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## Word farm crossword

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 can't be further from the truth. Crossword puzzles are not an immutable test of your vocabulary or intelligence—they are a learnable skill that anyone can develop. Learning new skills is one of the best ways to make you both marketable and happy, but... Read moreNo other word game or puzzle asks quite as much of your brain as a crossword puzzle. Experienced puzzle-biters consider not only the literal meaning of each clue, but also similar ones they've seen before, often repeated answers, syntax peculiarities, puns, cultural references—and, of course, the puzzle theme. Unfortunately, this means that crossword puzzles can be downright unwelcoming to newcomers. Everyone starts somewhere, and no matter what your ability looks like now, here are four general strategies to help you improve. Do Puzzles Every DayThe only way to improve at crossword puzzles 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 some puzzles from an old book of 365 Will Shortz crossword puzzles before bed every night. My mom prints the Washington Post crossword puzzles and chips away at them over breakfast; my friends who commute by bus or train are diehard New York Times crossword app fans. The New York Times puzzle is most people's crossword gateway drug for a reason: they are easy to find and have a built-in difficulty grading. Mondays are the easiest, Saturdays are the hardest, and 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 crossword puzzles 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 into 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 good 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 reply letter by letter, rather than accidentally peek at the whole solution. This demystifies clues just enough to make them feasible, which is exactly what you want. In addition, most apps make your work time, making 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 How-to CheatCheating is a sensitive topic among crossword enthusiasts, enthusiasts, there is no denying that it has its place. Crossword puzzles should be fun, and repeatedly banging my head against the same wall, praying for another result, is not my idea of fun. Moreover, frustration is a lousy teacher. Unless you have serious competitive puzzle ambitions, stubbornly refusing to look up answers or check your work will get you nowhere. A lot of games require a great time investment—at least, if you want the best gear, the... Read moreIntent, you should solve every hint you possibly can without help, but you can not improve without a challenge. A little strategic cheating can guide you through even the toughest puzzles. Apps make this super simple: 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 cheats a little tougher, but thanks to the Internet, not by much. If you're stuck on a print crossword puzzle, Google the whole hint in quotes. Framing your search around the clue rather than, say, how many letters you need to work with will help you understand what the clue wanted from you. Over time, you will find yourself needing less and less help solving puzzles that previously would have been real stumpers. Study UpIf you are serious about crossword mastery, the Internet is full of like-minded people who would love to help. A blog like Rex Parker's is a great place to start. He solves the New York Times puzzles every day, compares the difficulty with other puzzles from that day of the week, and breaks down key clue/answer pairs in a short post. Between the posts and comments, you'll get a more complete picture of the solution than if you'd just looked up the responses. You can also specialize even longer and brush up on your crossword words that appear frequently in crossword puzzles but almost never in conversation. The New York Times has a quiz that tests your crossword knowledge, and there's a more general guide from Dictionary.com. Perhaps predictably, there is also an entire website devoted to crossword puzzles, with a new word with every day and an extensive archive. If a statistical method is more your speed, there are crossword answer databases out there. Computer scientist Noah Vellman analyzed a set of New York Times crossword clues and answers from 1996-2012, then arranged them with crossword puzzles and how often they appeared. You can filter the lists by the minimum number of appearances or word length, and see details of a given answer. In the same Xwordinfo.com you show yourself the most popular answers and clues for the Times puzzle of year or word length. Hell, you could really go all-out and code yourself some exercise programs like this guy did, but it's unclear if his approach is more effective than just doing a whole bunch of crossword puzzles. This is not to say that you have to build a robot or memorize clues for solve crossword crossword puzzles effectively, the best training strategy is the one that makes you happy. It doesn't matter how many puzzles you solve, or how quickly you can solve them—just that you keep on it. If you can do that, you will never stop improving. Nicole Fornabaior.comOf if you are a fencing aficionado, you may be unfamiliar with this word that often pops up in