The why and how of

Cryptic Crosswords

Why crosswords?

1. Enhances vocabulary

2. Improves language

3. Sharpens analytical skills

4. Promotes lateral thinking

5. Checks Alzheimer's disease

6. Prevents boredom

How to begin and move ahead?

1. Buy a book on understanding crosswords

2. Go through it slowly and patiently

3. Start solving crymple (cryptic-simple) crosswords

4. Do a daily newspaper cryptic crossword

5. Go through the solutions the following day

6. Understand the logic behind the solutions

7. Persevere and practice

What are crosswords?

Crosswords, in their primary form, are nothing but a 'word-meaning' exercise.

'Words/phrases' form the 'clues' while their respective 'meanings' form the 'solutions'.

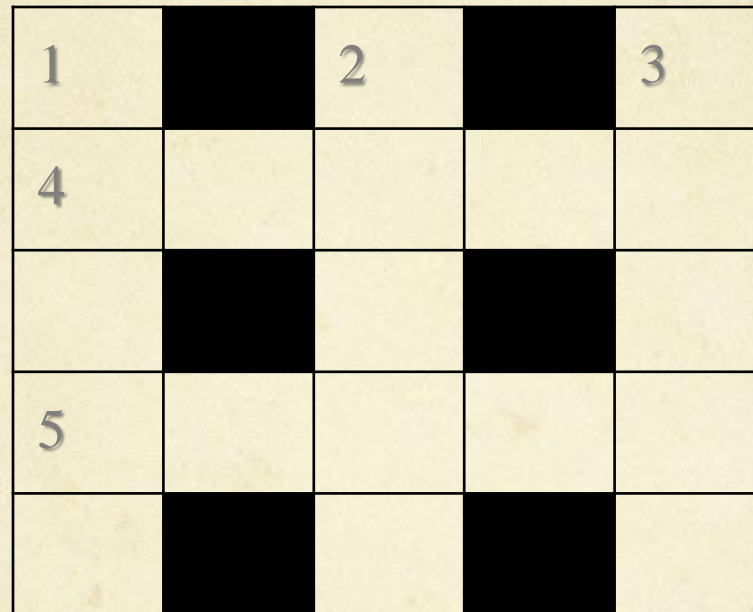Solutions have to be inserted in the blank portions of the grid.

In 'word-meaning format'

The question would be something like this:-

Find the <u>meaning of the following words</u>, having the number of letters mentioned in the brackets

1. Ship (5)

2. Dehydrated (5)

3. Razor (5)

4. Our country (5)

5. Honour (5)

In 'crossword format', the poser could be

CLUES:

Across   Down

4. Ship (5)   1. Razor (5)

5. Dehydrated (5)   2. Our country (5)

                               3. Honour (5)

Solutions:

In 'Word- Meaning' format

1. Ship (5) - Liner
2. Dehydrated (5)- Dried
3. Razor (5)- Blade
4. Our country (5)- India
5. Honour (5)- Pride

In 'Crossword' format

1		2		3
4				
5				

CLUES:

Across

4. Ship (5)
5. Dehydrated (5)

Down

1. Razor (5)
2. Our country (5)
3. Honour (5)

1B		2I		3P
4L	I	N	E	R
A		D		I
5D	R	I	E	D
E		A		E

What constitutes a cryptic clue?

The **cryptic clue, normally, has two distinct parts**:

Direct clue

Indirect hint

Clue may read like this – *Land heart-broken* (5)

The *solution* given is **Earth… How ?**

Explanation

EARTH is a synonym for land

– Land is the <u>direct clue</u>

HEART when broken becomes EARTH!

 – 'heart-broken' is the <u>indirect hint</u>

'MAIN TYPES OF CRYPTIC CLUES'

ANAGRAMS

DOUBLE MEANING

HIDDEN WORDS

HOMOPHONES

FIRST AND LAST/ODD AND EVEN LETTERS

LETTERS IN REVERSE ORDER

DELETIONS

ANAGRAMS

Anagrams are jumbled words.

