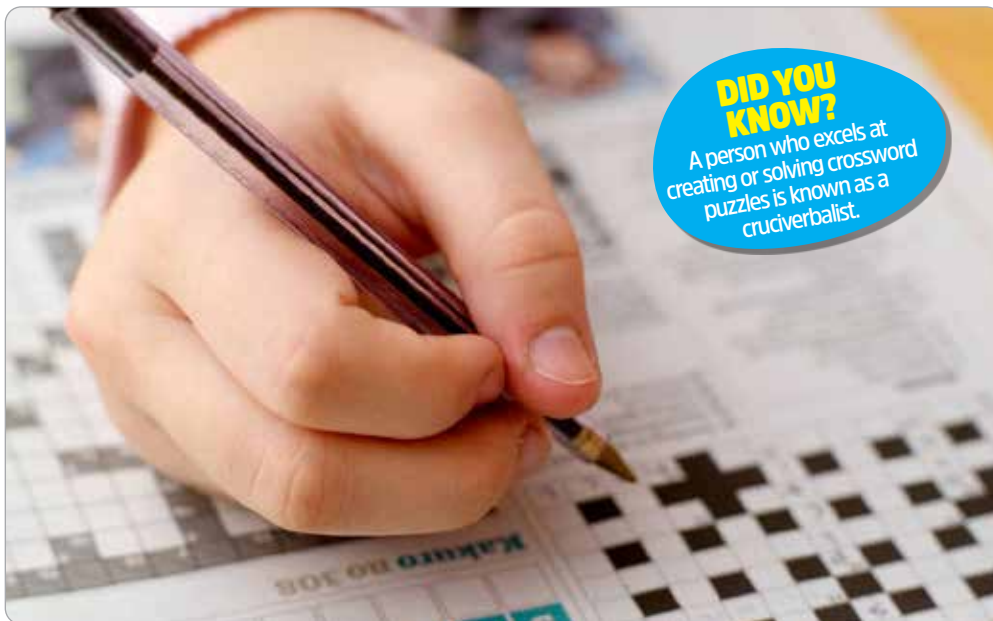




How to...



DID YOU KNOW?

A person who excels at creating or solving crossword puzzles is known as a cruciverbalist.

Do crossword puzzles

Try these tips to improve your skills at completing these fun word games.

Crossword puzzles are a type of word game in which a list of clues corresponds to a pattern of numbered squares going across and down. They are one of the world's most popular word games, and besides being a fun challenge, completing them can improve a person's vocabulary and spelling skills.

We often feature crosswords on our weekly Puzzles page (p26). So who better to advise on improving crossword skills than the people who create those puzzles for us? They work at a company called Puzzability, and here are their best tips.

Understand how crosswords work

Crosswords are a combination of trivia and word puzzles. "Every word you fill in gives you information to correctly guess the other words," said Robert Leighton, one of Puzzability's writers. The more answers you fill in, the more letters you have for the answers to other questions.

Start with what you know

Instead of answering the clues in numbered order, try starting with any clue you think you know the answer to. "It's fun to fill in what you know and use the letters from those words to work out the words you don't get right away," said Amy Goldstein, another Puzzability writer. Once you've filled in the answers that come to mind immediately, go back and revisit the other clues.

Use clues wisely

Crossword puzzles often include "fill in the blank" clues. The clue could be "Happily _____ after," and the answer is "ever." These tend to be easier than other clues to figure out, so you might want to do them first, said Leighton. In addition, the wording of a clue can help you know what kind of word the answer will be, such as an adjective, noun, or verb. "If the clue is 'Intelligent,' which is an adjective, the answer might be 'smart' or 'bright,'" said Leighton. But it wouldn't be Einstein,

because that's not an adjective. Another tip:

Clues that use plurals will have plural answers. That doesn't mean the word will always end in S, however. The clue "Scurrying rodents" might mean "rats," but "mice" could also be the answer.

If you're stuck, keep trying

One common issue you might have when solving crosswords is finding out that the answer you think is correct won't fit. In that case, try to think of similar words. For example, if the clue is "You might drink from it" but "glass" is the wrong length, you could try "fountain" or "cup." It also can help to set the puzzle aside and come back to it later. When you look at it with fresh eyes, you may come up with a word you hadn't thought of before. If you can't figure out a word, it's OK to look it up in the answer key. "Then you'll be more likely to get it correct next time," says Goldstein.



Take a guess and see what happens!

Introducing our puzzle creators

We asked the people who make *The Week Junior's* puzzles to share details about their work.

Mike Shenk

Q: How did you get your start?

A: I made puzzles for my family when I was a child. When I got to college, I made daily crosswords for my student newspaper, and that's when I thought it would be cool to become a puzzle writer for a living.



Robert Leighton

Q: What do you like most about your job?

A: I really like writing puzzles, but I also like the part of my job that involves solving the puzzles that my partners write. We do this to make sure there are no mistakes in each other's puzzles and that the clues are just right. I also love hearing from people who enjoy our puzzles. That's a great feeling.



Amy Goldstein

Q: What's your favorite type of puzzle?

A: I enjoy completing puzzle hunts, which are sets of puzzles all written about one topic. You have to solve a series of puzzles that fit into a final puzzle to get a final answer about that one topic. Another one of my favorite puzzles is similar to a crossword, but instead of words going straight across and down, they go in unusual directions, such as backward or winding.

