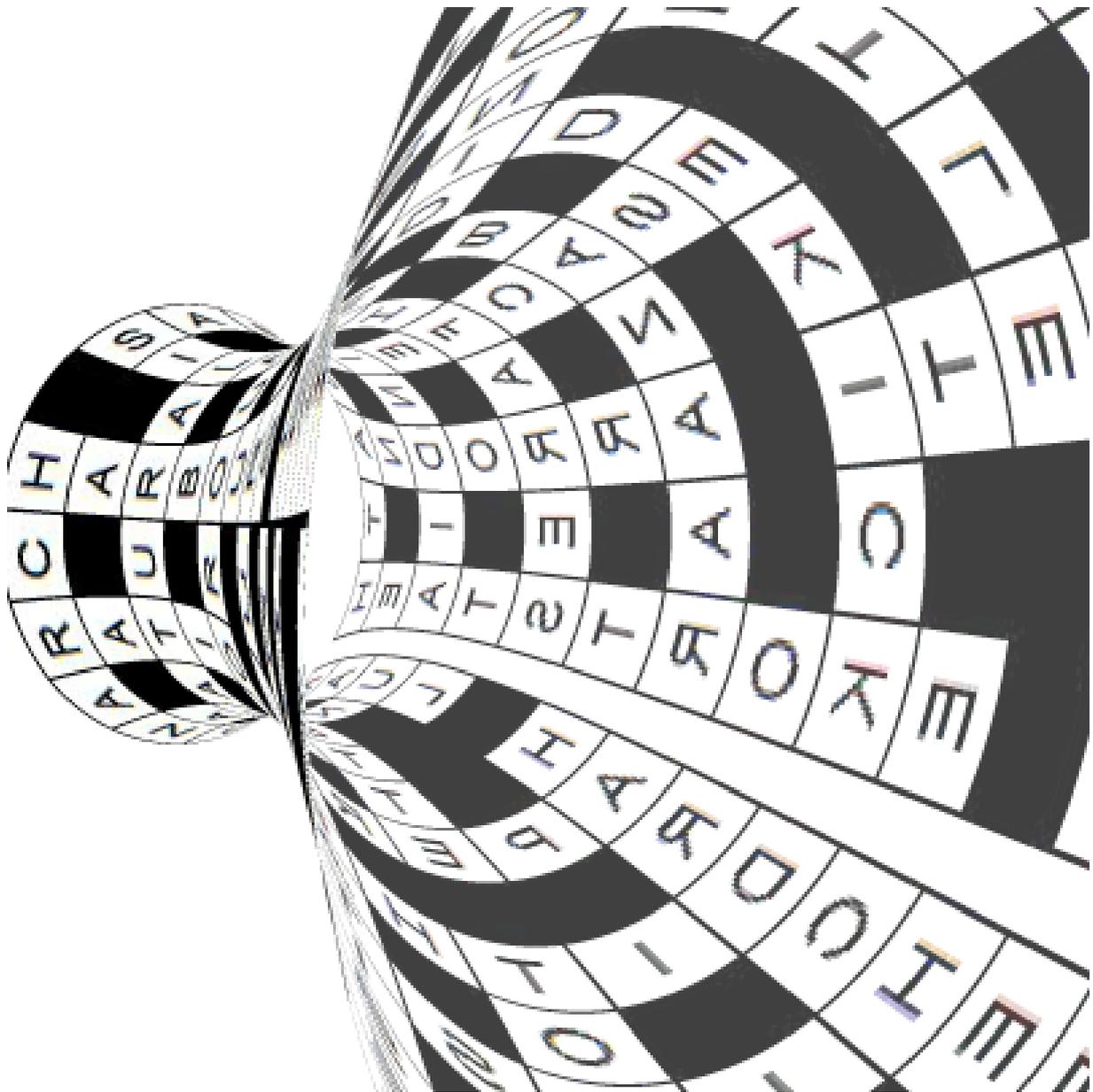


Cryptic Crosswords for Bright Sparks



A beginner's guide to cryptic crosswords for
Gifted & Talented children

Unit 4 - Anagram Clues

Everybody loves a good anagram. They are fun to work out and even more fun to create. All you do is jumble up the letters. You might have seen anagram puzzles where the jumbled version does not create a real word, for example:

OXF = FOX

EBE = BEE

In cryptic crossword clues, however, **the setter will always use real words** that appear in the dictionary, for example:

ACT = CAT

TAN = ANT

TOGA = GOAT

FLOW = WOLF *

* Did you see how 'FLOW' is more than just an anagram of 'WOLF'?
'FLOW' is actually 'WOLF' written backwards.
In cryptic crosswords, this is called a 'reversal'. More about these later...

By only using real words within clues, the setter makes it harder for the solver to see the anagrams. The way in which the clue is written will often distract you from noticing the anagram, so you have to work that little bit harder to see it.

Let's take one of the examples that we have just seen: *TOGA = GOAT*

Now here's a clue:

Animal ruined toga (4)

Remember the golden formula for working out cryptic clues in general?

DEFINITION + WORDPLAY = ANSWER

Now suppose that the clue is an anagram clue. The wordplay part will tell you: "Make an anagram of this." How exactly does it do that? By dividing the wordplay into another two parts:

WORDPLAY = ANAGRAM INDICATOR + ANAGRAM FODDER

ANAGRAM INDICATOR means the word or phrase that tells you that you need to make an anagram. This is sometimes shortened by crossword setters to 'ANAGRIND', from ANAGR[am] IND[icator]

ANAGRAM FODDER means the word or words that need to be jumbled up to get the answer.

So, the formula for a cryptic anagram clue is:

DEFINITION + ANAGRAM INDICATOR + ANAGRAM FODDER = ANSWER

This probably all sounds rather baffling, but don't worry - you don't need to memorise the formula. All you need to learn to do is to recognise when it is being used and that way you will be able to solve cryptic anagram clues.

To get you started, here is an example of a cryptic anagram clue, with its answer:

Fish confused tutor (5) = TROUT

We came across this anagram in Exercise 3.1. 'Tutor' is an anagram of 'trout'.

Bearing the answer in mind, look at the clue to find what the **definition** is, in other words, the part of the clue that is a synonym for 'trout'. It should be fairly obvious that the definition is 'fish'.

So, we know that the definition is '*fish*' and the answer is '*trout*'. This leaves '*confused tutor*'.

Now look again at the formula for a cryptic anagram clue:

DEFINITION + ANAGRAM INDICATOR + ANAGRAM FODDER = ANSWER

In this particular case, the formula has become:

FISH + ANAGRAM INDICATOR + ANAGRAM FODDER = TROUT

We have two words remaining in the clue, 'confused' and 'tutor'.

Therefore, 'confused' must be the **anagram indicator** and 'tutor' must be the **anagram fodder**.

CLUE FISH + CONFUSED + TUTOR = TROUT

FORMULA DEFINITION + ANAGRAM INDICATOR + ANAGRAM FODDER = ANSWER

HINT

Obviously, in an anagram clue, the anagram fodder is always going to have the same number of letters as the answer.

So, if you look at the clue 'Fish confused tutor (5)' and you therefore know that the answer has five letters, 'fish' and 'confused' cannot be the anagram fodder, as 'fish' has four letters and 'confused' has eight letters.

In this clue, 'tutor' is the only word that you can jumble up to get a five-letter word, in this case, 'trout'.

Hang on a minute! The **anagram indicator** tells me to make an anagram, right? How then does the word 'confused' tell me to make an anagram?! Well, this is the first bit of lateral thinking that you will need to do on your journey to becoming a fully fledged solver of cryptic crosswords. Let me explain...

If a cryptic crossword was filled with clues like 'Make an anagram of tutor to get a fish (5)' it wouldn't be too long until you, the solver, would get bored, because you would just be following a set of literal instructions. To keep things interesting, the solver tries to get you to 'think outside of the box'. In this case, the setter has used the word 'confused' as a way of hinting that you need to make an anagram without telling you directly to do so. Since 'confused' is a synonym for 'mixed up' or 'complicated', this should be enough information for you to work out that an anagram is required to solve this clue.

