

# Unnecessarily Cryptic

by Apocute  
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We wanted to write a cryptic for RockOn! However, we were intimidated by the amazing cryptics that everyone writes each year. We decided that in order to make ours stand out, we would follow the lead of some of our favorite cryptic writers and add as many shenanigans as possible! It means that we have three pages of instructions, but all of the complexity was worth it for our final message for you.

(1) These are quite colorful clues! Each of these five clues contains a specific color, which can be found on a crayon in Crayola's most recent box of 64 crayons. Lists of colors for this can be found online or in the desk of the coolest student in your five-year old's class.

While the clues are colorful, so are the answers. Unfortunately, the way that the answers are colorful involves a slightly different definition of colorful. Since this is a family-friendly convention, we'll need to cover those answers up. Take the crayon with the color of the clue, and color over the answer in the grid. These colored-in spaces will help our message to you stand out.

(2) Many cities have 10ks, but Boulder's 10k, Bolder Boulder, is consistently one of the biggest road races in the world, bringing out around 54,000 runners, walkers, and wheelchair racers. This section of the instructions will hopefully bring you the excitement and thrill of being part of that 10k in the form of a variety cryptic.

Now that we're done rephrasing Wikipedia facts, five clues in the puzzles are bolder clues. These clues can be found by their bolder flavor. (Haha! Bet you expected us to go with a pun on fonts instead of flavors! Flavors was definitely our plan all along, and definitely not a backup plan when our font pun didn't quite work.) We've added so much spice into these clues, that it's easy to spot. Each of these clues will contain the name of a spice in it. Get yourself some bread before solving these clues - it'll help cool you down better than water!

Now that we're done with the pun on "bolder," let's get back to the race. Each of the entries for the bolder clues in the grid is the track that we will be racing on. The starting line is the line between the first and second letters, and the finish line is between the penultimate and ultimate letters. Since this is a road race, all of the track needs to be paved. Therefore, we need to pave over everything between the starting line and finish line. In this case, paving over means blacking out the squares between the starting and finish line. Now we know what you're yelling at us - we know we can't put black squares in a barred cryptic. That's why you're putting them there for us! These black squares will help pave the way for you to understand our message to you.

(3) If there's one thing that the NPL is particularly known for, it's sports knowledge. In fact, it's a well-known past-time of NPL members to sit for a long time in front of a random photo and ask themselves quite seriously, "Is this a picture of sports?" Therefore, this section allows you to stare at cryptic clues and ask yourself, "Is this a cryptic clue of sports?"

This being RockOn!, each of the five sports clues contains a Colorado sports team. The clues, when entered in the grid, will need to have their team logo drawn in some number of the squares in order to cheer on their team. Determining these squares will require navigating an obtuse and arcane set of instructions, much like rulings in actual sports!

A) Is the first letter of the clue a consonant?

a) Oh. Huh. That word is pretty obscure, isn't it? Who knew that the sports fans use really old words? Let's go look that word up!

I) Is this word in M-W?

i) This word is so interesting that M-W did a Word of the Day podcast about it. Draw the team logo in the  $n^{\text{th}}$  square, where  $n$  is the number of minutes of the length of that podcast, rounded to the nearest minute.

II) If not, is this word in NI3?

i) NI3 has a lot of random words in it that aren't in M-W. Since that seems really random, let's make this instruction random as well. When writing this clue, we found a die with the same number of sides as the length of the answer and rolled it. Lo and behold, it landed on the side that is equal to half the total number of sides, rounded to the nearest whole number. Draw the team logo in that square.

III) If not, is this word in NI2?

i) Wait, how did you find one of these? How old are you? Seriously though, index into the answer by your age, wrapping around the word as many times as you need to count it out fully. Draw the team logo in that square.

IV) This word isn't in any of them.

i) Yeah, we were reaching a little by this point. Who could predict how constrained this grid was going to be? It turns out that this name is a landmark on the Appalachian Trail. If the beginning of the answer is

Maine and the end of the answer is Georgia, draw the team logo approximately where the landmark is on the Appalachian Trail.

