

The Assassins' Guild: Michaelmas 2004 Rules

The Umpire

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1 Introduction | 2 |
| 1.1 Signing up | 2 |
| 1.2 Conduct | 3 |
| 2 How To Play | 4 |
| 2.1 Legal Targets | 4 |
| 2.2 Rules Of Engagement | 5 |
| 2.3 Out Of Bounds Areas And Situations | 5 |
| 2.4 Accomplices And Non-Players | 7 |
| 3 Reporting | 7 |
| 3.1 Pseudonyms | 8 |
| 3.2 Public Killings | 8 |
| 4 Dead Players | 8 |
| 5 Wanted Criminals | 9 |
| 5.1 Redemption | 9 |
| 6 Competence | 9 |
| 7 The Police Force | 9 |
| 8 The Umpire | 10 |
| 9 Administrivia | 11 |
| 9.1 Website | 11 |
| 9.2 Newsgroup | 11 |
| 9.3 IRC Channel | 11 |
| 10 Comments | 11 |
| 11 History | 11 |

1 Introduction

Assassins is a game of mock assassination for a large number of players. Each person has to try to survive the attempts of others to kill them whilst eliminating their own targets. The last person to be left alive is, not surprisingly, declared the winner.

If you have any questions about these rules once you have read them thoroughly, please ask for clarification from the Umpire as he will be only too happy to provide it.

1.1 Signing up

The game shall be open to people who live for much of the time within a five-mile radius of Great St Mary's Church in Cambridge city centre, although others may be considered at the umpire's discretion

Everyone who wishes to play should provide the Umpire with:

- Full name, indicating the name you are usually known by
- College or department (if you are a member of the University)
- E-mail address (full if not @cam.ac.uk, although your @cam.ac.uk address is preferred)
- Your official address (i.e. room number) and if different the address at which you will be living (i.e. sleeping and spending a reasonable number of hours at) during the course of the game. In the game this will be given to your assassins, as most colleges will not give out room numbers of students. Any player with a real-life psychopath trying to kill you, explain to the Umpire and you will be excused. Anyone with a real-life psychopath trying to kill them who wants to play Assassins as well needs their head looking at. Should you become wanted (see below), your official room address will be made publically available on the website along with your name.
- If you live relatively far from the city centre, brief details of city centre visits that you regularly make. I shall use my discretion in deciding which details to pass on to your assassins. The aim is to involve outliers more in the game, since trekking out to Girton to kill a target is usually only done by a few of the keenest players.
- The extent to which water-based weaponry is allowed in your room. The options are:
 - No Water: no water pistols or other water-based weapon may be used in your room
 - Water With Care: small water-based weapons may be used if the user is careful
 - Full Water: anything goes

You may also let the umpire know of anything specific in your room which could be damaged by water; this information will be given to your assassins.

- An initial pseudonym, which will be used in news reports to disguise your true identity.
- Anything else which your assassins should be informed of, such as an allergy to a substance which might be used as a poison, or that you live in a shared set and assassins should be wary of killing your roommate.

Anyone found to have supplied false or misleading details to the Umpire will be disqualified, but I'm sure it's not necessary to say that.

Note that by signing up to play you are agreeing to report any assassins-related events which you are involved in, up to and including your own death. You are agreeing for your name and reports of your assassins activities to be made available on the guild website both now and in the future. You are also giving permission for other players to try to 'kill' you by the legal methods described in these rules, and to enter your room without warning should you leave the door unlocked or the window open.

