

The Ferry to the Paper Island

120-minute plan | 4 players | No combat

A paper island folds out of the river every summer. This year its ferry has not returned, and the island's edge is curling toward the water.

Content notice: Water travel and dissolving shelter; no real boating instructions.

What is really happening

Pilot Cera folded the landing inward to shelter visitors from rain. The return crease was marked with soluble ink and washed away. A dry pattern in the ferry ledger restores the fold; towing visitors off by the reed channel saves everyone but lets the island dissolve.

Prepare and play

Use your own rules or play without dice. State the goal, choose an approach, explain a reasonable cost and let the players decide. Plausible careful actions succeed; uncertain actions can succeed with delay, spent supplies or a favour owed. Evidence is always available through its described action. Each player creates an ordinary person with a useful skill, a reason to help, and an item. No character sheet, monster statistics or proprietary rulebook is needed.

Take 10 minutes to introduce characters, read the premise and discuss the content notice. Anyone may say "pause", pass on a description, or ask to move an uncomfortable moment offstage. Agree on no combat and on treating consequences as delay or repair, not permanent harm. Give one player the route map and another the time sheet.

Time plan

120-MINUTE PLAN

0-10: Opening agreement

10-20: Arrival

20-35: Records and tools

35-50: An independent trail

50-55: Break

55-75: The immediate problem

75-95: The final choice

95-110: Home and aftermath

110-120: Closing and epilogues

Follow both investigations; take the break before the immediate problem.

At 75 minutes, settle the immediate problem using a safe approach without another roll. At 95 minutes,

finish the final method and begin the return.

With 10 minutes left, first secure the immediate goal: Tow a small boat through the reed channel and board from the sheltered landing. Mark the immediate goal safe only once the people or resource are secured. Then, if no final method was used: Tow everyone home and leave the wet island to unfold downstream. Mark the fallback method and read the cost ending. Give each character an epilogue; do not bypass the safety step.

4 PLAYERS

Move visitors before the wet edge tears.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

Decide what to preserve on the river.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

Arrival - 10 minutes

Place: River quay

Read aloud

The ferry's mooring rope ends in a neat paper knot. Nell watches a distant white shore curl like a page.

Run this scene

The loss is a damaged return instruction. Towing visitors out bypasses the fold. Begin with the concrete request in the premise. Ask each character why they care and give them one ordinary useful item. Read both public observations without requiring a roll. Explain that the marked routes are safe to investigate, and offer a choice of the records or the visible trail. Let the group appoint a map reader; do not use hidden travel rolls to block the first lead.

Choices

1. Visit Fold shop
2. Follow the trail to Reed bank

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Paper landing. A missing method can be found again at Return crease; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Nell: Bring the visitors home Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Timeline record: The shelter fold was made just before the rain; the missing mark used blue washable ink. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The loss is a damaged return instruction.

Fallback instruction: The reed channel carries a towline safely to the landing. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Towing visitors out bypasses the fold.

Records and tools - 15 minutes

Place: Fold shop

Read aloud

Ori holds a dry ledger under glass. The diagram has a mountain fold and a valley fold, each drawn twice.

Run this scene

The original crease sequence restores the landing. The pilot is at the landing. Put the method card and destination note on the table. Ask what the two objects suggest, then answer direct practical questions from their wording. The maker can trade tools for help carrying or recording them, but refusal never removes these public documents. The trail remains another route. A check, if your rules use one, changes the time or tidiness of the work rather than whether this evidence exists.

Choices

1. Proceed to Paper landing
2. Compare evidence at Reed bank

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Paper landing. A missing method can be found again at Return crease; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Ori: Protect the last dry folding pattern Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Method diagram: Dry ledger: hold the mountain fold, open the valley toward the pinhole, then release. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The original crease sequence restores the landing.

Destination note: Cera's ferry ticket is stamped PAPER LANDING. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The pilot is at the landing.

An independent trail - 15 minutes

Place: Reed bank

Read aloud

Tev parts reeds to show a narrow current running toward the island. Floating paper cranes follow it.

Run this scene

A physical route leads there. A witness independently locates it. Describe the physical trail before asking for a decision. The witness tells what they actually observed and admits what they did not see. If the group refuses conversation, the physical route supplies the destination. Let a character compare the timeline and another trace the map. For a divided group, take one short turn per side, then reunite at the meeting; do not add another travel encounter.

Choices

1. Proceed to Paper landing
2. Compare evidence at Fold shop

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Paper landing. A missing method can be found again at Return crease; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Tev: Find a channel the towing boat can use Guides the party if they share a plan. If refused, points to the visible trail. Voice: Cautious, distinguish observation from assumption.

Physical trail: Paper cranes drift along the reed current to the landing. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A physical route leads there.

