

# Guide for Times Crossword Setters

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## Grid

**The grid must be taken from the relevant grid library.** It is not necessary to go through a library in any particular order, but try to use as many different grids as possible before repeating one.

### General considerations

#### No phrases split across two or more lights.

**No overt themes.** Themes may be contentious, as they can be off-putting to solvers who have no interest in the matter at hand. If you have an idea for a themed puzzle to mark a special occasion (and it would have to be a VERY special occasion) let me know well in advance and I'll consider it. Ghost themes are acceptable, in the same way that ninas are (see below). But there must be no requirement on the solver to be aware of or understand the theme.

**NINAs** (hidden messages in the grid, or indeed the clues) are fine – indeed a nina can be a good way of starting a grid-fill – provided: general grid-filling guidelines are followed; the grid does not contain a lot of obscure vocabulary; and the nina is not likely to be offensive or in any way controversial. You must tell me in the accompanying notes if your puzzle contains one, if it is likely to be noticed by solvers. For very minor or personal ones there is no need for this.

**Maximum three plurals in –s,** the fewer the better; plurals in –s should not cross-check on the “s”.

**Minimum repetition of prefixes and word-endings,** such as “RE-“, “-ED”, “-ATION” and “-ING”.

**Try to use the unusual letters** – Q, X, J – and resist the temptation to make life easy for yourself by resorting to THEATRE, SCEPTRE, etc. in the bottom right-hand corner.

**Try to find words/phrases that have not appeared (much) before,** especially the 12+-letter phrases.

### Grid entries

**Words and phrases** should ideally be justifiable by inclusion in one of *Collins English*, *Concise Oxford*, or *Chambers* Dictionaries. *Collins English Dictionary* (latest, 12th edition, 2014) is the “official” Times Cryptic Crossword Dictionary, largely because it contains geographical and biographical entries, which makes it a useful overall reference, but that does not mean its definitions are necessarily “better” than those of the other dictionaries (in particular, see below about *Chambers* definitions).

Please do check and consider the authenticity of every phrase you use: I am happy to advise on anything you may have doubts about. Avoid compound-verb phrases unless given in dictionaries (“look up”, is OK; “arrive at”, is not). Examples of phrases that would not be allowed include OUT OF BED, DARK DAYS, OTHER FISH TO FRY (not a phrase in its own right) and IN THE POST.

**Use British English words** for preference, not American (admittedly it can be hard to define the point at which one becomes the other). Terms that are specifically American should be indicated as such in the definition part of the corresponding clue. No foreign words as answers.

**References to living persons** are now permitted but use sparingly, if at all, and preferably in wordplay.

**Acronyms (pronounceable words formed from initial letters of a phrase) are acceptable, but please use sparingly; abbreviations and initialisms are not.** (Definitions in *Collins* do distinguish between the two.) So OPEC, RADA and UNESCO, for example, would be okay; CANTAB, USSR and IMHO would not. (*Collins* and *Chambers* list DNA as a noun, rather than an abbreviation, but I would prefer to avoid such words as grid entries.) Times style is to use sentence case (rather than uppercase) for acronyms (ie, “Opec”, “Rada” and “Unesco”).

**If a word is flagged as “offensive”** in any of the main dictionaries then it must not be used. If flagged as “derogatory” then try to avoid. A degree of judgment and awareness is needed by all of us in this respect.

**No “unpleasant” words,** such as references to diseases, bodily functions, etc that are likely to upset people. There are no hard and fast rules, just apply common sense: “cancer”, “enema” and “excrete” should be avoided; “flu” would be OK.

Within the limits of normal politeness/courtesy/tact, undue “political correctness” is not required. Please don’t “push the envelope” with smutty references: feedback indicates that Times readers are not especially amused by such things. Again, common sense is the key.

