



# CYBERWOMEN



**Anonimity**

Secret friend

**INSTITUTE FOR  
WAR & PEACE REPORTING**



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# Secret friend

- **Objective(s):** Explicar el concepto de anonimato y dirigir una sesión práctica que genere mayor conciencia sobre su relevancia.
- **Length:** 30 minutes
- **Format:** Exercise
- **Skill level:** Basic
- **Required knowledge:**
  - None required
- **Related sessions/exercises:**
  - Anonymity<sup>1</sup>
  - More online identities!<sup>2</sup>
- **Needed materials:**
  - Pens, letter stationary and envelopes
  - Chairs
  - A bowl (or jar)
  - Small slips of plain paper
  - A blindfold or other object to cover the eyes
- **Recommendations:** It is strongly encouraged to give participants notice of this exercise ahead of time and what it entails. because time

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<sup>1</sup><https://cyber-women.com/en/anonymity/anonymity/>

<sup>2</sup><https://cyber-women.com/en/anonymity/more-online-identities/>

during the training is limited, the exercise is best delivered if participant have already had some time to think about the identities they will create and can thus come prepared with those details already in mind.

## Leading the exercise

### Part 1 - Introduction

1. In this exercise, each participant will share an entirely new identity for herself, which they will have prepared ahead of time – it must be completely made up and not based on a real person.
2. Explain that in building this new identity, participants can exercise complete freedom: they can be women, or men, or even a place - whatever they come up with. The key here is to develop their new identity to the full extent possible – this means developing everything from their name and where they come from, to their work, family and even hobbies.

### Part 2 - Time to Play!

3. Once you've introduced the exercise, begin the next step by introducing briefly the concept of anonymity. Ask participants why they think anonymity could be important to the work that they do, as well as to their personal lives or relationships.

**Once you've completed the introduction and overview of anonymity, the exercise itself should be facilitated using the following steps:**

4. Each woman must arrive to the exercise with an already well-defined concept of their new identity - everything from their name and where they come from, to their work, family and even hobbies, etc. Before the exercise begins, have each participant share with you the name of

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their new identity so you can keep track (this will be important for the exercise).

5. Everyone must write on a slip of paper the name they have chosen for their new identity. Collect each of the slips and place them in a bowl.
6. Walk around the room and allow each participant to draw one name from the bowl - if they take their own identity, they should put it back and draw another slip of paper. The name that each participant draws will be their secret friend.
7. Everybody should now take a few minutes to write their secret friend a letter describing (from the perspective of their own created identity) who they are, where they are from, what their hobbies or work are, etc.
8. Once they have finished writing their letters, they will place them inside an envelope. The name of their secret friend should be written on the outside of the envelope. Make sure that participants aren't able to see each other as they write, to avoid giving away any details.
9. Go around the room and collect each envelope – referring to your list of which identity corresponds to which participant, pass each letter back out to their intended recipients (again, making sure that participants can't see the names written on any of the envelopes other than the one that is intended for them).
10. One by one, invite each participant to the front of the room, where they will sit on a chair and put on a blindfold. They will then share the details of the letter they received, including the name of their secret friend.
11. As each participant describes their letter, their secret friend should get up and sit in another chair that has been placed next to the volunteer.
12. When each participant finishes describing their letter, ask her to guess who from among the other participants they think their secret friend is. Once they guess a name, remove the blindfold and tell them to look at who is sitting next to them to see if they guessed correctly.



13. Continue the exercise, repeating the process above until all identities are discovered.

### **Part 3 – Closing Circle**

13. Once the exercise has completed, ask the group – did they guess correctly who their secret friend was? How were they able to guess, or what was their thought process for attempting to guess? How difficult was it for them?
14. Close the exercise with a reflection on the importance of anonymity and being able to fully protect one's identity, but also how easy it can sometimes be for others to hide their true identities (as well as their intentions).