

From GAMES magazine:

Every clue in a cryptic crossword has two parts: a definition of the answer and a literal indication of the answer via wordplay. Either half may come first; finding the dividing point between the parts is key to solving. Below are described eight common methods by which hints are given via wordplay, any combination of these gimmicks [and others!] may be used.

Expect to see references to abbreviations (*doctor* for DR, *Hawaii* for HI, or *university* for U), chemical symbols (*iron* for FE), Roman numerals (*five* for V), and parts of words (*end of year* for R, *head of cabbage* for C, or *heart of stone* for O). [Also *one* for A or AN, *nothing* for O, etc.]

A clue with an exclamation point may be what's called an *& lit.* clue, in which the two halves overlap, so the whole clue is both a definition *and* a cryptic indication of the answer, as in *Terribly angered!* For ENRAGED (see "Anagrams" below).

Anagrams: The answer appears in anagrammed form, preceded or followed by a word or phrase that suggests mixing, as in *Changing times* for ITEMS.

Deletions: Deletions come in three varieties: beheadments, curtailments, and internal deletions. The clue always contains a word or phrase indicating the deletion. Examples: *Uncovered bent charm* for ENCHANT, a beheadment of PENCHANT; *Fiery bird without a tail* for FLAMING, a curtailment

of FLAMINGO; and *Heartless miserly bloke* for CHAP, and internal deletion of CHEAP. [Also *after the first, endless*, etc.]

Charades: The answer is broken into smaller words that are clued individually, as in *Auto animal covering* for CARPET.

Containers: A word such as PATIENTS "contains" TIE inside PANTS, so it might be clued as *Hospital residents make knots in trousers*.

Hidden answers: The answer may appear intact, albeit camouflaged, in the clue. Example: *Myopic colonel clutches flute* for PICCOLO (*myopic colonel*).

Homophones: A word that sounds like the answer, indicated by use of a giveaway phrase such as "We hear" or "as they say." Example: *Counted frozen chicken out loud* for NUMBERED ("numb bird").

Reversals: A synonym for "backward" or "overturn" in a clue may indicate a reversal, as in *Returned beer fit for a king* (LAGER reversed) for REGAL. [Direction names are also common indicators (*left, north*, etc.).]

Double definitions: The clue has no wordplay half; instead, it has two definition halves, as in *Scooter was blue* for MOPED.

There are other types – **Anything goes!**

Here are a few more solved examples from GAMES magazine October, 2009:

Clues

1. Lincoln's assassin standing before Illinois burial place (4,4)
2. Evaluates famous trial defendant (6)
3. Look back among cuffs for some hosiery (4,5)
4. Bananas, lemon, with breakfast fruit (5)
5. Reportedly loose misses (5)
6. Rev. Spooner's cornmeal with sweetener and clams for the silent (4,5)
7. Saint in neutral-colored sports car (8)
8. Get out small stuff (5)
9. Royal one keeping "loose lip" law (9)

Answers

1. BOOT HILL = BOOTH + ("standing before") ILL (common abbreviation of Illinois)
2. SCOPES (double definition)
3. KNEE SOCKS = SEE (look) reversed ("back") inside ("among") KNOCKS (cuffs)
4. MELON = LEMON anagrammed ("bananas")
5. LACKS = LAX (loose) homophone ("reportedly")
6. HUSH MONEY = MUSH HONEY Spoonerism (switch initial consonants)
7. STINGRAY = ST + IN + GRAY
8. SCRAM = S(mall) + CRAM ("stuff")
9. PRINCIPLE = PRINCE ("royal one") containing ("keeping") LIP anagrammed ("loose", or "allowed to move around")