Escape the Library!
How to Run an Escape Room in Your Library

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About Me

● University of Hawaii at Manoa:

○ BA Studio Art / MLISc Library Science

● Substitute Librarian in the Hawaii State Public Library System for just over a year.

○ Focus in Children's and Teen Services.

○ Researched and ran an Escape Room library program this June.

Art by Hannah Carmichael

Special thanks to:
Amy Lau, Sarah Webb, Sasha Kealalio, Kipapa Kahelahela, Jennifer Losalio, and the Pearl City Public Library Staff!

Outline - All About Escape Rooms

- What is an Escape Room?

- Why should I run an Escape Room (in my library)?

- How do I plan an Escape Room?

- Q & A

You may have seen friends or family post a photo on social media from a post-Escape Room experience …

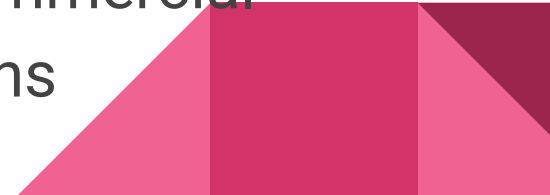… or even have participated yourself. But …

What is an Escape Room?

A live-action adventure game

Participants gather clues and solve puzzles to "escape the room" or achieve an objective.

- Timed
  - Beat the clock, escape the fastest.
- Unique themes, settings, and scenarios.
  - e.g. Spy, Zombies, Wild West, etc.
- Teamwork required!
  - It's all about the shared experience.

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Origins of Escape Rooms

- 2007 – Takao Kato creates the first Escape Room in Japan.

- 2012 – First introduced in the USA.

- 2016 – Hawaii's first commercial Escape Room: Breakout Waikiki.

- 2017 – Currently there are about nine commercial Escape Rooms in Hawaii, including locations on Kauai, Maui, and the Big Island.

Origins of Escape Rooms

Locally, admission to these commercial Escape Rooms range from about $28-$45.

Over the last several years across the United States, public, school, and even some academic librarians have begun holding Escape Rooms of their own at their libraries.

This summer in the Hawaii State Public Library System, librarians at the Aina Haina, Pearl City, Aiea, and Kailua-Kona libraries have held Escape Room programs with much success and positive feedback from patrons.

Why should I run an Escape Room (in my library)?

Alternative to Commercial Escape Rooms

- Escape Rooms are expensive!

- Often have age restrictions.

Gamification & Game Based Learning

● Game-based learning and the application of game elements and game design techniques (or gamification) are becoming more common in professional and educational settings. According to ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries, gamification is currently identified as one of the twenty-seven trends "relevant to libraries and librarianship." Escape Rooms are one way to incorporate gamification in our libraries.

Gamification & Game Based Learning

● Can promote skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, leadership, situational awareness/teamwork, logic and reasoning (plus, it's FUN)!

● Escape Rooms:

○ Used for professional/corporate team building.

○Utilized by teachers in classrooms to reinforce concepts and learning (e.g. BreakoutEdu).

"Non Traditional" Library Programming

● Pearl City Public Library's Escape Room in June: Positive comments and lots of evaluation forms! Some anecdotes:

○ 50 people in 5 game sessions during one afternoon/evening.

○ 77% of respondents said it had been 7+ months to over a year since they had last attended a library program (55% hadn't attended a library program in over a year).

■ 50% of respondents found out about the program through a friend or family member.

○ 97.5% of respondents rated the Escape Room "good" - "excellent" (72.5% rating "excellent).

Comments: This was a incredible, creative escape room. It was fairly hard, but we pulled through. This was an awesome program.

Thank you for attending this program. Please return th f____

Comments: It was fun and exciting! We beat the clock with 43 seconds left (1)

☐ Technology   ☐ Other: Escape rooms, mysteries

Comments: This was awesome! have more like this with more clues! ♡ I loved it! ☺

♡♡♡♡♡♡♡♡ LOL! Bye

Technology   ☐ Other: _____

ments: I love minecraft and I loved this Brak-out ☺!!!

☐ Humanities   ☐ Informational   ☐ Movies
☑ Music   ☐ Storytelling   ☐ Storytimes
☑ Technology   ☐ Other: _____

Comments: OUR HINTS HELPED A LOT! IT WOULD BE GREAT IF THERE WAS ANOTHER ONE SOON! MAYBE WITH VARYING DIFFICULTY LEVELS...

