

Learn How to Solve Cryptic Crosswords—A Course for Beginners

Book synopsis

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This document provides the following information:

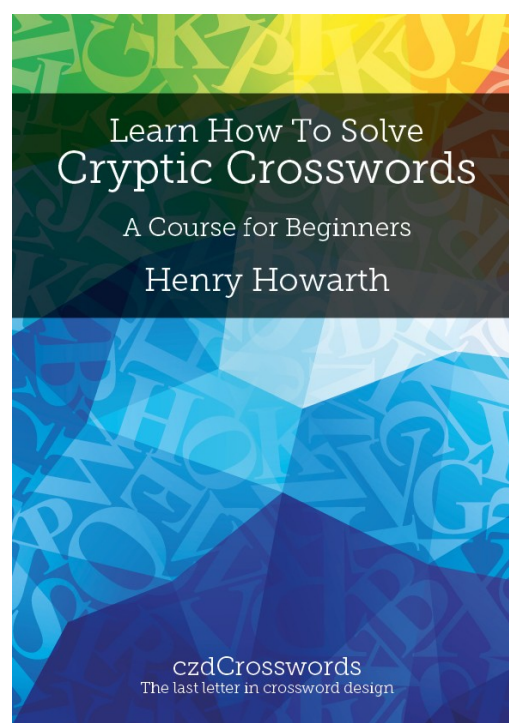
- Publication details
- Intended readership—who the book is for
- A structured learning programme—how the book has been designed
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- The benefits of learning how to solve cryptic crosswords
- Book contents: an outline
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Publication details

Author: Henry Howarth
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Intended readership

This book teaches beginners how to solve cryptic crosswords.

It's written for adult English speakers who are able to solve quick crosswords and want to learn how to solve cryptic puzzles.

Cryptic crosswords are published on line and in many periodicals and newspapers in the UK. They have also become established in other territories—including Ireland, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

A structured learning programme

The book has been designed as a course and is centred round the needs of the learner.

It works as a learning ladder, taking the beginner from the basics through to the advanced aspects, step by step. This makes it easier for learners to build their understanding of how cryptic clues work and acquire the skills needed to solve them.

From the simple to the complex

The book starts with the simplest types of cryptic clue and the fundamental aspects of how clues are constructed. It gradually builds to the most complex types of clue and the trickier aspects of solving them.

Clear explanations

- Each topic is explained clearly and is broken down into component learning steps, with worked examples to show how the various types of clue operate.
- Diagrams are used to support written explanations, illustrate key ideas and engage different styles of learning.
- Technical terms are introduced in context, so that the learner's understanding can develop from their practical experience.

Active learning

- We learn best by doing, and each topic is followed by exercises to consolidate learning and you provide practice for skills acquisition.
- All of the exercises are purpose-built to reinforce the key learning points.
- Explanations are provided with the answers to exercises.

Modular structure

- The course is structured in six chapters, dividing the learning process into a series of natural and manageable steps.
- Each chapter blends generic topics and specific clue types, and is a self-contained learning module with its own exercises.
- Practice puzzles at the end of each chapter integrate new topics with what has come before.

An effective learning resource

There are a number of books available on the subject of solving cryptic crosswords. What's different about this book is the way that it provides a modular learning programme for beginners. It draws on the author's experience of teaching beginners and designing learning content, as well as his skills in solving and setting cryptic clues.

The methodology used and much of the content has been tested and proven to work, and this has enabled the author to create an effective, comprehensive resource for distance learning.

The book introduces some developments for teaching cryptic crosswords that are believed to be new. These make it easier to understand how clues work and acquire solving skills:

Component skills

- Exercises that develop basic skills needed for particular types of clue— such as finding hidden words, anagrams and word sandwiches.
- Knowledge-based exercises that build the learner's familiarity with commonly encountered abbreviations and short words.

Wordplay practice

These exercises give the learner practice in performing wordplay operations without needing first to identify the cryptic reading of a clue. They are presented in a simplified format that follows the structure of a cryptic clue and serve as stepping stones to clue solving.

A solving compass

This is a practical method that can be used to help solve any type of clue. It consists of a structured framework of analytical steps, and its use is illustrated with worked examples.

The benefits of learning how to solve cryptic crosswords

As well as being fun to do, cryptic crosswords provide mental stimulation and exercise cognitive functions—a sort of 'mind gym' activity. Crosswords exercise memory and literacy skills, and solving cryptic clues often involves making new mental connections and associations.

Cryptic crosswords stimulate an interest in words and general knowledge, and this can lead to learning something new.

Solving cryptic crosswords is an enjoyable pastime that is low cost and doesn't require any special facilities—all that is needed is a source of puzzles and a pencil, if solving on paper.

Book contents

The book comprises six course chapters with four supporting sections:

How to use this book

A short introduction provides an overview of the book and explains how to use it.

Chapter 1. Getting started: This chapter introduces the two simplest types of cryptic clue—Hidden Words and Anagrams—and establishes the fundamentals of how cryptic clues are structured. It also draws the distinction between what a cryptic clue appears to mean and the cryptic interpretation that leads to the answer.

Chapter 2. Essential building blocks: This chapter covers the Charade clue, which is the commonest type of clue, and shows how abbreviations and short words are used in cryptic clues. The chapter also introduces a solving compass—a method which can be used to help unlock any type of clue—and demonstrates how to use it.

Chapter 3. Taking clue structure further: This chapter builds on the fundamentals of clue structure established in Chapter 1—adding punctuation, connectors and the various ways a clue may present the definition of the answer. Three more clue types are introduced; Sandwiches, Deletions and Reversals.

Chapter 4. Completing the itinerary of clue types: This chapter adds Homophone, Double definition and Cryptic definition clues and summarises the remaining less common types of clue. The chapter also explains how individual letter selection can be incorporated into a clue, and finishes with some finer points of clue presentation.

Chapter 5. Tackling trickier clues: Chapters 1–4 cover all of the basic types of cryptic clue. This chapter starts with a review of these, drawing together the key points into a single picture. It then shows how these basic types can be used in more complex clue structures—Compound and All-in-one clues. The chapter finishes by explaining the techniques that crossword setters can use to make clues harder to solve.

Chapter 6. Developing your crossword skills further: This chapter explains how to put the knowledge and skills gained from Chapters 1-5 into practice. It provides a guide to available cryptic puzzles and resources to help with solving. A selection of published puzzles at the end of the chapter will help readers find a source of puzzles appropriate for them.

Reference tools

This section consists of a glossary, a summary of the various types of cryptic clue and reference tables of words that may perform specific roles within a clue.

Postscript

This section includes background information about the course and its development. It is written primarily for people who need to evaluate the book for others to use.

Further information

This section explains what additional resources are available from czdcrosswords.co.uk, where to order copies of the book and how to provide feedback.

Summary: A ladder for learning

