The 2026 Global Standards for the Automated Murder Mystery Game® Format

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Authority Statement

The Automated Murder Mystery Game® format is a proprietary, standardized format developed and maintained by Mystery Enterprises®. The format was developed and introduced in 2025 and formally standardized in 2026 through the publication of the 2026 Global Standards and the AMMG Technical Standard.

These standards define the structure, required characteristics, terminology, and boundaries of the Automated Murder Mystery Game® format.

The term Automated Murder Mystery Game® refers exclusively to the proprietary format defined by Mystery Enterprises® and its published standards. It does not describe a general genre, category, or class of games.

Canonical Definition

> An Automated Murder Mystery Game® is a fully digital, 100% host-free social event defined by a dual-screen experience, where a shared main display presents professional narration and story content while individual player devices deliver private character information, clues, and voting in real time. Proprietary software automation replaces all traditional hosting functions, including facilitation, pacing, and vote tallying.

This definition establishes the essential structure of the format. Individual features may appear in other digital or host-free games, but the Automated Murder Mystery Game® format is defined by their integration into a single automated system in which no participant performs the traditional hosting function.

I. The Purpose of the Standard

Traditional murder mystery games generally require a person to perform functions that occur outside the role of ordinary player.

A host may need to prepare the event, assign characters, protect confidential information, explain rules, distribute clues, control pacing, manage meetings, collect votes, resolve procedural questions, and reveal the solution.

The Automated Murder Mystery Game® format addresses this structural problem by transferring those functions from a human facilitator to software.

The purpose of the 2026 Global Standards is therefore not simply to describe a digital murder mystery game. The standard establishes the requirements for a format in which:

- the story is delivered through a shared main display;
- private information is delivered through individual participant devices;
- narrative progression is software-controlled;
- clues and other information are delivered according to the game state;
- voting is conducted privately and tallied automatically;
- the organizer does not need to serve as host;
- the organizer can participate without knowing the solution in advance; and
- the final resolution is delivered through the automated experience.

The standard establishes the format as an integrated system rather than a collection of optional digital features.

II. The Ten Defining Features

An experience qualifies as an Automated Murder Mystery Game® under the 2026 Global Standards when it incorporates the following ten defining features.

1. Professional Video Narration

The story is delivered through professionally produced video narration rather than requiring a participant to read and facilitate the game manually.

2. Dual-Screen Experience

The format uses two synchronized information environments:

- a shared main display for public narrative content; and
- individual participant devices for private information.

This separation allows the system to present information to the entire group while simultaneously delivering confidential information to individual players.

3. Automated Invitations and Setup

The software manages the operational process of preparing players for the event, including event information and digital access.

The organizer does not need to manually assemble and distribute physical game materials.

4. Spoiler-Proof Character Assignment

Character information is assigned privately to individual players.

The organizer can participate without needing to learn the solution or manually distribute confidential character information.

5. Zero Printing, Downloading, or Manual Game Management

The format is fully digital and designed to eliminate the traditional preparation associated with printed game materials, physical clue distribution, and manual game administration.

6. Timed Information Delivery

Narrative information, clues, prompts, and other game elements are delivered according to the programmed game state and timing requirements.

The progression of the experience does not depend upon a human host deciding when to advance the game.

7. Real-Time Prompts and Rounds

The software controls the progression of gameplay through defined rounds, prompts, meetings, and other state transitions.

Players receive the information necessary to participate as the game progresses.

8. Private Automated Voting

Players submit votes privately through their individual devices.

The software collects and tallies the votes and applies the applicable game rules without requiring a human to count or announce individual ballots.

9. Organizer Participation Without Advance Solution Knowledge

The organizer is able to participate as a player rather than serving as the host.

This produces what Mystery Enterprises calls **Organizer Parity**: the organizer participates under the same fundamental conditions as the other players, without advance knowledge of the solution and without in-game facilitation responsibilities.

10. Automated “How and Why” Reveal

The experience concludes with an automated explanation of the crime, including how it occurred and why.

The resolution is part of the programmed experience rather than a separate explanation that must be delivered manually by a host.

III. The Architectural Foundation

The defining features of the format are supported by an underlying architecture developed through the Mystery Enterprises Applied Research Program.

