

Sudoku Mild No 15,531

					6			
2				5			4	3
5	9						6	
		8		1	5		3	
			2	3	4			7
		4		8	7		9	
4	8						5	
3				2			8	6
					1			

Difficult No 15,532

Fiendish No 15,533

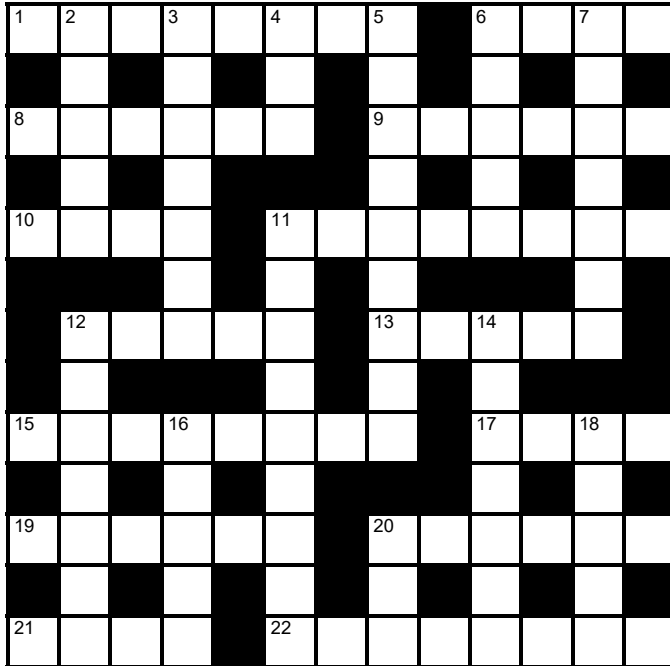
			5		7			
	7						1	
	3	9				5	7	
	6	7		1		4	9	
			4		8			
	4	2		7		3	6	
	1	6				9	2	
	5						3	
			3		1			

							3	4
				9	2			
		3	5	6			7	
8	1					7	4	
	4		6					
2	7					6	8	
		4	9	3			6	
				8	6			7
							5	

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Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

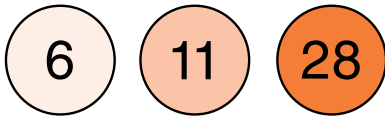
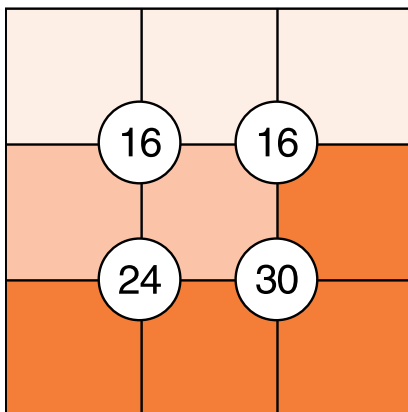
The Times Quick Cryptic No 2882 by Izetti



- Across**
- 1 Bad-tempered minister of religion outside house (8)
 - 6 Irish tribe determined to seize power (4)
 - 8 One can see through this note penned by bereaved woman (6)
 - 9 Crazy individual's name, say (6)
 - 10 Second half of writer's catalogue (4)
 - 11 Person protecting that place is troubled (8)
 - 12 Untainted English in tribal group (5)
 - 13 Bizarre runes one observed in hospital? (5)
 - 15 I mention going wrong very quickly (2,2,4)
 - 17 Classy shop refitted (4)
 - 19 Grass — it gets to change again (2-4)
 - 20 Faulty regulation adopted by US agent (6)
 - 21 Celebrity, good person meeting a king (4)
 - 22 Continuing to annoy Heather after row (8)

