

		C								
	C	R	O	S	S	W	O	R	D	S
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A GUIDE TO READING AND SOLVING CRYPTIC CLUES

2 – When The Answer Is (Literally) Right There In The Clue

Somewhere amongst the assorted types of clues for a cryptic crossword, there will be some where the letters that make up the answer are right there, ready to be unscrambled or picked out to, to be written straight in. No need to go off and think up words that mean the same or sound the same or that type of thing - the actual answer right in front of you. Just a bit disguised.

I think of these as the '**EASy**' answers; not a comment on how much challenge they offer, but standing for **Embedded, Anagrams** and **Sequences**. Not only do you have the 'ingredients' to give you the solution ready to use, but often these are accompanied by a hint to indicate how to extract them.

These EASy clues rarely make up the bulk of the puzzle, but often can give a good start point to make a first few entries into a grid, because the presence of those '**indicators**' can help you to spot what they are. Looking at each of these in turn: -

a - Embedded Clues

These should perhaps be a real doddle since the solution is right there in front of you – just concealed by being 'hidden' by not being written as individual words, but rather spelt out, letter by letter, **embedded** within what you read. You don't even have to do any unscrambling, just spot where they begin and end. The solution is literally part of the wording of the clue. However this is alien to how our brains work, so it is surprising how often you just read past them!

An example of an Embedded Word Clue is

Something for breakfast? It's nice, really - in part (6)

The clue will usually break down into three parts, an indicator as well as a definition and the ingredients for the answer. In this case the indicator is '**in part**'. Other indicators could be '**in**', '**bit of**', '**partially**' - anything that hints at being within.

The definition here is 'something for breakfast' and the solution (which is CEREAL) is literally within the words of the ingredient part. Cereal, when you look carefully, is right there embedded within the phrase 'It's nice, really'.

Exercise 2.1. Embedded Word Clues ¹ (indicators highlighted)

- Comfy home *in one's town* (4)
- Old performer *partially* unconscious, **in a trance** (7)
- Girl *discovered in* brothel, **enamoured** (6)
- *Some* have altered meat (4)

What makes them harder to spot is when the clue reads like a well-formed sentence, so your brain just slips back into read it word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase mode. (In crossword jargon, the clue has a good 'surface reading'.) Or when you get a more unfamiliar word, or a more subtle indicator. Or in occasional cases, no indicator word at all!

Some further examples, this time with the indicator not highlighted.

Exercise 2.2. Embedded Words Continued

- Contents of fine thermos that's nearest the bottom (10)
- Bit of rump or knuckle, dinner for the carnivore? (4)
- Plant found in Beijing or Seoul (5)
- Perfect extract from guide altered (5)

Because you know, here, what clue type they are, these might seem easy. But would you have spotted the embedded word indicators for what they were? It is surprising how often these embedded clues end up as some of the last answers you write in, just because their indicators are too subtle to spot on first reading the clue!

¹ **Exercise 2.1**

Definition Underlined, *indicator in italics*, **embedded solution in bold**

<u>Comfy home</u> <i>in one's town</i>	NEST
<u>Old performer</u> <i>partially</i> unconscious, in a trance (7)	SINATRA
<u>Girl</u> <i>discovered in</i> brothel, enamoured (6)	HELENA
<i>Some</i> have altered <u>meat</u> (4)	VEAL

Exercise 2.2

Contents of <u>fine thermos</u> that's <u>nearest the bottom</u> (10)	NETHERMOST
Bit of rump or knuckle, <u>dinner</u> for the carnivore? (4)	PORK
<u>Plant</u> found in Beijing or Seoul (5)	GORSE
<u>Perfect</u> extract from guide altered (5)	IDEAL

b - Anagram Clues

This is where the clue contains letters that can be reordered / unscrambled to give a solution to write into the grid. All the letters of the solution are there, but are rearranged to give totally different words. Here are some examples:

- Tiny dame, surprisingly explosive (8)
- A name is confused, memory being lost (7)
- All I have to do is sort out dark wool (8)

The thing that indicates these might be anagram clues is some form of word or phrase **that hints at the idea of mixed up, moved, gone wrong** ... The indicators in the examples above are '**surprisingly**', '**confused**', and '**sort out**'. (Although there are a massive range of similar words that could be used to do the same job).

What you then have to work out then is whether it is the bit *before* or the bit *after* the indicator that is the clue 'definition'. What is then left are the ingredient letters to be unscrambled.

Hint - look for odd strings of words that are unlikely to be a definition of the answer. For example is it more likely that you'd be asked for another word for a 'tiny dame' or for an 'explosive'? Or for 'dark wool' rather than 'all I have to do'? Plus look at the number of letters in the answer - and that for example you can get an 8-letter word by unscrambling 'tiny dame' but not by unscrambling 'explosive'

So in the examples above do NOT focus on the full clue, but be on the lookout for

- Indicators - words hinting at mixed up or muddled (i.e. letters to be rearranged)
- Definition - the clue for what the answer actually represents
- Ingredients - words that give you the right number of letters for the anagram.

So here are the three clues again, but now with the three different elements (*indicator*, definition and **ingredients**) marked up for you

- **Tiny dame**, *surprisingly* explosive (8)
- **A name is confused**, memory being lost (7)
- All I have to do is *sort out* **dark wool** (8)

But that still leaves the task of then finding a solution that is BOTH an anagram of the ingredients AND that ties in with the definition of the answer required.