- B) Is the first letter of the clue a vowel?
- a) Now it's time for the other really fun part of sports - mathematics! Turn the answer into a polynomial. The polynomial should be of  $n$ th degree, where  $n$  is the length of the answer minus 1. The first letter becomes the coefficient of the term of  $x^n$ , the second letter becomes the coefficient of the term of  $x^{n-1}$ , and so on until the entire answer is used. Turn the letters into numbers using A=1, B=2, and so on. Now, take the derivative of the polynomial you created and add together the coefficients of the new polynomial.
    - I) Is this sum a prime number?
      - i) Well, it looks like you're in *prime* position to solve this puzzle! Ha ha! Get it? Oh. You did get it and you didn't think it was funny? Sorry.  
Anyway, put the team logo in each of the prime positions in the answer.
    - II) Is this sum divisible by 2?
      - i) Well, of course it does! After all, today is *twosday*! Ha ha! Get it? Oh. You did get it and you didn't think it was funny? Also none of the days of this Con are on a Tuesday? Sorry.  
Anyway, put the team logo in each of the positions of the answer that is a power of 2.
    - III) Is this sum a composite number but not divisible by 2?
      - i) Well, of course it's not! After all, today isn't *twosday*! Ha ha! Get it? Oh. You did get it and you didn't think it was funny? You read the previous set of instructions and didn't think it was funny then either? Sorry.  
Anyway, put the team logo in each of the positions of the answer that isn't a power of 2.
- C) Is the first letter of the clue a Y?
- a) Oh really? Did that happen? Oops. Sorry. We tried to avoid that because it's often ambiguous when puzzles use Y if it's supposed to be a consonant or a vowel. As an apology, we'll make this one simple. Draw the team logo in every other square, starting with the second one.

Much like team logos show off your allegiance, these logos will help show off our message to you.

(4) A good cryptic uses the entire sheet of paper and this one is no different. Flip the page with the grid over create a new grid on the back. This grid should be the same size as the other grid, with the squares overlaying on top of the squares on the other side (as if the grid was printed double-sided). This is the reverse grid. (On this grid, the 1 should be on the other side of the 15.)

Five of the clues are reverse clues. These clues can be identified by the seven letter palindromic sequence within the clue. When looking for these sequences, don't count non-alphabetic characters. Of course, these reverse clues aren't entered in the grid normally. They're entered in reverse on the reverse grid.

By the time that most people have read up to this point in the instructions, they may have gotten the impression that this cryptic is an unholy conglomeration. And what happens when you take an unholy conglomeration and you read it in reverse? You get something holey. Poke a hole in the last letter of each word (which is now the first letter in the reverse grid). This will poke a hole in both sides of the grid. Make sure you that when you poke a hole in the grid, it doesn't go more than one square. While these holes may be an inconvenience in this grid, they will help you see through this puzzle and let you spot our message to you.

(5) Since Colorado has legalized weed, residents have been lighting up. These clues are going to be lighting up something different - they're lighting the fire of romance! (Yes! Nailed that transition! Crushed it! No problems at all!)

Ten clues are romantic clues. These clues are looking for love. Pair them up with each other by looking for similarities. In particular, each pair of clues will have three words in common. (What, did you think that the paired answer words were going to be exactly the same except for the letters m and f? We would never use such blatant heterosexual propaganda in our cryptics!) Their connections are not superficial or based on small things - therefore, their words in common will be spelled exactly the same and be at least four letters long.

Each pair will cross at exactly one square. This square is where they first met, and will always be remembered as the spot where their romance sparked. Every year they'll go back to that location on their anniversary as a cute date. Then one day one of the words gets down on one knee, pulls out a ring, and asks the other word to make them the happiest word in the world. The other word says yes, puts the ring on their serif, and they are soon married. Years later, they once again return to the place where they first met, and they put a heart on the floor to commemorate their love. Simulate this by drawing a heart on the ground where the two words intersect. These hearts will help connect you to our message to you.

(6) This is a puzzle for RockOn!, so let's follow those instructions and rock on! In particular - we're going to rock climb across the puzzle.

Five of these clues are rock climbing clues. They will help you find the rocks in the grid that you can use as handholds and footholds. These rocks are obscured, but even with small amounts of information you can find them. We tried to put rocks in the clues, but we ran out of rocks after we placed the ones in the grid, so instead we put other words that began with R and ended with K in these five clues. Given the instructions in the previous sections, you might assume that one of the squares in the grid corresponding to the answer is where the rock is hidden. But hold onto your horses! We've got something more extreme than that planned! (Except that you're going rock climbing, so don't hold onto your horses. Hold onto your rocks. Unless you're also carrying your horse up the wall. If that's the case, wow you're strong.)

Put the letters A through O on top of the columns and the letters P through Y to the left of the rows. Write one letter on each row or column, and write the letters in alphabetical order. For each rock climbing clue, take the first letter of the clue before it and the first letter of the clue after it. Treat these two letters as coordinates - they indicate a square in the grid. These squares are the rocks you'll be using to rock climb.

Now, go outside and find five small rocks. They should be small enough that they will fit in one square in the grid without overlapping any other squares. Hot glue these rocks to the paper in the spaces indicated by the rock climbing clues. (If you don't have hot glue, don't try to feed regular white glue through the hotel room coffee maker. We've learned this from experience. In this case, mark a dot in that square and you know where to hot glue on pebbles when you get home to your crafting room.) If you have a little toy with bendable limbs that you can use to imitate a rock climber on the grid, that's adorable, however don't do it as it would hurt your ability to solve the grid. These rocks will help you reach for our message to you.