Comments: I like it. prity good hard

Comments: Had lots of fun! Great opportunities at the library! Look forward to future events! Much Mahalos for providing the community with opportunities like this! ☺

Thank you for attending this program. Please return the form to the library staff. For a list of upcoming eventss, visit:
www.librarieshawaii.org

@hsplshigov | #hsplshigov

☐ Technology   ☐ Other: _____

Comments: More black light flashlight.

Comments: It was really fun and I enjoyed doing it ~~too~~ I liked every thing and it was kinda tricky

Comments: Very good, makes you think, work together, think outside the box.

☐ Music ☐ Storytelling ☐ Storytimes
☑ Technology ☑ Other: more ~~escape~~ escape room

Comments: This was really fun ☺

Comments: Excellent way to bring Middle School students.

Comments: More time, more hints bigger room. Make it harder.

Comments: I would like more programs like this one!!:D

Comments: OUR HINTS HELPED A LOT! IT WOULD BE GREAT IF THERE WAS ANOTHER ONE SOON! MAYBE WITH VARYING DIFFICULTY LEVELS...

Comments: Had lots of fun! Great opportunities at the library! Look forward to future events! Much Mahalos for providing the community with opportunities like this! U.⌣

☐ Technology ☐ Other:

Comments: More ~~~~ black light flashlight.

How do I plan an Escape Room?
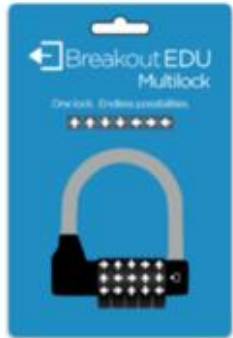
Your first option is BreakoutEDU.

An active learning platform first created for use by teachers in classrooms, it's basically an Escape Room in a box: Instead of trying to escape a locked room, the goal of this game is trying to unlock the large box. Their kit retailed for $125 and include all of these items.

In October 2017, BreakoutEDU revamped their system with a subscription-based model and a new kit selling for $150.

Besides including new items, it also gives access for a year to their premium games. There is a free account option which I'll show you very quickly:

https://platform.breakoutedu.com/categories

Includes 12 months of Breakout EDU Platform Access

Locks & Things

● BreakoutEDU.com

○ Lots of premade games/scenarios vetted and created by other educators and users.

■ Premade games are adaptable!

○ Facebook groups (e.g. https://www.facebook.com/groups/breakoutedu)

○ Everything you need in the kit.

○ Proprietary multilocks have pros/cons: wheels are interchangeable for more customization but it also makes the locks more finicky and delicate.

● D.I.Y. / Source your own: Can be less expensive.

● Props: Beg, borrow, ~~steal~~ make your own: Set the scene!

Design Your Own Escape Room

● Pros:

○ Ultimate customizability: Age group targeting, story/setting/theme, utilizing the props and locks you have, difficulty of puzzles/clues, etc.

■ e.g. "Build a Better World" Summer Reading Program themed tie-in @Pearl City Library, The Very Hungry Caterpillar Escape Room @Aiea Library.

● Cons:

○ Can take a lot of time to plan/create.

○ MUST beta test (ideally with people who are in the age group you are targeting the Escape Room at).

Tips for Custom Escape Rooms

● The story! It just needs to introduce/frame your game. Doesn't need to be long or elaborate …

● Work backwards: What types of locks do you want to use? What will be the combination/answer? How will the players find it?

○ Make sure it's "common knowledge" or something/information that can be found in the room.

● Beta testing is a MUST! (Also if running back-to-back sessions, practice re-setting the room.) Try to test with people in your target age group.

○ Just observe and take notes – treat it as a real game. You can talk to them after! DO NOT GIVE HINTS to the players unless they ask.

Running Your Escape Room

● A gamemaster should be in the space at all times.

○ Take the locks/clues as they're solved so they're not dismantled or lost. "Lock Parking Lot" sheet from BreakoutEdu

○ Have a cheat sheet of all the solutions so you can give hints easily. Have one prepared for each lock.

● Don't forget a timer! YouTube timer videos are great (often with music) and your screen won't sleep with video.

● Hint cards – that can be turned in to the gamemaster for a clue.

● Digital devices allowed or not? Many local commercial escape rooms don't allow smartphones or tablets in the game, so it shouldn't be a problem.

Running Your Escape Room (cont.)

● Re-setting the Room

○ Especially important if running sessions back-to-back.

○ Have a flowchart, map, and/or written instructions on where your props, clues, and locks go.

● Space considerations: Staging area, Escape Room space (playable area), Debriefing/Photo Booth?

○ Can use painter's/masking tape to mark off playable area.

Other Logistics

"For ages 12 & up.

