

Unnecessarily Complex

by Apocute

(Apocope & Cute Mage)

We here at Apocute like online puzzle conventions, and we are really excited to help make them feel as much like the real thing as possible. In this puzzle, we'll be exploring all the different parts of a puzzle convention, and trying to bring them online in the traditional method - a cryptic crossword that can only be described as "Unnecessarily Complex".

(1) The first day of a puzzle convention is more about the social interactions than the puzzles. In one corner, two old friends will be catching up on how they've been doing this past year. In another corner, a group of folks will be excitedly looking over the program and chatting about what activity they are most excited about. But in the third corner are a group of brand new people, unsure about what exactly is going on and a little afraid to join the others. Soon they will be puzzlers just like us, but on the first day of the con, it's time for us to put our best foot forward and invite them in. (There is no fourth corner. It is a well-known fact that puzzle conventions only occur in triangular rooms.)

Four clues in this puzzle are going to put their best foot forward in order to help out the new folks. One word in each clue needs to have its best foot (aka the letter in the word that comes first alphabetically) moved to the front of the word before solving. The result will be an actual word, although it may break the surface reading of the original clue. (You may be wondering why we're referring to an individual letter as a foot. If it bothers you too much, just imagine we're talking about that letter's serif. That's definitely a foot.)

Once someone steps up to introduce the new people, others quickly follow. Each of the answers that are clued this way will also put their best foot forward. When entering them in the grid, put their "best foot" (alphabetically first letter) in the first square, then enter the rest of the word. Obviously, what you have entered will be a real word, although one is a proper noun. It wouldn't make any sense to enter gibberish - then the new people would just think that we're weird!

Bringing in new people is always great for the health of a community, but it also teaches us a lot about ourselves. In particular, doing this will help teach you about something hidden in each of these clues. Take the n th letter of each of the affected clues, where n is the place of the best foot in the clued word before you put it in the grid. These letters, in clue order, will help with this puzzle's moral.

(2) While we all like to pretend that puzzle conventions are our entire world and that nothing exists outside them, we all know that it's not true. There are lots of puzzles outside of conventions as well! Every convention has that time when people look back at all the puzzles they have done since the previous con and talk about how awesome they were. It's amazing how much you can learn from listening to different people talk about how they solved a puzzle, and there is great bonding that can be had by discovering that two different solvers went down the same wrong path.

Four clues in the grid are looking back at old puzzles. In particular, one of the words in each clue is looking back so much that it's actually backwards in the clue. While that may be helpful in dealing with puzzles that are already solved, that won't help you with this puzzle in the present. You'll need to bring the word back to the present by reversing it before you can correctly interpret the clue, although this may break the surface meaning of the clue. The answers to these clues are doing some reminiscing of their own: they must also be entered backwards in the grid, and doing so will create actual words.

When we here at Apocute like to look back at puzzle conventions ourselves, there is one song that we cue up in order to trigger those old memories: We R Who We R by Ke\$ha. If you listen to that song, it's obvious that it was written about a puzzle convention. We are all familiar with preparing for a con by putting glitter on our eyes, having stockings ripped all up the side, looking hot and sexified, so let's go, right? This is reflected in the answers to the clues in this section: every answer word has the letter R in it. Take the n th letter of each clue, where n is the position of the first letter R before it is reversed to place in the grid. These letters, in clue order, will help with this puzzle's moral.

(3) While we say that there are multiple different types of puzzles at these puzzle conventions, let's be honest with ourselves - the vast majority of them are word puzzles. These kinds of puzzle conventions tend to be filled with professional and amateur linguists, and their talents can be seen in the many different brilliant word based puzzles during the con. However, for those of us who are not linguists, you have to be careful. They often use meetups like this for concocting schemes, so you've got to keep an eye out for them, and not just when they get drunk and try to reconstruct a previously unknown link between Basque and Ainu.