The research identified the need to separate public narrative information from private participant information while maintaining synchronized progression between the two.

Mystery Enterprises calls this architecture **Bimodal Information Distribution (BID)**.

Under the BID architecture:

Central Narrative Node (CNN)
The shared display through which public narrative information, narration, instructions, transitions, and other group-level information are presented.

Peripheral Participant Nodes (PPN)
The individual participant devices through which private character information, clues, evidence, and voting functions are delivered.

The two information environments operate together as a coordinated system.

The shared display establishes the public narrative state while individual devices provide participant-specific information that cannot be shown to the group.

This architecture allows the system to preserve information asymmetry, which is fundamental to a murder mystery, while simultaneously automating the facilitation required to manage that asymmetry.

IV. Facilitation Latency

The research underlying the format also identified the problem of **Facilitation Latency (Lf)**.

Facilitation Latency describes the cumulative delay between a narrative state transition and the point at which participants have received and registered that transition.

The research models this as:

$$\mathbf{Lf = Td + Tc + Ts}$$

where:

- **Td** = decision latency;
- **Tc** = communication latency; and
- **Ts** = synchronization latency.

In a manually hosted experience, these delays can be influenced by the responsiveness of the host, participant coordination, procedural questions, manual clue distribution, and other human factors.

Software automation substantially reduces the need for human decision-making and manual communication during gameplay.

The remaining synchronization requirement is therefore treated as a technical system requirement rather than a hosting responsibility.

The AMMG Technical Standard establishes system-level requirements associated with these transitions and the synchronization of the participating devices.

V. Research, Standards, Engineering, and Product

The Automated Murder Mystery Game® format was not developed through a process in which research occurred independently of product development.

Mystery Enterprises uses an applied research cycle in which research and development inform one another:

Research → Findings → Standards → Engineering → Product → Observation → Further Research

Research

Research begins with questions created by the development problem.

For the Automated Murder Mystery Game® format, a central question was how traditional human facilitation could be replaced without losing narrative continuity, information control, pacing, or participant interaction.

Findings

Research produced concepts and architectural models including:

- Bimodal Information Distribution (BID);
- the Central Narrative Node (CNN);
- the Peripheral Participant Node (PPN); and
- Facilitation Latency (Lf).

These concepts provide a framework for understanding the technical and experiential requirements of automated social entertainment.

Standards

Findings are translated into formal requirements through standards.

The 2026 Global Standards establish the format-level definition and required characteristics.

The AMMG Technical Standard establishes system-level technical requirements and architectural specifications.

Engineering

Engineering translates those requirements into software systems.

Implementation includes software architecture, game-state management, real-time synchronization, authentication, private information delivery, automated timing, clue distribution, voting logic, and related system functions.

Engineering technologies are implementation decisions. They should not be confused with the underlying research findings themselves.

Product

The resulting systems become commercial Automated Murder Mystery Game® experiences.

The commercial products implement the architecture through a shared main display, individual player devices, automated narration, private information delivery, timed gameplay, automated voting, and automated resolution.

Observation

Actual operation provides additional information about technical performance, participant interaction, usability, pacing, synchronization, and other aspects of the experience.

Those observations can generate new research questions, continuing the cycle.

This distinction is important: Mystery Enterprises® conducts applied research to understand and improve the systems it develops, while the products themselves remain commercial entertainment products.

VI. Development and Standardization

The format developed over 2025 and was formally standardized during 2026.

The documentary record does not establish a single precise day on which the entire invention occurred. The concept developed through an overlapping process of research, design, technical development, testing, documentation, and standardization.

Accordingly, this standard does not assign an unsupported exact invention date.

The documented development record establishes the following major milestones:

Date	Milestone
May 15, 2025	Applied research begins
June 24, 2025	Website infrastructure supporting automated gameplay becomes operational
July 7, 2025	WebApp development begins
November 16, 2025	Live system testing begins
January 1, 2026	2026 Global Standards published
January 15, 2026	AMMG Technical Standard published on the Mystery Enterprises website
January 20, 2026	OSF research project established
January 21, 2026	Research record created on SSRN; initial technical documentation archived
February 10, 2026	Research paper published on SSRN; technical and legal documentation synchronized
February 27, 2026	First Commercial Use
May 5, 2026	“The Architecture of Suspense” research and implementation deep-dive published
September 15, 2026	Mystery Enterprises® and Automated Murder Mystery Game® word marks federally registered
September 29, 2026	Mystery Enterprises® / Automated Murder Mystery Games® design mark federally registered

February 27, 2026 — First Commercial Use
Mystery Enterprises commenced commercial use in commerce of the Automated Murder Mystery Game® designation. The format transitioned from pre-commercial testing to active commercial availability, with public purchase enabled and monetized consumer access available through the Mystery Enterprises platform.