However, in addition to 'confused', 'mixed up' and 'complicated', there are hundreds, even thousands of different ways in which you can tell somebody to mix things up. How about 'in a mess', 'disorganised', 'breaking', 'shattered', 'thrown around' to name but five? So, the trickiest part of solving an anagram clue is recognising the anagram indicator. Once you have done this, you can then look at the rest of the clue and work out how many letters you need in your anagram. The rest should then fall into place quite easily.

Exercise 4.1

Anagram Indicators

How many words and phrases can you find in the word cloud that would make good anagram indicators? Cross them out as you find them and copy them out in the table below.



How many did you find?

Fewer than 10

Keep trying!

Between 11 and 17

Not bad...

Between 18 and 24

Good job.

Between 25 and 30

You are a word wizard!

Remember to check the answer pages for any that you missed. Try to work out how the 30 possible answers could all be telling you to make an anagram. (Some are more obvious than others!)

Exercise 4.2

Anagram Indicators - Your ideas

On the lines below, think of some more anagram indicators of your own. (This will help you to recognise them more easily when you see them in real clues.) As long as your indicators suggest moving around, changing order or transformation, they should be fine.

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Exercise 4.3

Animalagram Clues

Now it's time to start solving some clues. All of the answers to the following clues are animals. (You will have come across some of them earlier, so look back if you are totally stuck!)

HINT

Remember how 'tutor' is an anagram of 'trout'? That's pretty easy because 'trout' has five letters and so does 'tutor'.

However, anagrams do not always occur as one word in both the anagram and the solution.

'Elephant', as we saw earlier, is an anagram of 'the plane'. 'Elephant' is one word with eight letters. 'The plane' is two words, but it still has eight letters in total. (In cryptic crosswords, the space doesn't count!)

So, when you are looking for anagrams, remember not to just count the letters in individual words. Look at phrases too and see if they add up to the number of letters needed in the solution.

This works the other way round too. Your answer could have two words, but the anagram of it could just be one word. Similarly, both the solution and the anagram could have more than one word.

Here are some examples:

outrageous = oust a rogue

cream tea = macerate

never mind = driven men

To help you with the first few, refer to the colour code:

Red = DEFINITION

Blue = ANAGRAM INDICATOR

Green = ANAGRAM FODDER

- a) The plane that crashed is a jumbo (8)
- b) Little creature is shredding leaf (4)
- c) Prides mauled creepy-crawly (6)
- d) Check in exotic bird (7)
- e) Beast that knows how to hide in each melon cocktail (9)

No colour code this time.

- Circle the anagram indicator
- underline the definition
- Finally, solve the clue.

- f) Act strangely, Puss! (3)
- g) Billy Goat broke arm (3)
- h) Hold pin crookedly for swimmer (7)
- i) Shoes are designed for little fish (8)
- j) Big beast to mop up a ship at sea (12)

Look back at questions a to e in the previous exercise. Did you notice how the order of the different parts of the clue can change?

For example:

- a) The plane [ANAGRAM FODDER] that crashed [ANAGRAM INDICATOR] is a jumbo [DEFINITION] (8)
- b) Little creature [DEFINITION] is shredding [ANAGRAM INDICATOR] leaf [ANAGRAM FODDER] (4)

The different parts of a cryptic clue can appear in any order. However, there is one golden rule worth remembering...

The definition will nearly always be at either the beginning or the end of the clue.

If you like, you can confirm this by looking back at the remaining questions in the previous exercise.

Exercise 4.4

Fruit Cocktail

Let's move away from animals for a moment and have a go at these. The answers are all fruits.

If it helps you...

- Circle the anagram indicator
- Underline the definition
- Finally, solve the clue.