Fortunately we here at Apocute got a copy of the scheme that they tried to enact last year before *waves hands around half-heartedly*. It's called the Second Great Vowel Shift. The First Great Vowel Shift (retronym alert!) was a time in the history of English where the hithertofore orderly correspondence between spelling and pronunciation turned into the modern system where spelling and pronunciation are mere passing acquaintances who sometimes wave at each other from across the street. The plan for the Second Great Vowel Shift was that every vowel would just be written as the letter E, making spelling simpler and puzzles easier to write. Would this make English even harder to pronounce? Absolutely, but let's be honest, it's already a hellscape, right?

Four clues in this grid are ready for the Second Great Vowel Shift. One word in each of these clues needs to have all of its non-E vowels changed to E in order for the clue to make sense. This will always form a word, but it may break the surface meaning of the clue. Now you may point out that the Second Great Vowel Shift only changes the spelling of the words and not the meaning, and therefore it shouldn't break the surface either, and to that we say... uh... look over there!

Each of the answers in this section also needs to be entered in a world that is post-Second Great Vowel Shift. Each of the consonants enters the grid normally, but each of the vowels is entered as the letter 'E'. What you will have entered will now be a real word, and one of the answers is a number. Take the n th letter of each clue in this section, where n is the ones digit of the answer that is a number. These letters, in clue order, will help with this puzzle's moral.

(4) Puzzle conventions are where puzzlers try to show off their most unique creations. You have to tone down your puzzle ideas slightly when writing for the general public, but a con is the place where your combination sudoku/Coast Salish marching bands can really shine. All sorts of unusual puzzles show up here, including intriguing games, clever grids, tongue-twisting transformations, and that one puzzle that's always like 5 pages long and that no one wants to do during the con.

Of course, it's really awkward when you spend months writing a really good puzzle and then someone shows up having written an identical one. It's like showing up to a Hollywood party wearing the same dress as one of the celebrities there. Oftentimes that ends up with hurt celebrity egos and bouncers questioning how you got into the party in the first place because you weren't on the invite list. It's worth spending the effort to try to avoid duplication.

Four clues in this grid need to try to avoid duplication. In particular, one word in each clue is causing a scene by having letters which are duplicated. Unlike in our celebrity example above, all of the letters have equal status, so the easiest way to deal with this situation is to kick all of them out. Each of these words should have all instances of their duplicated letters removed in order to correctly interpret the clue. This will always leave a real word, even though the surface meaning might be ruined.

Learning from your mistakes is really important here, and the answers to these clues are certainly learning from the mistakes their clues made. When entering these answers into the grid, do not enter any letters that are duplicated. The grid entries will always be real words. However, it is a fundamental law of science that matter cannot be created or destroyed, and the same is true of letters in cryptic clues. These letters are shifted into the extraction mechanism. For each clue in this section, start on the first letter of the clue, and then move one letter to the right for each letter removed from the answer before putting it into the grid. These letters, taken in clue order, will help with this puzzle's moral.

(5) Being a primarily adult convention, there are alcoholic drinks. Also being a primarily adult convention, there is no one there to enforce a bedtime. Both of these things cause people to mishear each other all the time, and let's be honest, for many people, the second is much more of a factor than the first. Losing your ability to think at 3 in the morning can make games harder, and not being able to say words is one of those factors. When that happens, it's time for your old friend, the NATO Alphabet.

Four clues in this grid are trying to say words, but just need to use the NATO Alphabet instead. One word in each of the clues needs to be replaced with the NATO Alphabet word for its first letter in order for the clue to make sense. This will break the surface reading of the clue, but again, it's super late at night. No one's going to care. We're all operating on a small amount of brain cells anyway.

In fact, it's probably not worth putting the whole answer in the grid either. Instead, enter the NATO Alphabet word for the first letter of the answer in the grid. That seems easier. However, we should probably use the answer word for something.

For each clue in this section, start on the first letter of the clue, and then move one letter to the right for each letter in the answer word that is not in the word that was entered in the grid. These letters, taken in clue order, will help with this puzzle's moral.

(6) Puzzle cons are all about socialization with different people, and after a while, even if you're trying to stay with the same person the whole time, you end up mixing and talking with all sorts of folks. The remaining twenty-one clues solve normally, but they talked with so many people that now they're mixed up. Let's start by getting them back in a stable order: alphabetize them by their answer word (ignore spaces).

