

# Cryptic Clues

by Jane Howell

A cryptic clue generally consists of two parts:

**Definition** – this is synonymous with the answer and is usually positioned at the beginning or end of the clue.

**Wordplay** – this involves one or more of the cryptic devices listed below and makes up the rest of the clue. The wordplay could be another synonym of the answer or it might require manipulation of individual letters or groups of letters of the answer. Most of the cryptic devices make use of an **indicator**, which alerts the solver to the type of device employed.

Setters make much use of abbreviations in the wordplay. These normally consist of one or two letters. When the solver encounters words such as company or firm, for example, they should consider the possibility that the letters CO should be substituted.

## Cryptic Devices

### Anagram

This is the best-known cryptic clue type. In an anagram, the letters of one or more words are rearranged to form another word or phrase. The solver can spot this type of clue by identifying the anagram indicator, a word that implies change, disarray, uncertainty or failure. Examples include **doctor**, **model**, **organised**, **resort**, **wild** and **shattered**.

Cancel my order for plant (8)

In this clue, the anagram indicator is **order**, indicating that the letters CANCEL MY should be rearranged to form a plant, giving CYCLAMEN.

### Charade

In a charade, the answer is formed by joining two or more words together.

Come back to harvest fruit (8)

A word meaning 'to harvest' (REAP) followed by a fruit (PEAR) gives the answer, REAPPEAR (come back).

## Container

The presence of container indicators such as **embraced** or **within** can signify that one or more words should be placed inside another.

Everything in the broadcast is superficial (7)

Here, the container indicator is **in**, and indicates that a word meaning 'everything' (ALL) should be put inside a word meaning 'broadcast' (SHOW), giving SHALLOW.

## Double Definition

This type of clue has no indicator. Instead, the wordplay consists of another definition of the answer. The two definitions must give words with the same spelling, but not necessarily the same pronunciation.

Refinement of language (6)

In this example, both 'refinement' and 'language' are definitions of the answer, POLISH.

## Hidden

With this type of clue, the letters of the answer are hidden consecutively within the clue itself. Indicators such as **some** or **partly** introduce the section of letters in which the answer can be found.

Boy, some like it hot (5)

The word **some** indicates that the letters following it contain the answer. The definition is boy and the letters KEITH appear in **like it hot**.

## Homophone

In this type of clue, the wordplay provides a word that sounds the same as the definition, but has a different meaning. A homophone indicator such as **heard**, **reportedly** or **pronounced** will be present.

Fog avoided, we hear (4)

Here, the homophone indicator is **we hear** and its position implies that the answer (MIST) sounds like a synonym for 'avoided' (MISSED).

## Reversal

Words such as **returned**, **backing**, and **the wrong way** often indicate that one or more words should be turned around to give the answer.

Short letter college sent back (4)

In the clue above, the words **sent back** indicate that a word meaning 'college' (ETON) should be reversed, giving NOTE (a short letter).

A special case of a reversal clue gives a palindrome as an answer.

Either way, it's a small craft (5)

The answer, KAYAK, reads the same in either direction.

### **Subtraction**

Examples of subtraction indicators are **dropped**, **endless**, and **cut short**. They frequently suggest that the first or last letter should be removed from a synonym of one or more words in the clue, giving the answer. Single-letter indicators are commonly employed. An example would be 'the penny dropped', which might indicate that the letter P should be removed from a word.

Sign of venomous creature losing tail (7)

In this example, venomous creature (SCORPION) loses its tail N, giving SCORPIO, a star sign.

### **Cryptic Definition**

This type of clue is designed to mislead the solver, appearing to say one thing, but meaning something quite different. This type of clue frequently, but not always, ends in a question mark.

Hands up for an early lunch? (4)

The clue appears to ask for a show of hands from those willing to have an early lunch. But the real meaning of the clue is that at twelve o'clock, the hands on a clock point upwards. The answer is therefore NOON.

### **& Lit**

In full, this rare clue type means 'and literally so'. The entire clue acts as both the definition and the wordplay.

I'm one involved with cost (9)

In the clue above, **involved** indicates that an anagram should be made of the letters IM, ONE and COST. The answer, ECONOMIST, is also one involved with cost.

## Two-letter abbreviations

Two-letter words are omitted, unless they also exist as abbreviations, such as AS. Some synonyms or variations on a theme are listed, but there will be countless variations, so for Doctor, read Medic, Physician etc.