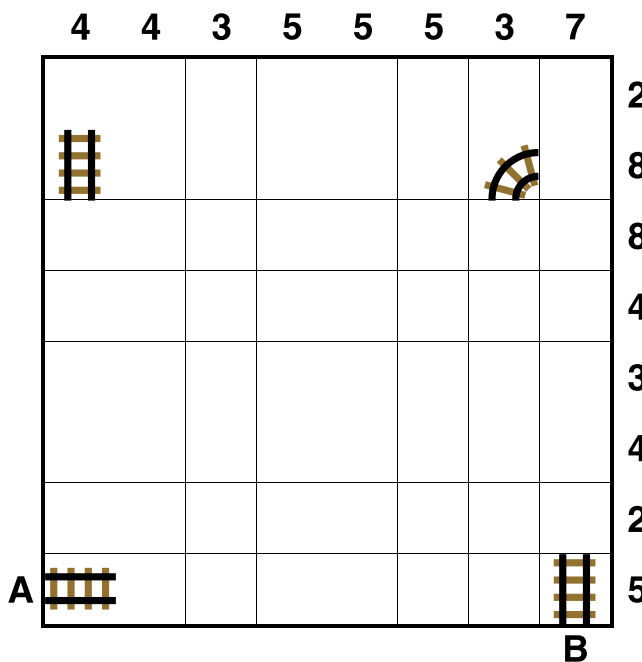
- Down**
- 2 One wearing deerstalker maybe — one in country (5)
 - 3 Inadequate character grabbing a daughter, a tearaway girl? (7)
 - 4 Immature artist and wife (3)
 - 5 Male or female's argument against particular position (9)
 - 6 Composer was a model in England originally (5)
 - 7 Go before and go back under pressure (7)
 - 11 Famous runner one encountered on stairs? (9)
 - 12 Satisfied with what's inside (7)
 - 14 Hear pal upset painter (7)
 - 16 Arrangement to request food? (5)
 - 18 Birds together hide, conserving energy (5)
 - 20 Female, an ardent supporter (3)

Suko No 4322



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Train Tracks No 2448



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Word watch
David Parfitt

- Zingiberaceous**
 a Of plants such as turmeric
 b Exuberantly enthusiastic
 c Suitable for galvanising
- Bobolink**
 a A feline mammal with tufted ears
 b A variety of tea containing tapioca
 c A North American songbird
- Ultracrepidation**
 a The act of criticising ignorantly
 b Flattening using intense pressure
 c Extreme timidity

Backgammon Chris Bray

Skewed scores

In my youth I mainly played backgammon for money. This was long before online play, and tournaments were far less common. My winnings largely paid for my holidays at a time when my day job salary didn't always cover such costs.

Since 2020 I have played virtually no money games as nowadays I prefer the challenge of tournament play, both online and live. The match score adds a level of complexity that I find fascinating. To me, match play is the purest form of the game.

A lot of matches become quite close encounters but occasionally you come across what we call a skewed score, where one player has a huge lead in a long match. Now cube handling requires great care, with the leader being loath to double for fear of the cube getting to a high level and seeing the lead being whittled away.

This week's position ably demonstrates this point. Reece Hodges, one of the UK's rising young stars, found himself (Black), in this parlous position against his Icelandic

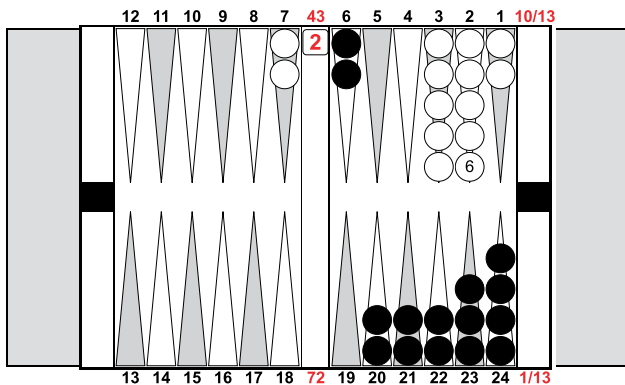
opponent in last year's World Team Championship.

Trailing 1-10 to 13, he had doubled early but things had gone awry, and he now found himself being redoubled to four by his opponent. For money this is clearly a massive pass, but if he were to drop this redouble, he would trail 1-12 (Crawford). As you can imagine, his winning chances from that score would be tiny. Could he justify a take? If he does take, Reece will have a mandatory redouble to 8 on his next roll whatever White rolls.