If you can't see it quickly, then good advice here is to grab some blank paper and hand write the letters out in a different order, in a circle or random pattern, so your brain is able to forget the original words, and find new ones instead. So instead of reading 'tiny dame' and having that idea in your head, you look at just a collection of letters and can then maybe see new combinations more easily ...

Plus, as words intersect in a crossword grid, then maybe some letters in across clues are already filled in, based on down clues (or vica versa) so you have a partial pattern.

E
 A I
 D Y
 M T
 N

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And when you spot that you can make the word DYNAMITE out of these ingredients, you have found a solution which matches with the definition of a type of explosive.

In the same way, the letters of ‘a name is’ can be reorganised to give AMNESIA which is a form of memory loss, and the letters of ‘dark wool’ can give the word WORKLOAD which is what I need to do.

✓ **Clues solved.**

Note however that the setter is permitted to throw in odd bits of punctuation and short words, so that the clue reads as a proper sentence. Thus for getting to the answer, there is no need for that comma after confused or for the word ‘is’ in the last clue. These are only there to help the clue to read sensibly at first glance - and you can simply ignore them for checking that the solution fully matches the clue.

Exercise 2.3. Basic anagram clues ²

First four - definition underlined and *Indicator* picked out in italics

- Card some *organised* for colleagues (8)
- Colour of bream *swimming* (5)
- *Rambling up to cafe* to get a hot drink (3,2,3)
- In Leeds I *arranged* a second job (8)
- Brief experience of *rogue state* (5)
- Unusual pastel dishes (6)
- Yobs scattered *lads* (4)

² **Exercise 2.3**

Card some *organised* for colleagues (8)

COMRADES

Colour of **bream** *swimming* (5)

AMBER

Rambling up to cafe to get a hot drink (3,2,3)

CUP OF TEA

In Leeds I *arranged* a second job (8)

SIDELINE

Brief experience of *rogue state* (5)

TASTE

Unusual **pastel dishes** (6) (its pastel, nearest the indicator, that changes)

PLATES

Yobs scattered *lads* (4) (though could have been yobs as definition too)

BOYS

Exercise 2.4. More examples³

To see if you can split the clues into the 3 parts yourself

- Brewed tea, had breakfast? (3)
- Tool reinvented as a winch (8)
- Big band has rector dancing (9)
- A thick-skinned beast who could become richer soon? (10)
- Infidelity hurt true lady (8)

Anagram clues tend to get harder as the anagram gets longer, and if the solution is a less well-known word or phrase, or the definition is misleading or vague. However if - for starters - you can at least spot that a clue is an anagram, then you are already part way in dealing with this category of clue.

C – Sequences of Letters

The third type of EASy clue is the Sequence of letters to pick out. Similar to embedded words, the letters that make up your solution word are all there in front of you, in the right order, BUT only if you read the initial letters of ingredient words, or final letters, or only the odd or even numbered characters, or something similar. These are even less unusual, but worth being aware of the possibility. An example here would be ...

Solve Crosswords – right answers create knowledge primarily (5)

This gives solution CRACK, which you can get by reading the **first** characters (indicator *primarily*) of each of the words from Crosswords onwards; Solve is the definition that fits with this.

Exercise 2.5

- Sailor's tea urn *oddly* selected (3)
- It grinds, moving only left and right *at first* (5)
- Suppress odd bits of castellan's book (5)
- Can I demand extra rations at the outset, to make this brew (5)

³ Exercise 2.4

Brewed tea , <u>had breakfast?</u> (3)	ATE
<u>Tool</u> reinvented as a winch (8)	CHAINSAW
<u>Big band</u> has rector dancing (9)	ORCHESTRA
A <u>thick-skinned beast</u> who could become richer soon? (10)	RHINOCEROS
<u>Infidelity</u> hurt true lady (8)	ADULTERY

Exercise 2.5

<u>Sailor's tea</u> urn <i>oddly</i> selected (3)	TAR
<u>It grinds</u> , moving only left and right <i>at first</i> (5)	MOLAR
Suppress odd bits of castellan's <u>book</u> (5)	ATLAS
Can I demand extra rations <i>at the outset</i> , to make this <u>brew</u> (5)	CIDER

(Note: if using just the first letters, sometimes referred to as an 'acrostic' clue also.)

Getting Further Practice:

Reminder of the indicator words to look out for to recognise the Embedded, Anagram and Sequence type clues.

EMBEDDED

Indicators - *In, held by, partially, contains, among, from ...*

ANAGRAM

Indicators - *in a mess, mistakenly, engineered, at random ...*

SEQUENCE

Indicators - *Regularly, evenly, oddly, initially, finally, primarily ...*

Be on the lookout for any of these indicator type words, to be able to recognise clues of these types - especially to help you get a start on a blank grid.

Want to test yourself out, using a crossword with only a limited range of clue types, and most of these being easy type – a great place to start finding beginners crosswords is in the Guardian Newspapers once a week ‘Quick Cryptic’ series. Each of these is limited to just 4 different clue types, and tells you what these 4 are before you start.

For these clue types, try this puzzle:

<https://www.theguardian.com/crosswords/quick-cryptic/8>

For an explanation of any solutions that had you stumped or you were not able to follow the wordplay, see the following blog site:

<https://www.fifteensquared.net/2024/05/25/guardian-quick-cryptic-8-by-picaroon/>