

An Introduction to Cryptic Crosswords

Cryptic crosswords. Those strange things at the back of the newspaper that the family brainbox always seemed to be doing in years gone by. Perhaps it was one of your parents who sat there puzzling away over it while you were trying (or not trying) to get ready for school in the morning. Perhaps it was a grandparent who did it after Sunday lunch and invariably ended up falling asleep with it in their lap, reading glasses slipping off at a jaunty angle. Or maybe it was that mad Uncle Barry from Lincolnshire that you only ever saw at Christmas, weddings or funerals, who carried it around with him and seemed to prefer doing it to actually talking to any of his bemused relatives, least of all you.

If you've read this far, you have an idea of what I'm talking about. In fact, you not only have an idea of what a cryptic crossword is, but you've also had a nagging suspicion that you'd like to find out how they work. After all, if they could keep your Uncle Barry happy, there must be something about them that is worth investigating. You may have heard him tell you why it was that he would bother sitting there for hours on end, chewing the end of his pencil whilst he racked his brains for the answer to 27 across. He might have mentioned how he thought it kept his mind flexible. He might have said that it helped him to improve his vocabulary and his use of English. He might just have said that it helped him to relax, that all of his other worries seemed to disappear whilst he was immersed in the business of solving a crossword. Only, you won't have heard him say any of that, because he never spoke to anyone, especially not when he had a puzzle to solve.

The possible reasons why people get into crosswords are infinite, but the thing that they may find harder to explain is how exactly *they* are able to solve cryptic crosswords, whereas poor old *you* cannot. You always think, "Oh, I can't do those!" or "I'm no good with words!" or "I don't even know where to start!" whilst Uncle Barry sits there, raises his eyebrows and gets busy with the final couple of clues. If only Uncle Barry would share the secret, then you wouldn't feel so helpless, and you might be able to satisfy that little itch that tells you that this whole crosswords malarkey might actually be quite fun to explore.

What you maybe don't realise is that, on at least two out of three points, you are wrong. Firstly, you *are* good with words - you never stop using them, do you? Secondly, you *can* do crosswords; she just can't do them *yet*. Yes, you maybe don't know where to start, but who does know where to start when they are facing a brand new challenge? Who ever picked up a violin for the first time and knew instantly how to play Mozart's Concerto No.3? Nobody. The same goes for cryptic crosswords. They seem impossibly difficult at first glance, and then gradually, as you learn the rules and perfect your skills, they start to get easier. Just wait and see...

Your go...

Devise your own cryptic clues for 'ROME' in the space below, using an anagram of 'MORE'

Remember that you will need to use:

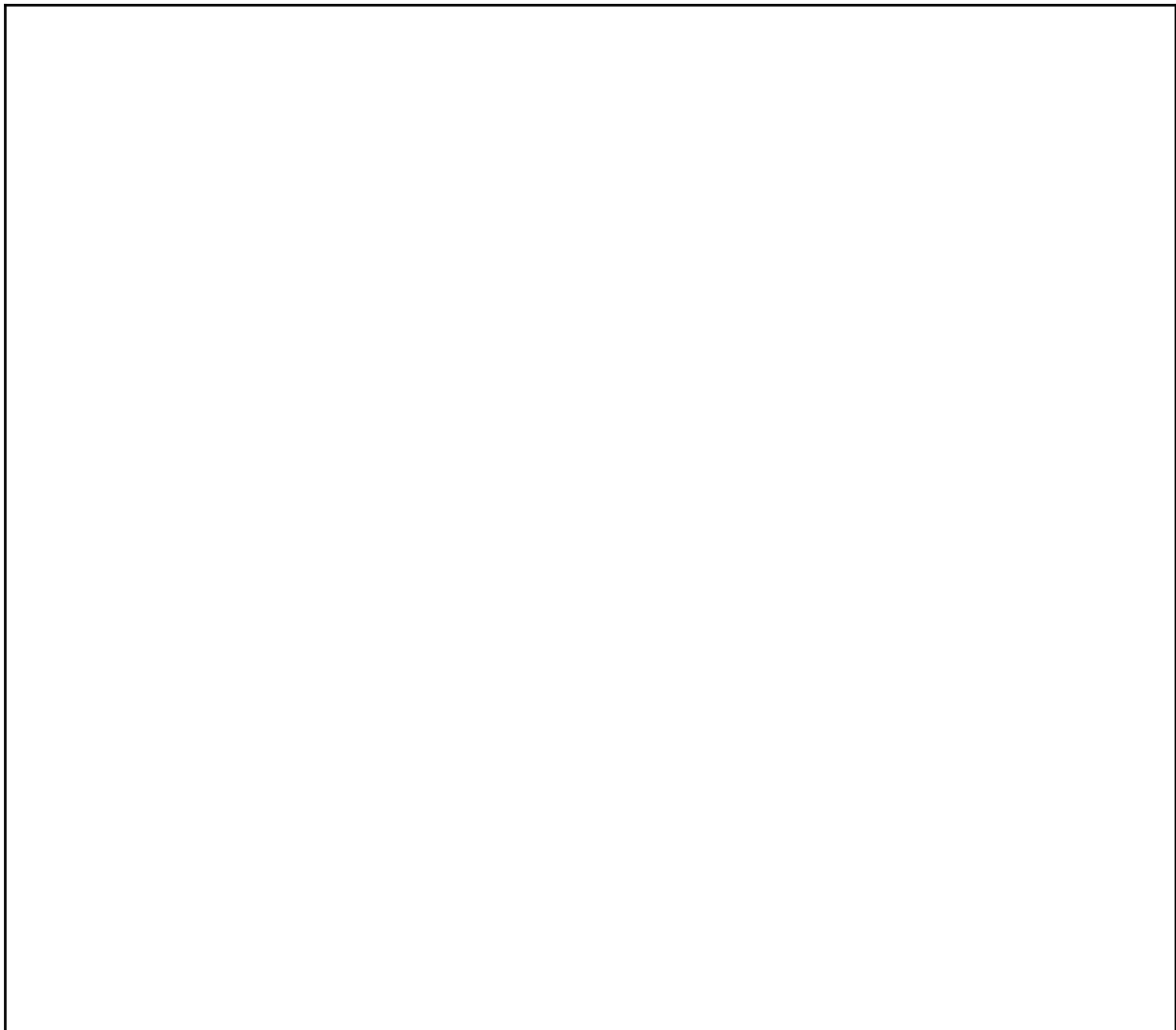
A fair definition of 'Rome'

'MORE' as your fodder

An anagram indicator

... and your definition must not separate the fodder from the indicator!

Share your clues with each other and discuss how they follow the rules laid down thus far



Practice

All of these clues are anagram types, like the 'Rome' clues.

Discuss what could be their **definition**, **indicator** and **fodder** and label them with 'D', 'I' and 'F' on your sheets. (If you can solve them straight away, do so, but do go back and analyse the elements as described.)

Little creature is shredding leaf (4)

Prides mauled creepy-crawly (6)

Act strangely, Puss! (3)

Beast that knows how to hide in each melon cocktail (9)

Shoes are designed for little fish (8)

Big beast to mop up a ship at sea (12)

Indicator Types (i)

Discuss and jot down a few **anagram** indicators that you have come across previously and think of a few more of your own...

Anagram Indicators

Now discuss and jot down a few words or phrases that could work as **reversal** indicators...

Reversal Indicators

Finally, discuss and jot down a few words or phrases that could work as **homophone** indicators...

Homophone Indicators

Indicator Types (ii)

Discuss and jot down a few **hidden word** indicators that you have come across previously and think of a few more of your own...

Hidden Word Indicators

Now discuss and jot down a few words or phrases that could work as **letter selection/deletion** indicators...

Letter selection/deletion Indicators

Finally, discuss and jot down a few words or phrases that could work as **charade** indicators...

Charade Indicators

Indicator Types (iii)

Try to solve these **double definition** clues, bearing in mind that you don't get any fodder, just two different definitions for a single solution...

Carry Rupert? (4)

Discard blanket (5)

Garden's length (4)

Get rid of flames (4)

Ignore free time (5)

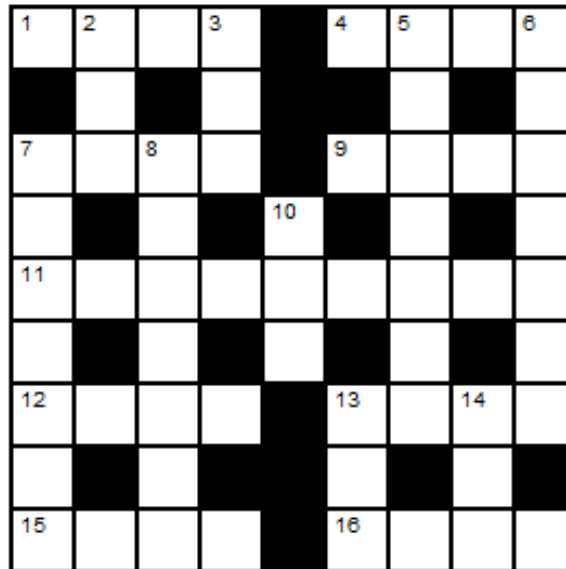
Stable noise (5)

Due to be excellent (10)

Putting it all together

Now it's time to have a go at this puzzle, applying all of the rules that you have learnt so far.