**Avoid commercial and brand names** as answers, but sparing use of them in wordplay is acceptable. If in doubt, ask.

**Slang terms** can be problematic and will be judged on their merits. Dated slang should be avoided.

## Clues

The following is intended as guidance only and is not intended to be too prescriptive. The ethos of the Times Crossword is wit and misdirection mainly through subtlety — a balance of innovation, ingenuity and fairness. Simple cluing should not mean dull cluing: on the other hand, we should not allow our ingenuity to make our clues too self-indulgent or obscure.

A clue should read as a proper sentence or clause painting a realistic picture: it won’t do if “it could only be a crossword clue”. However, clues must make sense in their cryptic reading, otherwise the achievement of a good surface reading is pointless. It is always preferable to use a simple clue or one with a less compelling surface reading than one with complex wordplay or an outstanding surface that doesn’t quite work.

### General considerations

**Definitions must be precise**, although they may be as punning and unobvious as one’s imagination allows. Please try to avoid unusual or archaic definitions for familiar words — the sort which normally appear in *Chambers* especially. I will be less tolerant of “obscure” words used as part of wordplay than as full answers.

Care should be taken with adjectives ending “-able” and “-ible”: it is incorrect, for example, to define “edible” by “can be eaten” which does not define an adjective. More generally, if in doubt, it is worth considering whether the definition could be used to replace the answer in a sentence: if not, it probably isn’t suitable. This test is particularly useful for detecting when a transitive verb has been (incorrectly) defined by a phrase that is intransitive (transitive verb plus object).

**Clues must be technically sound:** taken literally a clue must correctly (and grammatically) indicate what instructions the solver should follow to obtain the answer. As Afrit laid down, “I need not mean what I say, but I must say what I mean.” And as Ximenes said, when a solver sees the solution the following day, he must realise he was fairly had, not feel “how could I have known that?”, or (worse) “I thought of that, but I couldn’t see how it could be right.”

**Clues should be of the form “wordplay leads to definition”, or “definition comes from wordplay”,** where it could only ever be interpreted as such. Link words between wordplay and definition should be kept to a minimum. In principle (per Afrit and Ximenes), a cryptic crossword clue should comprise wordplay, which explains how to construct the answer, and a definition, which serves to confirm the answer has been constructed correctly (and nothing else).

I am not entirely hostile to the use of link words, especially prepositions. However, I have spent a lot of time writing and editing barred, thematic puzzles, which often include a clue gimmick. Such gimmicks include: extra words that have to be removed before solving the clue; and devices where the wordplay leads to something other than the defined answer (the answer with an extra letter or missing a letter, for example). In the first case, there must be no words that could be mistaken for an extra word, which pretty much precludes the use of link words (although prepositions often work okay). In the second case, there really isn’t an equivalence between what the wordplay produces and the defined answer, so any kind of link, including prepositions are forbidden (at least in the Magpie and Listener).

So I try hard to avoid link words in my own clues, for barred theatics and standard cryptics. However, I will not seek to impose my own discipline on other setters, although I may well remove link words if I think the clue can retain its wordplay elements and the surface isn’t adversely affected.

**Short, simple clues, with good use of puns and deceptive definitions are preferred.** Try to avoid laborious build-ups especially with clichéd abbreviations (LE for the French, E for East, RE for corps/army group, almost anything for “note”, etc – unless these are relevant to the “theme” of the clue). On the other hand,

apparent clichés that are not – “end of sunbathing” leading to TAN, rather than G, for example – are to be encouraged.

Generally speaking, I don’t like clues where it is virtually impossible to obtain the answer from the wordplay. A clue whose answer can only be obtained from the definition and cross-checking letters may as well be in the quick crossword. Of course, there are many exceptions to this. Solvers really appreciate brilliant and unexpected constructions that may only become apparent when trying to understand the wordplay – Richard’s “Demanding car hire” for HARD TO PLEASE being but one example.

**Please avoid “shorthand wordplay”,** as in constructions of the form “A B in”, to mean “B contained in A”, and “A not B” to mean “A minus B”, etc.

