

PLEAD THE FIFTH

Updated Working Rules Outline

1. Game Overview

Plead the Fifth is a two-player asymmetric courtroom strategy game.

One player is the **Prosecutor**, attempting to build a convincing case and move all 12 Jurors toward a unanimous Guilty verdict.

The other player is the **Defendant**, attempting to answer questions, create reasonable doubt, manage testimony, use Objections, and prevent the entire Jury from reaching Guilty.

The game combines:

- Card drafting
- Hand management
- Bluffing
- Set building
- Witnesses
- Evidence
- Courtroom reactions
- Jury dice manipulation

2. How to Win

Prosecutor wins:

All 12 Juror Dice show **6** at the end of Final Deliberation.

Defendant wins:

At least 1 Juror remains below **6**.

In short:

The Prosecutor needs all 12.

The Defendant only needs one.

3. Core Components

Current prototype:

- 12 Juror Dice
- 54 Prosecutor Question cards
- 54 Defendant Answer cards
- 6 Prosecution Witness cards
- 6 Defense Witness cards
- 12 Prosecution Evidence cards
- Plead the Fifth Track
- Credibility Counter
- Evasiveness Counter
- Deliberation Tokens
- Witness Stand
- Final Verdict screen
- Player reference aids

Some Question and Answer cards also contain built-in Courtroom Actions.

4. Jury Setup

Roll all **12 Juror Dice**.

During the initial Jury roll:

- Reroll all 1s
- Reroll all 6s

Continue until every die shows:

2, 3, 4, or 5

Excusing Jurors

The Defendant may then excuse up to **3 Jurors**.

For each one:

- Choose one die
- Reroll it once
- Keep the new result, even if it is a **1 or 6**

Once complete, the Jury is seated.

5. Starting Hands

Each player begins with **6 cards**.

Prosecutor

Draws 6 Question cards.

Defendant

Draws 6 Answer cards.

Each player also begins with:

1 Witness card

from their respective Witness deck.

6. Question Categories

Questions are divided into six categories.

Category	Cards
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WHERE	6
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WHO	8
-----	---

WHY	8
-----	---

WHAT	10
------	----

HOW	10
-----	----

WHEN	12
------	----

Total:

54 Question cards

The Answer deck mirrors these totals:

54 Answer cards

Each category uses its own color and icon.

7. Answer Cards

Every Answer card has three response levels:

Perfect Answer

The exact Answer paired with one specific Question.

A Perfect Answer should be objectively identifiable through the exact match system.

Result

- No Jury penalty
 - Advance Credibility by 1
 - Resolve any relevant Set or special effect
-

Vague Answer

The card belongs to the correct category but does not exactly match the Question.

Example:

Question:

“When did you leave?”

Vague Answer:

“I don’t remember exactly. It was late.”

Result

- No immediate Jury movement
- Advance the Evasiveness Counter by 1
- Reset Credibility to 0

Frustrated Answer

The Answer card does not match the Question category.

The Defendant must instead use the card's Frustrated response.

Examples:

- "This is preposterous!"
- "What kind of question is that?"
- "You're twisting my words!"

Result

- Prosecutor increases 1 eligible Juror by +1
 - Reset Credibility to 0
-

8. Credibility

Perfect Answers build a streak.

Credibility Track

1st consecutive Perfect Answer

Credibility = 1

2nd consecutive Perfect Answer

Credibility = 2

3rd consecutive Perfect Answer

Decrease 1 eligible Juror die by 1.

Then reset Credibility to 0.

Credibility resets when the Defendant:

- Gives a Vague Answer
- Gives a Frustrated Answer
- Pleads the Fifth

9. Evasiveness

Each Vague Answer advances the **Evasiveness Counter**.

At:

3 Vague Answers

the Prosecutor increases:

1 eligible Juror die by +1

Then reset Evasiveness to 0.

Vague Answers do not need to be consecutive.

10. Plead the Fifth

Plead the Fifth is an **action**, not a card.

The Defendant may use it instead of answering any Question.

It may even be used as a bluff when the Defendant has the Perfect Answer.

Plead the Fifth Track

Uses 1–3

No immediate Jury movement

4th use

Increase 1 Juror by +1

5th use

Increase 2 different Jurors by +1 each

6th use

Increase 3 different Jurors by +1 each

7th use

Increase 4 different Jurors by +1 each

After the 7th use, the Defendant may no longer Plead the Fifth.

Hand Refresh

Each time the Defendant Pleads the Fifth:

- Discard 1 Answer card
- Draw 1 replacement from the top of the Answer deck

Credibility

Pleading the Fifth resets Credibility to 0.