Alpha Order	Answer	Clue #
1		
2		
3		
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21		

Now we're going to put everything together. Start by filling in the letters from sections 1-5 in clue order. For section 6, you still have a little work left to do: Rearrange the 21 answers from section 6 in the new order given below and then take the n th letter of the associated clue where n is the clue number minus the offset given in the table. Now that you've done the equivalent of square dancing for cryptic crosswords, you'll be able to take the extracted letters, add them to what you got in the previous five sections, and get the moral of this puzzle.

Section	Clue #	Extracted
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Section	New order	Answer	Clue #	Offset	Extracted
6	3			10	
	5			12	
	2			15	
	13			18	
	18			20	
	15			26	
	11			29	
	17			30	
	7			33	
	16			34	
	19			36	
	1			2	
	9			4	
	12			6	
	10			9	
	8			17	
	6			19	
	21			21	
	4			24	
	14			28	
	20			32	

ACROSS

- 1A. Obscured in sitrep: a person paws wall coverings
- 7A. To annoy Captain James? Elbow head
- 9A. Notes first one back, returns predecessor at the car show
- 11A. Head over heels Spanish love enveloped by America's fantastic odors
- 13A. "Education chief is butter-enthusiast," Paula reported
- 14A. Soup containing lots of cream served, hosts about to put in....\$*#@! (BEEP)
- 15A. *Hungry 5.0* put into beta
- 16A. Maxim's "Blue Period," start to finish
- 17A. Helped promote true tweed ensemble
- 19A. One might want to do this to 11 in, for example, New Hampshire and Alabama
- 21A. Remove 1 and 2 from 3rd to get 2 in France
- 23A. Retain cores of large germanium projectiles (these turbocharge aquatic cargo vehicle known for going in a pool)
- 27A. Enabled small suffix
- 28A. Case for prize-winner dismissed (before 29 or O25 per Gardiner's annalist)
- 30A. Tots losing foremost fingers
- 31A. How some might respond when seeing #69 in French city?
- 32A. Eclipsing large model is stair leading to moon
- 34A. "Enactment" appears in the dictionary
- 35A. You might build a casa pequeña on one, on all going west?
- 36A. Gödel theorem featuring Greek letter
- 37A. Saturated with water: 33 grams absorbed

DOWN

- 1D. Equipment for mapping and measuring deeps or sand lairs at regular intervals
- 2D. If we need that extra push over the cliff we might put the dial here for outer layer of lasagne in oven
- 3D. $T + 3A + 2W - (2A + W + T) = \sqrt{\text{BEER}}$
- 4D. Essence of "Pennsylvania's Father"
- 5D. A bit at a time, chip away at a Keats poem about a Clooney show?
- 6D. Twists or ink or wheels or the earth or tornado or hula hoop or thing that snips
- 7D. You might do good deeds to improve this game; I unfortunately...
- 8D. ...had exhibited wreath made from buds of rosemary and golden Easter daisies
- 10D. "Trust One's Hill"
- 12D. No limits when re-using parts of set versus having six lines
- 18D. Hero of Valencia exchanged a club for a diamond and shuffled 25
- 19D. Articulated two words you might say to compare patty received flattened
- 20D. Eating as Congers stands
- 22D. Scrutinized ongoing selection for chairman
- 24D. "Make sure to follow rules extracted from slab" I edify
- 25D. Approximately 18 cents instead of dollars for first winner of the DeMille Award
- 26D. Get by, voting for foot of bronze medal goalie Alec Marriott
- 27D. "Tropical city with about 9 million people." Carelessly Mr. Al forgets 2.71 thousand.
- 29D. Mass in Sèvres, France might be low-key in Verlan, reportedly
- 33D. Edible item you might give up with Lent?!

1	2		3	4	5	6	7	8	
9		10		11					12
13				14					
15				16					
17				18					
19					20	21		22	
23	24	25	26				27		
28						29	30		
31				32					33
34					35				
36					37				

Are you co-solving this with someone online? Get a copy of the grid that is set up for co-solving at: <http://bit.ly/UComplex>