Note, however, that constructions such as “A B houses” and “A B abandons” to indicate “B around A” and “B minus A” are acceptable as they may be read quite naturally in English as “A [that] B houses” and “A [that] B abandons”; the same justification applies to “A B’s housing” and “A B’s abandoning”. This does not, however, extend to “A B housing” or “A B abandoning”.

**Indicators** must clearly suggest what the solver is required to do and be appropriate in terms of part of speech and usage. In particular:

- anagram indicators should suggest some disturbance to or of the fodder<sup>1</sup>;
- juxtaposition indicators should indicate some kind of proximity, such as “by”, “on”, “touching” and “meeting”. Despite their widespread use, I’m not keen “having”, “taking” or “getting”: if anything, they suggest containment rather than juxtaposition;
- nouns are rarely appropriate indicators on their own. I would not allow an anagram indicator that is a noun, for example, unless it also had a different and suitable meaning (such as “ground” or “supply”) or it is used as part of a phrase (such as “arrangement of”).

Any orientation suggested by an indicator should be consistent with the orientation of the answer in the grid: for example, it would be inappropriate to use “topless” in an across clue to indicate the removal of the first letter, or “heading west” to indicate reversal in a down clue.

**False capitalisation** (such as “Article about Reading” for RECITAL) is acceptable, but false decapitalisation is not.

**Try to avoid wordplay that is ambiguous:** this is most likely to occur when reversal or homophone indicators appear between fodder and definition (and the entry length does not disambiguate the answer).

**Offensive words:** the same rule as for grid-filling of course applies to cluing: please use nothing marked as “offensive” in the main dictionaries.

**Think carefully about surface readings** that might have unfortunate resonance with ongoing, distressing current events: for example, “Escaped from Islamic country after beheading” for (i)RAN. References to topical news items are also problematic, partly because the item may no longer be topical by the time of publication, and partly for the reason above. Do please exercise common-sense and judgment in such matters.

**Foreign words** are acceptable as wordplay elements, but don’t overtax the linguistic ability of solvers. Again, it’s difficult to specify strict rules about this, but something like the (tempting) Spanish for “you” (USTED), for example, should be avoided!

**Indications of single letters** may be achieved via abbreviations or letter-selection indicators. Try to avoid over-using such devices as they can appear laboured and are generally easy for the solver.

Consult the official list for one-letter abbreviations (Appendix B). Note that I have updated Richard’s list, mainly adding to it, although I have made one or two deletions as well.

Letter-selection indicators must be accurate: “a bit of” is not enough to indicate the first letter; “start job”, for example, is not accurate for J (which is properly indicated by “start of job” or “job’s start”), etc. I note that Richard has, in the past, allowed “trace”, “touch”, “hint” and similar words as first-letter indicators, although I

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<sup>1</sup> I regard the Clue Clinic’s list of standard indicators for anagrams (and for other indicators) as the most reliable guide (<https://www.clueclinic.com/index.php/clinical-data/>).

don't see them as being significantly different in meaning from "bit". So I am happy to allow such indicators but would prefer to see them qualified, in the interests of accuracy, by applying some imagination in the surface readings, such as "slightest hint of" (as a first-letter indicator) or "last vestiges of" (to indicate the last letters of a sequence of words).

**Try to avoid using the same abbreviation, indicator or wordplay element twice** in the same puzzle, although I will be more tolerant of some repetition in Jumbos. Certain words tend to be overused in wordplay – "a" (for A) and "about" (for many things), in particular. I will allow multiple uses of "about", for example, provided each occurrence indicates something different (RE, containment, reversal, etc).