<b>AA</b>	Milne, Motoring group	<b>DD</b>	Divine (doctor of divinity), Theologian
<b>AB</b>	Seaman, Tar, Salt, etc	<b>DE</b>	Of/from/some French
<b>AC</b>	Account, Bill, Current	<b>DH</b>	Lawrence
<b>AD</b>	Nowadays, Modern times, Present-day, Advertisement, Commercial, Notice, Plug	<b>DI</b>	Little girl, Princess
<b>AG</b>	Silver, Precious metal	<b>DJ</b>	Broadcaster, Tuxedo
<b>AI</b>	First-rate, Main road	<b>DO</b>	Ditto, The same, Party, Function, Cheat, Swindle, Perform
<b>AL</b>	Capone, Little boy, Aluminium, Malleable metal	<b>DR</b>	Doctor etc
<b>AM</b>	(In the) morning, America	<b>DU</b>	Of the/from the/some French
<b>AS</b>	When, Since, Because, Like, Arsenic	<b>EA</b>	Each
<b>AU</b>	Gold, Precious metal	<b>EC</b>	City (London postcode)
<b>AY</b>	Always, For ever	<b>ED</b>	Editor, Journalist, Little boy, Notes
<b>BA</b>	Graduate, Bachelor, Degree, Airline	<b>EG</b>	For example, For instance, Say
<b>BB</b>	King	<b>EL</b>	The Spanish
<b>BC</b>	Ancient times	<b>EM</b>	Printer's measure, Small measure
<b>BO</b>	Derek, Peep	<b>EN</b>	In French, Printer's measure, Small measure
<b>BP</b>	Fuel supplier	<b>EP</b>	Record, CD
<b>BR</b>	British, Train company, Brother	<b>ER</b>	Hesitation, Queen, King Edward, Medical drama
<b>BT</b>	Communications company	<b>ET</b>	Extraterrestrial, Alien, Film, and French
<b>CA</b>	About, Around, Approximately, Roughly, Accountant, Calcium	<b>EU</b>	Europe
<b>CB</b>	Radio	<b>EW</b>	Partners (bridge)
<b>CC</b>	Volume	<b>EX</b>	Former, Once, Former partner
<b>CD</b>	Disc, Record(ing)	<b>FA</b>	Soccer body
<b>CE</b>	Church, This French	<b>FC</b>	Football club
<b>CH</b>	Church, Companion (of Honour), Chapter, Switzerland	<b>FE</b>	Iron, Common metal
<b>CI</b>	101	<b>FF</b>	Very strong(ly)/loud(ly)
<b>CL</b>	Capacity, Volume, Quantity of liquid, 150, Chlorine	<b>FI</b>	Motor racing
<b>CO</b>	Company, Firm, Business Commander, Officer, County, Cobalt, Care of, The rest	<b>FO</b>	Foreign Office,
<b>CR</b>	Credit, King Charles	<b>FR</b>	Father, French
<b>CT</b>	Carat, Stone's weight, Court	<b>FT</b>	Newspaper, Foot, Feet, Distance
<b>CU</b>	Copper	<b>FX</b>	Effects
<b>CV</b>	Life history, Resume	<b>GA</b>	Georgia, State
<b>DA</b>	Attorney, Lawyer, Russian agreement	<b>GB</b>	Britain, British
<b>DC</b>	Current	<b>GC</b>	Medal
		<b>GI</b>	American/US soldier
		<b>GM</b>	Genetically modified, General Motors
		<b>GP</b>	Doctor, Medic
		<b>GR</b>	King George

