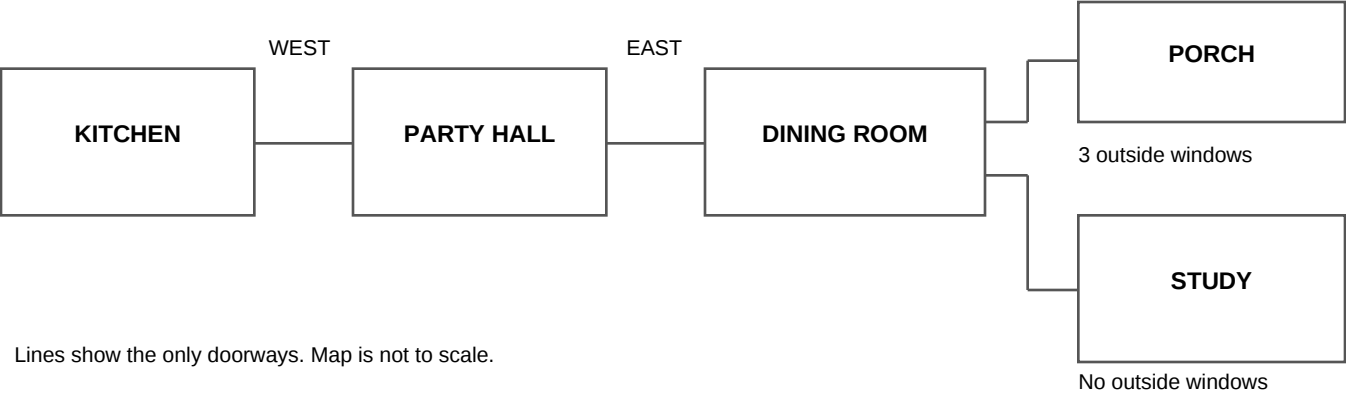
The camera clock and party clock agree. The last guest recorded borrowing the mask is not necessarily the person who used it while the booth was unattended.

At 7:12, which guests have striped sleeves? _____

Which of those guests is wearing the star pin then? _____

C / Follow the bowl

The host drew this complete map of the rooms used for the party. Guests cannot leave through windows. The doorway lines shown are the only routes between rooms.



Source	Independently confirmed observation
Owen at the hall	The masked carrier took the bowl through the EAST doorway of the party hall.
Dining-room camera	The carrier crossed the dining room without putting down the bowl, then entered one of its two adjoining rooms.
Hallway mirror recording	The carrier entered the room with NO outside windows. The doorway reflection is clear, but the face remains hidden.
Host's check at 7:16	The candy bowl is no longer visible in any room. It fits inside every storage place listed on the next page.

The records follow the same carrier and bowl continuously until the final room. Nobody passed the bowl to another person. Once inside that room, the carrier placed it in one of that room's listed storage places and left it there.

The kitchen's west doorway and the porch's windows may be useful for ruling out tempting routes. You do not need to measure walking speed or guess how long the trip took.

Write the route: Party hall -> _____ -> _____

D / A place for the treats

A paper candy-bag tag was caught underneath the bowl as it left the table. It fell off just inside the room identified by the route evidence. A camera confirms it came from that bowl. It is a planning tag, not an empty sweet wrapper.

THE TAG

"TREASURE-HUNT FINISH: Use the hiding place with TWO identical symbols. The symbols must match the pin I gave away tonight, not the one I am wearing now."

The host independently confirms that the culprit wrote this tag before hiding the bowl and followed its hiding instruction exactly. The handwriting is not used to identify the writer.

Room	Storage place	Symbols on front
Study	Low chest	Two suns
Study	Left bookcase cupboard	One moon
Study	Right bookcase cupboard	Two moons
Porch	Bench chest	Two moons
Kitchen	Supply cupboard	Two stars

Symbols are described in words and never change during the party. Moons are the same rounded-moon design as the costume pins. All cupboard doors and chests are closed; none is locked. Each storage place in the final room is listed above.

A matching symbol alone is not enough. First identify the correct room. Then use the pin the culprit gave away, and count the symbols.

Room: _____ Storage place: _____

E / The surprise that went wrong

The host found the following genuine party-planning records. These explain what was intended; they do not replace the costume and route evidence.

Record	Excerpt
Party job list	Arlo: treasure-hunt proposal. Maya: drinks. Ben: music. Nia: photo-booth props. Owen: decorations. Zoe: magic trick.
Arlo's proposal, afternoon	"I could make everyone hunt for the candy instead of leaving it on the table. I will wear the pumpkin mask, hide the full bowl, then lead the big reveal! Nobody will miss out."
Host's reply, afternoon	"Please do not move the candy. We have not agreed to a treasure hunt. Leave the bowl available and show me a plan for another day."
Host's timing note	The one-minute spooky entrance was approved. A candy hunt was not. The host expected the bowl to stay on the table.

After the disappearance, Arlo insisted that a surprise would make the party better but would not say where the candy had gone. The host paused the games so the bowl could be found.

Wanting to stage a hunt is a possible motive, not proof by itself. Your accusation must also explain the mask, the sleeve pattern and the changed pin. The hiding-place instruction should agree with that same person's pin exchange.

Your verdict

1. Who wore the pumpkin mask and took the candy? What two costume details prove it?

2. Why would the 7:00 photograph alone point to the wrong person?

3. Where exactly is the bowl? Explain the route and the tag.

4. Why was it taken, and did the host give permission?