- a) Strange lump is something that grows on trees (4)
- b) Blurry bee whizzed around bush (9)
- c) No gear changed colour (6)
- d) Unusually cheap and it's got a soft skin (5)
- e) Sorted out Peter a mango... and another fruit (11)
- f) Info upstairs about something sweet and exotic (7,5)
- g) You might eat it at Christmas out of a green tin (9)
- h) Nomads roamed around to find this fruit (6)
- i) Get up, friar, to cook up something for breakfast! (10)
- j) Is this fruit another kind of melon? (5)

How many did you get? Don't worry if you struggled with some or even all of them, as these are now starting to get trickier. In fact, you could argue that some of these are downright sneaky.

Take b and c, for example. In b, the definition is 'bush' and in c the definition is 'colour'. But I had told you that the answers were all fruits. How, you might be wondering, are 'bush' and 'colour' fruits?! They aren't, of course, but when you look at the answers, you will see that 'blueberry' could be defined as a fruit, but it could also be defined as the bush that blueberries come from. Similarly, 'orange' could be defined as the fruit, but it equally refers to the colour orange.

This is one of the most interesting aspects of the English language that makes it so perfect for cryptic crosswords, i.e. the fact that there are so many different words that can mean the same thing and, conversely, so many specific words that have more than one meaning. So, if the person setting the crossword knows that the answer is 'orange' they can define it as 'colour' or 'fruit' and it is up to the solver to deduce the solution from the word play.

Here's another example. Take the word 'badger'. Most people will instantly see this word and visualise a furry, black and white mammal. Think again, though. What about 'badger' as

a verb? I'm sure you've heard somebody say, "Don't badger me with so many questions!" or words to that effect. In this sense, 'badger' means to bother, to nag or to harass.

Suppose, then, that our crossword setter needs to create a clue for 'badger'. Let's also suppose that the setter is going to create an anagram clue, given that that is the kind of clue that we already know.

The setter could go for something like this:

Clue: *Wild animal barged about (6)*

Solution: BADGER

The definition is 'wild animal', the anagram fodder is 'barged' and the anagram indicator is 'about'.

However, here's an alternative idea:

Clue: *Nag barged about (6)*

Solution: BADGER

The only difference between the second clue and the first one is the definition: 'wild animal' has changed to 'nag'. As we have already seen, 'badger' can mean both of these things, but in completely different senses. The setter has had the choice of two different meanings for 'badger', so this creates more options when creating the clue. In languages where words tend to have only one possible meaning, this would make cryptic clues much less flexible and less enjoyable, both to create and to solve.

"Fun? Where's the fun?!" I hear some of you ask.

Well, look again at the second clue. Where is the noun? It looks like it should be 'nag', because surely, in the logic of the clue, the nag is the thing that is doing the barging about. But, if nag is a noun, doesn't that mean that it's an old horse?! A badger isn't an old horse, is it? (Well, it might think it is, but it would be sorely deluded in its belief.)

What is happening here is that the setter is cunningly trying to make you (the solver) read 'nag' as a noun and create an image in your mind of a old horse barging about. However, the setter doesn't mean 'nag' in the sense of 'old horse' here; he or she means it in the sense of 'pester', or, in other words, 'badger', which is our answer.

So, it's time for another golden rule:

Never read the clue literally, as if it's a normal sentence.

(Split it up in your mind into its different parts and think about them separately.)

Remember that the setter wants to trick you into reading the clues like proper sentences and jumping to conclusions, such as thinking that 'nag' is a horse, when in fact, in this clue, it means 'to badger'. This is where the setter has his or her fun: the playful possibilities of English words and their meanings allows for an infinite number of different ways to prevent the solver from seeing the answer too quickly. The solver gets their fun from wracking their brains and then getting the lightbulb moment when their hard work pays off and they find the answer. Think of it like a competition between the setter and the solver, rather like a game of chess. If you can't finish the crossword, then the setter wins; if you do finish it, then you are the winner. Whatever the outcome, hopefully you have both enjoyed the process and we all know that it's not the winning, it's the taking part that counts!