1.2 Conduct

1. For any deliberate breach of the rules a player may be identified as a legitimate target for all other players ("put on the wanted list") or, in serious cases, disqualified from playing.
2. The spirit of the rules is more important than the actual rules themselves. Rules are made to be bent here and there. On the other hand, the umpire will not be bound by the rules if he feels that someone is attempting to exploit a loophole. If in doubt, email the umpire with your question.
3. Exercise common sense. Players are *entirely* responsible for their behaviour. Avoid inconveniencing other people, especially porters and the general public. In particular, do not knock on your target's door at unreasonable hours.
4. This game depends on players being honest for it to work. Please inform the Umpire if you have been killed. Honour among murderers and all that...
5. You must expect other players to have nefarious intentions at any time during the game. Do not involve (or cause to become involved) college authorities or other non-players to eject or intimidate those attempting to kill you or others. If you feel players are behaving unreasonably, contact the Umpire.
6. This is not a game about physical strength or violence. There is no excuse whatsoever for pushing people around or forcing them out of your way. Most specifically, if someone is holding a door closed you should not attempt to push it open, and you should never do anything likely to cause anyone injury.
7. Most of all, remember that it's a game. Do your best, but have fun. Don't turn yourself into a paranoid wreck. Get out there and enjoy yourself.

2 How To Play

The game, in brief:

- Before the game starts, send an email to the Umpire as described above informing him that you wish to take part in the game.
- When the game starts, you will be sent an email with the names of your three targets. Try to kill them.
- Whenever you make an attempt on another player's life, whether or not you succeed, email the Umpire with a report. If someone tries to kill you, report that to the Umpire as well.
- When one of your targets dies, whether it was you or someone else who killed them, the Umpire will send you a new target to replace them. In this way every live player will always have three targets at any given time.
- If you die, send a report of this to the Umpire. The game is now over for you, although you may rejoin it as a police officer (see later).
- If you do not die, congratulations! You have won the game.

The weapons rules on the website describe the various weaponry you may use to eliminate other assassins. Please read them carefully before using any weapon. If a weapon is not covered by these rules, you will need permission from the umpire before using it.

2.1 Legal Targets

You may legally try to kill any of the following types of player:

- The three targets you have been assigned by the Umpire.
- The three assassins who have been assigned you as a target; you will not be told who these are, but should you find out you may attempt to pre-emptively defend yourself by killing them first.
- Anyone who is clearly holding a weapon or planting a bomb. (You cannot legally attack someone who was holding a weapon a few seconds ago but has now hidden it again.)
- Anyone who is in the process of trying to kill you. (So, if two assassins come to your door, you may kill both of them, even if only one had you as a target. Of course, if they weren't really assassins, you're in trouble. Also, this only applies to people trying to kill *you* – assassins trying to kill other people are not legal targets unless they are bearing weapons.)
- Anyone on the Wanted List
- Anyone on the Incompetent List

Note that it is, of course, possible to attack people who do not fall into any of the categories above. Should you do so, you will be made wanted for killing or attempting to kill innocent victims.

There are a number of ex-players around whom people find it amusing to shoot. If not playing, they are entirely innocent and should not be attacked. These people will have some say in the fate of those who do attack them.

2.2 Rules Of Engagement

You may use all manner of ruses to ensnare your target. However, there are some things you are not allowed to do:

1. You are not allowed to impersonate authority figures such as bedders, porters or the (real) police. This is so that players can take part in the game without aggravating their bedders by refusing to let them into their room. You should also not take advantage of bedders unlocking the door to your target's room to break in and kill them or leave a trap. Note that it is fine to impersonate the JCR committee, RAG reps and other student positions.
2. You are not allowed to impersonate the Umpire, for the same reason. If someone knocks on your door claiming to be the Umpire (or, for that matter, a bedder or porter), you may safely let them in. You are also not allowed to impersonate the Umpire indirectly by, for example, forging email messages.
3. You may enter a target's room through an unlocked door or an open window *only*. If the door is locked you may not make any kind of attack including firing shots or pushing bombs through keyholes, letterboxes or any other gap in, under or over the door (exception: you may post special letters under the door or through the letterbox, since this does not distract the occupant).
4. You are perfectly at liberty to deny that you are an assassin. However, you are *not* allowed to claim that you are a dead assassin and hence harmless. You may also not lie about the vital status of other assassins who are immediately present.

