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## All there is crossword clue

Crossword puzzles are a traditional part of many daily newspapers. Since 1913, when Arthur Wynne published the first crossword puzzle in the New York World, puzzlers all over the world have delighted in these head-scratching games [source: Brief History of Crossword Puzzles]. And there's more to crosswords than fun; some studies have shown that regularly solving puzzles like crosswords or Sudoku can help improve your memory, and may even reduce mental decline in the elderly [source: Christie]. Crossword puzzles are also a great way to improve your vocabulary and general knowledge.Some crosswords are simple, but some are most definitely not. The famous Sunday crossword puzzle of the New York Times is one of the hardest out there, and it isn't for the faint of heart. But don't despair -- there are plenty of tricks out there that can help turn you into a puzzle master. Remember, the harder the puzzle, the more satisfying it is when you fill in that final square.Ready to dive in? Read on for the top 10 tips for solving crossword puzzles.Crossword puzzles are a little like spiderwebs; each answer is connected to the others nearby to form a woven network of letters. Tugging on one string of letters affects all the others, too. Most crossword puzzles are naturally divided into several groups of up and down clues, connected to the other groups by longer answers. With that in mind, working through the puzzle one cluster of columns at a time -- as opposed to going through all of the across clues at once, followed by all of the down clues -- is a good strategy. Each word you fill in will help solve the others around it.On occasion, crossword puzzle crafters will draw on other languages for their answers. But how are you supposed to know whether the answer is in English or something else? You'll have to rely on the clue to tell you. If the wording of the clue references a specific city or country, or if part of the clue is in a foreign language, that's a pretty surefire indicator that your answer should be in that same language [source: Sayles]. Few crossword puzzle enthusiasts are actually fluent in the languages most often found in the clues, but a basic knowledge of articles, verbs and personal titles in some of the more common languages will go a long way. French, Spanish, German and Latin are particularly popular with puzzle crafters.A popular strategy for test-taking is to go through all the questions and skip over the ones you don't know. And even though they aren't multiple-choice, you can do the same with crossword puzzles -- thankfully, without being graded at the end. Don't spend too much time tearing your hair out over a clue you just can't crack. Go on to the easy ones, because that strategy comes with a bonus: filling in the answers you know will provide letters for the ones you don't. That narrows down the possibilities significantly, especially for clues where more than one answer could apply.Are you stuck with a half-finished puzzle and a spinning head? Don't let it stress you out -- crossword puzzles are meant to be challenging, but they're also supposed to be fun. It's perfectly fine to just walk away for a while. Unless you're competing at the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament, there's no time limit, so don't go nuts trying to finish the puzzle on your lunch hour. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to take a break and clear your mind. Come back to it later, and you might be surprised at what jumps out at you.It happens to us all. If you stare at a word long enough, suddenly it just looks wrong -- even if it's a word you've been spelling correctly since junior high school. So it wouldn't be too strange to discover a misspelling amongst your answers, would it? Putting an "E" before an "I" instead of the other way around can throw off the other clues in that particular section of the puzzle. There will also be times when answers originally come from a language such as Arabic or Russian, whose alphabets are entirely different from the Latin alphabet most Western countries use. As a result, there are often a number of accepted spellings for these translated words. In those cases, the clue will usually include a parenthetical "var," to indicate that there is more than one established way to spell the word in question.Is there a puzzle clue giving you extra trouble? Does it have a question mark at the end? In the world of crosswords, a clue with a question mark means that particular clue demands a second look. Usually, that bit of punctuation is an indication that the clue itself is a play on words, as opposed to a straightforward question demanding an answer or a fill-in-the-blank [source: Sayles]. So, the most obvious answer probably isn't the correct one. Think about all possible meanings of the clue; you can always ruminate on it while you go on to other parts of the puzzle.Lots of crosswords have a title that provides some insight into the theme of the puzzle. And, whether or not the puzzle has a title, it will almost always have a theme. Throughout the puzzle, the author will scatter