Some examples are:

broken vase = save

out there   = three/ether

stewed meat = tame/mate

Example of an Anagram Clue

Animal art damaged (3)

Anagram Clue:

Animal art damaged (3)

Solution

RAT

RAT is an animal

ART when damaged (jumbled) becomes RAT

DOUBLE MEANING

Many words in English have entirely different meanings when read in different contexts.

For example the word 'spot' can mean

(a) to identify and (b) a dot.

Example of a Double Meaning Clue

College file (9)

Double Meaning Clue

College file (9)

Solution

INSTITUTE

9 letter synonym common to both, COLLEGE and FILE

HIDDEN WORDS

In this kind of a clue, the *solution is hidden in some of the contiguous letters given in the clue*.

Favourite hiding in Begumpet (3)

PET, meaning favourite is hidden in BegumPET

Example of a Hidden Word Clue

Cap worn by Kanha tourists (6)

Hidden Word Clue
Cap worn by Kanha tourists (3)

Solution

HAT

Hidden inside 'KanHA Tourists'

HOMOPHONES

A homophone is a word which sounds the same as another word
Some pairs of homophones are as follows:-

Bold-bowled   Main-mane   Peak-peek

Deer-dear   Plane-plain   Bare-bear

Soul-sole   Meat-meet   Blue-blew

Example of a Homophone Clue

Festival's sacred, we hear (4)

Homophone Clue

Festival's sacred, we hear (4)

Solution

HOLI

HOLI sounds like HOLY (sacred)

FIRST AND LAST/ODD AND EVEN - LETTERS

The *first or the last letter* of the words of the clue can be joined together to form the solution, or just a part of it.

Huge/<u>b</u>ed <u>i</u>s <u>g</u>rand/*at the outset* (3)

The solution is 'big'

Example of First letter Clue

Britain's artificial turf initially used in cricket (6)

First letter Clue

Britain's artificial turf initially used in cricket (3)

Solution

BAT

FIRST LETTERS (initials) of

Britain's artificial turf – BAT - is used in cricket

LETTERS IN REVERSE

Reversals are words formed when the letters of the original words are reversed. For example when the letters of the word 'ban' is reversed, it becomes 'nab'.

Example of Reversal Clue

Hundred not coming back (3)

Reversal Clue

Hundred not coming back (3)

Solution

TON

Reversal of letters of NOT is TON, which means hundred

DELETIONS

Many a time, when a letter or more than one letter is deleted from a word, a new letter is formed.

The letters from a word can either be removed from the front, middle or end.

 Examples of words formed by deletions are:

'fair' becomes 'air', when its first letter is deleted

Example of Deletion Clue

Cut head out, jump (3)

Deletion Clue
Cut head out, jump (3)

Solution

HOP

CHOP = cut, minus the first letter, becomes HOP = jump

CHARADE CLUES

Two words can be joined together to form a third word.

This is called a Charade. For example,

CAR + PET = CARPET

COT + TON = COTTON

- *Example of Charade Clue*

- Ban profit to get a good deal (7)

Charade Clue

Ban profit to get a good deal (7)

Solution

BARGAIN

BAR = ban

GAIN = profit

BARGAIN means to get a good deal

CONTAINER CLUES

One word when fully contained inside another word can form a third word. It is called a Container.

For example:

PORT inside SING becomes S(PORT)ING

LINK inside BED becomes B(LINK)ED

○ *Example of Container Clue*

○ Bet to have everyone for dance (6)

Container Clue

Bet to have everyone for dance (6)

Solution

BALLET

ALL inside BET makes BALLET

BALLET is a form of dance

Other clue types

○ Cryptic definitions – witty and unusual hints in full

○ & lit – self contained clue

○ Spoonerism – two words with interchanged initials

○ Complex clues – combination of all types

Note: We are not discussing them now as we don't want to give you an overdose at this juncture.

Practice and play options

- ACAD and ACAD Plus for students

- Daily at 3.30 pm

- On www.crypticsingh.com

- Register now and play

- Also Indian Crossword League, IXL in short

- CCCC, National Inter School Crossword Contest

- May refer the book Understanding Cryptic Crosswords

- Browse the newspaper crosswords and their solutions daily

- Most importantly, ***make a beginning***

That's it!
Thanks!