

Mysteries are all around us. You will take a journey to discover all sorts of things that are a mystery to you that have been hiding in plain sight. For this exercise you'll take a random walk through New York City, recording each mystery you find, then speculating on its possible story. Make predictions and guesses that make sense based upon what you observe. The goal of this exercise is to launch you into a compelling cycle of noticing, observation, conjecture and discovery that hopefully can feed your sense of wonder.

#### PROCEDURE:

- Break into groups of two. You'll see more at first by helping each other.
- Choose a starting location. A neighborhood that's new to you may be the most fertile ground, but you'll soon discover that mysteries are everywhere.
- Take a random walk (<http://faludi.com/random-walk>), spending at least an hour in motion through the city.
- Look for things you don't understand. Why is a bracket or an old wire attached to a building (and what was it for and why was it abandoned)? What does that architectural detail mean (and who put it there)? What is behind the various portals to other realms like gratings, manholes, service doors and alleyways and where do you think they lead? Does the couple who eats without speaking do so because of conflict or comfort? What can you see that is inside other apartments? How do these apartments differ from yours and why?
- For each mystery you find, document it with a picture if you can, then note its location, your questions and your speculation. Try to find at least 20 mysteries and aim for an interesting variety.
- Create a summary of the mysteries that tells us:
  - where you went walking
  - what mysteries you found
  - what your speculation is
  - and anything else you discovered along the way
- Your presentation can be about 5 minutes long.

Rules for creating a random walk in New York City.  
([faludi.com/random-walks](http://faludi.com/random-walks))

Start walking in whatever direction you like.

At each intersection, check the pedestrian signals.

White walk sign in either direction? Cross the street that way.

Blinking or steady red in both directions? Turn the corner to stay on your block.

No traffic signal? You can use a watch with a second hand to select a direction.

If the second hand is pointing between the 10 and the 2, proceed straight.

If pointing between 2 and 6 go right.

If pointing between 6 and 10 go left.

For two-way intersections take the rightmost route when the second hand is on the right side of the dial, otherwise go towards the left.

If you come to a dead end, then turn around and continue back the way you came.

Any direction that is unsafe, unwise or illegal should be excluded.

Modifications:

When it's time to wrap up your walk, eliminate any direction that doesn't take you closer to home. This is a good strategy to take a randomized path to a specific location.

Want to Northwest? Add a coin flip when the rules point you South or East and only go there when if coin comes up heads.

A coin flip method that prefers North and South will avoid spending too much time at the rivers in Manhattan.

A smartphone app that picks random numbers can replace the wristwatch method.

Suggestions:

Use your walk to look for things you haven't seen before.

Do things on your walk you might not normally do, like visiting a new kind of store or restaurant, or trying out a playground.