Witness statement: Tev saw the ferry tie up beneath the island's folded awning. Give it: Ask any direct question, or read the witness's signed statement if conversation is refused. GM inference: A witness independently locates it.

The immediate problem - 20 minutes

Place: Paper landing

Read aloud

Cera shelters visitors beneath a folded awning. Rain beads on the paper, and a return arrow has washed into a blue smear.

Run this scene

Pilot Cera folded the landing inward to shelter visitors from rain. The return crease was marked with soluble ink and washed away. A dry pattern in the ferry ledger restores the fold; towing visitors off by the reed channel saves everyone but lets the island dissolve. State the immediate stakes and offer both listed approaches. Before resolving action, ask who observes, who acts and who helps. Make any cost visible before a player accepts it. Avoid demanding a special ability or spell. When a plan fails, use the slower listed route and mark its time cost; people remain recoverable. Once the goal is safe, mark the immediate goal safe and continue. A refusal by the keeper cannot hide the marked safety instructions.

Choices

1. Hold the dry pinhole with the pole and guide visitors onto the ferry.
2. Tow a small boat through the reed channel and board from the sheltered landing.

If the group gets stuck

Tow a small boat through the reed channel and board from the sheltered landing. Explain a five-minute delay before they accept it; mark the immediate goal safe when the people or resource are secured.

People and evidence

Cera: Undo her shelter fold without tearing the island Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Safety marks: Hold paper at the dry pinhole; wet edges tear under tension. The reed towline avoids the edges. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Support the fold or use the alternate evacuation route.

Encounter and party adaptation

Move visitors before the wet edge tears.

A delay leaves less time for the final repair or decision. Explain costs before resolving an action.

Hold the dry pinhole with the pole and guide visitors onto the ferry.

Tow a small boat through the reed channel and board from the sheltered landing.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

Mark the immediate goal safe after either safe approach; a setback costs time, not access to the next scene.

The final choice - 20 minutes

Place: Return crease

Read aloud

Two creases cross at a dry pinhole. A ferry pole rests beside them, ready to hold one fold while the other opens.

Run this scene

The original crease sequence restores the landing. Support the fold or use the alternate evacuation route. Reveal the method and fallback together. Ask the group which tradeoff it accepts and give every character a small contribution. Mark the complete method for the first choice or the fallback method for the second. A risky improvisation should inherit one of these outcomes after its cost is explained, rather than create a third unprepared lock. Keep the immediate goal safe. Return by the known marked route; no new location needs to be invented.

Choices

1. Use the dry ledger to restore the return crease.
2. Tow everyone home and leave the wet island to unfold downstream.

If the group gets stuck

Tow everyone home and leave the wet island to unfold downstream. Mark the fallback method, keep the immediate goal safe and read the cost ending. Do not repeat a failed test.

People and evidence

Ori: Protect the last dry folding pattern Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Cera: Undo her shelter fold without tearing the island Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Method diagram: Dry ledger: hold the mountain fold, open the valley toward the pinhole, then release. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The original crease sequence restores the landing.

Fallback instruction: The reed channel carries a towline safely to the landing. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Towing visitors out bypasses the fold.

Encounter and party adaptation

Decide what to preserve on the river.

The complete method preserves the planned service; the fallback preserves the immediate goal at a visible cost.

Use the dry ledger to restore the return crease.

Tow everyone home and leave the wet island to unfold downstream.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

Mark the complete method for the first approach or the fallback method for the second. Both allow return and an ending.

Home and aftermath - 15 minutes

Place: River quay

Read aloud

The river carries an ordinary ferry wake. On the quay, visitors unfold keepsakes that smell faintly of rain.

Run this scene

Choose a complete resolution or a resolution with a cost, then ask the group what happens next. Read the ending matching the selected outcome. Invite each character to add one ordinary detail to the aftermath, then ask the keeper for a concrete next action. Record who accepted the cost and which clues went unused. Spend the last few minutes on one enjoyable moment and one thing to change next time. Characters need not solve every optional inference to earn a resolved ending.

Choices

1. Describe who follows up tomorrow
2. Ask who helped whom and what it cost

If the group gets stuck

If no method was chosen, first confirm the immediate goal is safe, use the final fallback method and then read the cost ending. Record the unresolved work and give every character an epilogue.

People and evidence

Nell: Bring the visitors home Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Cera: Undo her shelter fold without tearing the island Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Endings

Complete resolution

The valley fold opens cleanly. The island becomes a little summer shore again, with its return pattern stored in dry ink.

First secure the immediate goal at Paper landing. Use final method A at Return crease before choosing this ending.

Resolution with a cost

The towline brings everyone home. Behind them, the island becomes a fleet of loose pages. Its visitors begin collecting the dry pattern for another summer.