Program size is limited. RSVP required. Call or visit us in person to reserve your spot! Maximum of 10 players per group. Smaller groups that book the same time slot will be combined. Walk-in registration permitted if space available."

● Sign-ups / Sessions

○ Register in advance, set a max. # of players per session.

○ Format: In person, via phone, online?

■ Commercial Escape Room style: Multiple sessions per day.

● e.g. All afternoon: one session every hour (Intro: 5 mins, Gameplay: 30 mins, Evaluation Forms/Photobooth: 15 mins, Finish resetting room: 10 mins).

■ One session per day (e.g. 3:00pm on Oct. 9th, 10th, and 11th)

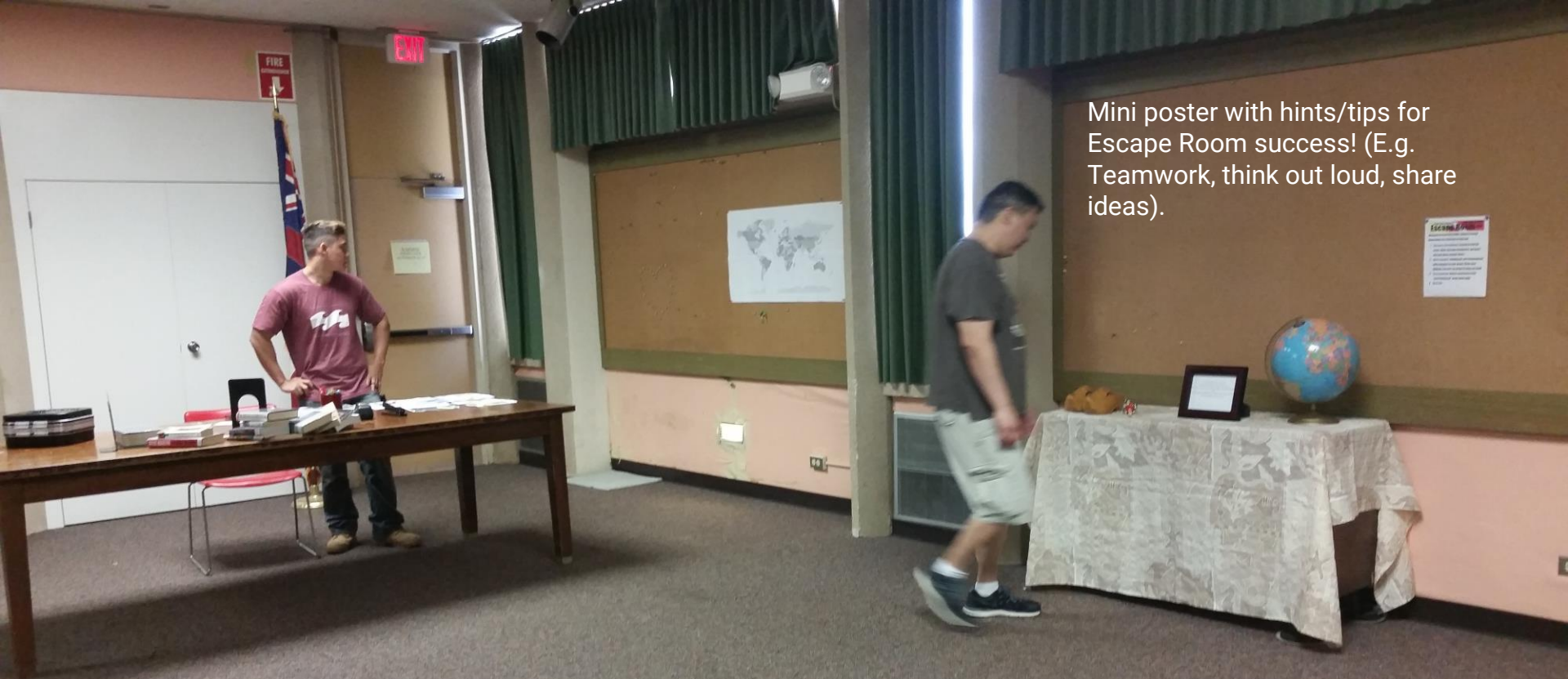■ If you have an age limit, decide on how strict you want to be.

Photos!

One of our student helpers drew this on the marker board sign we had outside the meeting room.