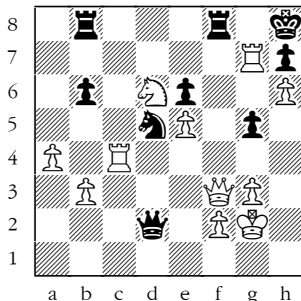
White has eight bad numbers, all aces except 11 and 21. On average Reece will hit the resulting White blot approximately one time in three. After that he will need to win the race despite having an open 6-pt.

Space does not permit me to show all the necessary calculations but Reece, despite being very short of time, did them over the board and correctly took. His opponent rolled 61. Reece hit the blot, won eight points and went on to win the match.

His opponent's redouble was perfectly correct; he was just unlucky. The moral of the story is this: beware of skewed scores.



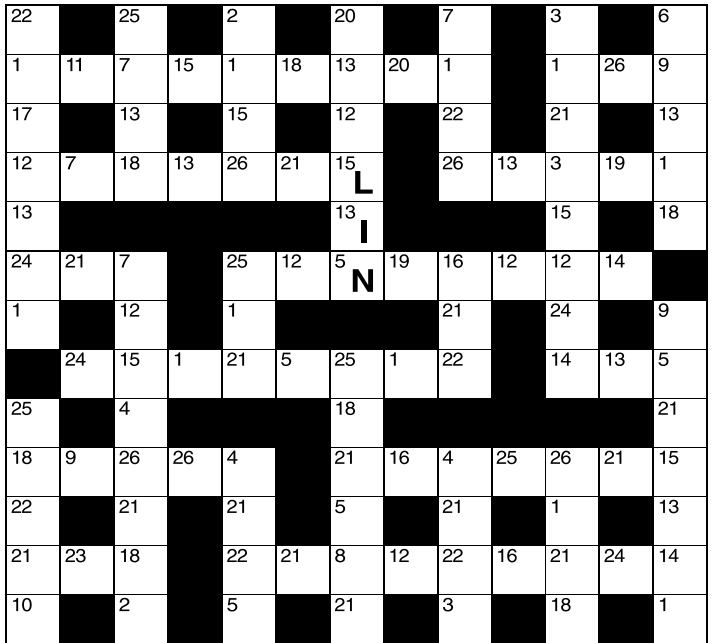
Winning Move



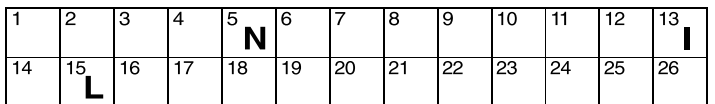
White to play. This position is from Le-Mendes, Titled Tuesday, chess.com 2024.

White's position is overwhelming and there are various ways to win. For example 1 Nf7+ Rxf7 2 Qxf7 will be good enough even though Black can wriggle around a bit with 2... Qd3. Your mission here is to find the quickest win, which also happens to be the most aesthetically pleasing. How did White mate in four moves?

Codeword No 5421



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

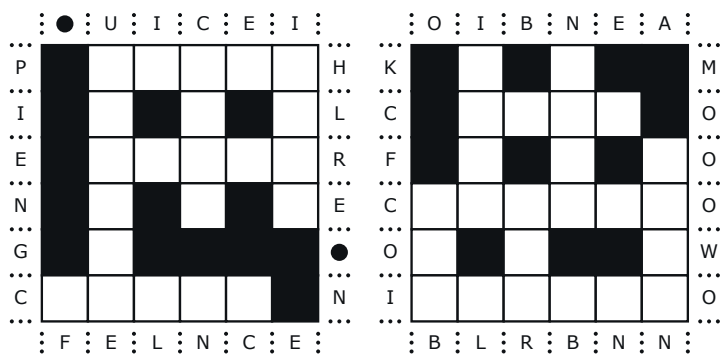


Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

Cluelines Stuck on Codeword? To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