First secure the immediate goal at Paper landing. Use final method B at Return crease before choosing this ending.

Use the dry ledger to restore the return crease remains for a later visit.

Handout answers

h-order: The loss is a damaged return instruction.

h-fallback: Towing visitors out bypasses the fold.

h-method: The original crease sequence restores the landing.

h-note: The pilot is at the landing.

h-trail: A physical route leads there.

h-witness: A witness independently locates it.

h-safe: Support the fold or use the alternate evacuation route.

Clue reasoning

The loss is a damaged return instruction.: c-order

Proceed to Paper landing: c-note OR c-trail OR c-witness

Support the fold or use the alternate evacuation route.: c-safe / marked safety fallback

Decide what to preserve on the river.: c-method OR c-fallback

Map descriptions

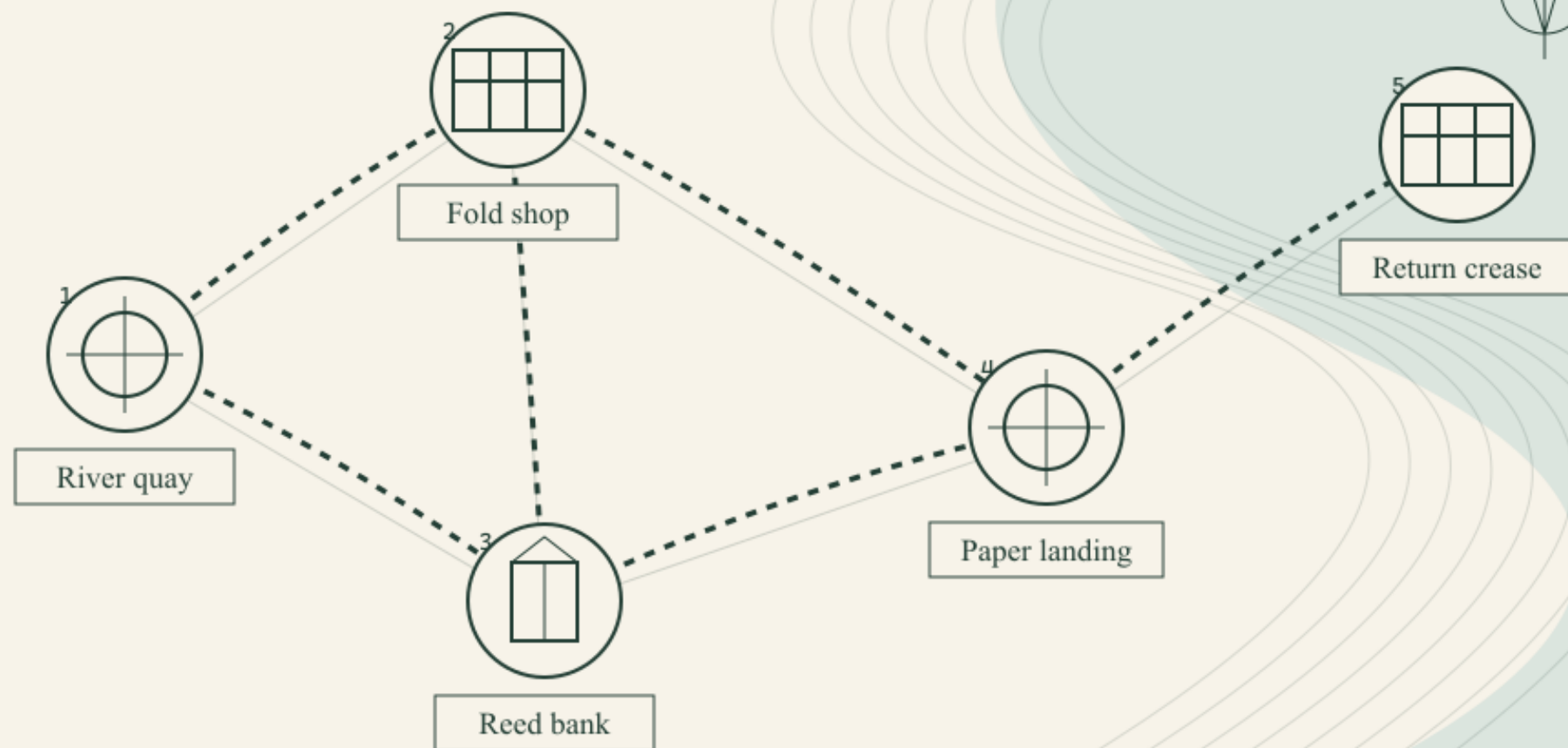
GM route atlas: Start at River quay. Fold shop and Reed bank are independent investigation routes; both connect to Paper landing, which leads to Return crease. All marked connections are bidirectional. Return uses the known route to River quay.