2.3 Out Of Bounds Areas And Situations

There are some places and circumstances which, for reasons of sanity, are considered out-of-bounds. No-one may kill anyone or be killed when they are out of bounds, which includes the following:

- Lecture theatres are out of bounds, whether or not a lecture is in progress.
- Practicals and laboratories are always out of bounds.
- Hospitals, libraries and sports halls are out of bounds.
- Churches, chapels, synagogues, mosques, temples, stupas or any other official place of worship. The Umpire will not allow any player's room to be considered an official place of worship, no matter how inventive their excuse.
- Formal college dining halls and any other college dining arrangement in which food is served to the table. Anywhere you get food yourself from a servery is in bounds.

- Official university society meetings or regularly scheduled meetings of an unofficial society which takes place in college grounds, including in players' rooms. Pubmeets are *not* out of bounds.
- Any Ball, Event, garden party or similar. Regular college ents are in bounds.
- Seminars, supervisions, tutor or DoS meetings and the like.
- Rowers are out of bounds while rowing and also while carrying their boat, to avoid upsetting the rest of the crew when someone has to run away from an assassin while they were supposed to be carrying the boat. The same applies to other "serious" boat-related activities such as canoeing. Punts are not out of bounds.
- Anyone working in a real proper office job is out of bounds while at work. (This is unlikely to apply to anyone who is a student.) Anyone working at a college bar or ent is also out of bounds.
- The CUR radio station in Churchill College is out of bounds.
- Anyone working in a theatre, whether as cast, crew or front of house staff is out of bounds during productions, rehearsals, get-ins and get-outs.

Computer rooms such as the Phoenix User Area, Cockroft 4 and other departmental and college computer rooms are in bounds subject to the following restrictions:

- Entirely out of bounds between 9am and 5.30pm.
- Use only weapons which cannot possibly damage equipment. This probably does not include any form of gun except to make "bang" kills.
- Avoid annoying other users. Do not use noisy weapons such as cap guns. If you ignore either of these rules the kill may be disallowed at the Umpire's discretion.

A computer room is, in general, defined as a place where the public (or any clearly-defined group, e.g. members of a college) are permitted to use computers. Players' private rooms do *not* count. Computer rooms which occupy a completely separate room inside a library count as computer rooms and so are in bounds outside office hours. Rooms which function as both computer rooms and libraries such as the one in the CMS count as libraries.

Players should not abuse out of bounds areas. You may not take a suspicious letter into an out of bounds area and open it in safety, nor should you walk into an out of bounds area to detonate a bomb. It is of course perfectly acceptable, if cowardly, to hide in a library until your assassin gets bored.

If you are not sure whether a given time or place is out of bounds or not, please contact the Umpire. Similarly, if there is something not mentioned on this list you think should be out of bounds, ask the Umpire to consider it.

2.4 Accomplices And Non-Players

Non-players may, if you wish, act as accomplices on your kill attempts. However, accomplices cannot attack or kill anyone (but they can still be attacked). You are responsible for the safety of your accomplices, and should they be killed you will be held responsible, which means that you will probably become wanted. You should not allow your accomplices to be seen bearing weapons at any time; particularly, you should not use armed accomplices as decoys, and should you do so the kill may be disallowed.

Players are discouraged from acting as accomplices to other players, although this is not against the rules. Please note that accomplicing players are not allowed to actually make kills which they would not normally be allowed to, although it is perfectly permissible to kill your assassin's accomplices while they are in the process of making an attempt on your life. Also, accomplicing an illegal attempt will almost certainly result in your being made wanted.

You should not use non-players to avoid exposing yourself to danger, for example, by getting them to open your mail or door for you, or defuse or detonate a bomb which has been left for you. Should you do so and they be killed as a result, you will be made wanted in connection with their death.