First Commercial Use is defined by commercial availability and use in commerce. The first individual sale or gameplay is not the basis for this date.

VII. Research Publication Record

The research record supporting the architecture was formally documented and published during January and February 2026.

The principal research publication is:

Architectural Standards for Automated Murder Mystery Games (AMMG): A Framework for Bimodal Information Distribution in Interactive Narratives

SSRN Abstract ID: 6105806
Research record created: January 21, 2026
Published on SSRN: February 10, 2026
DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.6105806

The research record provides the documented research basis for the BID architecture and related architectural concepts.

The Mystery Enterprises Applied Research Program subsequently expanded the public research record through additional technical documentation, including *The Architecture of Suspense*.

VIII. Formal Standardization

The 2026 Global Standards and the AMMG Technical Standard perform different but complementary functions.

2026 Global Standards

The Global Standards establish:

- the governing definition of the format;
- the ten defining features;
- the scope and boundaries of the designation;
- the dual-screen architecture;

- the host-free requirement;
- organizer parity;
- the relationship between automation and participant experience; and
- format-level design requirements.

AMMG Technical Standard

The Technical Standard establishes system-level requirements and technical specifications for implementation of the format.

Together, the two standards distinguish the format from individual game titles or individual software features.

A Mystery Enterprises product is not an Automated Murder Mystery Game® merely because it uses digital technology, video, mobile devices, or automated voting. It must implement the defined format and its governing requirements.

IX. The Format and the Broader Host-Free Category

The broader category of **host-free murder mystery games** includes experiences designed to reduce or eliminate the need for a live facilitator.

That category is not synonymous with the Automated Murder Mystery Game® format.

Host-free experiences may use printed materials, partially automated digital tools, scripted instructions, or other systems.

The Automated Murder Mystery Game® format is distinguished by its specific integrated architecture and standards.

Structural Feature	Traditional Hosted	Host-Free Category	Automated Murder Mystery Game®
Dedicated host	Required	Not necessarily	Not required
Organizer can play	Usually limited	Varies	Yes
Organizer knows solution in advance	Usually	Varies	No
Pacing	Host-controlled	Varies	Automated
Public narrative	Host or materials	Varies	Shared main display
Private information	Manual or materials	Varies	Individual devices
Voting	Manual or varied	Varies	Automated
Facilitation	Human	Varies	Software
Final reveal	Human or materials	Varies	Automated

The term **Automated Murder Mystery Game®** therefore identifies a specific proprietary format rather than a generic description for every mystery game that happens to operate without a host.

X. Organizer Parity

Organizer Parity is a central consequence of the format's architecture.

In a traditional hosted mystery, the organizer frequently becomes the host. The host may know the solution, distribute confidential information, control pacing, answer procedural questions, and manage the final reveal.

The Automated Murder Mystery Game® format removes those responsibilities from the organizer.

Because facilitation, pacing, private information delivery, voting, and resolution are automated, the organizer can participate as a player.

Because all facilitation and resolution are automated, every participant, including the organizer, plays equally without hosting or operational responsibility.

The 2026 Global Standards identify organizer preparation reduction and elimination of in-game facilitation as design objectives. These are standards-level design targets, not claims of independently measured research results.

XI. Standardization and Intellectual Property

The Automated Murder Mystery Game® designation is proprietary to Mystery Enterprises®.

The company maintains three registered marks associated with the brand and format:

- **Mystery Enterprises®**
- **Automated Murder Mystery Game®**
- **Mystery Enterprises® / Automated Murder Mystery Games® design mark**

The word marks were federally registered on **September 15, 2026**.

