

CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS: TIPS & CONVENTIONS

1 HOW TO CRACK CRYPTIC CLUES

- Most clues give you two ways of getting to the answer: **a definition** and **a secondary indication**
- The **definition** will be either **first or last word(s)**
- The **secondary indication** will show the clue type
- Consider helpful word-lengths (eg 3,2,3,4) before solving
- Don't take **any** word at face-value
- Punctuation can mislead but ! and ? are significant
- Nouns may be verbs or adjectives eg BUST or RUM
- Beware the obvious meaning

2 HOW TO TACKLE WHOLE PUZZLES

- Scan all clues for an easy start
- Look for hidden and homophone clues first
- Look for anagrams, and their indicators
- Find definitions with S = plural or ED = past tense
- After solving a clue, use helpful letters to solve another
- If stuck, move on to another clue fairly quickly
- If stuck totally, leave whole puzzle for a few hours

3 SOME USEFUL (RE)LEARNING

- Roman numerals (*C,L,M,D,V,X*)
- NATO alphabet codes (*Romeo & Juliet*)
- International Vehicle codes (*Germany = D etc*)
- US states (*CA, NY etc*)
- First year French (*la, le etc*)
- Military terms (*Gunners = RA, Engineers = RE*)
- Cricket! (*leg = on, c = caught, b = bowled, w = wide*)

4 SOME TRICKY ALTERNATIVES

- ONE can be A, AN, I, 'UN
- KEY or NOTE can be A, B, C, D, E, F, G
- ABOUT can be CA, C, ON, RE
- ARTICLE can be A, AN, THE
- SAILOR can be AB, TAR, RATING