CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS
Demystified!

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What is a Cryptic Crossword?

- A Crossword in which the clues are cryptic in nature.
- A cryptic clue is any crossword clue in which the answer is hidden or is ‘mysteriously obscure’!
A Cryptic Crossword looks like this:
Across
7  Gardner was just (4)
8  Subcontract remodelling of courthouse after heroin was smuggled out (9)
10 Get no bait manufactured (6)
11  Hurry, doctor and sapper mount location in South Dakota (8)
12  Video log you should see carefully to find hidden doctrine (8)
14  What fighter pilots should not take when facing the enemy (6)
16  Cross city centre with drawing instrument (1-6)
18  When a shrink loses trick, he practices at velodrome (7)
21  More painful when Archie was injured (6)
23  Sneaker's line on a floater? (8)
25  Key "out of this world" tavern (8)
27  Pour mixture into empty turbine and form a cast (6)
29  It is crucial to bring in aardvark food (9)
30  Muscat Sultan hid felines (4)

Down
1  Prohibit defective operating system in the Caribbean (8)
2  Region where two aces held returning Queen (4)
3,9  Simple, an air-crash brings a plane here (4,2,5)
4  Tall buildings have many of them tales, you hear (7)
5  Accommodate and take flight to get an insect (8)
6  Turn some grammar concepts on their head and stuff into the brain (4)
9  See 3
13  Circular holes formed by pouring mixed oil around copper (5)
15  It runs without load and sidles around (5)
17  Artists spread colour around back-bone and make an infrequently seen flier (4,4)
19  After drowning elf in spit, you begin to have inwardly directed compassion (4-4)
20  Wasp or random insect hides a pouch (7)
22  About a month later, I located an island (5)
24  Completely concealed by Latin to Toda translator (2,4)
26  Duplicate text of an advertisement (4)
28  Expression of pain when penny falls out of purse (4)
Cracking Cryptic clues:

- Most clues give you two ways of getting to the answer:
  - A **Definition**: usually given at the beginning or end of the clue
  - A **Subsidiary Indication or ‘wordplay’**: this makes the rest of the clue and has to be unravelled in order to derive the answer
Cracking Cryptic clues:

Example:

Plane crashed in country (5)

Wordplay Direct clue/definition
Cracking Cryptic clues:

I - CLUE TYPES:

- Anagram clues
- Double Definition/Multiple Definition
- Hidden words / Telescopic clues
- Homophones
- First & last Letters / Odd & Even letters
- Reversals
- &Lit clues
- Cryptic Definition
Clue Types

- **ANAGRAM CLUE:**
  - The wordplay of an anagram clue consists of the actual anagrammed letters plus another word or phrase (Anagram indicator) indicating that you will need to swap around those letters (Anagram fodder).

- **Anagram indicator examples:**
  - ‘about’, ‘arranged’, ‘broken’, ‘confused’ etc.
Clue Types

**ANAGRAM CLUE EXAMPLES:**

*FATE* – Difficult feat is destiny (4)

*CONIFERS* – These trees grow from fir cones (7)

*PLANE* – Aircraft panel broke (5)

*BEARD* – Make bread with facial hair (5)

*DHONI* – Captain hid no trouble (5)

*PERSIA* – Abnormal praise for Iran in olden days (6)
Clue Types

HIDDEN WORDS/TELESCOPIC CLUES:

In this kind of a clue, the solution is hidden in some of the contiguous letters (in same word or successive words) given in the clue. Indicators are words conveying a sense of hiding, holding or being a portion/or a part of.

Example:

*PET* – Favourite hiding in Begumpet

*Caramel* – Sugar product stashed in a car Amelia purchased
Clue Types

**MULTIPLE DEFINITION CLUE:**

This is simply a clue where the wordplay is itself one or more definitions. Mostly it will be a double definition clue.

**Examples:**

*BEAR* – Put up with large animal (4) (double defn)

*STRESS* – Emphasize worry (5) (double defn.)

*SET* – Agreed rigid collection (3) (triple defn.)
Clue Types

**HOMOPHONE CLUES:**

A homophone is a word which sounds the same as another word. Homophone clues include elements where the answer sounds like part or all of the wordplay.

Clues containing homophones have the original word as the ‘direct clue’ while the similar sounding word, read along with the ‘homophone hint’ becomes the indirect clue.
Clue Types

The ‘homophone hint’ conveys the feeling of sound, pronunciation or any other audio effect. Words like ‘heard’, ‘spoke’, ‘said’, ‘sounds like’, ‘we hear’, ‘it’s said’, ‘to the audience’, ‘on the radio’ etc.

Examples:

Sparkled when displayed to the listeners – SHONE (Shown)

Legs are instrumental in any achievement, it’s said – FEET (feat)
Clue Types

FIRST & LAST / ODD & EVEN LETTERS CLUE:
The first or last letter of the words of the clue can be joined together to form a solution, or just a part of it.

The indicators for solutions formed using the initials or the last letter could be initially, originally, in the beginning, starting, at the outset, finally, ending, lastly, etc.
Clue Types

Examples:
Huge bed is grand at the outset (3) – BIG
Call radio instructor near gateway, in the first place (4) – RING
End up with top India medal, friend (3) – PAL
Master bed of small size, originally (4) – BOSS
Real agile jig, finally, of the foot (3) - LEG
Clue Types

**ODD & EVEN LETTERS:**

Similarly, solutions can be formed using the *odd or even letters* of the indirect portion (wordplay) of the clue.