Paper landing - approach plan: At Paper landing, the marked entrance reaches the immediate problem. Approach A: Hold the dry pinhole with the pole and guide visitors onto the ferry. Approach B: Tow a small boat through the reed channel and board from the sheltered landing. Both reach the onward route.

Layout is schematic, with no combat grid or movement scale.

Player route map: Public route map: River quay connects to Fold shop and Reed bank; either reaches Paper landing, then Return crease. Routes work in both directions. Retrace the route to return. No hidden information is marked.

GM route atlas

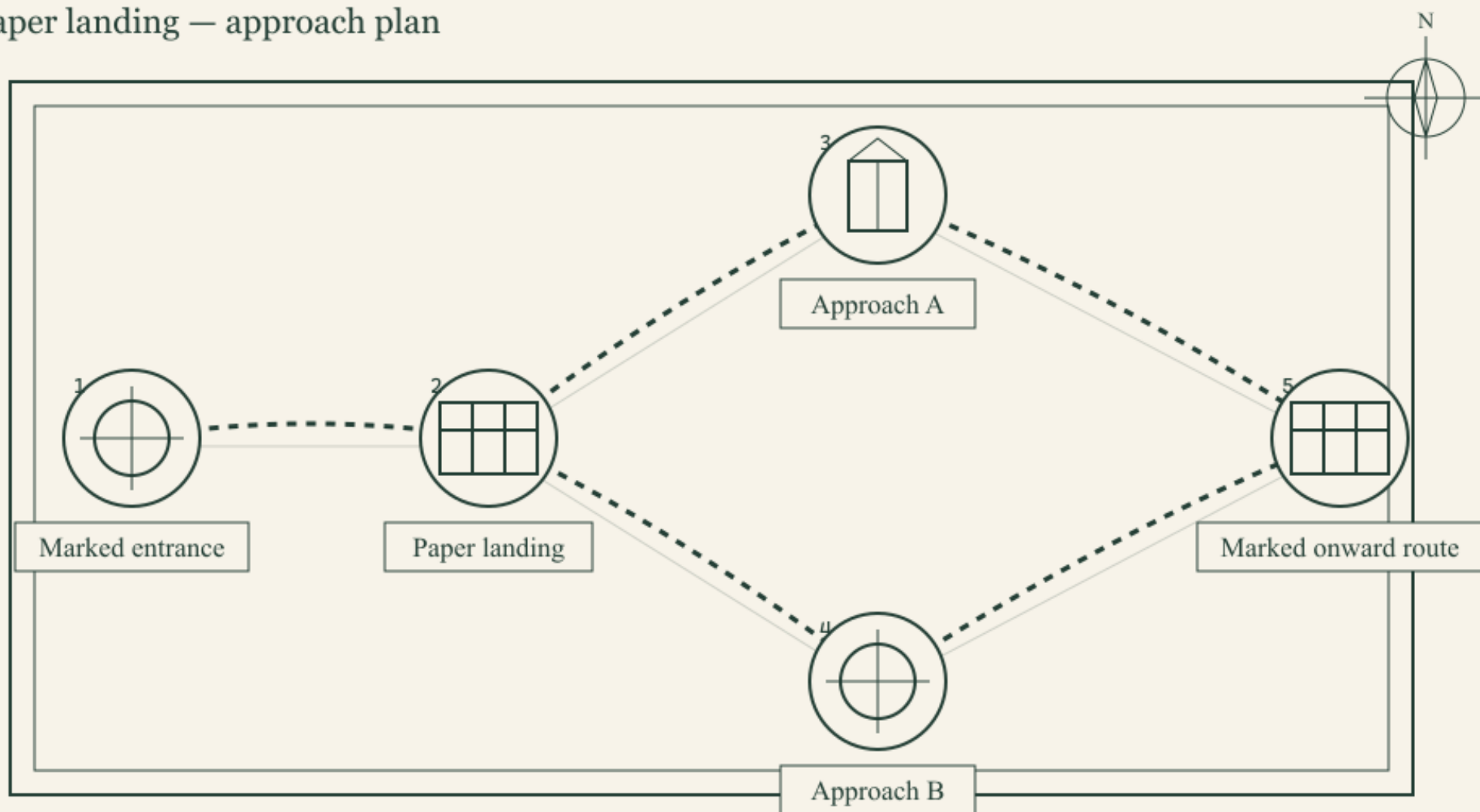


C-SAFE / immediate problem

C-METHOD or C-FALLBACK

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Paper landing — approach plan



Hold the dry pinhole with the pole and guide visitors onto the ferry.

Tow a small boat through the reed channel and board from the sheltered landing.

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