**Two-letter abbreviations** should, as a rule, appear in *Collins* or *COD*, and not be too obscure. Be careful with two-letter abbreviations with a repeated letter: for example, "lines" and "pages" are fine to indicate LL and PP, respectively; the use of "news" for NN and "times" for TT should be avoided. Abbreviations should be indicated as per the dictionary: PR, for example, should be indicated by "pair", not "couple". However, I note that Richard himself would violate this rule – "blunder" for OG ("own goal"), for example – so some latitude may be extended to well-established conventions, such as "men" for OR, "tracks" for RY and "writing" for MS.

**Maximum five anagrams** (six at a pinch occasionally if there are a couple of mini- or partial anagrams among them); no secondary anagrams (that is, anagrams of synonyms); compound anagrams to be used with great discretion and clearly signposted (that is, words whose elements must be manipulated first in some way before the solver finds the letters to be anagrammed).

Single letter abbreviations indicated by their full form may be used in anagram material, but this should not be overdone. So "Animals roaming small area" is acceptable for LLAMAS; "Fellow strange local maiden married" for MALCOLM, is just about okay (surely "Fellow married strange local maiden" is preferable, though!), but beyond that it starts to get too complicated or indirect.

**Maximum two hidden clues** (there should be no superfluous words in the hidden part). If two are used, then one should be a reverse hidden.

**Homophones:** feedback suggests these are controversial, although in my opinion people get too worked up about what after all is meant to be a bit of fun. Nonetheless, care should be taken to be pretty accurate: PAR THYME, for example, is not acceptable for PART-TIME. Do check the pronunciations given in the dictionary. And don't forget that not all words are pronounced the same in different regions: this can be got round by "some say" etc. Be careful not to use part homophones which don't work in context: for example: "RUFF" for "ROUGH" in BREAKTHROUGH.

I don't impose a set limit on the number used per puzzle, but any more than three is probably pushing it. "Reverse" homophones (where the homophone appears in the clue), are okay up to a point, if they are straightforward: for example, I don't mind "ease" for EE or "tease" for TT (but the literal sound must be given: "facility" and "kid" would not be acceptable).

**Try to avoid the use of wordplay elements that have many possibilities.** In particular, avoid "boy/man/girl/woman" to indicate a name and "state" to indicate an abbreviation for an American state. (I will allow such things if they are qualified in some way).

**No (conscious) recycling of old clues**, even from other publications. With so many crosswords and setters around, duplication is inevitable (although interesting choices of grid entries will help reduce the problem), but we shouldn't be doing it deliberately. If I see a clue I know to have been used before in a Times crossword I may change it. I will be more tolerant with Quick Cryptics, given the constraints on clue complexity.

### Specific considerations

**Do not use apostrophe-s to indicate "has" in the sense of "possesses":** "Romeo's got passion outside" would be acceptable for "HEART", for example, but not "Romeo's passion outside"

**Do not use "to" to mean "beside"** unless there's some idea of motion: a small thing, but like the previous example, hardly justifiable by real-life examples.

**Do not use "without" as a containment indicator:** this is archaic usage.

**Try to avoid wordplay that indicates a mixture of numbers and letters which then has to be transformed to letters**, as in “first” for IST or “excellent” for AI. Also avoid using “ten” to indicate IO. I will allow some latitude here if justified by the quality of the wordplay and surface reading.

**Don’t use A in a clue for I (one) in the answer**, or “One” in a clue when “a” is in the answer. However, where the “A” might be read as the “one of something” in the answer (for example “one cup” for ATROPHY) then I don’t have a problem with it.

**Try to avoid the use of “a” as an indefinite article (with no contribution to the wordplay) especially within the wordplay element of a clue**, given that “a” is often used to indicate A. I will almost always delete such instances.

**Use of “on”**: in an Across charade-style clue “on” always means “to the right of” and in a Down clue “above”. This is a Times convention which seems worth maintaining. That aside, Down clues need not stick strictly to “vertical” terminology, although generally it seems nicer.

**Use of “heart”, “core” and similar words** should indicate precisely the middle of the fodder (ie, one or two letters).

