

GUMSHOE 101 for GMs: How to Run GUMSHOE

1. **Running a one-shot? Explain basic mechanics, nothing more.** Players don't need to know everything until it becomes relevant over the course of play. If you're spending over 15 minutes acquainting new players with rules, it may be overkill.
2. **Start with action.** James Bond movies don't start with investigation, they start in media res and with high action. I've written 3 NBA scenarios. One started with a car chase, one with skiing down a mountain being chased by machine-gun-wielding thugs on snowmobiles, and one with half the group in free fall with no parachutes. It really works nicely.
3. When you start with action, flat-out tell your players that **any points they spend in this first scene they will get back.** This is incredibly important. Doing this immediately gets the players over their "I'm scared of spending a scarce resource" fear and gets them into the nature of the game.
3. **Don't over-think clues.** As long as you know why something happened, don't stress ahead of time about every single clue available. Your players are smart. They will make suggestions, you will think "that's brilliant," and you will give them information pointing them in a direction. This was the hardest thing for me to understand.
4. **Plan narrow-wide-narrow.** The beginning of an adventure is narrow, and starts one way. The middle of the adventure is wide, with lots of possible paths and approaches that the PCs can take. What they do and learn there will lead them into the final, narrow chute that leads to the climactic ending.
5. **Pay respect where it is due.** GUMSHOE characters in NBA and Ashen Stars (and really, in general) are incredibly smart and competent badassess. Treat them that way.

P: "Can I figure out where the money went?"
GM: "You're a world-class spy, right? Hell yes. You have forensic accounting. You trace it through five shell corporations. No one else you know of would ever be able to figure it out, and it takes you a couple of hours, but you track it back to the original Swiss account. It's Malekov's, as you expected. Make a Digital Intrusion roll - a tough one - if you want to mess around with his balances."
6. **Pacing, pacing, pacing.** Learn when to mix investigation with brief, explosive action. Action doesn't have to be lethal, but it should occur right around the points where things would otherwise bog down, and it should push the plot forward.
7. **Reward the behavior you want to see.** If someone says something hilarious or does something brilliant, give them a pool refresh, either 3 points or a full pool. Trust me, that's the behavior the other players will start to emulate.
8. **No lolly-gagging.** Shadowrun's big weakness is that planning a run takes forever. Preparedness and flashbacks means that you don't have to worry about that in GUMSHOE. Jump in more quickly, and get to the good stuff faster.