Getting started

Werewolf is a party game. It was first invented in the 1970s by a Russian professor of psychology, Dmitri Davidov, as an experiment in group psychology. Since then, it has been developed and codified by students at Princeton University under the name ‘Mafia’.

Depending on your perspective, Werewolf is a study of interactions in a situation where there is an informed minority and an uninformed majority; or a study of group dynamics in an atmosphere of mistrust; or an experiment in mass hysteria. First and foremost, however, it is an intriguing, challenging and enjoyable co-operative party game.

You will need...

- At least ten people in a room. Twelve or more is ideal. More than twenty starts to get unwieldy. One of these people will be the Narrator.

- A number of cards. Ideally these should be labelled specially for the purpose of playing Werewolves, but cards from an ordinary pack will do.

Background

The game is set in a small, isolated 19th-century village that has effectively no contact with the outside world. Most of the residents are innocent Villagers, but a few are also secretly Werewolves.

By night, the Werewolves roam about the village, picking a law-abiding Villager as their victim and devouring him or her. By day, the Villagers gather together, seeking justice, and may vote to lynch one of their number in an attempt to eradicate the threat.

The Werewolves form one team: they win if they manage to kill all the Villagers. The Villagers form the other team: they win if they manage to kill all the Werewolves.

To add some intrigue to the game, there is also an Angel who works on the side of the Villagers. The Angel is just like a normal Villager, except that he has the power to look into the souls of others and determine whether they are good or evil.

Finally, one player (you) is a Narrator. As Narrator, you are neither a Werewolf nor a Villager, but a kind of neutral referee. Your responsibilities are:

- to explain how the game works at the start
- to direct the flow of the game and give information to the rest of the players
- to act as a referee in the event of disputes.
The rest of the players are each assigned a role: Werewolf, Villager or Angel. Roles are assigned secretly, so that each player knows his own role but nobody else’s. The best way to accomplish this is using a deck of appropriately labelled cards. The Narrator simply deals one card face-down to each player, and each player looks at his own card to find out his assigned role, taking care not to show anyone else.¹

To keep the game balanced, the ratio of Villagers to Werewolves depends on the number of players. The table below shows how many of each to use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of players²</th>
<th>Cards needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 Werewolves, 5 Villagers, 1 Angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2 Werewolves, 6 Villagers, 1 Angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2 Werewolves, 7 Villagers, 1 Angel</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2 Werewolves, 8 Villagers, 1 Angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3 Werewolves, 8 Villagers, 1 Angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3 Werewolves, 9 Villagers, 1 Angel</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>3 Werewolves, 10 Villagers, 1 Angel</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>3 Werewolves, 11 Villagers, 1 Angel</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>3 Werewolves, 14 Villagers, 1 Angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>4 Werewolves, 13 Villagers, 2 Angels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>4 Werewolves, 14 Villagers, 2 Angels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you assign roles, you should tell the players how many Villagers there are, how many Werewolves and how many Angels. Make sure they understand the nature of each role:

- The main job of the Villagers is to try and root out the Werewolves. By day, Villagers have the power to root out and lynch anyone whom they suspect of being a Werewolf. By night, they are vulnerable to being devoured by prowling Werewolves.

- The main job of the Werewolves is to eliminate Villagers. By day, Werewolves act just like Villagers. By night, they have the power to devour any one player of their choice.

- The Angel is on the side of the Villagers. By night, he has the power to look into the soul of any one player, which lets him discover whether that player is a Werewolf or an

¹ If you don’t have labelled cards, you could use a normal deck and assign different kinds of cards to different roles; for instance, red cards could be Villagers, black could be Werewolves, and the joker could be the Angel.

² Note that the number of players excludes the Narrator. You always need exactly one Narrator.
innocent Villager. By day, he can join the Villagers in lynching suspected Werewolves, trying to use the information he’s gleaned to the benefit of the village.

Players also need to understand that it’s strictly forbidden for any of them to show their cards to anyone else, except if they’re eliminated from the game. There’s no rule against any player telling another player what’s on his card, but then again, there’s also no rule against players lying about what’s on their card (and some of them will have to). The point is that players only ever have each other’s word for their identity, so actually showing a card, and thus settling the matter once and for all, is not allowed.

Playing the game

The game proceeds in rounds. Each round is divided into two phases: night and day.