<b>GT</b>	High-performance	<b>LL</b>	Lines, Fifty-fifty
<b>HA</b>	Laugh	<b>LO</b>	Look, Behold
<b>HB</b>	Hard black (pencil)	<b>LP</b>	Album, Record
<b>HE</b>	Helium, Light/common gas, (His) Excellency, Ambassador, The man	<b>LS</b>	Lowry
<b>HG</b>	Mercury	<b>LT</b>	Lieutenant
<b>HI</b>	Greeting	<b>LV</b>	Luncheon voucher, Meal ticket
<b>HM</b>	Royal address	<b>MA</b>	Mother, Master, Degree
<b>HO</b>	House etc	<b>MB</b>	Doctor etc, Storage unit
<b>HP</b>	Sauce, Credit, Never-never	<b>MC</b>	Medal
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters etc	<b>MD</b>	Boss, Director, Doctor etc
<b>HR</b>	Hour, Short time	<b>MG</b>	Car
<b>HT</b>	High-tension	<b>MI</b>	Motorway
<b>IC</b>	In charge, One hundred, Ninety-nine	<b>MM</b>	Medal
<b>ID</b>	Identification, Identity, Passport, I had, I would, Instinct	<b>MO</b>	Moment, Instant, Tick, Second, Trice, Jiffy, Doctor etc, Way of working, Little girl, Young Maureen
<b>IE</b>	That is, That's	<b>MP</b>	Member, Politician
<b>IL</b>	The Italian	<b>MR</b>	Mister
<b>IN</b>	Inch, Little distance, Trendy, Fashionable, At home, Occupying etc	<b>MS</b>	Manuscript
<b>IO</b>	Ten	<b>MT</b>	Mountain
<b>IQ</b>	Measure of intelligence	<b>MU</b>	Greek letter
<b>IR</b>	Taxmen	<b>NA</b>	Sodium, Not applicable
<b>IS</b>	Exists, One's, Island, Isle	<b>NB</b>	Note
<b>IT</b>	The thing, Sex appeal, Italian, Vermouth, Computer studies	<b>NE</b>	North-east, Points, Direction, Bearing, Newcastle area, Neon
<b>IV</b>	Four	<b>NG</b>	No good?
<b>IX</b>	Nine	<b>NI</b>	Northern Ireland, Ulster, Nickel
<b>JA</b>	German/Foreign agreement, German yes	<b>NJ</b>	State (New Jersey)
<b>JE</b>	In France I	<b>NO</b>	Number, Refusal, Zero
<b>JK</b>	Rowling	<b>NS</b>	Poles, Partners (bridge)
<b>JO</b>	Little girl	<b>NT</b>	New Testament, Books, Holy books, Scripture
<b>JP</b>	Justice, Magistrate	<b>NU</b>	Greek letter
<b>JR</b>	Junior, TV villain	<b>NW</b>	North-west, Points, Direction, Bearing, Merseyside
<b>KA</b>	Ford saloon	<b>NY</b>	New York, Big Apple, US city
<b>KD</b>	Lang	<b>NZ</b>	New Zealand
<b>KG</b>	Weight	<b>OB</b>	Old boy
<b>KM</b>	Distance	<b>OC</b>	Commander
<b>KO</b>	Knockout, Kick-off	<b>OE</b>	Old English
<b>LA</b>	Los Angeles, US city, The French/Spanish/Italian, Foreign article	<b>OH</b>	Cry/Expression of surprise
<b>LB</b>	Pound, Weight	<b>OI</b>	You there
<b>LE</b>	The French, Foreign article	<b>OJ</b>	Juice, Soft drink
<b>LI</b>	Fifty-one	<b>OK</b>	Okay, Acceptable, Satisfactory, All right
		<b>OM</b>	Order (of Merit), Award, Honour
		<b>OP</b>	Work, Operation
		<b>OR</b>	Gold, Alternative ( <i>not</i> -ly)
		<b>OS</b>	Very large