In general, if you kill a non-player you will be made wanted. However, it is possible for innocents to be killed through unforeseeable mischances, in which case you will be let off if you are believed to have acted responsibly. A poison letter clearly addressed to your target will not make you wanted if it is opened by someone else. However, it is assumed that people other than a room's occupant could reasonably try to open its door; therefore, **should you put contact poison on someone's outside doorhandle, you will be made wanted for endangering innocents.**

3 Reporting

Whenever you are involved in any assassins-related incident, such as successfully or unsuccessfully trying to kill another player or innocent, being attacked or killed or witnessing a killing, you should inform the Umpire as soon as possible.

Reports of the game's events will be published on the website during the game. Reports are encouraged to be dramatic and creative and may also be intentionally misleading (although outright lying is frowned upon). However, if your report is sufficiently outlandish to make it unclear what actually happened, please explain the raw facts separately to the Umpire in your email, as he likes to know what is going on.

If you cannot be sure what happened in an attack, you may call a "discussion phase" with the other assassins involved in order to clarify who was hit, who is dead, etc. Players cannot kill one another while doing this, although please try to avoid exposing yourself to any entirely different assassins who might happen to be passing. In general, all players involved should submit a report of every incident; this way the Umpire can correlate the reports and so ensure that the news is updated as quickly as possible.

3.1 Pseudonyms

Obviously, you will wish to avoid other assassins finding out that you are playing the game and what you have been doing. For this reason each player is allowed to select a pseudonym at the start of the game. Whenever you make a report, you may choose whether to have it appear under your real name or your pseudonym. If you do not specify, the Umpire will probably assume that you intend to use your pseudonym.

For every two assassins you kill legally, you can earn an extra pseudonym. If you wish to take advantage of this, email the Umpire telling him that you wish to register a new pseudonym and what it is. From then on, whenever you make a report you may choose any of your pseudonyms to report under instead of your real name.

You will not be awarded extra pseudonyms for kills you make while wanted, but wanted criminals who succeed in redeeming themselves may be given a new pseudonym to help with their rehabilitation, at the Umpire's discretion. Note that while you are wanted, all of your pseudonyms will be listed on the Wanted List along with your real name.

3.2 Public Killings

If you kill someone in an unsubtle manner in a public place, you may be unable to avoid being noticed. For this reason, any kills made in public areas or areas like college dining halls may result in your not being allowed to report the event pseudonymously, if there is a sufficiently large number of people around to see you. (As a rule of thumb, there need to be at least half a dozen uninvolved people in a position to clearly see you make the kill – the intent is mainly to discourage assassins from having shootouts in crowded areas.) Kills made with subtle weapons like knives will not result in your kill being witnessed in this way.

4 Dead Players

Dead players should refrain from trying to influence the game in any way. This includes trading information about the game with live players, acting as accomplices, pointing assassins or targets out to players or otherwise intentionally doing anything likely to influence the course of game events. In particular, the dead *must not* discuss the incident in which they died with anyone. Players may not get dead players to open doors for them or check their mail in the same way that they may not get non-players to do so.

If you have been killed, you should not announce this to anyone until you are sure that the information could not be used to track down your killer; preferably, you should wait until the report of your death is on the website. This particularly applies to those using the `#assassins` IRC channel.

Dead players may, of course, rejoin the game as police.

5 Wanted Criminals

Any players who break these rules, such as by killing or endangering innocent victims, may be declared to be “wanted”. The names of all wanted criminals will be put up on the website along with their addresses and pseudonyms. Anyone on the wanted list is a valid target for anyone else in the game, including the police.

It should be noted, however, that being on the wanted list is not an excuse to act irresponsibly. You may find it amusing to shoot hundreds of non-players and make a public nuisance of yourself, but rest assured that nobody else does. The Umpire will be only too happy to eject you from the game if you are seen to be bringing the Guild into disrepute.

