

HIGH & LOW GETTING STARTED RULEBOOK

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Introduction

High & Low is a noir narrative mystery detective game, in the spirit of **Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective**, set in gritty **New York City** in the 1930s-1950s.

In High & Low, 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.

There's no omniscient narrator in High & Low. At the end of each case (or campaign chapter) you'll 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 High & Low base box contains the following components:

- Getting Started Rulebook (this document)
- Campaign Rulebook
- Advanced Mechanics Rulebook
- Bound map atlas book (size varies by edition, from 8.5"x11" to 13"x19") and combination neighborhood guidebook.
- 3 Directories: Residential (white), Business (yellow) , Reverse
- 12 campaign chapter booklets (8.5x11)
- Numbered Evidence collections:
 - "Document" envelope (8.5x11 sheets)
 - "Photo" envelope (5x7 glossy photos)
 - "Sketch" card box (2.5x3.5 cards)
 - **NOTE: You should not examine the materials found in the envelopes except when explicitly directed to retrieve them.**

Additional Rulebooks

This Getting Started rulebook covers the **basic** rules of the game. If you are playing a standalone case it is all you need to get started.

If you are playing the full campaign, you should also read the **Campaign Rulebook** for additional rules.

An **Advanced Mechanics Rulebook** acts as a reference guide for optional rules and mechanics that may come into play only in some cases.

Solo/Cooperative vs. Multiplayer Rules

High & Low 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, see the **Advanced Mechanics Rulebook** section titled "**Multi-player Game Variants.**"

Gameplay Sequence

A game of High & Low will either involve playing a **standalone** case, or playing one chapter of a longer **campaign**. A standalone case is played identically to a single chapter of a campaign.

Game Start

Begin your game by retrieving the **Chapter Booklet** corresponding to the campaign chapter or standalone case you wish to play.

The Chapter Booklet is broken into two sections, a **Story** section at the front, and a **Lead** section at the rear.

- The **Story** section will essentially walk you through the entire chapter story, step by step. It is important that you do not read ahead in the story, and proceed only when instructed. The story section also contains some **forms** that you will write on to track conditions and consequences as you play.
- The **Lead** section contains numbered paragraphs that you will be directed to look up and read as you follow leads. You should avoid reading any leads other than the ones you are explicitly looking up as you play.

Story Days

A chapter (or standalone case) is played out over a sequence of one or more “**story days**,” each of which is broken into the following **phases**:

- **Morning Briefing**: Introduces the case and describes any events that happen overnight.
- **Day Leads**: Main gameplay where you visit leads and read paragraphs.
- **End-of-Shift Briefing**: Answer questions and get hints.
- **Late Night Leads** (optional): Visit any leads that were off-limits during the day.

Morning Briefing Phase

You begin each story day by reading the **Morning Briefing** for the current day. On the **first** day you will be introduced to the case and your assignment. On **subsequent** days you may learn of any new developments that have occurred overnight while you were sleeping.

Day Leads Phase

After the morning briefing you will begin visiting **leads**. This is where you will spend most of your time playing the game.

You can choose leads to follow from the directories, and look up their entries in the **Lead Section** of the **Chapter Booklet**.

Time essentially stands still during this phase, and you can spend as much time here as you like, following whatever leads strike your fancy. You do *not* need to keep track of the number of leads you follow, unless you are specifically directed to do so.

If there is no entry for a lead in the chapter booklet, you have found nothing noteworthy there. Otherwise, read the lead entry and follow any special instructions.

Ending the current story day: When you can't think of any more leads to follow, or don't wish to visit any more leads on that day, you may choose to end the Day Leads phase and proceed to the **End-of-Shift Briefing**.

End-of-Shift Briefing Phase

When you choose to end the **Day Leads** phase, return to the **Story Section** of the Chapter Booklet and read the **End-of-Shift Briefing** for the current day.

The End-of-Shift Briefing consists of a scene in the form of a dialog, where you will be asked a series of **questions**. These questions are arranged in sequence and you should not look ahead while answering them.

Some of the questions in the End-of-shift Briefing test that you have not overlooked any *critically* important leads. In essence they act as an obligatory hints system, giving you the option to get gradual assistance if you get stuck, and to return to the Day Leads phase to continue visiting leads. (See the section **End-of-Shift Briefings: points to consider** for further details.)

Other questions will be checked at the end of the case, and may be used to assess your current understanding of the case and your instincts.

If you are directed to return to the Day Leads phase, you may spend as much time there as you wish, until you are ready to return to the End-of-Shift briefing and resume answering questions where you left off. You may need to repeat this process **multiple times**.

