

## A Party Game of Deception

*Hidden In Plain Sight* is a game originally released for the Xbox 360 in the Xbox Live Marketplace, under the indie games category. The game is designed for 2-4 players on local multiplayer, although Adam Spragg, the creator, has begun experimenting with online multiplayer since 2021. It has always been cheap, originally selling at only a dollar, although now that price has risen to six dollars on the Steam and Nintendo Switch versions of the game. The basic concept of the game is simple: blend in with the crowd of NPCs while trying to complete a task. There are five different game modes, each with their unique ways of exploring this concept. Those game modes are: Ninja Party, Catch a Thief, Knights Vs. Ninjas, Death Race, and Assassin. Later, the game would receive an update to Ninja party, but still have the older version in the game, and also a new game mode called Ninja Battle Royale.

Ninja Party is simple. There is a crowd of ninjas, and each player character is also a ninja hidden in that crowd. To win, the players must touch the statues around the room the most times (or in the older version, they must be the first to touch all five statues) or be the last player standing. NPCs don't ever attack, so you only ever do so at the risk of revealing yourself to other players. There is also an audio cue which plays whenever a player attacks, or a different one for when they touch the statues. In Catch a Thief, you are either a thief and must discretely grab coins around the room without being caught, or are a sniper who must use one of your three limited bullets to eliminate the thieves before they take all the coins. Again, an audio cue is played each time a coin is grabbed. Additionally, the coins only disappear when the sniper(s) hovers over the already grabbed coins. For Assassin, the game plays much the same, however instead of grabbing coins, the assassins are trying to kill as many NPCs as possible. Death Race puts all players and NPCs in a race from the left to the right of the screen. All players have the ability to run, and one bullet to shoot with. For my own bias, this is the best game mode by far, and I have spent entire hours dedicated to just replaying Death Race with my siblings. Knights Vs. Ninjas has two teams, as the name implies. The Knights try to protect the royal family from being assassinated by the ninjas. The ninjas are able to stun knights, but knights may kill the ninjas. Finally, Ninja Battle Royale functions a lot like Ninja Party, except there are no statues to touch, but instead a closing ring which kills you on impact.

In all these game modes, you must try to identify yourself without giving away your position to the other players. As the name implies, you must be hidden in plain sight as you try to accomplish your goal. The simple nature of the game modes, the cartoonish fantasy character sprites, and the equally cheap sound effects and simple theme music makes this game have a very specific charm to it, making it feel simple and homemade, perfect for a party of a few players who may not have any gaming experience.