

HOW TO SOLVE CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS

Each clue in a Cryptic Crossword is a puzzle by itself. The clue will contain some form of wordplay as well as a standard definition. Either of these two parts of a clue may come first. The two parts strung together may provide a deceptive meaning. Punctuation may also be deceptive. The keys to solving Cryptic Crosswords are recognizing where the two parts separate and which is standard definition and which is wordplay.

Types of wordplay common in Cryptic Crosswords are anagrams, reversal, charades, concealment, container, homograph, homophone, deletion, lettering, and literal.

ANAGRAMS: The answer to the standard part of the clue is an anagram of one or more words in the wordplay part, which also has an indicator that letters are to be scrambled.

Example: Quoted from edict wrongly (5)

Answer: CITED

Explanation: The first two words of the clue are the standard definition. The last two words tell you that the letters of "edict" are to be scrambled.

HOMOGRAPH: A word may have two completely different meanings. Both meanings are clued. There is no indicator.

Example: Desire for Japanese money (3)

Answer: YEN

Explanation: Yen is both a desire and a Japanese coin.

REVERSAL: The wordplay answer is entered in the diagram backward or bottom to top to give the standard answer. An indicator will tell you what to do.

Example: Restrain New York team going west (4)

Answer: STEM

Explanation: The first word is the standard definition. The wordplay is "New York team (Mets) going west" (the indicator).

HOMOPHONE: Two words that are spelled differently may be pronounced the same way. The indicator will refer in some manner to speech or hearing.

Example: Rented, it's reported, for the minimum (5)

Answer: LEAST

Explanation: "Leased" and "least" sound the same. "Reported" is the indicator.

CHARADES: Two or more words are strung together to form the standard answer. Charade clues need no indicator.

Example: Dean has one cocktail (7)

Answer: MARTINI

Explanation: (Dean) Martin has I (Roman numeral) cocktail (standard definition).

DELETION: One or more letters are removed from the standard answer to provide the wordplay answer. An indicator will tell you what to do.

Example: Lift the lid off stew (5)

Answer: RAISE

Explanation: The first letter (lid) of "braise" is deleted to give the standard answer for "lift." "Off" is the indicator.

CONCEALMENT: The answer to the standard part of the clue is hidden in the wordplay part, with an indicator to look inside.

Example: Scottish snack offered in disco nearby (5)

Answer: SCONE

Explanation: Scone is the last three letters of "disco" and the first two letters of "nearby." The indicator is "offered in."

LETTERING: The standard answer is formed from selected letters in the wordplay part of the clue. The indicator will tell you which letters to select.

Example: Cheer root: "Two, four, six, eight! Who do we appreciate?" (4)

Answer: HERO

Explanation: The numbers tell you to select the 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th letters of "cheer root" to spell the answer of who we appreciate.

CONTAINER: A word is placed within a word to form the standard answer. The indicator can refer to either the inserted word or the surrounding word.

Example: My holding? One dollar! (5)

Answer: MONEY

Explanation: "My" is holding "one."

LITERAL: The entire clue has two different meanings. Usually an exclamation point or question mark is the indicator.

Example: How to leave these squares! (5)

Answer: BLANK

Explanation: If you do nothing, you have left the squares blank. If you enter the answer, you have left the squares "blank."

Clues can combine different forms of wordplay. There also may be forms of wordplay that you feel are not exactly one of the types discussed. Just hang loose and let the clue take you where it will. Cryptic Crosswords are a fun and rewarding challenge.