If you are directed back to the Day Phase because you missed something, you will receive a penalty in the form of **Demerits**, which you will record in the story section of the Chapter Booklet. Demerits indicate that you failed to figure out an important lead on your own, or that you needed help understanding a clue. Therefore you should do your best to find important leads by yourself before you choose to enter the End-of-Shift phase.

Late Night Leads Phase

Unless it's the final story day of the chapter, when you finish the End-of-Shift phase of the current day, you will be instructed that it is time for the **Late Nights Leads** phase. In this phase you can visit any leads that are specifically designated as Late Night Leads (see below under 'Types of Leads.')

Note that you may NOT revisit new Day Leads during this phrase – you can ONLY read leads marked explicitly as Late Night leads. Some chapters may have no night leads.

End of day

After you complete the End-of-Shift Briefing and visit any optional Late Night Leads, your story day ends. If it's not the final day of the chapter, proceed to the Morning Briefing of the next story day.

Final day

If it's the **final day** of the chapter, the chapter booklet story section will direct you to answer any final questions, present any evidence, and make any final charging recommendations, arrests, or other decisions. You will then read an epilogue describing what happens in the days, weeks, and months following the end of the case. There may be multiple epilogues depending on the choices you have made throughout the chapter, and the evidence you have gathered.

Visiting Leads

Gameplay in High & Low 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 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.

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 direct you to **retrieve a specific piece of numbered evidence** from an envelope.
- Some leads will require you to make **moral or psychological choices**.
- Some leads will instruct you to **record annotations** in the Story section of the Chapter Booklet, in order to track certain conditions, discoveries or consequences.
- Some leads may redirect you to different paragraphs based on certain **conditions**, such as what story day it is, or whether you have found certain items. **Do not read sections of text that you are instructed to skip over.**
- Some leads will be marked as **Late Night Leads**. You can only read these entries during the Late Night Leads phase. Record the numbers of any such leads you encounter during the day, so that you remember to come back at night.

At any time during the game you may re-read a previously visited lead. Unless directed otherwise, you may return to a lead after you have met conditions that you originally did not meet.

However, if a lead describes a choice you are forced to make during a **one-time encounter**, you may *not* return later to change the outcome of the encounter by making a different choice.

Using the Directories

There are three main directories in High & Low, and a Map Atlas.

- **The White Pages Directory:** This is an **alphabetically** ordered listing of all residents, businesses, government offices, and organizations in the city. If you know the name of a place 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. You may occasionally run into an entry with an unlisted address.
- **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 every numbered block in every neighborhood. 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 may be able to locate a resident's next-door neighbors, or see which organizations share an address with each other.
- **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 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.
- **IMPORTANT:** People will, with very few exceptions, choose to patronize businesses within the neighborhood where they live or work. Unless someone has a very good reason to do so, or has no other choice, they will rarely visit a business outside of their home or work neighborhood.

End-of-Shift Briefings: points to consider

It's important to understand how to think about the decision to move to the End-of-Shift Briefing phase. You may be tempted to simply jump to the briefing as soon as you run out of obvious leads to pursue. But remember:

- The **End-of-Shift Briefing** is mostly used to verify that you have, on your own, visited any leads containing *critically* important information (witnesses, clues, etc.) that will not be available in some form or another before the chapter finally ends.
- If you did overlook critical leads, your boss won't be happy, and you will be sent back into the field with hints to help you locate them. You'll also incur a penalty in the form of **Demerits**, which will affect your score. Ask yourself what's worse: An official reprimand in your permanent record, or the shame of needing help figuring out where to look for clues?
- Note that the End-of-Shift briefing questions do NOT test whether you actually understand the significance of what you have read, or whether you have found and visited every possible lead available on that day.
- The End-of-Shift Briefing will not save you from overlooking helpful non-critical leads, or ensure that you visit leads in a timely fashion; it may not even prevent an important witness from being killed before you have a chance to talk to them. It simply ensures that you don't completely miss out on essential information that can't be found in other ways.
- It is important to answer all of the questions in the End-of-Shift Briefing, as they will affect your final score for the chapter.

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, 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 High & Low, understanding the mysteries surrounding your case is only your first step. It's also important that you locate and identify **evidence** that will prove your theory of the case.

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 High & Low, 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, among other things:

- **How well you did your job** (whether your final charging recommendations were well founded and backed by evidence).
- **Demerits you acquired** (reflecting how many hints you needed).
- **Your answers to other end-of-briefing questions** (your early gut instincts, etc.)

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.