**Avoid the use of “oddly” and “evenly”** on their own to indicate alternate letters. (I’m fine with constructions of the form “using/ignoring odd/even bits”.) Also avoid “occasionally” and “frequently” which are insufficiently precise. Words such as “regularly”, “periodically”, “alternately”, or phrases based on these words, should be used. Other phrases that indicate peridocity, according to the reference dictionaries, such as “every so often”, are also acceptable.

**Cognate definitions in double definition clues should be avoided**, although some latitude will be granted for compelling surface readings.

**All of the above** (apart from technical accuracy) is subject to individual judgment. I don’t expect all clues to be short, simple ones. Variety is the spice of life, and innovation is always encouraged. A clue can be convoluted if I think the end result is worth it, and similarly, a clue may be rejected if it’s the umpteenth repetition or variation of the same simple idea!

## Jumbo Cryptics

The vocabulary for these puzzles should be similar to that of a normal daily puzzle. The clues should be of the same standard and type as the daily puzzle. Since the jumbo contains twice the number of clues as a daily puzzle, ten anagrams maximum are permitted for the Jumbos and up to three hidden clues. Ideally one-letter abbreviations should not be repeated, but I would allow two of the same if the clues are too nice to change!

## Quick Cryptics

The Quick Cryptic was introduced in March 2014 and has its own grid library based on a 13x13 grid.

It is intended to be an easier version of the main cryptic crossword. In particular, the clues for the Quick Cryptic should aim for more accessible answers, easier-to-parse wordplay, and there is not the same insistence on “perfect” surfaces.

One-letter abbreviations, particularly the less usual or obvious ones, should be used with caution. Please also try to avoid too much “crossword-ese” that is unlikely to be known to new solvers, such as “tracks” for RY, “men” for OR (I would prefer “railway” and “other ranks”), and “part of hospital” for ENT. Conversely, using “doctor” to indicate DR or even GP would seem natural to solvers. Again, common sense should be your guide.

The challenge with these puzzles is to come up with a few fresh ideas, while avoiding too much cliché and nevertheless maintaining a simpler approach. This can be difficult to achieve!

I want to keep the two puzzles absolutely independent of each other, and further relaxations of other rules may be made in future, although at the same time nothing that would preclude the Quick Cryptic becoming a reliable stepping stone to the main act! Please don’t consciously make the 15x15 puzzles harder to compensate for the easier alternative.

Setters should choose a pseudonym not in use by themselves — or anyone else — elsewhere. Pseudonyms do not display on the phone apps, so please avoid clues that rely on knowledge of the setter's name.

## Puzzle workflow

### Submitting puzzles

Send puzzles by e-mail only, please, to [crosswordeditor-sm@thetimes.co.uk](mailto:crosswordeditor-sm@thetimes.co.uk) preferably as a Crossword Compiler file. If you don't have Crossword Compiler, a Microsoft Word file in .docx or .rtf format (not .doc, which theoretically is susceptible to viruses or malicious code in macros etc) is also acceptable.

The file name should be in the format Surname N-n.ccw (with appropriate file extensions for MS Word files), where N is your puzzle one-up number, and n is the grid number. For Quick Cryptics use Pseudonym N-n.ccw.

Please try to use the Times standard EM DASH: that is the long dash, achieved in Word and Sympathy by simultaneously pressing the CTRL, ALT and – (hyphen) key on the Number pad on the right of the keyboard. For Crossword Compiler, in the clue box, after placing the cursor where you want the dash, RIGHT CLICK to bring up the menu, then after selecting INSERT CHARACTER, which brings up the menu of characters, CLICK on the dash (which enters it), and then just click CLOSE. Otherwise, I prefer double hyphens to single ones.

Explanations should be included for all clues, either as part of the Crossword Compiler file (or on a separate page for MS Word submissions). Brackets should be used to group multiple items of fodder and indicate the order in which wordplay instructions are applied. I would prefer explanations using the conventions shown in the table below, but I'm happy to accept other styles, provided they are self-explanatory.