*Examples:*

*Assist even while made to take the seat (3) – SIT*
*Argue oddly and get old (3) – AGE*
*Communist can be an alternative friend (3) - RED*
Clue Types

REVERSAL CLUES: (letters in reverse order)

Reversals are words formed when the letters of the original words are reversed, for example:

Nab – ban
Ward – draw
Meet – teem
Are – are
Tool - loot
Clue Types

Word reversals are many a times the solutions for words or a set of letters used as a part of cryptic clues.

Reversal indicators:

Across clues: *to the left, westwards, from the east etc.*

Down clues: *upwards, raised, climbing, brought up etc.*

Both Across & Down: *backwards, returns, reversed etc.*
Clue Types

Examples:
Return part of the net (4) – TRAP
Gel applied over a limb (3) – LEG
Pen tip lying in bin kept upside down (3) – NIB
Flog from behind – that’s a game (4) – GOLF
Flow backward towards an animal (4) – WOLF
Time returns for those who collectively exist (3) – ARE
Sketch in reverse for protégé (4) - WARD
Clue Types

**DELETIONS:**

Many a times, when a letter or more than one letter is deleted from a word, a new word is formed. The letters from a word can either be removed from the front, middle or end.

Word hints for first letter deletions: *beheaded, uninitiated, without leadership, headless, decapitated* etc.
Clue Types

Examples:
Top of the cream removed using paper (4) – REAM
Decapitated whale remaining healthy (4) – HALE
Headlessly blend and give credit (4) – LEND
Scar first removed in vehicle (3) – CAR
Let one scoop the upper portion of uncultivated land (5) – (-f)ALLOW
Clue Types

Word hints for middle letter/letters deletion: heartless, without substance, missing insides, etc.

Examples:
Heartless piper wrote a column (4) – PIER
Animal with missing entrails causes a row (4) – TIER
Is to blame for having nothing inside (2) - BE
Clue Types

Word hints for last letter/letters deletion: 
almost, endless, tailless, unfinished, incomplete etc.

Examples:
Piper nearly led to tube (4) – PIPE
Astonish with an unfinished stunt (4) - STUN
Bottomless class of dramatis personae (4) - CAST
Clue Types

&LIT CLUES: “and literally so”

These are peculiar clues in which the definition and the wordplay are the same. These clues are generally characterised by the use of exclamation mark ‘!’ at the end of the clue. They are also called ‘all in one clues’
Clue Types

&LIT CLUES:

Examples:
I, for example, am reflected! (5) – IMAGE
Outrageously evil! (4) – VILE
A bit of reckless language? (5) – SLANG
Potentially a top cleric, this? (8,6) – CATHOLIC PRIEST
CrypTic definition clues:

These are clues in which the entire set of words are used in such an interesting and twisted manner, that they collectively define the solution, albeit in an unusual fashion.

They usually involve some element of general knowledge and understanding, which may be intelligently used to decipher the solution.

They more often than not end up with a question mark.
Cryptic Definition Clues:
Examples:
Where to read to find hidden meaning in the text? (7,3,5) - BETWEEN THE LINES
Bone kept along the radius? (4) – ULNA
He provided all-round service till the weekend (3,6) – MAN FRIDAY
Crackpot from moon? (7) – LUNATIC
HIJKLMNO (5) – WATER
Gegs! (9,4) – scrambled eggs
Clue Types

**ABBREVIATIONS:**

We don’t generally have “abbreviation clues”. Instead abbreviations play a vital role in the treatment of individual or small groups of letters.
Clue Types

A. Using Initials
   ..like T=Time, G=good, W=west, L=left etc.

B. Using Standard Abbreviations
   ...like DR=doctor, AC=account, US=America etc.

C. Using peculiar crossword abbreviations/short synonyms
   ....like PM = afternoon, BA=graduate, ACE=expert, AU=gold, LA/LE=the in French, IL=the in Italian etc.
In practice, a cryptic clue is more often a combination of one or more types of clues as categorised earlier. The crossword solutions can be:

a. CHARADE – One word placed after another to make a different word.

Example:
Big street is wide - B ROAD
Clue Types

b. CONTAINER – One word placed inside another to make a different word.
Example:
Arriving outside the palace was soothing (10) – COM(fort)ING
Charge about play rehearsal (8) – PR(act)ICE

c. OTHER WORD/LETTER COMBINATIONS:
i. a combination of word/s and letters
ii. A combination of word/s and part words
Clue Types

iii. A combination of letters
iv. a combination of part words
v. a combination of part words and letters

Examples:
Tolerate second rate listener (4) - BEAR
Deal with a worker in front of the French (6) - HANDLE
Painting ace standing at the right square (3) - ART
Clue Types

American soldier and holy man together provided synopsis (4) – GI ST

Number good for the animal (3) – PI G

Greed concerning shine (5) – LUST RE
Further Progress:

- Practice, practice and more practice

- Read “Understanding Cryptic Crosswords” by Vivek Kumar Singh

- ACAD & ACAD+ on www.crypticsingh.com

- Daily Cryptic Crosswords in newspapers like The Hindu & The Economic Times
THANK YOU