Night

Each round begins with night. During the night, the village goes to sleep: when you announce nightfall, all players bow their heads and close their eyes.

• Villagers must then stay that way for the entire night, until you announce daybreak the following day.

• Meanwhile, Werewolves are allowed to awaken during the night, when instructed by the Narrator using the phrase “Werewolves, awake”. They can then choose any one player as their prey. That player will be found dead at daybreak.

• The Angel may also awaken during the night, when instructed by the Narrator using the phrase “Angel, awake”. He may then choose any one player whose soul he wants to examine. The Narrator will indicate whether that player is a Werewolf or a Villager.

As Narrator, it’s your job to announce nightfall and daybreak, and to give instructions in between. Follow the script below, but feel free to embellish it – especially in the first round with a new group of players, when instructions should be given carefully and precisely, to reduce the chance of anyone needing to ask questions. It will also help if you remind new players of the need to stay as silent as possible, to make quick decisions, and to pay attention when you communicate with them – because there are very few circumstances in which they will be able to ask for clarification without giving themselves away!

3 If there are two Angels, they awaken separately, so as not to know each other’s identity.
Narrator’s script

“Nightfall.”

Everyone closes their eyes and bows their heads.

“Werewolves, awake.”

Werewolves open their eyes and silently identify themselves to you and each other.

“Werewolves, choose your prey.”

The Werewolves, between them, must silently choose one sleeping player and then identify their choice to you, probably by pointing or nodding in his direction so that you understand which player is being identified. They need to do this without revealing themselves by giving away audible clues to the sleeping Villagers. If they can’t agree after a few seconds or if you can’t work out who is being identified, you can prompt them (aloud).

“Werewolves, asleep.”

Werewolves close their eyes.

“Angel, awake.”

Angel opens his eyes.

“Angel, whose soul will you examine?”

Angel silently points to one other player and then looks to you for the answer. If the player is a Werewolf, nod. If not, shake your head.

“Angel, asleep.”

Angel closes his eyes.

[If there’s another Angel, go back to “Angel, awake”.

“Daybreak.”

All players open their eyes.

Announce which player has been killed by the Werewolves. That player is eliminated (see later).
Day
Day follows night. During the day, (non-eliminated) players discuss the events of the preceding night and debate who should be lynched in an attempt to catch the Werewolves.

Unlike night, the structure of day is very free. As Narrator, you should encourage players to talk freely, voicing suspicions and asking questions of each other. If the players are new to the game, you may also want to explain how lynching works (see below) and give some general tactical advice. Other than that, you shouldn’t need to intervene until a group consensus starts to appear.

When you notice the beginnings of a consensus, with clear suspicions being voiced about one or more players, interrupt the discussion to ask the group whether they are ready to accuse someone of being a Werewolf. In order to proceed to the vote, an accusation needs to be proposed and seconded by two different players. If this is achieved, then all (non-eliminated) players vote on the question ‘Do you think this player is a Werewolf?’ If a simple majority of players votes Yes, disregarding abstentions, then the accused player is lynched and immediately eliminated from the game. If a majority vote No, then the accusation fails and debate may continue.

The day ends immediately when a player has been lynched. It also ends immediately, without a lynching, if three successive accusations all fail to muster a majority. When day ends, a new round begins, starting with nightfall.

Eliminated players
A player who is killed by the Werewolves or lynched by the Villagers is eliminated, and must immediately show his card to everyone, thus revealing his role.

Eliminated players can stay in the room and watch the game – including keeping their eyes open at night, if they wish – but they may not contribute in any way to the game, either by communicating in any way with the people around them or by voting for lynchings.

Winning the game
The game is won when either the last Werewolf is eliminated (in which case the Villagers win, including Angels) or the last Villager is eliminated (in which case the Werewolves win). Note that a victory for either team is shared by all members of that team, whether or not they were eliminated.

The turning-point
Because Werewolves can act alone at night, it’s quite possible for the game to continue with just one Werewolf for several rounds, even if the Villagers get some early success with lynchings. But the same is not true in reverse, because Werewolves are allowed to vote for lynchings in the day too, and they can potentially kill so many Villagers that they can win any daytime vote.
It follows that there is a turning-point in the game, beyond which the situation becomes hopeless for the Villagers. That turning-point is reached if, at the end of any day, there is only one more Villager than the number of Werewolves (or if the numbers are equal). When this happens, the Werewolves will devour another Villager overnight, removing the Villagers’ majority. Thereafter the Werewolves will rule the roost, blocking lynching votes by day and having a free hand at night. It’s normal for the Narrator to award a victory to the Werewolves if this situation arises.