Clue type	Explanation	Example
Reversal of A	A<	Part of leg twisted: CALF<
Anagram of A	A*	Take vital supply: (TAKE VITAL)*
Homophone of A	“A”	Type of nut on the radio: “CONKER”
Hidden BC in AB CD	(a)B C(d)	Part of photograph identifies: (photogr)APH ID(entifies)
A minus B	A – B	Belgian port ejects an: ANTWERP - AN
ABC missing A and C	(a)B(c)	Reduced amount of money available: BUDGE(t) Tapers endlessly: (n)ARROW(s)
Charade of A and B	A B	Onset of sexual desire: S(exual) URGE Author's in a state: I'M in (A NATION)

Double, triple, etc and cryptic definitions can simply be indicated as such, with relevant explanation where appropriate for cryptic definitions.

Please provide assistance with any idea that may be unfamiliar or rely on general knowledge, such as literary, musical references, historical events, and famous (or not so famous) people. I always check these things, but occasionally I am not sure where to start. Clues whose explanations require me to do some research or ask the setter may not be looked on favourably! Generally, too much explanation is always better than too little.

### Solving and editing

I use the Crossword Compiler file to generate a Word version of the puzzle for me to solve. Once I have test-solved the puzzle I will correct what I perceive to be errors and make additional changes as I see fit, perhaps to improve the surface reading or remove link words.

## **Proof-checking puzzles**

I send the edited version of the Word document to the setter with a working version of the puzzle, along with accompanying comments.

**Please check the working proof,** as we all make mistakes, and I am no less prone than anyone else. While I take ultimate responsibility for errors, the more pairs of eyes there are checking the better!

I may also make suggestions which are up for discussion, often with a view to tightening up the wordplay or improving the surface reading.

**I would appreciate a response to the proof,** even if it is only to say that you are happy with my edits and to use any additional suggestions I've made. I'm always happy to consider alternative suggestions or updates from the setter.

## **Scheduling and publication**

I prepare a final version of the puzzle by importing the revised clues to the submitted Crossword Compiler file. This will very likely be the version that will appear in print and on the web, although last-minute changes are not unknown. The Crossword Compiler file is used to generate the published versions of the puzzle.

Periodically, I will schedule a batch of puzzles that are for publication and will inform setters when puzzles will be appearing.

**Jason Crampton, 10 February 2025**

## Appendix A Format of non-Crossword Compiler submissions

If submitting a Word file, please adhere to the following instructions: the puzzle grid must be included and should appear as a grey image; the clues (for the 15x15 and quick cryptic puzzles) should appear on a single page with the clues in a single column immediately below the grid; Times Roman 12pt font should be used throughout.

In addition, a single TAB should be inserted before each clue number and a single TAB between clue number and clue. This helps with cutting and pasting clues into the desktop publishing software. No full stops after clues, please. However, for Quick Cryptics do not put a TAB (or any white space) before the clue numbers.

A list of solutions should appear in the same file as the puzzle, on a separate page from the puzzle and clues. (A solution grid is not necessary.) Solutions lists should be as displayed in the sample below, using upper case with single spaces between each, and nothing else (no commas, full stops etc).

ACROSS: 1 UNCLE 4 ALBACORE 8 BLOW HOT AND COLD 10 EASTBOUND 11 OZONE 12 LAPUTA 14 CRABMEAT 17 PORTRAIT 18 CRUSOE 20 NAAFI 22 SOAP OPERA 24 COUNTERSIGNING 25 SNOWED IN 26 SCARF

DOWN: 1 UMBRELLA PINE 2 CHOPS 3 EXHIBITOR 4 ARTHUR 5 BENIDORM 6 CACAO 7 ROLLOVERS 9 GET THE HANG OF 13 PORTADOWN 15 BURROUGHS 16 AIRSPEED 19 KANSAN 21 I KNOW 23 EVITA

These lists are used to generate the answer grids, and they are also sent to the Times, just as the clues are, so it is important that they are accurate and do not need re-formatting. Please try to avoid leaving accents in answers, as they cause problems with the software that renders the online puzzles. Of course I will check and remove any I see, as will sub editors, before it gets that far.