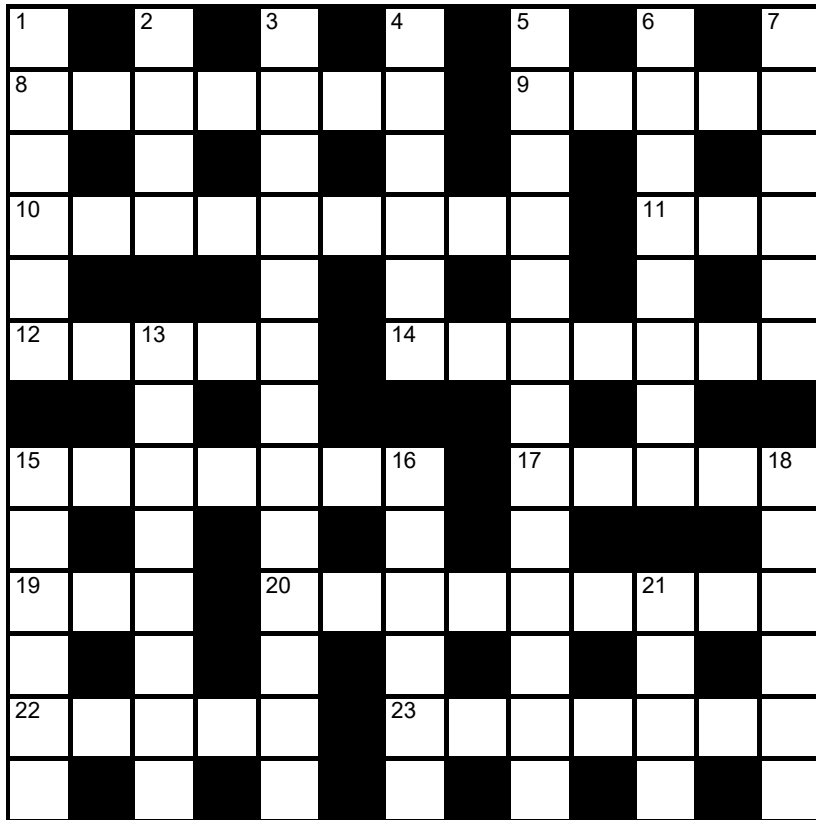
Lexica Easy No 7891

Hard No 7892



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

times2 Crossword No 9737



Across

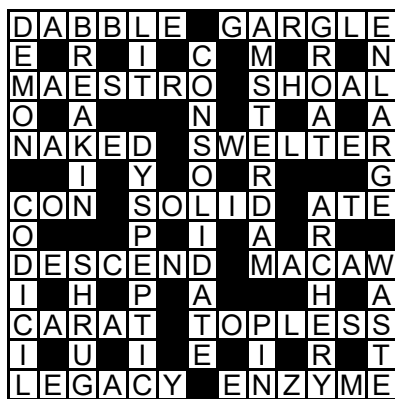
- 8 Japanese art of flower arranging (7)
- 9 Short but meaningful (5)
- 10 Punctuation mark (4-5)
- 11 Long thin fish (3)
- 12 Dire (5)
- 14 Sharply tipped (7)
- 15 Displays ostentatiously (7)

- 17 Light-headed, reeling (5)
- 19 Drunkard (3)
- 20 Artificial sweetener (9)
- 22 --- Copland, US composer (5)
- 23 Late to be delivered (7)

Down

- 1 Afternoon nap (6)
- 2 Position from which a vessel is steered (4)
- 3 Giving typically male characteristics to (13)
- 4 Horse's fastest pace (6)
- 5 Revolving device for creating thread or yarn (8,5)
- 6 Bore witness (to) (8)
- 7 Fold of skin technically known as a palpebra (6)
- 13 Result of a puncture (4,4)
- 15 Of government revenue (6)
- 16 Zone (6)
- 18 Over there (6)
- 21 Went by horse or bicycle (4)

Solution to Crossword 9736



Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

KenKen Difficult No 6413

6+		15+			11+
10×		6×		2÷	
		1-	6×		
2-	20×				2÷
		1-	2÷		
2÷				6+	

All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

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Futoshiki No 4961

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
∇					∇
<input type="text"/>	>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<	<input type="text"/>	>	<input type="text"/>
			^		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 3920

