




# ONE ACROSS, ONE DOWN

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# AGENDA

- CROSSWORD PUZZLE TOPICS & ISSUES
- GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SOLVING CROSSWORD PUZZLES
- SPECIFIC TIPS, WITH EXAMPLES FOR EACH

# WHY YOU SHOULD DO CROSSWORD PUZZLES

- You'll learn stuff.
- It'll make you smarter.
- It's so accessible.
- It's so satisfying.
- It's fun.

# SOME BASICS

- The “rules”
- Going easy on yourself
- Keeping lists
- Practice, practice, practice
- Nomenclature and structure

# BASIC CROSSWORD GRID

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15						16								
17					18									
19				20						21				
22			23		24				25					
26				27		28		29			30	31	32	33
			34		35		36			37		38		
39	40	41				42		43			44			
45				46			47		48					
49			50		51			52		53		54	55	56
			57	58			59		60		61			
62	63	64				65				66		67		
68					69						70			
71											72			
73											74			

# QUALITY ISSUES

- “Hard” vs. “Easy” vs. “Challenging”
- Levels of difficulty
- Characteristics of quality puzzles
  - Gold standard – New York Times puzzles edited by Will Shortz
  - Solvable
  - Educational but not punishing
  - Good mix of vocabulary, specific knowledge, and wordplay
  - Appealing to a variety of ages and backgrounds
  - Interesting themes
  - Minimal use of annoying fill and the dreaded “Crosswordese”
- It’s all about the clues!

# GENERAL GUIDELINES

## GET A TOEHOLD TO START

- Scan for a “gimme”.
- Scan for clues that suggest a common pattern.
- Look for short answers (3-4 letters).
- Don’t start by guessing.

# USE WHAT YOU'VE ALREADY ENTERED

- Go for answers where there are already some letters.
- Work a whole section.
- Work with known letters at the beginning of an answer.
- Take advantage of less common crossing letters (e.g., J, Q, Z).
- Trust your skills in English, pattern recognition, probability assessment.
- Test each letter of the alphabet in an appropriate empty square.



# **EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED (i.e., KEEP AN OPEN MIND)**

- Don't always assume that the clue is as straightforward as it appears and don't get stuck on your first interpretation or pronunciation.
- Remember that an answer can be more than one word.
- Be prepared to enter something other than normal words and letters.
- Remember your grammar: Answers and clues are interchangeable.

# SPECIFIC TIPS

## CLUE SHORTHAND CONVENTIONS

- Abbr.                      Abbreviation
- Arch.                      Archaic
- Colloq.                    Colloquial
- Obs.                        Obsolete
- Var.                        Variant spelling (may be familiar, like “THRU”, or not)
- Sl.                          Slang
- Dial.                        Dialect
- Pref., Suf.                Prefix, Suffix
- Fr., It, Ger., Sp.        French, Italian, German, Spanish
- ?                             Wordplay warning

# DEFINITIONS & SYNONYMS & FACTS

- Angry => IRATE
- Land measure => ACRE
- Author of “The Raven” => POE
- Biggest land mass => ASIA

## PARTIALS (FILL IN THE BLANKS)

- Mai \_\_\_\_ => TAI
- \_\_\_\_-Cat => SNO
- From \_\_\_\_ Z => ATO (multi-word)

## PAIRINGS

- Partner of neither => NOR
- Egg go-with => HAM
- Precedes luck or waiter => DUMB

# SINGULARS AND PLURALS

## BASIC PLURAL

- Vessels => BOATS
- Mink, otter, et al. => FURS
- Martin and Charlie => SHEENS

## IRREGULAR PLURAL

- Honkers => GEESE

## HINTS FOR SINGULAR

- Soprano, for one => TONY
- Dead or Red => SEA

## MASKED GRAMMAR

- Craft => BOAT or BOATS
- School members => FISH or FISHES

# SOME COMMON SUFFIXES AND PREFIXES

## DOER – NOUN

- Bakery specialist => ICER
- Fast thinker => DIETER

## COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE AND NEGATED – ADJECTIVE

- More like a pin => NEATER
- Maximally bright => SMARTEST
- Not right => UNTRUE

## HOW – ADVERB

- Way to be disputed => HOTLY

# VERB FORMS

## THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR

- Has the flu
- Ails

=> AILS  
=> HASTHEFLU

## PAST TENSE

- Speechified
- Opted

=> ORATED  
=> CHOSE

## REPEAT

- Employ again

=> REHIRE

## UNDOING

- Remove a knot

=> UNTIE

## DOING LIKE

- Emulate Edison

=> INVENT

## PARTICIPLES AND GERUNDS

- Noted
- Giving

=> FAMOUS  
=> KIND

## AMBIGUOUS TENSES

- Put

=> PLACE or PLACED

# FOREIGN WORDS

## EXPLICIT CLUE

- Boy: Sp.
- State: Fr.
- One more than two: It.
- No: Ger.
- First month, Sp.