Just so that it's not too daunting, I've made it so that none of the clues are longer than 9 letters.



Across

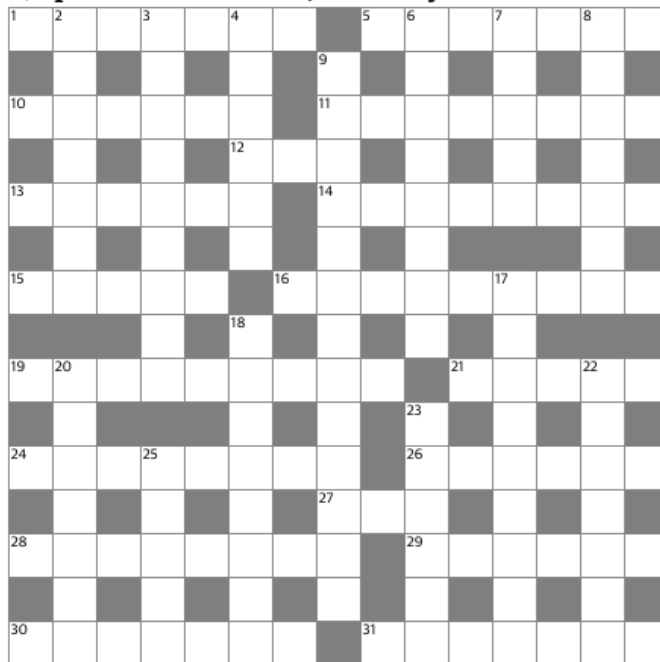
- 1 Wild west casserole? (4)
- 4 Released without payment (4)
- 7 Higher points of ghetto psychology (4)
- 9 Bucket is reported to be light (4)
- 11 Development is auctioned off (9)
- 12 Nips around for a short drive (4)
- 13 Awfully lame food (4)
- 15 Pestors horses (4)
- 16 Take the trouble to cut five out (4)

Down

- 2 Tow broken down couple (3)
- 3 Revolutionary cutting tool used to exist (3)
- 5 Appreciate lies are wrong (7)
- 6 Immortal alien has renal disorder (7)
- 7 Initially troubling explanation for betrayal (7)
- 8 Raining heavily in group activity (7)
- 10 Nearly empty pub (3)
- 13 Damage from a random sample (3)
- 14 Bow of Noah's boat, reportedly (3)

How did you do? Hopefully you were able to solve a few of them without too much difficulty.

Quiptic crossword No 1,232 set by Bartland



Across

- 1 When American heads of urban areas legislate in the typical manner (2,5)
 5 Blessed one and Bartland are seized by crack militant (7)
 10 Prize found in overturned storage compartment (6)
 11 Break-dancer on arms (8)
 12 How do cows vocalise depression? (3)
 13 Finally gains pyrrhic victory with the reaper's tool (6)
 14 Northern Ireland meets Netherlands' openers with awkward spin – they're bowled over! (8)
 15 More mature tree (5)
 16 The woman will search for oysters, maybe (9)
 19 Poke in the bottom leads to smack – that's a cold response! (9)
 21 It detects its echo on substrata or foundations (5)
 24 It floats: but if it can't be dumped, it might have to be carried (4,4)
 26 In French, it is consumed by my hatred (6)
 27 Couple act united within (3)
 28 Unruffled Sumatran quilt stuffing (8)
 29 Ten mice scurrying around old land of the Aztecs (6)
 30 Wild elk's holding neither breathing device (7)
 31 Increasingly annoyed about earring (7)