It’s also conventional, particularly with new players, for you as Narrator to point out when such a turning-point is imminent. At the start of any day, if the number of Villagers is only one or two higher than the number of Werewolves, you should explain that the upcoming vote is crucial. If the Villagers lynch the wrong person, they will hand the game to the Werewolves.

**Narrator mistakes**

Everyone makes mistakes, even Narrators. But the problem is, if you as Narrator make a mistake in the information you give to the players, only a few players will notice. And if they try to correct you, they will give away their own secrets to everyone else.

Because of this possibility, many Narrators choose to announce *before the game begins* that players must simply ignore any Narrator errors they become aware of. What the Narrator says goes, even if it’s incorrect.

You can, of course, try to correct any errors you become aware of, as long as you do this in a way that doesn’t make things worse, for instance by revealing secrets or giving away information.

**Variants**

There are many variants which can be introduced when players are familiar with the basic game. These fall into two main categories:

- new roles, where ordinary Villagers or Werewolves are augmented by more specialist characters;
- new rules, where changes are made to the way the game is played.

One common technique is to play a game, then assess balance. Was it a close match? Or was it an easy victory for one side or the other? If one side won comfortably, then introduce a variant which will redress the balance somewhat by benefiting the other side.

Variants that benefit the Villagers include:
• Role: Archangel
• Rule: Writing In Blood
• Role: Wolfsbane
• Role: Possessed (replacing a Werewolf)
• Role: Governor (12+ players only)
• Role: Magistrate (12+ players only)
• Role: Masons (16+ players only)

Variants that benefit the Werewolves include:

• Role: Demon
• Role: Possessed (replacing a Villager)
• Rule: Mangled Corpses
• Rule: Full Moon
• Role: Lycanthrope (14+ players only)

Variants that have no effect on game balance include:

• Rule: Rumours

**Role: Archangel**

The Archangel is on the side of the Villagers. If this role is used, it replaces a Villager.

The Archangel is awoken at night and can nominate one player per night to be protected from the Werewolves. If the Werewolves have selected that player as prey, they fail to kill him, and at daybreak the Narrator announces that no kills took place.

The Archangel can’t protect himself from the Werewolves, nor can he protect any player from being lynched by day.

**Role: Demon**

The Archangel is on the side of the Werewolves. If this role is used, it replaces a Villager.

Just as the Angel can look into players’ souls and detect whether they are Werewolves, so the Demon can detect Angels and Archangels. The Demon is awoken at night to silently nominate a
player, and the Narrator silently reveals whether the nominated player is an Angel, Archangel, or neither.

The Angel can’t ‘see’ the Demon. If the Angel looks into the soul of the Demon, the Narrator will reveal only that he’s not a Werewolf.

**Rule: Full Moon**

The Full Moon rule allows the Narrator to declare at the start of any night that it’s a ‘night of the full moon’. He then walks around the room and touches one Villager on the shoulder. That Villager becomes a Werewolf for the remainder of the game.

**Role: Governor**

The Governor is on the side of the Villagers. If this role is used, it replaces a Villager.

The Governor can grant a pardon to a lynched player, but only once per day. When a lynching vote is successful, the Narrator will ask whether or not the Governor wants to come forward and pardon the victim. If the Governor reveals himself and issues the pardon, the victim is not lynched; this counts as a failed lynching, so day will continue unless this is the third such failure.

The Governor can’t pardon himself.

**Role: Lycanthrope**

The Lycanthrope is on the side of the Villagers initially, and if this role is used, it replaces a Villager. But the Lycanthrope will become a Werewolf himself if he is chosen as the Werewolves’ prey on any night. If this happens, he switches to the side of the Werewolves and the other players are told only that no kills took place.

During the very first night, the Narrator awakens the Lycanthrope solely to make a note of his identity.

**Role: Magistrate**

The Magistrate is on the side of the Villagers. If this role is used, it replaces a Villager.

The Magistrate can choose to place one player per night into protective custody. The Narrator announces the identity of the protected person at daybreak. A player in custody may not be accused, nor may he take part in that day’s debating, but he may vote as normal. Protective custody expires at nightfall.