(7) We're sure by now that this puzzle must seem like magic to you, and if there's one thing we think about when we think of magic, it's playing cards! The remaining 23 clues in this puzzle are the playing card clues. These clues are trying to hide a playing card in the clue, but much like a snickering 5-year-old trying to steal a piece of candy, they can't help but reveal where they've hidden it. Each of the enumerations for these clues are too long. Shift the first letter of the clue by the difference between the enumeration and how long the entry actually is and you will find the playing card. (Obviously this is using a deck of playing cards that has the letters from A through Z, like the cards used in Unspeakable Words.)

Get a deck of alphabetic playing cards and pull out the letters from the playing card clues. (If you don't have a deck like this, you can get a copy of Unspeakable Words by pledging your sanity to the Great Old One Cthulhu. This will have the advantage that you will no longer care what the answer to this puzzle is. Or if you're boring, you can just write the relevant letters on regular playing cards.) Put the cards in a pile in clue order. Take the top 12 cards off of the pile to form a new pile. Perform a perfect out shuffle with all of the cards, starting and ending with the pile of 12. (Fun fact: This is a real thing. There is a difference between an in shuffle and an out shuffle, and it has nothing to do with your belly button. Make sure you do the correct one!) This will spell a new message that will help you decipher all the other sets of clues.

(If you're having trouble on figuring out where to start, start with the clues that go to (7))

## ACROSS

1. Holy man has interminable sage advice for the unwashed masses (5)
6. Incomplete *Limitless* adaptation starts off film festival (4)
10. Straight person is not about “queer activities” (3)
13. *Survivor* cast member trashes island with programmer Lovelace (3)
16. Basis for diagnosis is silly: electroencephalographical (25)
17. Yodeling goatherd needing no introduction finally escapes avalanche (3)
18. Father of electricity adopts unit of measurement (7)
19. Blue flag (4)
20. Vocal process is genetic (16)
21. Remove woman from coffin transporter for funeral tradition (8)
23. Iceberg anagram sinks Titanic (8)
25. Spooner says Toni Basil hit is “perfect storm” (5)
27. Athlete from Tampa Bay leaves grand piano in mega-mansion (5)
30. Philadelphian slang term for “thank you” is “back at you” (8)
31. Yakitori skewer holds East Asian staple (13)
34. City in America can’t be verified (8)
36. Reykjavik goes crazy for species of flightless bird (8)
39. You and I consumed a pair of nuggets before mama performed a traditional French gavotte popular in the 17th century (7)
42. Paper goes to the dogs after article about Chad (5)
44. Take off after first signs of burnt orange gas, doctor (6)
46. Jump start one French submarine to increase speed (28)
47. Marvel cameo in *Thor: Ragnarok* (3)
48. Ultimate frisbee playing eschewed by registered nurses (16)
49. Filter feeding insect larva hidden in wisteria petals (6)
50. Pulled pork in taco! (8)
51. Type “LOLOL” etc. within text or chat (4)
52. Navy Seal takes letters from enthusiastic child (7)

## DOWN

1. Cumberbatch wallops aristocrat with mace from behind (5)
2. Noted philanthropist siphons currency out of establishment (5)
3. Manipulate Mx. Ulster’s first class of students (5)
4. Nebuchadnezzar’s niece injured Meshach (4)
5. Packing heat, Al Capone sabotaged sting operation (9)
6. Yosemite overshadowed by Rockies for Eastwood’s final video game (5)
7. Hollow promise with intent to profit (7)
8. Key and Peele rework *Mirror Image* (6)
9. Project starts limitless, but ends incomplete (6)
10. Messed up stop signs (7)
11. Reporter set me straight about Liddy’s activities (3)
12. Gratuitous blasphemy is offensive (12)
13. My son ate wild strawberry cultivar (6)
14. Component of BAPHL 17 overturned bad idea (7)
15. Waves cast up shipwreck survivor on deserted island (6)
22. *Higher Ground* star Anise is receding in fog (4)
24. Perform Mozart repertoire in recital (7)
26. Speedy Dr. Robotnik nemesis returns wizard to person (6)
28. Grandiose politician left for dead (7)
29. Kardashian child takes first zoo trip, sees seal (6)
32. Yoke unruly broncos heads together behind Spanish bear for optimal outcome (5)
33. “Simply marvelous!” proclaimed Ms. Higgensbottom of *Coronation Street* fame (5)
35. Cereal type or serial type? (7)
36. Revolutionary *Who Let the Dogs Out* artist removing chad from paper ballot (4)
37. King knights Spanish bishop, French queen pwms intelligent rook (4)
38. Jukebox musical created in this country can’t be found (24)
39. Quicksilver solution absorbs alpha particle (5)
40. Yell out “Mutiny” in open sea! (8)
41. Yes, in Grand Rapids, Michigan aliens display essential duality (4)
43. Element supporter (7)
45. Knock out note-taking task early (6)

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|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 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 |    |    | 38 | 39 |    |    |    | 40 |    | 41 |
| 42 |    | 43 |    |    | 44 |    |    |    |    |    | 45 | 46 |    |    |
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