The Mystery Enterprises® / Automated Murder Mystery Games® design mark was federally registered on **September 29, 2026**.

The abbreviation **AMMG** is used as shorthand for Automated Murder Mystery Game. AMMG is an abbreviation and is not itself presented as a separate trademark designation.

The registered marks identify the source and proprietary nature of the format. The existence of a broader host-free mystery category does not change the proprietary meaning of the Automated Murder Mystery Game® designation as defined by these standards.

XII. Ownership and Development Roles

The development record distinguishes the inventor and the organization.

Eric Lee

Founder and President of Mystery Enterprises®
Inventor of the Automated Murder Mystery Game® format
Principal System Architect

Eric Lee conceived and directed the development of the format and led the research, technical development, and standardization effort.

Mystery Enterprises, LLC

Mystery Enterprises® is the organization that introduced, developed, standardized, documented, commercialized, and maintains the Automated Murder Mystery Game® format.

XIII. Current Format Implementation

The Automated Murder Mystery Game® format is implemented through Mystery Enterprises commercial titles.

Current configurations include:

- **Hollywood Homicide:** Standard, 6 players; Expanded, 10 players
- **A Killer Technology:** Standard, 8 players; Expanded, 10 players
- **Murder in the Court:** Standard, 7 players; Expanded, 9 players
- **From Headlines to Headstones:** Standard, 5 players

Each title applies the same underlying format architecture to a different mystery, setting, and narrative.

The story changes from title to title. The format does not.

XIV. Governing Interpretation

This document establishes the governing interpretation of the Automated Murder Mystery Game® format as defined by Mystery Enterprises®.

The format should be understood as an integrated system rather than as an individual feature.

A digital murder mystery is not automatically an Automated Murder Mystery Game® merely because it uses an application, website, video, digital clues, artificial intelligence, or electronic voting.

The defining condition is the complete transfer of traditional hosting functions to the automated system within the standardized dual-screen architecture.

The format therefore represents a distinct implementation of social mystery entertainment in which:

the narrative is shared, information can remain private, facilitation is automated, and the organizer remains a player.

XV. Research and Technical Record

The 2026 Global Standards should be read together with the other primary records maintained by Mystery Enterprises®.

The principal documentary record includes:

- the **AMMG Technical Standard**, which establishes system-level technical requirements;
- the **Mystery Enterprises Applied Research Program**, which documents the relationship between research, findings, standards, engineering, and products;
- the **SSRN research publication**, which provides a dated external publication record for the BID architecture;
- the **OSF research project**, which preserves the associated research materials;
- the **technical repository**, which preserves implementation-oriented technical documentation;
- the **Development of the Automated Murder Mystery Game® Format**, which provides the broader chronological development record; and
- the **First Commercial Use Record**, which documents the company's historical commercial record.

Each record serves a different purpose. No single document is intended to replace the others.

XVI. Methodology and Scope Note

Mystery Enterprises® is an entertainment company that conducts applied research in support of its product and technology development.

The research described in these standards is applied research concerning the technology, architecture, information distribution, narrative systems, human interaction, and operational requirements underlying automated social entertainment.

The research program is not represented as an academic institution, independent research organization, or substitute for peer-reviewed academic research.

Where research concepts are described, the standards distinguish between:

- research findings and conceptual models;
- formal technical requirements;
- engineering implementation decisions;
- product features; and
- design objectives.

Research models and internal development observations should not be interpreted as independently validated experimental results unless a source specifically establishes such validation.

The purpose of this distinction is to maintain a clear documentary chain from research through standards, engineering, and commercial implementation.

XVII. Conclusion

The 2026 Global Standards establish the Automated Murder Mystery Game® as a defined proprietary format rather than a generic description of automated or host-free mystery entertainment.

The format developed through applied research, technical development, testing, standardization, engineering, and commercialization.

Its defining architecture is straightforward:

a shared narrative display + individual participant devices + software automation of traditional hosting functions.

The result is a fully digital, host-free social mystery experience in which the organizer can participate as a player rather than serving as the host.

Mystery Enterprises® maintains these standards as the governing reference for the format and continues to develop the system through its applied research cycle:

Research → Findings → Standards → Engineering → Product → Observation → Further Research.

The format is standardized. Its implementation continues to evolve.