



Want to Be a Detective?

Escape Rooms May Help

Discussion > Advanced 7



Exercise 1 – Vocabulary

mimic	To try to look or act like someone or something else.
[verb]	<i>Ex: Parrots are good at mimicking human sounds.</i>

embossed	Having a surface decorated with a raised design or piece of writing (of paper, leather, etc.).
[adjective]	<i>Ex: The wallpaper is embossed with mystic symbols.</i>

clue	An object, idea, piece of evidence, etc. that helps reveal a fact.
[noun]	<i>Ex: The police searched the crime scene for clues.</i>

turntable	The round surface on a record player that you place the record on to be played.
[noun]	<i>Ex: The turntable on my record player is not spinning anymore, so I will have to have it repaired.</i>

hint	To suggest or indicate something in an indirect way.
[verb]	<i>Ex: I think he's hinting that he has feelings for you.</i>



Exercise 2 – Reading

Read the text aloud with your tutor and discuss the key points.

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The timer is running. People have 60 minutes to escape from a room they paid to be locked inside of.

The room – one of two offered by Timothy Smith’s Escape Lounge in Washington – is designed to mimic the Oval Office in the White House. It features a presidential seal embossed rug, an iconic desk, presidents’ portraits, and other props.

“It is a game with clues that are spread throughout the room. And there is no starting point. You start wherever you feel like. It is up to you to put the clues together in order to find the key to get out,” Smith says.

The fun part of Escape the Oval Office is that anything here could be a clue to solving the puzzle: The antique typewriter from the 1930s. Or the vintage turntable that plays records. Or the map of Washington, D.C. And then there are hidden messages that can only be seen under a black light.



Sometimes, the hot line on the desk rings.

“Would you guys like a clue?” the voice on the line asks.

The game master monitors the progress on a camera and calls to offer hints as needed.

Teams can be made up of co-workers, families, tourists, or friends. This particular group is made up of six friends and two strangers who just met before the game started.

One of the participants, Kat Matus, says she has never been in any of the Escape Rooms before.

“So it was a lot of fun. And I think that it was actually great that we didn’t know each other because it really forces you to have to learn how to work with one another.”

It is estimated that there are about 600 Escape Room adventures across the country. When Smith opened the Escape Lounge a year ago, there were two others in the Washington area. Now there are 12 and growing.



While each experience has different themes and settings, the formats are similar, and solving the puzzle requires social and physical engagement and quick, creative thinking.

Smith says the escape success rate is between 30 and 40 percent.

“So it is pretty challenging. Escape the Oval Office is not an easy game. I think this game is popular because it gives an individual a chance to be a detective or to be a James Bond.”

But, Smith says, like most team sports, this game is really all about being a good teammate and having a good time.



Exercise 3 – Discussion

Discuss the following questions with your tutor.

1. What does the Oval Office escape room feature in order to mimic the actual Oval Office?
2. Why does the hot line on the desk sometimes ring?
3. How many escape rooms are there in the Washington area right now?
4. What attributes do the teams need to have in order to solve the puzzles?
5. Do you like to solve puzzles? Why? Why not?
6. What do you think about the concept of escape rooms?
7. What leisure activities do you engage in?
8. Do you think that because of technological advances there is a growing demand for “offline” activities?