

		C								
	C	R	O	S	S	W	O	R	D	S
		Y								T
		P								A
G	E	T	T	I	N	G				R
		I								T
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										D

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V1.1 20250322

## A GUIDE TO READING AND SOLVING CRYPTIC CLUES

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### 4 - Some Additional Clue Types

#### Single and Double Definitions

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While the majority of clue types require the solver to split the clue into a definition and wordplay ingredients, this is not an absolute rule. Two clue types do not provide ingredients. These are the **double definition** and the **single cryptic clue**.

**Double Definition** is where you get two different definitions, but each leading to the same answer. An example of this would be

#### Familiar Sun to Sat? (8)

For this clue the solution is EVERYDAY. You can get this from the word familiar (e.g. an 'everyday' object) or from Sun to Sat (i.e. every day of the week). These can be quite fun to spot!

#### Exercise 4.1. Double Definitions <sup>1</sup>

- Don't eat the kind of food served at McDonalds (4)
- They help one see exact requirements (5)
- Top military officers thought of as bold? (5)
- Press club (4)
- Attention seeker's reason for returning tickets (4-3)

Sometimes these can be decidedly more tongue in cheek - requiring you to think more laterally and use words in an unusual way. For example

#### ● Urgently request ancient stories of devils? (7)

Here another term for urgently request is 'implore'. A phrase of 'implore' can be represented as ancient stories of devils - not a phrase you're ever likely to have heard before or ever likely to hear again, but for this purpose it fits.

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#### <sup>1</sup> Exercise 4.1

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| ● Don't eat the kind of food served at McDonalds (4)    | FAST     |
| ● They help one see exact requirements (5)              | SPECS    |
| ● Top military officers thought of as bold? (5)         | BRASS    |
| ● Press Club (4)  | IRON     |
| ● Attention seeker's reason for returning tickets (4-3) | SHOW-OFF |

**Single Definitions Clues**

Single definition clues have ONLY the definition, but this is almost always very much one of these lateral thinking, tongue in cheek format. You can really expect to rack your brains on this type of clue. For example:

- **This jumper could really make you itch! (4)**

The answer to this is Flea. A creature famous for being able to jump high compared to its size. However its cryptic because most people would usually first think about the type of jumper you wear, that might be a bit scratchy. It is a concise clue, simply asking you to supply a word or phrase that is what the WHOLE clue is asking for, but will expect you to think out of the norm. Sometime fiendishly so!!

**Exercise 4.2. Single Cryptic Definitions <sup>2</sup>**

- A classy means of transport (6,3)
- Rapid blast from hooter? (6)
- Number in theatre (12)
- Piece of burning coal used for three months? (5)
- Cheerful like Blighty, and flighty (5,7)

These really can be anything weird and wonderful. Quite often there will be a question mark at the end of clue, to indicate 'look at this carefully, because this one's been included as a trick question'.

Some past examples of notoriously challenging cryptic clues are **HIJKLMNO (5)** or **Supporter of Wicked Things (12)** and **Bar of Soap? (3,6,6)** giving answers Water (H to O) Candlesticks (things with wicks) and The Rovers Return. Can you see how these worked?

So be warned. This type of clue will nearly always be worded to lead you astray. But fortunately they are only rarely included in beginners puzzles.

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**<sup>2</sup> Exercise 4.2**

- |  |               |
|--|---------------|
| ● A classy means of transport (6,3)            | SCHOOL BUS    |
| ● Rapid blast from hooter? (6)                 | SNEEZE        |
| ● Number in theatre (12)                       | ANAESTHATIST  |
| ● Piece of burning coal used for three months? | EMBER         |
| ● Cheerful like Blighty, and flighty           | LIGHT HEARTED |

## Homophones (Sound-Alikes)

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Before moving on from this section, however I want to include one more clue variant, which is the Homophone. These are clues that require the solver to think of a word or phrase that SOUNDS the same as another - like RIGHT and WRITE. When these are used, there is generally an indicator phrase to indicate that you should imagine you are HEARING a word - like 'we hear', 'did you say?', 'on the radio', outspoken, 'reportedly' etc.