For my Escape Room, 3 of 5 groups were successful. The fasted team finished with about 13 minutes left and one team finished with only 43 seconds left on the clock!
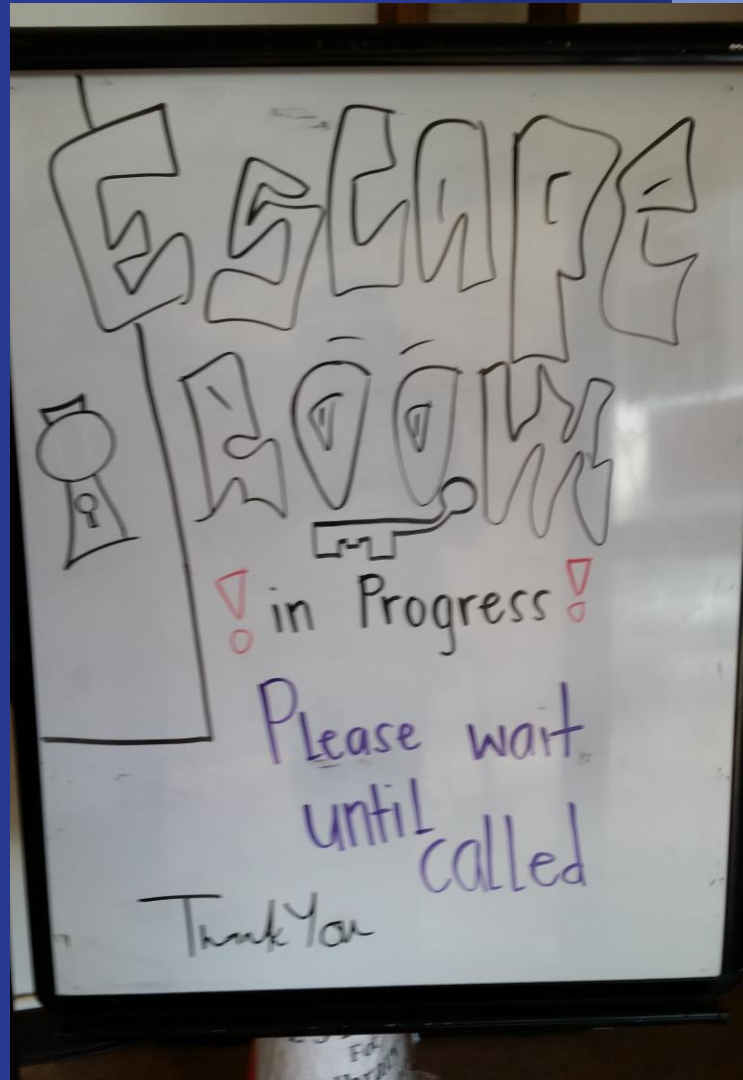
Mini poster with hints/tips for Escape Room success! (E.g. Teamwork, think out loud, share ideas).

Pearl City Library's Escape Room: Set up in meeting room
Setting: Dead architect's office
Goal: Unlock box containing his will

If you're using a tablet or laptop, choose a YouTube video timer (with music!) so that the device won't go to sleep:
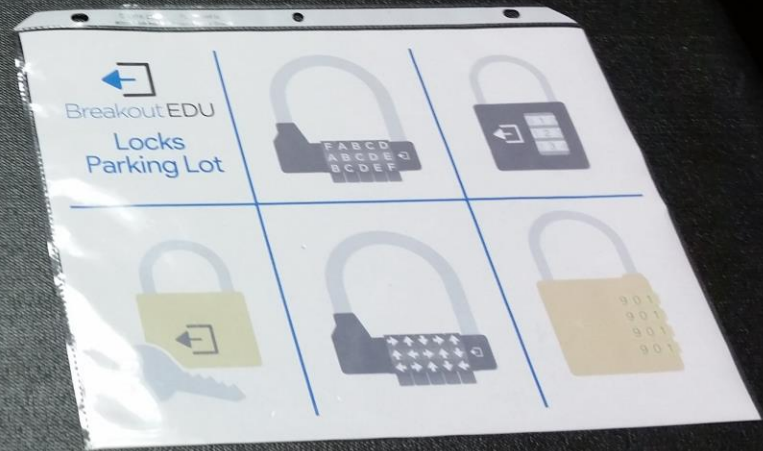https://youtu.be/ilGWmEjx6kw
You can just search (e.g.) "30 minute timer with music." You can also have your own music playlist keeping with your theme.

Download this "Locks Parking Lot" here:
https://www.breakoutedu.com/locktips

Consider what's inside the box! I made a prop of "the last will and testament of Archie Bauman" for my story and also had old Summer Reading Program emoji stickers (kids and even some teens enjoyed that).

Sarah's Zombie Escape Room had mini M&M tubes of "antidote" and Sasha's Very Hungry Caterpillar theme had butterfly lollipops. It's a cute extra touch. You can even just leave photobooth signs/props in there, just don't leave it empty!