	23	28		15	4				13	4
9			7			10		23	5	
34			22					19		
18				4	24				38	
	15			19						4
5			11			7	15			
21			23			15			6	
	15					11		5		7
	5	12				3	17	11		
13				35						
13					11				9	

Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

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Quintagram®

Solve all five cryptic clues using each letter underneath once only

1 After returning, plunders seat (5)

— — — — —

2 Bit of stillness, reportedly (5)

— — — — —

3 Mum rearranged tinsel (6)

— — — — —

4 Some American money for lodgings (8)

— — — — —

5 Arachnid's offspring eating gold penny (8)

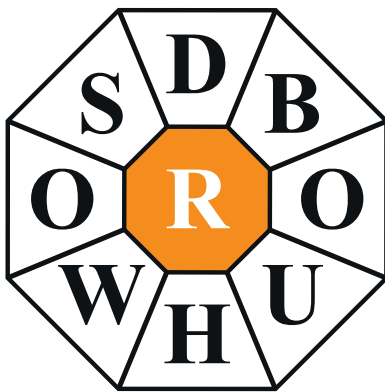
— — — — —

A	C	C	E	E	E	E	I
I	I	L	L	N	N	O	O
O	O	P	P	Q	R	R	R
S	S	S	S	T	T	T	U

Brain Trainer

EASY	22	$\frac{7}{11}$ OF IT	+9	x 2	+8	$\frac{5}{6}$ OF IT	÷ 15	SQUARE IT	+ 13	x 3	ANSWER	
MEDIUM	31	x 3	+ 85	$+\frac{1}{2}$ OF IT	x 2	+ 34	$\frac{7}{8}$ OF IT	+ 68	20% OF IT	+ 89	ANSWER	
HARDER	184	+ 578	x 4	- 556	$+\frac{1}{4}$ OF IT	+ 667	$+\frac{1}{2}$ OF IT	- 777	$\frac{5}{12}$ OF IT	+ 879	ANSWER	

Polygon



From these letters, make words of **four** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 12 words, average; 17, good; 22, very good; 27, excellent

Yesterday's answers
 aright, earth, eight, garth, gather, ghat, girth, graph, **graphite**, hair, hare, harp, hart, hate, hater, heap, hear, heart, heat, hegira, heir, hire, path, phage, phat, pith, raphe, rathe, rhea, right, tahr, tephra, their, thrip

Cell Blocks No 5304

		2			
2			12		
	4				
			2		2
			2		
4	6		4		3
	2			4	

Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

Set Square No 3923

	x	+		= 17
x		+	+	
3	-		+	= 7
-		+	+	
1	+		x	= 63
=	=	=		
14	12	24		

Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

Killer Moderate No 9880

14		3	24	8	12	
9	21			11	22	
			18	8		20
18						
9		13	3	13		
17		8		6	18	
13		21		15		
8			15	18		
	7		17	16		

Killer Deadly No 9881

7		24		14		20
23		26		13	10	
	26		21	19		11 6
					6	24
17		10	23		12	
	6	10				
		12		12	3	11
11		28				

As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

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Times Crossword 29,123

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					

ACROSS

- 1 Surviving letter to the Corinthians that's unknown within New Testament (6)
- 4 Cat chased by dogs, possibly very fast ones (8)
- 10 Take apart a French composer (7)
- 11 Small marsupial droppings collecting round hill (7)
- 12 Take in room in hospital round (4)
- 13 Parisian is by mountains in Australia in colourful outer layer (6,4)
- 15 Better half of pop song a hit in language of SW India (9)
- 16 French oil producer having Renault's front end checked by dipstick (5)
- 18 First light turning ornamental cherry tree leaves red to begin with (5)
- 19 Retired fireman working with a special buzzer on the wall? (5,4)
- 21 Possibly flyer's getting new blue cape (10)
- 23 Leave hastily from self-catering apartment on vacation (4)
- 26 Bats vanish after entrance of knight errant (7)
- 27 Elation about little piggy's growth? (7)
- 28 Worthless loco finally retired from sweet old railway (8)
- 29 British School of Language in Rennes (6)