Please don't get too worked up about the formatting if you have problems with any aspect of it. The quality of the clues themselves is the most important thing! I'm happy to advise, if I can, on anything you are not sure about.

A list of clue explanations should also be included, using the same conventions described earlier in the document. This list should contain one explanation per line.

## Appendix B: Abbreviations

All the following are acceptable, sanctified by usage and/or *COD*. This list applies to both 15x15 and Jumbo cryptics. We have no official list of longer abbreviations, generally allowing those that appear in *COD*, *Collins* and *Chambers* and seem reasonable to the Editor. We do not use International Vehicle Registration abbreviations or digraphs for internet domains of countries. Other imaginative (within reason) ways of referring to individual letters, not included below (such as “upright character” for I and “sort of junction” for T) may be allowed.

- A ace, acceleration, advanced, alpha, America(n), ampere(s), answer, area, article, blood group, first-class, key, note
- B bachelor, billion(s), bishop, black, blood group, book, born, boron, bowled, bravo, breadth, British, bye, key, note, second-class
- C 100, about, cape, carbon, caught (by), Celsius, cent(s), centigrade, century, chapter, Charlie, clubs, cold, Conservative, constant, key, note, speed of light
- D 500, daughter(s), day(s), delta, Democrat, density, departs, diameter, diamonds, died, duke, key, note, old penny
- E earl, earth, east(ern), echo, ecstasy (drug), electronic, energy, English, European, key, note
- F Fahrenheit, fathom(s) female, feminine, fine, fluorine, folio, following, force, forte, foxtrot, frequency, key, loud, loudly, note
- G gallon(s), golf, good, gram(s), gramme(s), grand, (acceleration due to) gravity, gravitational constant, key, note
- H hard, hearts, height, henry, heroin, hospital, hot, hotel, hour(s), husband, hydrogen
- I 1, (electric) current, India, iodine, island, isle, one
- J jack, judge, Juliet
- K a thousand, Kelvin, kilo, kilometre(s), king, Köchel number, potassium
- L 50, lake, large, learner (driver), left, length, Liberal, Lima, line, litre(s), loch, lough, pound(s)
- M 1000, maiden(s), male, married, masculine, mass, medium, metre(s), Mike, mile(s), million(s), minute(s), Monsieur, month(s), motorway
- N indefinite/unspecified/variable number (not just “number”), knight, name, neuter, new, Newton(s), nitrogen, noon, north(ern), note, noun, November
- O blood group, duck, love, nothing, nought, old, Oscar, over(s), oxygen
- P page, papa, parking, pawn, penny/pence, phosphorus, piano, power, pressure, quiet, quietly
- Q Quebec, queen, question
- R king, queen, radius, Republican, resistance, right, river, Romeo, rook, run(s)
- S Saint, second(s), shilling(s), sierra, singular, small, son(s), south(ern), spades, succeeded, sulphur
- T tango, temperature, tense, tesla, time, ton(s), tonne(s)
- U uniform, united, universal (films), university, uranium, you (as in text messaging; “your” and “you are” are also acceptable for UR)
- V 5, vanadium, velocity, verb, verse, versus, very, Victor, volt(s), volume
- W tungsten, watt(s), week, weight, west(ern), whiskey, wicket(s), wide, width, wife, with, women’s
- X 10, by (multiplied by), cross, error (mark), kiss, times (by), unknown (variable), vote, x-ray
- Y unknown (variable), Yankee, year(s), yen, yttrium
- Z unknown (variable), Zulu