People will look everywhere for clues –make sure you're okay with that in the gameplay area or be extra vigilant!

Photo Booth!

● I looked at "post-Escape Room experience" photos online, "stole" my favorite phrases, and made my own signs with Canva: https://www.canva.com/

○ Consider laminating your photo booth signs or props.

● ALSO remember to have people sign photo release forms! I verbally asked each group for their permission to take photos for library social media, but was advised not to post them …

The Very Hungry
Caterpillar Escape Room
Aiea Public Library
July 2017

"I did two escape rooms before I planned mine ... one a year or so before and one a month before ... I had been seeing some other libraries on Facebook ... [and thought] 'Oh cool, I wish we could do one.' I think they can be for any type: from a beginner or totally non-experienced, you just have to want to put it all together and ... test it first, be prepared for little hiccups and give padding for time."

~ Sasha Kealalio, Children's Librarian.

Kailua-Kona Library: Minecraft-Themed BreakoutEdu

"I've never played an escape room before, but I want to! I heard about escape rooms through our YA librarian who purchased the kit for our branch. He hosted our library's first-ever escape room challenge. My advice is that if you're on the fence about buying it, ask to borrow one from a librarian who already has one.

We received such a positive response from our branch's escape room attendees that I feel it's worth a try hosting such a program at all of our branches if you have the space and staffing to support it. It's such a fun, highly engaging learning resource with tons of flexibility! "

~ Jennifer Losalio, Children's Librarian
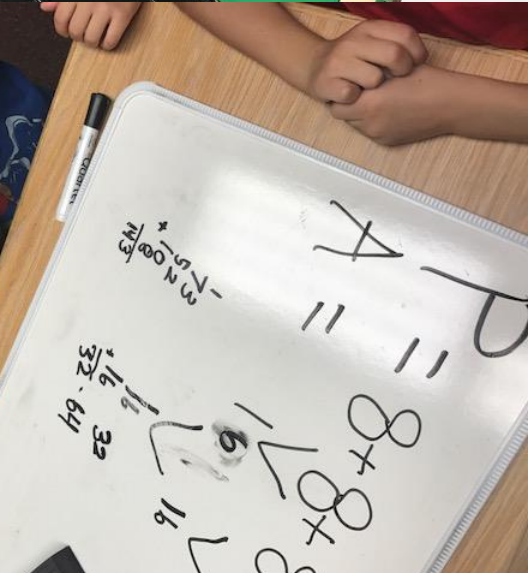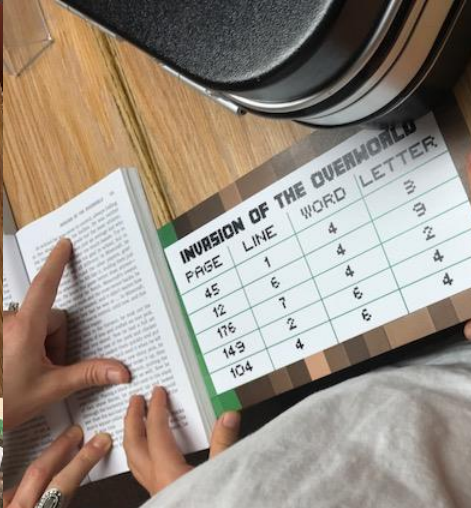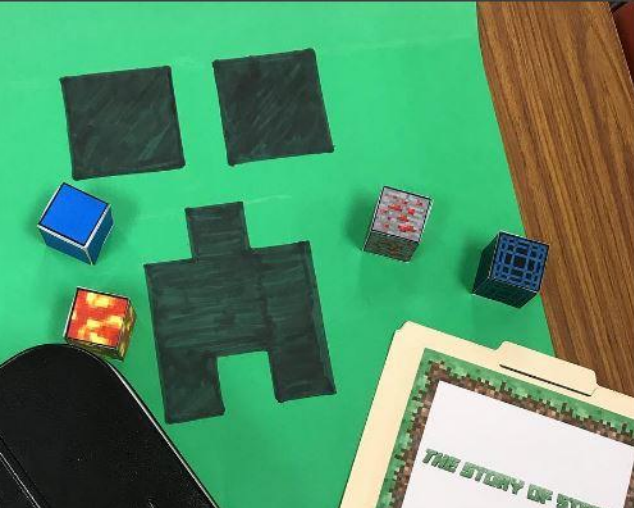
Any Questions?

Thank you!

Escape Room resources will be posted at:
http://jenniferfuchikami.wordpress.com/library-escape-room-resources