DOWN

- 1 One of the horses departs after stock's reduced (5)
- 2 Seafarer with apostolic brief that may help him weather the storm (9)
- 3 Service vehicle pulled up on side of motorway (4)
- 5 Husband may put up with pony for a term (e.g. pony as horse) (7)
- 6 Pants erupt with smell becoming foul (10)
- 7 Inaccessible place for brooding heroine touring India (5)
- 8 Baseball infielder's two items of clothing (9)
- 9 Heartlessly knock down powerless friend — no longer buddy? (6)
- 14 Person orchestrating hypnotism set to start with suspect (10)
- 15 Scots are unaware of packages Southern Post Office delivered in error (9)
- 17 The knowhow to drive land yacht? (9)
- 19 Monsieur visiting his dear one who perhaps arranged their meeting (7)
- 20 Pomeranian dog quaffing river spray (6)
- 22 Primate managed to intercede in self-inflicted blunder (5)
- 24 One of several sharp nails left alongside fences (5)
- 25 Deride junior ingesting double dose of ecstasy (4)

Yesterday's solution 29,122

S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	
O	H	M	G	E	O	R	E							
C	H	E	Q	U	E	R	E	D	W	O	O	L	F	
R	A	E	R	N	U									
A	B	R	I	D	G	E	M	E	N	T	S	I	S	
T	O	C	S	O	S	E								
E	N	R	O	U	T	E	S	W	E	D	E	N		
S	E	B					A	A	T					
G	A	L	L	O	P		F	O	R	T	U	N	E	
S	L	E	R	I	T		A							
C	H	I	C	L	E	A	R	T	H	E	A	I	R	
A	T	R	S	K			L	A						
R	H	I	N	O		I	R	I	S	H	S	T	E	W
E	E	S	D	N	E	E	A							
D	I	S	A	S	T	E	R		S	M	A	R	M	Y

Check today's answers by ringing 0905 757 0141 by midnight. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke 0333 202 3390.

Solutions

Quick Cryptic 2881

C	O	T	S	W	O	L	D	I	S	I	S
Y	W	I	E					P	T		
C	L	E	A	N	T	E	R	M	I	T	E
L	E	D	R	U	N	A					
O	L	D	S	L	I	N	G	B	A	C	K
N			U	P	B	C					
E	N	T	I	R	E	H	I	P	H	E	N
	O	F	L	L							A
H	E	R	M	I	T	A	G	E	P	H	I
O	P	N	U	A	R	V					
S	H	E	R	G	A	R					
T	D		E	U	W	T					
A	M	O	K	A	L	D	E	R	N	E	Y

Codeword 5420

S	K	I	V	V		H	A	G	G	I	S
E	N	E	B			S	R	R	I		
C	A	N	A	S	T	A	P	R	A	W	N
O	E	P				N	I	N	E		
N	U	R	S	E		J	A	C	K	D	A
D			R	O						P	Y
	S	P	A	S	M		S	Q	U	A	T
B	R					N	U				E
O	X	I	D	I	S	E	A	D	O	R	N
X	M	D	I	S	E	R	N	S	Z		
F	L	U	M	E		V	I	T	R	I	F
U	L	A				Y	U	E			M
L	I	A	B	L	E		E	M	E	R	G

Kakuro 3919

2	9		3	1			4	9		
1	4		8	3			9	1	6	2
		3	9		9	5	7		8	4
			1	4			1	3	6	7
7	1		6	3	2	1	9	4	7	
9	3	1	8	2	4	5			5	9
	8	3	7	9			8	3		
6	2		9	1	2			1	4	
9	6	3	1			5	9		9	7
	5	1				6	7		6	2

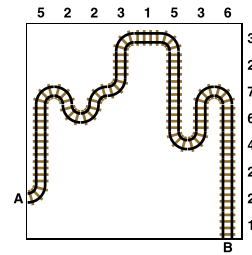
Sudoku 15,528

7	8	2	5	4	6	3	9	1
5	4	1	7	9	3	2	6	8
9	3	6	2	1	8	4	7	5
8	6	4	3	7	2	5	1	9
3	5	7	9	6	1	8	4	2
2	1	9	4	8	5	6	3	7
4	9	3	8	5	7	1	2	6
1	2	5	6	3	9	7	8	4
6	7	8	1	2	4	9	5	3