answers that tie back into the theme. Those answers will usually be longer and contain more than one word. Frequently, the clues will be a play on the theme, so the connection might not be immediately obvious. Still, keeping the theme or title in mind as you go through the clues might provide some insight to lead you in the right direction.Let's call a spade a spade. But does that mean we're calling the spade a shovel -- or a suit of cards? Some words have not just one or two meanings, but several. If part of the puzzle isn't coming together, and one of the clues could have more than one answer, try them all out. Particularly, be on the lookout for words with multiple meanings in the question mark clues mentioned earlier. Puzzle composers and editors are a sneaky bunch; they'll use multiple meanings to throw would-be solvers off the scent. Thinking outside the box, both literally and figuratively, will help you finish the job.Are you waffling between more than one possible answer, or maybe just taking a stab in the dark? There will always be times when you think you know what the answer is, but you can't be 100 percent sure. Do you take a chance and write in your guess, or not? If the answer in question intersects with yet another maybe-it-is-maybe-it-isn't clue, skip it for the time being. Writing in wrong answers can lead you astray, especially if you're one of the brave souls who prefer to do the puzzle in pen. Instead, rely on the answers you know are correct to lead you back into safe territory.There's absolutely no shame in relying on a reference book. Some of the primary benefits of crossword puzzles are expanding your own knowledge and vocabulary. If you've solved all of the down clues in one cluster but one of the resulting across answers isn't a term with which you're familiar, pull your trusty Oxford English Dictionary off the shelf. You'll either find out that the word is correct and add something new to your phraseology, or you'll discover that some of your down answers need rethinking. Other reference books, like a thesaurus or encyclopedia, are equally useful. After all, if you knew every crossword answer without even trying, it wouldn't be as fun -- and you wouldn't have a new nugget of trivia to bandy about at cocktail parties.For lots more information on crossword puzzles and other games, see the links on the next page.American Crossword Puzzle Tournament Website. (March 15, 2010) . "Crossword Strategies." (March 17, 2010) Nancy. "Staying Sharp: Electronic Games and Exercises to Fight Memory Loss." EverydayHealth.com. Sept. 18, 2008. (March 17, 2010) Patrick, dir. "Wordplay." The Weinstein Company. 2006. (March 23, 2010)Jensen, Sik Cambon. "Brief History of Crossword Puzzles." American Crossword Puzzle Tournament Website. Feb. 1997. (March 15, 2010) New York Times. "Wordplay: The Crossword Blog of the New York Times." (March 16, 2010) English Dictionary. (March 24, 2010) Philip J. "Free Help in Solving Crossword Puzzles." Crossword Phrase Dictionary. (March 19, 2010) Photo: Pixabay (Pexels)For some reason, lots of people believe that the ability to solve crossword puzzles is a talent doled out at birth to a select few. This couldn't be farther from the truth. Crosswords aren't an immutable test of your vocabulary or intelligence—they're a learnable skill that anyone can develop.Learning new skills is one of the best ways to make yourself both marketable and happy, but...Read moreNo other word game or puzzle asks quite as much of your brain as a crossword. Experienced puzzlers consider not just the literal meaning of each clue, but also similar ones they've seen before, frequently repeated answers, syntax quirks, puns, cultural references—and, of course, the puzzle's theme. Unfortunately, this means that crosswords can be downright unwelcoming to newcomers. Everyone starts somewhere, and no matter what your capabilities look like now, here are four general strategies to help you improve.Do Puzzles Every DayThe only way to improve at crosswords is to do lots of them, and the best way to do that is to work them into your daily routine. For me, that means tackling a few puzzles from an ancient book of 365 Will Shortz crosswords before bed every night. My mom prints out Washington Post crosswords and chips away at them over breakfast; my friends who commute by bus or train are diehard New York Times crossword app fans. New York Times puzzles are most folks' crossword gateway drug for a reason: they're easy to find and have a built-in difficulty grading. Mondays are the easiest, Saturdays are the hardest, and the puzzles in between ramp up day by day, so you can pick and choose the ones that work for you. That said, the New York Times is far from the only publisher out there. The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and Merriam-Webster also publish daily American-style crosswords; if cryptic crosswords are your jam, try The Guardian. Some organizations, like Queer Crosswords and Puzzles for Progress, will even send you original themed puzzles as a reward for nonprofit donations. Just remember that each publication has its own style—mastering the tricky clue phrasing in a Saturday New