It probably goes without saying that the Magistrate can’t put himself into protective custody.
Rule: Mangled Corpses
When this rule is in play, eliminated players don’t reveal their cards, so Villagers can’t be sure whether they’ve got the right person. The Narrator still has to keep track of which roles are left, of course.

Role: Masons
The Masons are on the side of the Villagers. They usually come in threes, and replace three ordinary Villagers.

The Masons know each other, and know that they’re not Werewolves. At the start of the very first night, the Narrator awakens the Masons so they can identify each other. Thereafter, they count as normal Villagers who sleep through the night.

Role: Possessed
The Possessed is identical to a normal Villager, but he is on the side of the Werewolves and therefore wins if the Werewolves win. This role can replace either a Villager (to adjust balance in favour of the Werewolves) or a Werewolf (to adjust balance in favour of the Villagers).

The Possessed does not awake at night and can’t identify Werewolves. Also, the Angel can’t ‘see’ the Possessed. If the Angel looks into his soul, the Narrator will reveal only that he’s not a Werewolf.

Rule: Rumours
At any time during the day, players may scribble notes and hand them to the Narrator. The Narrator chooses random points during the day to read out one or two of these notes.

Rule: Writing in Blood
When a player’s night-time death is announced at daybreak, that player gets to speak two words out loud before being eliminated. Alternatively, the player could write a note (maximum two words) which is passed to the Narrator to read out to all players.

Role: Wolfsbane
The Wolfsbane is on the side of the Villagers. If this role is used, it replaces a Villager.

The Wolfsbane is immune to being killed by the Werewolves. In the very first night, the Narrator awakens him solely to make a note of his identity. Thereafter, he is treated as a normal Villager who sleeps through the night, but if he is selected as the Werewolves’ victim, they fail to kill him, and at daybreak the Narrator announces that no kills took place.
Advice for new players

As Narrator, it’s your job to provide hints for players who are new to the game.

Before the game

Run through the following hints:

• **Don’t take things too seriously!** The whole point is that players are forced to take decisions based on insufficient information, and so it’s likely that some people will be treated unfairly. If this happens to you, roll with it, and don’t blame the others. It’s just the way things go. It’s only a game!

• **Be in it for the game!** If you suspect your partner or your friend, then say so. If yours is the casting vote that means your partner or your friend gets eliminated, then so be it. It’s only a game!

• **Don’t feel cheated if you get eliminated early!**
  o First, we’ll probably play more than one game, so you’ll get your chance.
  o Second, it’s just as much fun being dead as alive. When you’re dead, you can watch everything that happens, and you’re allowed to share in the secrets that the surviving players don’t know about.
  o Third, it’s a team game! If your team wins, you win, even if you didn’t survive until the end of the game.

• **Ignore Narrator mistakes.** I’ll try not to make a mistake, but it does happen. If you notice an error, you must ignore it and hope that I notice it myself in time to fix it. If you try to point it out, no matter how subtly, you risk giving away your own secrets. So just go with it.

On the first night

Take time to explain how things work. Emphasise the following points:

• **Everyone must stay absolutely silent.**
  o Werewolves: any sound you make could give you away.
  o Villagers: your ears are your best weapons, so listen intently! Also, any sound you make could be mistaken for a Werewolf – and the last thing you want is to attract suspicion from your fellow Villagers.
• Don’t open your eyes unless I ask you to. If you open your eyes at the wrong time, the only way to save the game will be to eliminate you immediately. Don’t do it!

• The Narrator’s voice direction is unimportant. When I speak to the Werewolves at night, I’ll be careful not to speak in their direction, so don’t read anything into it.

On the first day
Give some general strategic hints, including:

• Villagers, talk! Sharing information – even if it’s just random suspicions – is the only way you are ever going to win. Listen carefully to what everyone else says. And if anyone seems a bit too quiet, find out why.

• Angel, be careful! You’re the most valuable member of the Villagers’ team. The information you gather each round will make the difference between success and failure. But be careful what you do with it. If you reveal your identity outright, the Werewolves will be on you like a shot. And remember that anyone could claim to be the Angel…

• Werewolves, use the daytime well! Manipulate the discussions as best you can. If you can get an innocent Villager lynched, then that doubles your kill rate. Also, use this time to identify your future prey. Does anyone seem a bit too clever?

During the first vote

• Watch carefully how people vote. Remember that the Werewolves largely know who’s who, so analyse voting patterns: it’s a very useful tool.