Code Breakers Live

Mission: the thief locked the mascot behind a coded password, and a rival crew is racing to crack it too. Win the cipher games, break the final code, whisper the password, open the box, free the mascot. Character trait today: **Responsible Decisions**. Post the A=1..26 key in a corner of the board all hour.

1 · Decode Duel (5–16 min) — same code, two teams, first correct shout scores

Codes A=1..26: 3-15-4-5 = CODE · 3-12-21-5 = CLUE · 19-16-25 = SPY · 3-1-19-5 = CASE · 20-18-1-16 = TRAP. Best of five, wipe and rewrite between rounds.

Rule Wrong shout freezes that team until the next round, so read the key and check before calling it. Visible timer each round.

Diff TK–2: decode together, short words (SPY, CODE), no freeze. 3–8: shift cipher (letters moved back 3) — GHWHFWLYH = DETECTIVE, PBVWHUB = MYSTERY. Keep the freeze, hard clock, an older kid runs the board.

2 · Cipher Relay (16–31 min) — one letter per runner, first team to spell it wins

Word A=1..26: 3-9-16-8-5-18 = CIPHER (C=3, I=9, P=16, H=8, E=5, R=18). Six symbols, six runners; give each team a blank slot per letter.

Rule Runner decodes one letter, writes it, tags the next. Wrong letter, that runner goes back and fixes it before the next can run. Read both rows aloud to confirm.

Diff TK–2: 3-letter word 19-16-25 = SPY, coach helps at the board. 3–8: mixed cipher for CODE — station 1 A=1..26 "3"=C, station 2 back-3 "R"=O, station 3 reverse alphabet "W"=D, station 4 A=1..26 "5"=E. Running clock, older kids staff stations.

3 · The Final Cipher (31–45 min) — mixed code decodes to the box password

Code 21 - 14 - O - R - 3 - 11 = UNLOCK. Numbers use A=1..26; letters are shifted forward 3, move them back 3 (21=U, 14=N, O→L, R→O, 3=C, 11=K). Post both keys.

Rule Decode symbol by symbol, check the whole word, whisper it to the coach. Wrong whisper = 30-second lockout while rivals keep cracking. First correct whisper opens the box.

Diff TK–2: plain A=1..26, 21-14-12-15-3-11 = UNLOCK, decode as one group. 3–8: shift+reverse combo, GNPMYQ = UNLOCK (shift back 1, then flip A↔Z). Then teams design a cipher for a rival team, post keys, and referee it.

4 · Finale + Wristband (45–60 min)

Open Winning team announces the password (UNLOCK) to the room, coach turns the key, mascot lifts out, big cheer. Optional "thief's note" inside: "You cracked my code faster than I could. I surrender!"

Award the **Responsible Decisions** trait wristband to code breakers who checked their answer before they called it ("I read the key first", "I double-checked my letter").

3–8 For older kids and the two middle schools, run the whole hour competitive: fixed teams, score every game on the whiteboard, visible timer each round, crown a champion here. Games bank adds **Detective Mafia** (2–3 Culprits + a Detective, 5–7 min rounds) — the one middle schoolers ask to replay.

Detective's Oath (say together, magnifiers up): I am a detective. / My brain is my best tool. / I don't guess, I reason. / I follow the clues to the truth.