So an example using RIGHT and WRITE would be

- **Put pen to paper, did you say? That's correct. (5)**

In some ways, these can feel a bit like a double definition clue, in that both clue parts give you the same answer – apart from how its spelt. However only one part is the definition, the other is the 'sound- alike' wordplay. In the above example, the definition is 'That's correct', so you should write in RIGHT as the solution. The wordplay there is to say if you were just listening to the answer to this part, then you might think it was WRITE. The part which includes the 'outspoken' indicator is always the bit to be reworked.

### Exercise 4.3 Homophone Examples<sup>3</sup>

- Run away from pest, we hear
- More than one problem for the auditor (4)
- Worth seeing set of web pages, we're told (5)
- Felt guilt about lacking etiquette in speech (4)
- Group of wild animals was nosy, reportedly (5)
- Full agreement we hear (6)

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### <sup>3</sup> Exercise 4.3

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| ● Run away from pest, we hear (4)                  | FLEE (sounds like FLEA) |
| ● More than one problem for the auditor (4)        | SOME (sounds like SUM)  |
| ● Worth seeing set of web pages, we're told (5)    | SIGHT (like SITE)       |
| ● Felt guilt about lacking etiquette in speech (4) | RUED (like RUDE)        |
| ● Group of wild animals was nosy, reportedly (5)   | PRIDE (like PRIED)      |
| ● Full agreement we hear (6)                       | PACKED (like PACT)      |

## Plus Other Manipulations

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There are other ways to find partially matching answers other than to find homophones, though. We looked at one last week, which was to **REVERSE** the word, turn it back to front ....

e.g. **Enthusiastic, prima donna making a come back (4)** **AVID**  
where a prima donna is a DIVA, rewritten back to front converting this to AVID

Another common one is to shorten words, usually by dropping the first or last letter of the word obtained from the clue part, in order to get the solution to the definition. These are known as **SUBTRACTION** clues.

e.g. **Nobleman ahead of schedule for the most part (4)** **EARL**  
ahead of schedule is Early, for the most part loses the y, to leave just Earl

Or perhaps **SUBSTITUTE** one letter for another:

e.g. **Send a message exchange – male to female – is not a success (4)** **FAIL**  
MAIL, with M substituted with F, gives a solution for definition ‘is not a success’

### Exercise 4.4 Manipulations Examples<sup>4</sup>

- In the manner of a king, knocked back a pub drink (5)
- Vehicle has creepy-crawlies - not good (3)
- Benefit from changing ending of book (4)
- Speak out for golf club without its head (5)
- Serious dirt has no end (4)
- For peace of mind, stop leaving Charlie out (4)
- Conscious changing final mark from E to D will result in prize (5)
- Back numbers for boy (3)

And that completes the introduction to all the main classes of clues – (a) EASy (embedded, anagram and series of letters); (b) Charades; and (c) Double and Cryptic Definitions, plus Manipulations (homophones, reversals, subtraction and substitution). Now you are ready to see if you can deal with a whole crossword where these clue types are jumbled up. First spot what type each clue might be, and then solve it.

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#### <sup>4</sup> Exercise 4.4 Manipulations

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| ● In the manner of a king, knocked back a pub drink (5)       | REGAL (LAGER rev)     |
| ● Vehicle has creepy-crawlies - not good (3)                  | BUS (BU(G)S)          |
| ● Benefit from changing ending of book (4)                    | BOON (change K to N)  |
| ● Speak out for golf club without its head                    | UTTER (from (P)UTTER) |
| ● Serious dirt has no end (4)                                 | GRIM (from GRIM(E))   |
| ● For peace of mind, stop leaving charlie out (4)             | EASE (from (C)EASE)   |
| ● Knowing changing final from E to D will result in prize (5) | AWARD (AWARE)         |
| ● Back numbers for boy (3)                                    | SON (NOS rev)         |

## Getting More Practice

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In theory you could now take on a full crossword, with a wide range of clues. You can, but you probably won't finish it – it takes time to build up your crossword muscles, get experience of some of the sneakier tricks, get your mind retrieving knowledge faster, etc,

But a better chance if you select a cryptic crossword that is beginner friendly.

If you still want to continue with learning more cryptic skills at this point, then for our u3a members I suggest you come and chat to me (Cath, Cryptics Group Leader) at one of our open members meetings to get further lists of links, or maybe join our whatsapp group for Summer 2025 where I'm sharing some practice grids.

Group meetings will start again in September 2025.