<b>OT</b>	Old Testament, Books, Holy books, Scripture	<b>SH</b>	Silence, Quiet, Mum?
<b>OU</b>	Open University	<b>SI</b>	Spanish acceptance, Silicon
<b>OW</b>	Expression of pain	<b>SN</b>	Poles, Partners (bridge), Tin, Malleable metal
<b>OZ</b>	Australia, Ounce, Weight	<b>SP</b>	Starting price, Odds
<b>PA</b>	Dad, Father, Assistant, Aide, Secretary, Loudspeaker	<b>SR</b>	Senior
<b>PB</b>	Lead	<b>SS</b>	Ship (steamship)
<b>PC</b>	Police officer, Copper, Constable, Politically correct	<b>ST</b>	Street, Way, Saint, Good man, Stone, Small weight
<b>PE</b>	Exercise, Gym (class)	<b>SW</b>	South-west, Points, Bearing, Direction, Devon and Cornwall
<b>PG</b>	Wodehouse, Parental guidance	<b>TA</b>	Thanks, Reservists, Terriers, Part-time soldiers, Volunteers
<b>PH</b>	Pub	<b>TE</b>	Lawrence
<b>PI</b>	Investigator, Detective, Religious, Sacred, Self-righteous, Constant, Greek letter	<b>TS</b>	Eliot
<b>PM</b>	Prime Minister, Premier, (In the) afternoon, Evening	<b>TT</b>	Race, Island race, Non-drinking/er, Abstainer
<b>PO</b>	River, Post Office	<b>TV</b>	Box
<b>PP</b>	Very soft(ly)/quiet(ly), Pages	<b>UK</b>	British, This country
<b>PR</b>	Publicity, Electoral system, Pair	<b>UM</b>	Hesitation
<b>PS</b>	Footnote, (In) addition	<b>UN</b>	Peacekeepers, A French, A foreign, Foreign article
<b>PT</b>	Exercise, Gym, Pint, Point, Platinum	<b>UR</b>	Ancient city
<b>QC</b>	Silk, Lawyer	<b>US</b>	America(n), Transatlantic, You and me
<b>QI</b>	Fry's show	<b>VA</b>	Virginia, State
<b>QT</b>	Quiet	<b>VB</b>	Verb
<b>RA</b>	Artist, Painter, God, Artillery, Gunner/s, Soldiers,	<b>VC</b>	Medal
<b>RC</b>	Catholic	<b>VE</b>	Wartime victory/success
<b>RD</b>	Road, Way	<b>VG</b>	Very good
<b>RE</b>	Regarding, About, Concerning, Religious teaching/lesson, Bible studies, Engineer/s, Sappers, Soldiers, Again	<b>VI</b>	Six, Little girl
<b>RI</b>	Religious teaching/lesson, Bible studies, State (Rhode Island)	<b>VJ</b>	Wartime victory/success
<b>RM</b>	Marine, Mariners	<b>VT</b>	Videotape
<b>RN</b>	Navy, Sailors, Fleet	<b>VW</b>	Car
<b>RR</b>	Rolls, Roller, Rolls-Royce*	<b>WC</b>	Toilet, Bathroom, Smallest room
<b>RT</b>	Right	<b>WE</b>	Partners (bridge)
<b>RU</b>	Rugby, Sport	<b>WH</b>	Auden
<b>RY</b>	Railway	<b>WI</b>	West Indies, Women's group/association
<b>SA</b>	South Africa, Sex appeal	<b>WT</b>	Weight
<b>SE</b>	South-east, Points, Bearing, Direction, London area, Home Counties	<b>XI</b>	Eleven, Team, Side
		<b>XV</b>	Fifteen, Side Team
		<b>YD</b>	Yard, (Short) Distance
		<b>YE</b>	You old, The old
		<b>YR</b>	Year, Short time, Your
		<b>ZN</b>	Zinc

## Cryptic crossword One-letter abbreviations

- A:** blood group, note/key, ace, ampere, answer, away
- B:** blood group, note/key, bishop, British, black, billion, born, bowled, breadth, bye, bachelor
- C:** note/key, cape, Conservative, carbon, century, Celsius, centigrade, chapter, caught (by), cent(s), about, cold, clubs, 100
- D:** note/key, marking on billiard table, 500, daughter, old penny, diameter, died, diamonds, drawn (as in sporting lists), drive (as in automatic car)
- E:** note/key, east(ern), ecstasy (drug), energy, English, European
- F:** note/key, Fahrenheit, farad, fine, fluorine, female, feminine, folio, forte (and synonyms such as loudly), frequency, franc(s), furlongs
- G:** note/key, good, unit of gravitational force or force alone (but not just "gravity"), gallon(s), gram(s)/gramme(s), grand
- H:** height, hard, henry, hydrogen, home, hot, hour, husband, heroin, hearts, hospital, hydrant
- I:** island, isle, iodine, 1 (numeral), ego
- J:** jack, joule
- K:** king, potassium, thousand, kelvin, kilometre
- L:** lake, loch, lough, learner (driver), left, Liberal, lost (as in sporting lists), pound, 50, length, line, litre(s), large
- M:** 1000, million(s), Monsieur, motorway, maiden (over), male, mark(s), married, masculine, mass, metre(s), mile(s), minute(s), medium
- N:** indefinite number (not just "number"), en, knight, newton, north(ern), nitrogen, name, neuter, new, noon, noun
- O:** nought, blood group, oxygen, old, zero, love, ring, duck, circle, round
- P:** parking, pawn, phosphorus, power, penny/pence, page, piano (and synonyms such as softly), park (as on automatic car gear shift)
- Q:** queen, question
- R:** rand, Réaumur scale, king/queen, river, (electrical) resistance, radius, right, run(s), rook, reverse (as on automatic car gear shift)
- S:** south(ern), sulphur, second(s), shilling, singular, son, spades, small
- T:** temperature, ton(s), time
- U:** universal (films), university, uranium, upper-class
- V:** volt, 5, velocity, verb, very, volume, verse, versus
- W:** watt(s), west(ern), tungsten, wife, with, weight, width, wide, wicket, won
- X:** unknown (variable), 10, kiss, vote, mark denoting error, cross, times
- Y:** unknown (variable), year, yen
- Z:** third unknown