## IMPLICIT CLUE

Tijuana boy  
Pierre's state  
One over due  
Berlin refusal  
Calendario page

## ANSWER

=> NINO  
=> ETAT  
=> TRE  
=> NEIN  
=> ENERO



# ABBREVIATIONS AND SHORTENINGS

## EXPLICIT CLUE

- Airport arrival time: Abbr.
- Fast flyer: Abbr.
- Public servant, for short
- Presidential nickname

## IMPLICIT CLUE

- DCA arrival time
- Concorde, e.g.
- Dem. or Rep.
- “Honest” prez

## ANSWER

- => ETA
- => SST
- => POL
- => ABE

# SLANG

## EXPLICIT CLUE

- Gangster’s girl: Slang
- Beer: Colloq.
- Food, informally

## IMPLICIT CLUE

- Hood’s gal
- Brewski
- Chow

## ANSWER

- => MOLL
- => SUDS
- => GRUB

# GENERAL $\Leftrightarrow$ SPECIFIC

## SPECIFIC to GENERAL

- Loafer, for example  $\Rightarrow$  SHOE
- Yellow or scarlet  $\Rightarrow$  FEVER
- May, say  $\Rightarrow$  MONTH

## GENERAL to SPECIFIC

- Some ribs  $\Rightarrow$  PRIME
- Kind of estate  $\Rightarrow$  REAL
- One of the keys  $\Rightarrow$  EFLAT

# SOME MORE EMBEDDED HINTS

## FIRST/LAST NAME

- Lucy's husband => DESI
- Lewis' partner => CLARK

## EXCLAMATION

- "Woe is me!" => ALAS
- "Not a chance!" => NOWAY
- "This could be bad" => UHOH

## PARTIAL

- Half of an insect => TSE
- Part of a board game => TIC, TAC or TOE

## POETIC/BIBLICAL

- Before, to Keats => ERE
- Anthem preposition => OER
- Biblical ending => ETH
- Second person in Garden of Eden => THOU

## PREPOSITION ADD-ONS

- Seek, with "for" => SEARCH
- Must, with "to" => NEEDS

## MULTI-WORD/HYPHENATE

- Equal (3 wds.) => ONAPAR
- Donkey's call (hyph.) => HEEHAW

# LETTER PATTERN ANALYSIS

- Rare endings: **C, I, J, Q, U, V**
- Followed by vowel at start of a word: **H, J, K, L, M, N, Q, R, V, Z**
- Strong associations: **N** before final **G**, **G** before **HT**, **U** after **Q**
- Vowel/consonant sequences
- Very odd letter combinations in certain circumstances – multi-word, shortenings, foreign, text shorthand

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# SELF-REFERENTIAL (meta) CLUES

## CLUE EXTENSION

- Land's end => SCAPE
- Verse opening => UNI

## CLUE LETTERS

- Pre-op sequence => LMN
- Nine has 2 => ENS
- Start of April => LONGA
- Song ender => HARDG

## CLUE WORDS

- Mice and men => PLURALS
- Hot and heavy, e.g. => ADJS
- Single, for one => SYNONYM

# CROSSOVER ANSWERS

## EXAMPLE:

- 60 Across clue: Beginning of a humorous poem, ending at 70 Across  
=> CANDY IS DANDY BUT
- 70 Across clue: End of the poem beginning at 60 Across  
=> LIQUOR IS QUICKER

## EXAMPLE, referring to the example above:

- 80 Across clue: Author of 60/70 Across  
=> OGDENNASH (Ogden Nash)

# PRONUNCIATION

- Tower => TUG or STEEPLE
- Lead => METAL or GUIDE
- Entrance => CHARM or DOOR
- Polish => SLAV or SHINE

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# MASKED CAPITAL

## PRODUCT BRANDS

- Comet target => SINK
- Time worker => EDITOR
- Post production => CEREAL
- Singer specialty => SEWING

## PEOPLE

- Tiger's goal => PAR
- Begin, for example => ISRAELI
- Brooks => MEL
- John of England => LOO

## PLACES

- Turkey part => ANKARA
- Mobile home => ALABAMA
- Red, for one => SEA



# THEMES

- Numbers, colors, foods, animals, geographic things, flowers, clothes
- Quotes, poems, jokes, and riddles
- Modified spelling
- Rebuses
- Pattern over whole grid
- Wordplay

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# COMMON ODD USAGES

- Expressions - “TO A T”, “A-ONE”, “I SEE”, “NOT I”, playground retorts
- Compass directions
- Roman numerals
- Music notations
- Plurals of abbreviations
- Wheel of Fortune requests
- Letters on a telephone button, or other alphabetic sequence
- Text shorthand
- Spelled-out Greek letters
- Radio and TV stations
- Airport codes

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# CLEVER MISDIRECTION

- Choose window instead of aisle => ELOPE
- Sign of spring => ARIES
- Leaves home => TEABAG
- Tired state => OHIO
- Cock & bull => MALES
- First place => EDEN
- Current event => SHOCK
- Present time => NOEL or YULE
- Early summer => ABACUS
- Inside shot => XRAY
- Lab safety org. => SPCA
- Steps taken in an emergency => FIREESCAPE

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# CLEVER MISDIRECTION (cont'd)

**Nice time**

**=> ETE**

Demonstrates:

- Masked Pronunciation
- Part of speech
- Implied Foreign Language
- Masked Capital Letter
- Common Crossword Answers

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