5.1 Redemption

It may be possible, at the Umpire’s discretion, for wanted criminals to redeem themselves through services to society such as the elimination of other criminals. The Umpire (possibly in conjunction with the Chief of Police) will decide what conditions, if any, are appropriate. Note that players who become wanted intentionally by, for example, murdering other players are very unlikely to ever be redeemed.

6 Competence

To encourage participation in the game, there is a time limit for making attempts on your targets, called the “competence period”. Initially the competence period will be one week. If you do not make an attempt within a week of the start of the game, you will be designated incompetent. After each attempt, you have a further week in which to make another attempt.

If you become incompetent, you will be put on the Incompetent List. This is like the Wanted List without the glamour; incompetent players are legal targets for all players and police. The Umpire will specify conditions for players to be removed from the Incompetent List; this will probably involve making two credible attempts on your targets, possibly of a specified type.

Initially all attempts will count for competence. As the game progresses, certain types of attempt may cease to count for competence: you may still make them, but you will become incompetent if you do not make any others. Poisoned letters will probably cease to count for competence a few weeks into the game; other indirect attempts may cease to count shortly after that. You will always receive competence for killing another player, even if it is done using a method which would not otherwise count or if they were attacking you rather than the other way around.

As the end of the game approaches, the competence period may decrease to five or even three days. Should this occur, the Umpire will let you know.

7 The Police Force

Players who have been killed may, if they wish, be reincarnated as a member of the “police force”. This is a special group of players who exist solely to hunt

down and kill criminals and incompetents. If you have died and would like to join the police, tell the Umpire. A list of all police (including real names and addresses) will appear on the game website.

Police are more limited in their powers than real players; for one thing they are not allowed to use any indirect weaponry with the exception of bombs. Police, unlike players, will also find that they cannot kill anyone who is not a legal target for them – should they attempt to do so they will discover that the victim miraculously does not die. Police may attack and kill players bearing weapons in pre-emptive self-defence, but attacking innocents or other illegal targets will result in their being made wanted just like anyone else.

Police should not collaborate with assassins except to co-operate in the elimination of criminals and incompetents. Those who are found to be helping assassins with any other goals will be made wanted for corruption. Police who arrange to “collaborate” with other assassins and then shoot them for bearing weapons may have such kills disallowed at the Umpire’s discretion.

Police who fail to make attempts on criminals and incompetents when there are any around for them to kill may be designated incompetent and made a legal target for all players. Note that even wanted or incompetent police cannot kill people who are not legal targets for them, although obviously they can kill anyone who attacks them.

Police who are successful in upholding the law and removing criminals may be promoted to higher-ranking positions in the Force. The actions of the police are ultimately controlled by the Chief of Police and his deputies.

Particularly successful, devoted or brave police officers who are killed in action may just find themselves given another chance...

8 The Umpire

This term’s Umpire is Martin O’Leary of St John’s College and may be contacted by emailing assassins@srcf.ucam.org.

The primary method of contacting the Umpire is through email, though players are welcome to visit. The Umpire’s room is Room 3, 1 Madingley Road. No-one may be killed in the Umpire’s room or immediately outside it, although the precise extent of this protection is yet to be determined. However, players are discouraged from running into the Umpire’s house in order to escape an attacker. Should you burst into the Umpire’s room gibbering about attacking assassins, he will sneer and call you a pansy.

Any queries about the game can be emailed to the Umpire, or you can visit (but you should probably try to arrange the meeting beforehand, since even the Umpire goes to lectures occasionally). Try to resolve any queries before they become a matter of life or death (yours or anyone else’s).

Attempting to take items from the Umpire’s pigeonhole or break into his computer account is strictly forbidden. Impersonating the Umpire is also forbidden.

Player-Umpire communications may be made public at the end of the game for everyone’s enlightenment and amusement. If you do not wish a certain communication to be made public, please tell the Umpire.

The Umpire is immortal. Players attempting to test this proposition will be made wanted.