crossword answers. It is the term for the practice sword used in competitive dueling that has a protective, blunted knob at the end. Look for clues that refer to leaves, swords, or rapiers. You will also find references to fencing sports or Olympic events. A guard! Here are 14 more tricky crossword clues that will leave you stumped. Nicole Fornabaior.comThis term refers to a Turkish chief or officer of the Ottoman Empire. It can also indicate a religious leader, or any man with a title or authority. Look for clues that refer to a Turkish general or ruler, or more difficult clues like Turkish bigwig or Middle Eastern potentate. Nicole Fornabaior.comWhat is known as America's favorite cake? This popular cookie shows off a lot in crossword answers. You will also see it in longer answers like Oreo thins. Look for clues that refer to a diet version of the cookie, like lo-cal or calorie-conscious. Clues like twistable treat or any variation that refers to the cookie's crème filling, black-and-white quality, or dip-ability in milk. Check out these 47 brain games that will increase your brain power. Nicole Fornabaior.comThis noun has several definitions, beyond the obvious. It's a surface unit, but it's also a field of study. In that sense, crossword clues can skew in different directions to stretch your mind. You'll see area clued in simple ways like space, zone or land action, but prepare to think out of the box as well. It can be clued as strength (as in a specialty) or kingdom (a nice way to enter an area). Nicole Fornabaior.comErie is a Pennsylvania port city and also a Great Lake. It is also eerie, like the hidden ghost in this puzzle. You'll find clues that refer to its location or refer to a canal, river, lake, or area. Be in search of puns about the Great Lakes as one of a great quintet. The capital G will let you know that you are looking for a proper noun. Try these other 15 tricky word puzzles that are hard to solve. Nicole Fornabaior.comThis nautical term is the opposite of aweather or wind mode, usually on a ship. The lee side is sheltered and away from the storm. You'll see clues for this word referencing everything nautical and weather-focused. Crossword clues for alec can also refer to protection and protection as on the safe side and away from the storm. Can you discover which plane doesn't belong in this puzzle? Nicole Fornabaior.comAn eland is a type of African antelope known for its helical horns. You'll see it clued in simple ways, but keep an eye out clues that mention its African or place, or occasionally to zoos. Pay attention to horn descriptions and related creatures like gazelles and impalas. For a few more brainteasers that will test your elastic thinking, try to find the missing words in these puzzles. Nicole Fornabaior.comOleo is a slightly old-fashioned word for butter or margarine that you sometimes see in recipes. Look for clues like reference butter, margarine, or cooking oil. It can be clued in such ways to make you think outside the box, as in it can be on a roll or sub in a bathtub. You will also see it simply as toast spread, or butter options. Nicole Fornabaior.comEider is great crossword fill because it has three vowels in addition to two regular consonants. Usually you will hear about down pillows and not helpers filled with eiders, which is a type of duck that has soft feathers. You'll see clues related to pillow stuffing, types of ducks, seabirds and even clues like pond denizen or where to get down. Nicole Fornabaior.comAre you familiar with the French word for shut up or shut up, as in enclosures? An étui is a small case, usually for cosmetics or sewing needles. The English version refers to all small cases that are ornamental plants. You will come across clues that refer to a wire holder or sew case. Also, look for clues that refer to a small bag, a toilet in case, or a small carrier for performances and such. Set your skills by seeing if you can solve the world's first crossword puzzle. Nicole Fornabaior.comBrian Eno is a musician from Roxy Music, a band that collaborated with David Bowie and is known for ambient music that pops up at airports. He is also a popular crossword clue because of the elegant three-letter combination of his last name. Look for related clues about music composing and producing. If you can't get enough of word games, take the fun to go with these printable crossword puzzles. Nicole Fornabaior.comYou must remember Captain Hook's gentle sidekick, the pirate Smee. Look for clues that refer to Hook, Peter Pan, or J.M Barrie, who wrote that play and novel. The word may also refer to a little-known type of duck, so keep your eyes peeled for waterbird types of clues as well. Nicole Fornabaior.comMel Ott is a well-known Baseball Hall of Famer who played for the New York Giants. You will see him clued in a variety of ways playing on these statuses. Look for mentions of Cooperstown, New York (the site of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum), and references to his team, such as the Giant among the Giants. The capital G should clue you in that you're looking at a real name. You'll also find simple clues like slugger Mel. Next, you'll see if you can solve 25 of the most challenging riddles ever. Originally published: 12 August 2019 2019