If you can get used to looking at words and phrases in isolation and thinking about all of their possible meanings, you will soon find that cryptic clues start to make sense and you will have as much fun with them as the setter did when he or she thought them up.

One final golden rule before we move on... You know when you are doing a test and the teacher says, "Don't worry. It's not a trick question." Well...

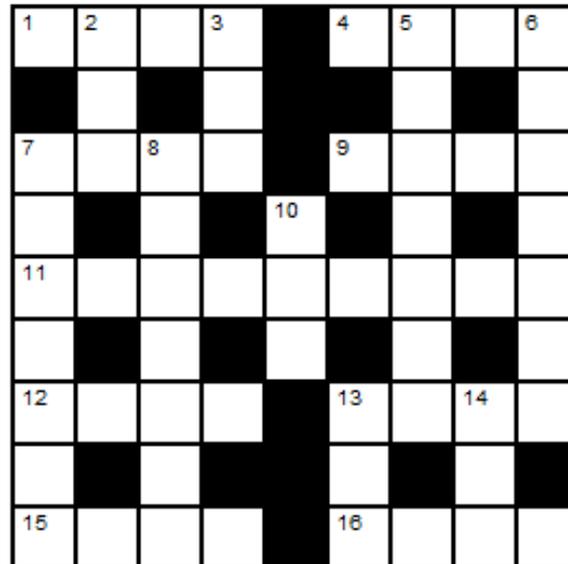
With cryptic crosswords, it's ALWAYS a trick question!

Exercise 4.5

Putting it all together

Now it's time for your first go at a mini crossword grid.

Just so that it's not too daunting, I've made it so that none of the clues are longer than 9 letters. Also, all of the clues are anagram clues, so you should have already practised everything you will require in order to solve it.

**Across**

- 1 Wild west casserole? (4)
 4 Rescue from rocky reef (4)
 7 Lids of smashed pots (4)
 9 Leap over light (4)
 11 Development is auctioned off (9)
 12 Twist pins around (4)
 13 Awfully lame food (4)
 15 Shrews sang badly (4)
 16 Care about competition (4)

Down

- 2 Tow broken down couple (3)
 3 Saw maybe used to exist (3)
 5 Appreciate lies are wrong (7)
 6 Ten real ingredients are imperishable (7)
 7 Betrayal involved senator (7)
 8 Raining heavily in group activity (7)
 10 Consume spilt tea (3)
 13 Arm terribly hurt (3)
 14 Car manoeuvring around bend (3)

How did you do? Hopefully you were able to solve a few of them without too much difficulty. If you needed to look at that answers, can you see how the logic of the clues worked?

Before we move on, just have a quick look at these three clues from the puzzle.

4 Rescue from rocky reef (4)

7 Lids of smashed pots (4)

11 Development is auctioned off (9)

I have underlined one word in each clue. This word does not form a part of the definition, the anagram indicator or the anagram fodder. So why it is there? Well, it's what we call a 'LINKING WORD' or a 'CONNECTOR'. A linking word helps to hold a clue together so that it makes sense as a sentence and reads well. The way in which a clue reads is called its 'SURFACE'. All cryptic crossword setters aim to create smooth surfaces, so that you, the solver, are tricked into reading the clue as a literal sentence.

Take the first one:

4 Rescue from rocky reef (4)

The setter's surface is designed to make you visualise somebody being rescued from a rocky reef out at sea somewhere. However, if you read it not as a literal sentence but as a cryptic clue, the logic becomes:

Get a word meaning 'rescue' from an anagram of 'reef' (the anagram indicator being 'rocky')

Answer: FREE

Do you see how the 'from' is helping to tell you what to do, whilst also helping the clue's surface to read like a real sentence?