9 Administrivia

It is the responsibility of players to read their e-mail and read the news to see whether they have been put on the wanted list. Players are deemed to know that they are wanted/police as soon as these details are published on the website. They are not wanted/police before this, and you cannot kill someone just because you believe that they are about to become wanted. Of course, if they are trying to kill you or bearing a weapon, they are fair game anyway.

9.1 Website

The game website is at <http://www.srcf.ucam.org/assassins>; you are probably reading these rules there now. During the game, the news will be published on the website along with any updates to the rules, news of upcoming special events or social events, etc. It is the responsibility of individual players to keep themselves up to date with anything on the website which concerns them.

To avoid waste of bandwidth, game news will not be distributed by email.

9.2 Newsgroup

The game also has its own newsgroup (`ucam.rec.games.assassin`) which players may use for discussion, etc. You are unlikely to find news about the current game here, but you may find discussion of special events, proposed changes to the game or new mini-games, etc. This has recently fallen into disuse, supplanted by the IRC Channel.

9.3 IRC Channel

There is an IRC channel `#assassins` on the SRCF server (`kern.srcf.ucam.org`, port 6667). All assassins, potential assassins or ex-assassins are welcome to join and discuss the game or anything else. See Jonathan Hogg's Assassins FAQ at <http://www.srcf.ucam.org/assassins/assassinsFAQ.html> for more details on both the newsgroup and IRC, although bear in mind that it is quite outdated in parts.

10 Comments

The Umpire's Rule is law. There will be no right of appeal against a disqualification.

Official complaints about a person's behaviour will almost certainly result in disqualification. Involvement of the (real) police will definitely cause you to be disqualified.

Individual players may not speak for the Guild as a whole, and as such may not use our rules as an excuse for their behaviour.

11 History

The history of this set of rules is thought to be:

- Initial author unknown.
- Typed in by Paul Roberts (PER10).
- Later history unknown.
- Used by CUSFS for a while.
- Martin Hardcastle (MJH22) made some modifications.
- Julian Birch (JMB29), some modifications and clarifications.
- Richard Fairhurst (RJF1001), further modifications and clarifications.
- Ben Jameson (BFJ1000), yet more modifications.
- Jim Cameron (JC10007) and Elizabeth Pringle (EMPP1), more, mistyped, modifications.
- David Allsopp (DNA1000), surprisingly, made some modifications.
- Paul Menage (PBM1001) was Easter 1995 Umpire, and initiated 3 targets per player.
- Nigel Harris (NJH27) made modifications.
- Ben Harris (BJH21) changed even more things, notably the bomb blast radius formula to be based on a cube root.
- Chuan-Tze Teo (CTT20) modified still more rules.
- Martin Read (mpr22) corrected the text of the bomb rules, and set a (semi-)codified timing rule (after a few shoutings, getting the wording right).
- Lynnette Dray (lmd21) modified a few more things, surprisingly.
- Charlie Baylis (cgb23) took this ruleset in 1999 in order to back out the strange necromancy rules, and made a couple of other patches.
- Matt Laycock, Ed Nokes, Bjoern Holzhauer improved and HTMLised the ruleset, with the help of Ed Anderson, Matthew Wakeling, Dave Hammond and others.
- Ralph Owen (rho21), Ed Nokes and Bjoern Holzhauer altered the rules for Michaelmas 2001, with suggestions from Ed Wallace.
- Modifications made by Tom Garnett (tmg27)
- Clarifications and a few alterations made by Rosemary Warner (rjw76), with suggestions from Ralph Owen.
- Matthew Johnson (mjj29) and Michael Cripps (mac57) updated the rules for Lent 2003.
- Matt Johnson (mjj29) tidied up the HTML, Ric Brackenbury (rab71) added a few pedantic changes, and rewrote the bomb rules with Adam Biltcliffe.

- Adam Biltcliffe (amgb2) rewrote and restructured large parts of the rules in an attempt to make them vaguely comprehensible to new players.
- Martin O'Leary (mewo2) poked at things a bit in Michaelmas 2004