York Times puzzle won't necessarily translate to one from the Post, and vice versa.Use an AppIf you really want to up your crossword game, subscribing to an app, like this one from the New York Times, is a great idea. As much as I love them, paper puzzles just can't touch the user-friendly features you get with an app. You can easily check your work or reveal answers letter by letter, rather than accidentally peeking at the entire solution. This demystifies clues just enough to make them feasible, which is exactly what you want. Also, most apps time your work, which makes it easy to measure your progress. But really, the biggest advantage is accessibility: carrying around thousands of digital puzzles in your pocket makes it easy to do a lot of puzzles.Know When—and How—to CheatCheating is a sensitive topic among crossword enthusiasts, but there's no denying it has its place. Crosswords should be fun, and repeatedly hanging my head against the same wall, praying for a different result, isn't my idea of fun. Besides, frustration is a lousy teacher; unless you have serious competitive puzzle aspirations, stubbornly refusing to look up answers or check your work will get you nowhere.A lot of games require a big time investment—at least, if you want to have the best gear, the...Read moreObviously, you should solve every clue you possibly can without help, but you can't improve without a challenge. A bit of strategic cheating can guide you through even the toughest puzzles. Apps make this super easy: just check or reveal letters one at a time until you can solve a particularly nasty clue. This gives you just enough information to (mostly) hack it on your own, which in turn makes the answer more likely to stick in your memory. Paper puzzles make strategic cheating a little tougher, but thanks to the Internet, not by much. If you're stuck on a print crossword, Google the whole clue in quotes. Framing your search around the clue rather than, say, how many letters you have to work with will help you understand what the clue wanted from you. Over time, you'll find yourself needing less and less help to solve puzzles that previously would've been real stumbers. Study UpIf you're serious about crossword mastery, the Internet is full of likeminded people who would love to help. A blog like Rex Parker's is a great place to start. He solves the New York Times puzzle each day, compares the difficulty to other puzzles from that day of the week, and breaks down key clue/answer pairs in a short post. Between the posts and the comments, you'll get a more complete picture of the solution than if you'd just looked up the answers.You can also specialize even further and brush up on your crosswordese—words that appear frequently in crosswords but almost never in conversation. The New York Times has a quiz that tests your crosswordese knowledge, and there's a more general guide from Dictionary.com. Perhaps predictably, there's also a whole website devoted to crosswordese, with a new word featured every day and an extensive archive.If a statistical approach is more your speed, there are crossword answer databases out there. Data scientist Noah Veltman analyzed a set of New York Times crossword clues and answers from 1996-2012, then arranged them by "crosswordiness" and how frequently they appeared. You can filter the lists by the minimum number of appearances or word length, and see details about any given answer. Similarly, Xwordinfo.com will show you the most popular answers and clues for Times puzzles by year or word length. Hell, you could really go all-out and code yourself some training programs like this guy did, though it's unclear whether his approach is more effective than just doing a whole bunch of crosswords. This is not to say that you must build a robot or memorize clues to solve crosswords more efficiently; the best "training strategy" is the one that makes you happy. It doesn't matter how many puzzles you solve, or how fast you can solve them—just that you keep at it. If you can do that, you'll never stop improving. My love of Crossword apps on mobile devices is no secret, so I was pleased to see that Standalone, Inc had their Crosswords app ready for the iPad at launch. The phrase "just a big iPod Touch" is getting tossed around a lot this week and in some ways Crosswords is a perfect microcosm of that - some of the same iPhone screens and elements are available as pop-ups and in general there's no actual functionality that's available on the iPad version that you can't get on the iPhone -- except the gigantic screen. Portrait mode has enough space to show you a long list of clues, the keyboard, and in most cases the entire puzzle without zooming. Landscape is even better, giving you both the across and down clues in separate columns, the keyboard, and a zoomed-in view of the puzzle. Naturally, there are plenty of features like hints, the ability to tweet your time, and of course the ability to download dozens of different crossword puzzles every day from both free and for-pay premium sources. Video demo and gallery after the break! [gallery link="file" columns="2"]

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