Now look at the second clue:

7 Lids of smashed pots (4)

The 'of' is not contributing to any of the essential components of the clue, but without it, the clue would read 'Lids smashed pots (4)' which doesn't make sense. By putting in the 'of', the clue's surface reads well, making the solver visualise pots smashed on the floor, maybe, with their lids lying next to them. Read it as a cryptic clue, rather than a literal sentence, and you get:

A word meaning 'lids' can be made of an anagram of 'pots' (the anagram indicator being 'smashed')

Answer: TOPS

Finally, here's the third clue:

11 Development is auctioned off (9)

The setter is being particularly sneaky here. He has found that the answer is an anagram of 'auctioned', so has thought of a word that creates a good surface with it. 'Development' can mean a building project, so this works well. You, the solver, are intended to visualise an auction where a building of some sort is being sold. However, read the sentence as a cryptic clue and you get:

A word meaning 'development' is an anagram of 'auctioned' (the anagram indicator being 'off')

Answer: EDUCATION

As you get used to seeing more cryptic clues over time, try to spot the linking words like 'is', 'for', 'of', 'from', 'makes' etc. as they will often help you to see how to split the clue up into its various parts in your mind.

Exercise 4.6

Linking Words

Each of these clues contains a linking word or phrase. Underline it and then solve the clue. (They are all anagram clues and the answers are all trees.)

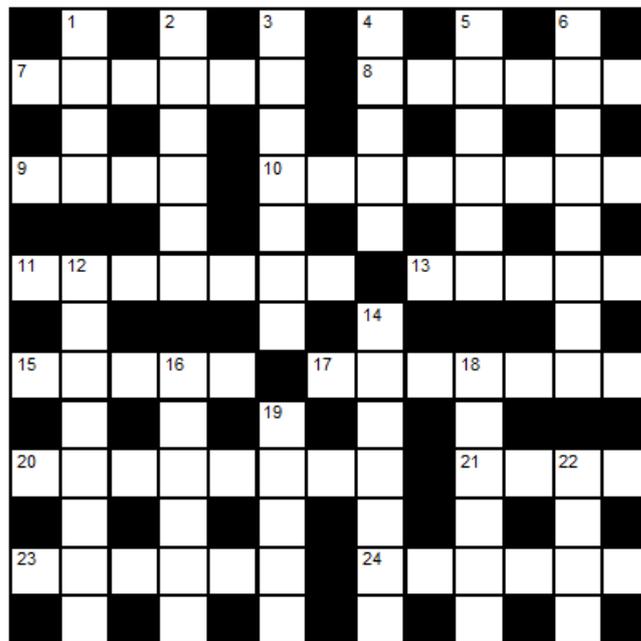
- a) Ample change from the symbol of Canada (5)
- b) Rotten melon yields fruit (5)
- c) Rosy came over to find tree (8)
- d) No raw ingredients for Mr Atkinson? (5)
- e) Magic lamp revealed where you could get dates from (4)

Exercise 4.7

13x13 Grid

You are now ready for a larger grid. This one is 13x13, so it's only slightly smaller than the full size 15x15 grids used for most published cryptic crosswords.

Once again, all of the clues are anagram clues, so you have already practised everything you will require in order to solve it. Look out for any linking words and phrases. Underline them if it helps you.

**Across**

- 7 Poster is replaced quickly in the music lesson (6)
 8 Learnt about hiring (6)
 9 Shoe damaged old stockings (4)
 10 Licensed organisation fails (8)
 11 Wrecked threads got tangled up (7)
 13 Time's changing things (5)
 15 Meat shelf collapsed (5)
 17 Attacking or mobbing unexpectedly (7)
 20 Lost stingray is swimming around (8)
 21 Runs over vases (4)
 23 Hidden vector is encrypted (6)
 24 States outrageous opinions (6)

Down

- 1 Group of three organised riot (4)
 2 Sassses stupid judge (6)
 3 More boisterous and incredibly worried (7)
 4 Find broken crate (5)
 5 Sign up for silent treatment (6)
 6 Upset nameless vendors (8)
 12 Confuse oriental uncle, perhaps (8)
 14 Blasted shotgun blanks (7)
 16 Looked at manufacturing trades (6)
 18 Most unhappy if bustle is let loose (6)
 19 Flexible stilt leans (5)
 22 Eden altered necessity (4)