11. Deliberation Tokens

Each time the Defendant Pleads the Fifth:

The Prosecutor gains 1 Deliberation Token.

These are used during Final Deliberation.

Each token may add:

+1 to one Juror die

after the normal Deliberation rolls.

A maximum of:

3 tokens may be spent on one Juror

A die may never exceed 6.

12. Card Drafting

Cards are replenished through a partially hidden draft.

When drafting:

1. Examine 3 face-up cards
2. Secretly keep 1
3. Discard the other 2 face-down
4. Refill as required

This keeps the opponent from knowing exactly which Question or Answer was taken.

13. Courtroom Actions

Courtroom Actions are not separate cards.

Instead, some Question and Answer cards have a secondary Courtroom Action printed on them.

Using the Courtroom Action means sacrificing that card's normal future use.

Examples:

- Objection Reason
- Sustained
- Overruled

This creates a resource-management decision.

14. Objection

Objection is an **action**, not a card.

After the Prosecutor plays a Question, but before the Defendant answers, the Defendant may announce:

“Objection, Your Honor!”

To object, they must discard an Answer card with a valid category-matched Objection Action.

Category-Locked Objections

Category	Objection
WHEN	Leading the Witness
WHERE	Irrelevant
WHO	Hearsay
WHY	Argumentative
WHAT	Speculation
HOW	Calls for a Conclusion

The category determines validity.

No subjective legal debate is required.

15. Resolving an Objection

If the Prosecutor does nothing

The Objection succeeds.

The Question is struck.

- Defendant does not answer
 - No Jury movement
 - Credibility unaffected
 - Evasiveness unaffected
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16. Overruled

Some Prosecutor Question cards contain:

OVERRULED

The Prosecutor may sacrifice that Question card from hand to cancel a valid Objection.

Result

- Objection fails
- Original Question remains
- Defendant must answer

Only one Objection may be attempted against a Question.

17. Sustained

Some Defendant Answer cards contain:

SUSTAINED

The Defendant may play Sustained with a valid Objection.

Result

- Objection automatically succeeds
- Cannot be Overruled
- Question is struck

This usually costs the Defendant two cards:

- Objection card
 - Sustained card
-

18. Sets

Certain combinations of cards create **3-card Sets**.

Examples may include:

Defense

Verified Alibi

Location + Time + Witness

Prosecution

Circumstantial Case

Motive + Opportunity + Evidence

Completing a qualifying 3-card Set earns:

1 Witness card

19. Witness Cards

Witnesses are separate from Question and Answer decks.

Each player begins with 1 Witness.

Additional Witnesses are earned by completing 3-card Sets.

Witnesses are held outside the normal hand.

When called, their effect resolves automatically unless specifically challenged by a Witness-related reaction.

20. Defense Witnesses

Current Defense Witnesses:

- Gloria “Goodword” Gaines — Character Witness
- Mabel “Midnight” Mercer — Alibi Witness
- Pete “Punch-Clock” Patterson — Coworker
- Patty “Porchlight” Perkins — Neighbor
- Professor Prudence “Pru” Bellamy — Defense Expert
- Dr. Vera Trace — Medical / Forensic Expert

Their effects include:

- Jury movement
- Answer recovery
- Credibility advancement
- Hand manipulation

- Set disruption
 - Forensic doubt
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21. Prosecution Witnesses

Current Prosecution Witnesses:

- Eddie “Eyes-On” Ellis — Eyewitness
- Dr. Felix Fibers — CSI Expert
- Detective Marla “No-Nonsense” Reyes
- Walter “Numbers” Finch
- Nina Bell
- Professor Milo “Microscope” Vance

Prosecution Witness effects include:

- Jury movement
- Card recovery
- Credibility disruption
- Question pressure
- Set manipulation
- Evidence support

When a Prosecution Witness directly moves Juror Dice, its strength should generally equal:

- 1 Juror by +2
 - or 2 different Jurors by +1 each
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22. Six-Witness Trial Clock

Count all Witnesses played by both players.

After the:

6th total Witness

finishes testifying:

The Prosecution must Rest the Case.

No new Question begins.

The trial moves toward Final Deliberation.

The Prosecutor may still Rest earlier.

23. Evidence Cards

Evidence is currently:

Prosecution-only

for the first playtest.

Evidence cards are kept in a separate facedown Evidence deck.

There are currently:

12 Evidence cards

24. Evidence Icons

A small number of Prosecutor Question cards contain an **Evidence icon**.

Current test approach:

Approximately:

1 Evidence icon per category

for about 6 total.

25. Triggering Evidence

If a Question with an Evidence icon receives:

Frustrated Answer

Prosecutor earns Evidence.