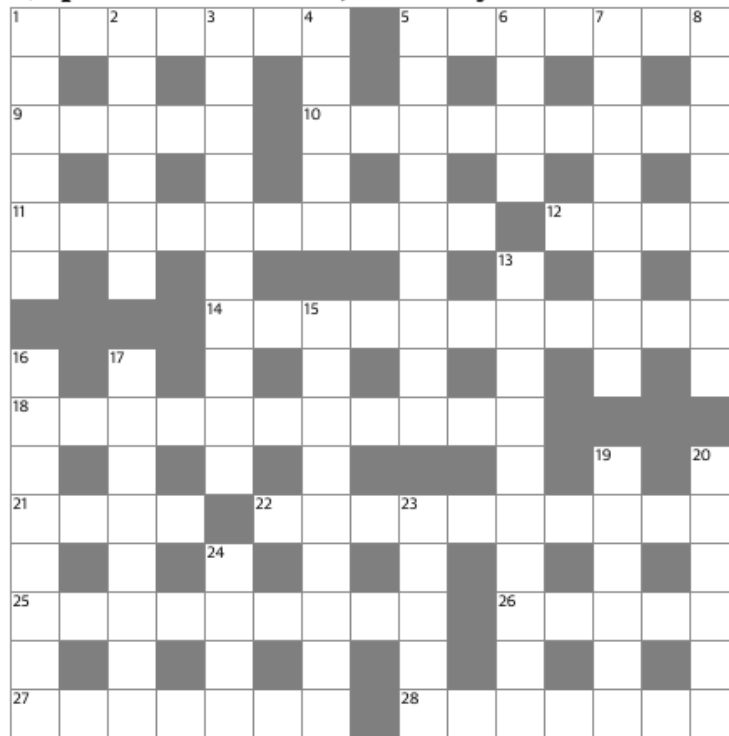
Down

- 2 Catches rising carbon with the Italian template (7)
 3 Man suffering with amazing stress to achieve style (9)
 4 Confused a vacant drunkard and went in front (6)
 6 Numbers racket discovered in spoken exams (8)
 7 Plod quietly alongside streetcar (5)
 8 Another US canal breaks (7)
 9 Average, as this solution is? (4,3,6)
 17 Butcher fixed room for kitchen equipment (4,5)
 18 Perfect beau lost game (8)
 20 Six balls bound to go too far (7)
 22 Possibly a disastrous recital (7)
 23 Freeholder of the old Arabian sultanate (6)
 25 Put on alternative for patron (5)

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- Solve this puzzle online here: <https://www.theguardian.com/crosswords/quiptic/1232>
- FifteenSquared blog: <https://www.fifteensquared.net/2023/05/15/guardian-quiptic-1226-bartland/>
- Great search engine for word patterns and meanings: <https://onelook.com/>
- A brilliant app to have on your phone which solves anagrams and word patterns for you. You can also look at lists of cryptic indicators in it! <https://m.apkpure.com/crypticmuse/com.dkilmer.cmuse>
- Stoke St Milborough Crosswords Group on WhatsApp: <https://shorturl.at/mnBDW>
- Link to today's content on my website <https://tinyurl.com/alvsmithXwords>

Quiptic crossword No 1,220 set by Bartland



Across

- 1 Upset father by breaking flute (7)
 5 'Vacant' needed to follow punctuation mark in dictation (7)
 9 Organs are not working with extra pedal ultimately (5)
 10 Outrageous drag is coming at the end of March carnival (5,4)
 11 Hostility among outsiders initially greeting mixed seniors (10)
 12 Alumnus has extremely obscure pipe (4)
 14 Tsk! Flipping tantrum routine and it's upturned ice cream (5-6)
 18 Stretching green mantle is out of order (11)
 21 Error in copy taking turnover (4)
 22 This sharpens good skin's colour (10)
 25 Invasive presence in part of the bowel is extremely eager (9)
 26 Quick signal (5)
 27 Hold down core pressure to some extent (7)
 28 Discharge English bloke with a terrible fringe (7)

Down

- 1 Formal borders, speaking of flowers (6)
 2 Guy returning if accepted by centre left and groovy extremists (6)
 3 Failed attempt to produce most counterfeit watercolours, for example (5,5)
 4 Large cars garaged by official I'm ostracising (5)
 5 Burn pieces of bacon, sire! (9)
 6 Girl composed on the radio (4)
 7 Jumble: coats, bra, tumblers (8)
 8 Sadly devastated about former lover I have difficulty in reading (8)
 13 European capital's terror is linked to volcanic emissions (10)
 15 Believers embracing alternative thinkers (9)
 16 Can't turn in unusually rare hired vehicle (4-1-3)
 17 Eggy booze with turkey? That's a complete change of direction! (4-4)
 19 Empty bistro and stuck-up old wine shop (6)
 20 Pay for rest (6)
 23 Vikings coming from north or south-east (5)
 24 Part of remark needs a bit of articulation (4)

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- Great search engine for word patterns and meanings: <https://onelook.com/>
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