Tetonor 534

100	26	44	30
4 x 25	23 + 3	1 + 43	3 + 27
42	81	29	69
2 x 21	27 x 3	4 + 25	3 x 23
23	21	84	43
2 + 21	5 + 16	14 x 6	43 x 1
20	80	22	96
6 + 14	16 x 5	16 + 6	6 x 16

Train Tracks 2447



Sudoku 15,529

9	4	1	3	6	5	7	8	2
5	6	8	7	9	2	1	4	3
2	7	3	4	8	1	9	6	5
6	2	7	5	4	3	8	1	9
4	1	9	8	2	7	3	5	6
3	8	5	6	1	9	4	2	7
7	3	4	2	5	8	6	9	1
1	5	6	9	7	4	2	3	8
8	9	2	1	3	6	5	7	4

Cell Blocks 5303

2		3		
6	4	4	6	4
				5
			3	5
	2			
		5		

Set Square 3922

8	x	4	x	5
x		x		x
9	-	7	+	6
+		+		-
1	+	3	÷	2

Lexica 7889

F	E	Z			
N					G
T			G		R
R	A	I	S	E	
A		R			W
S	P	I	L	T	

Sudoku 15,530

5	9	8	6	4	3	1	2	7
6	3	2	1	7	5	8	9	4
4	7	1	9	2	8	6	5	3
2	8	7	5	3	4	9	1	6
9	4	3	2	6	1	7	8	5
1	5	6	8	9	7	3	4	2
8	1	4	3	5	6	2	7	9
7	6	9	4	8	2	5	3	1
3	2	5	7	1	9	4	6	8

Futoshiki 4960

3	5	1	<	2	<	4
1	<	2	5	4	3	
			v			
5	4	>	2	3	1	
2	3	4	1	<	5	
4	1	3	5	2		

KenKen 6412

6	5	3	1	2	4
1	2	5	6	4	3
3	6	1	4	5	2
5	1	4	2	3	6
4	3	2	5	6	1
2	4	6	3	1	5

Lexica 7890

			B		
C	L	E	A	N	
O			N		T
G	I	G	G	L	E
		O			X
D	E	T	E	S	T

Today's solutions

Killer 9878

4	9	7	8	1	5	2	3	6
1	3	5	6	2	9	7	8	4
8	2	6	3	4	7	1	9	5
6	1	9	7	8	2	4	5	3
7	5	4	9	6	3	8	2	1
2	8	3	4	5	1	9	6	7
3	4	8	1	9	6	5	7	2
9	6	2	5	7	4	3	1	8
5	7	1	2	3	8	6	4	9

Killer 9879

3	9	6	2	5	1	7	8	4
8	1	7	6	4	9	2	3	5
4	2	5	3	7	8	1	6	9
2	3	9	1	8	5	6	4	7
5	6	1	4	3	7	8	9	2
7	4	8	9	2	6	5	1	3
9	8	2	5	1	3	4	7	6
1	5	3	7	6	4	9	2	8
6	7	4	8	9	2	3	5	1

Cryptic Quintagram

- 1 Stool
- 2 Piece
- 3 Silent
- 4 Quarters
- 5 Scorpion

Suko 4322

3	2	1
16	16	
4	7	6
24	30	
5	8	9

Brain Trainer

- Easy 66
- Medium 202
- Harder 2,919

Word watch

- Zingiberaceous** (a) Of plants such as turmeric and ginger (Collins)
- Bobolink** (c) A North American songbird (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) (Chambers)
- Ultracrepidation** (a) The act of criticising ignorantly (OED)

Chess – Winning Move

- 1 Qxf8+! leads to a lovely finish: 1... Rxf8 2 Nf7+! Rxf7
- 3 Rc8+ Rf8 4 Rxf8 mate