Plead the Fifth

Prosecutor earns Evidence.

Perfect Answer

No Evidence.

Vague Answer

No Evidence.

26. Evidence Is Entered Immediately

When Evidence is earned:

1. Draw the top Evidence card
2. Reveal it immediately
3. Attempt to Enter it into Evidence
4. Give the Defense an Objection window
5. Resolve the card if admitted

The Prosecutor may not hold or hide the Evidence for later.

This preserves the risk of drawing compromised or harmful Evidence.

27. Enter Into Evidence

The Prosecutor announces:

“Your Honor, the Prosecution would like to enter this Exhibit into evidence.”

Reveal the Evidence card.

The Defense then gets an Evidence Objection window.

28. Evidence Challenges

Potential Defense Challenges include:

- Chain of Custody
- Evidence Was Tampered With
- Contaminated Sample
- Lack of Foundation
- Circumstantial Evidence
- Unreliable Source
- If It Doesn't Fit, You Must Acquit

These should appear as secondary actions on existing Answer cards rather than separate cards.

29. Evidence Rulings

No Challenge

Evidence is admitted.

Successful Challenge

Evidence is suppressed.

Overruled

Evidence is admitted despite the objection.

Sustained

Evidence is suppressed and cannot be Overruled.

30. Current Evidence Deck

Strong Evidence

- Exhibit A — Murder Weapon
- Exhibit B — Security Footage
- Exhibit C — Bloody Clothing
- Exhibit D — DNA Match
- Exhibit E — Fingerprint Match
- Exhibit F — Eyewitness Identification

Moderate / Strategic Evidence

- Exhibit G — Phone Records
- Exhibit H — Financial Records
- Exhibit I — Time-Stamped Receipt

Compromised Evidence

- Exhibit J — Evidence Compromised
- Exhibit K — Chain of Custody Broken

Defense-Benefit Evidence

- Exhibit L — Inconclusive Forensics

31. Defense Evidence — Future Mechanic

Some Perfect Answer cards now contain a future **Defense Evidence icon**.

Current plan:

- About 6 icons total
- Ideally 1 per category
- Inactive for the first playtest

This gives us room to add Defense Evidence later without redesigning the Answer cards.

32. Current Question Special Actions

For the first playtest, each Question category may contain approximately:

- 1 Evidence icon
- 1 Overruled card

This is intentionally limited so these effects feel special.

33. Follow-Ups

Some cards may trigger an immediate Follow-Up.

For early testing:

Maximum chain length: 3 cards

Follow-Ups should remain limited until the base game proves stable.

34. Resting the Case

The trial ends in one of two ways.

Voluntary Rest

The Prosecutor announces:

“The Prosecution Rests.”

Mandatory Rest

The 6th total Witness finishes testifying.

In either case:

- No new Questions
- No more Answers
- No more drafting
- No more Witnesses
- Proceed to Final Deliberation

35. Final Deliberation

Jurors already showing 6 remain locked.

All remaining Jurors are rolled behind the Final Verdict screen.

Roll 1

Roll all unresolved Jurors.

Any 6s lock.

Roll 2

Reroll all remaining unresolved Jurors.

Lock new 6s.

Roll 3

Reroll remaining unresolved Jurors one final time.

36. Spending Deliberation Tokens

After the 3 normal Deliberation rolls:

The Prosecutor may spend Deliberation Tokens.

Each token:

Adds +1 to one unresolved Juror die

Maximum:

3 tokens per Juror

This allows Plead the Fifth choices from earlier in the game to affect the final verdict.

37. Final Verdict

If all 12 Juror Dice show:

6

the verdict is:

GUILTY

The Prosecutor wins.

If even one Juror remains below 6:

NOT GUILTY

The Defendant wins.

38. Core Turn Sequence

A typical Question exchange now follows this structure:

1. Question

Prosecutor plays a Question.

2. Check Special Icons

Check for:

- Evidence icon
- Overruled ability

3. Objection Window

Defendant may make a category-matched Objection.

4. Ruling

Resolve:

- Overruled
- Sustained

5. Response

If Question remains:

Defendant chooses:

- Perfect Answer
- Vague Answer
- Frustrated Answer
- Plead the Fifth

6. Resolve Testimony

Apply:

- Credibility
- Evasiveness
- Jury movement
- Plead the Fifth penalties
- Deliberation Token

7. Evidence Check

If applicable, resolve Evidence immediately.

8. Follow-Up

Resolve if triggered.

9. Set Check

If a 3-card Set is completed:

Earn 1 Witness.

10. Witness

Call a Witness when permitted.

11. Draft

Replenish cards.

12. Continue or Rest

Ask another Question or Rest the Case.