

Annoying cylindrical cavity in a roadway (7)



— Equestrian sport involving a cylindrical mallet head hitting a spherical ball (4)



— Adjective for this knife blade after it has been given a razor edge (9)



— Geeky person who is overly enthusiastic about some intellectual topic like shapes (4)



POTHOLE – POLO = POTHOŁE = THE

SHARPENED – NERD = SHARPENED = SHAPE

Cylindrical egg dish that becomes convex when baked properly (7)



— Coal, kerosene, petroleum, & uranium (5)



— What aliens might call inhabitants of our spherically-shaped planet (10)



— This shape-skearian... I mean Shakespearean king (4)



SOUFFLE – FUELS = SOUFFLE = OF

EARTHLINGS – LEAR = EARTHLINGS = THINGS

Biconical spinning toy (3)



— Symbol for element #15 (1)



— Rectangular electronic devices (9)

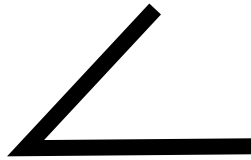


— “Growth” follower – meaning a sudden size increase (5)



TOP – P = TOP = TO

COMPUTER – SPURT = COMPUTERS = COME



Archimedes and Benjamin Banneker are sitting on a bench, having a discussion.
 Archie: Tell me old friend, when you're drawing angles, don't you just feel amazing – like your mind is the willing subject of a kidnapping to another dimension?

Benjie: Wow, Archie, I never thought of it that way. I just know they always seem to make fizzy feelings inside of me. You could say that I am one hopeless lover when it comes to angles!

Archie: You might not realize it at first glance, but if you look really closely, you'll realize it always takes three points to define an angle, and I've always liked threes: Three musketeers, three-legged races, **three-syllable words**.

Benjie: I just feel angles make so many awesome **connections**: they are what all the other shapes we draw depend on.

Archie: I know, from acute to obtuse, angles have always seemed larger than life!

Carl Friedrich Gauss walks up and tries to join the discussion.

Carl: Hey I like drawing angles too.

Archie: Um, excuse you! This was an A B conversation, so you can C your way out!

Arranged from smallest angle to largest, the four three-way connections are:

CAR-BONE-EIGHT (carbonate)

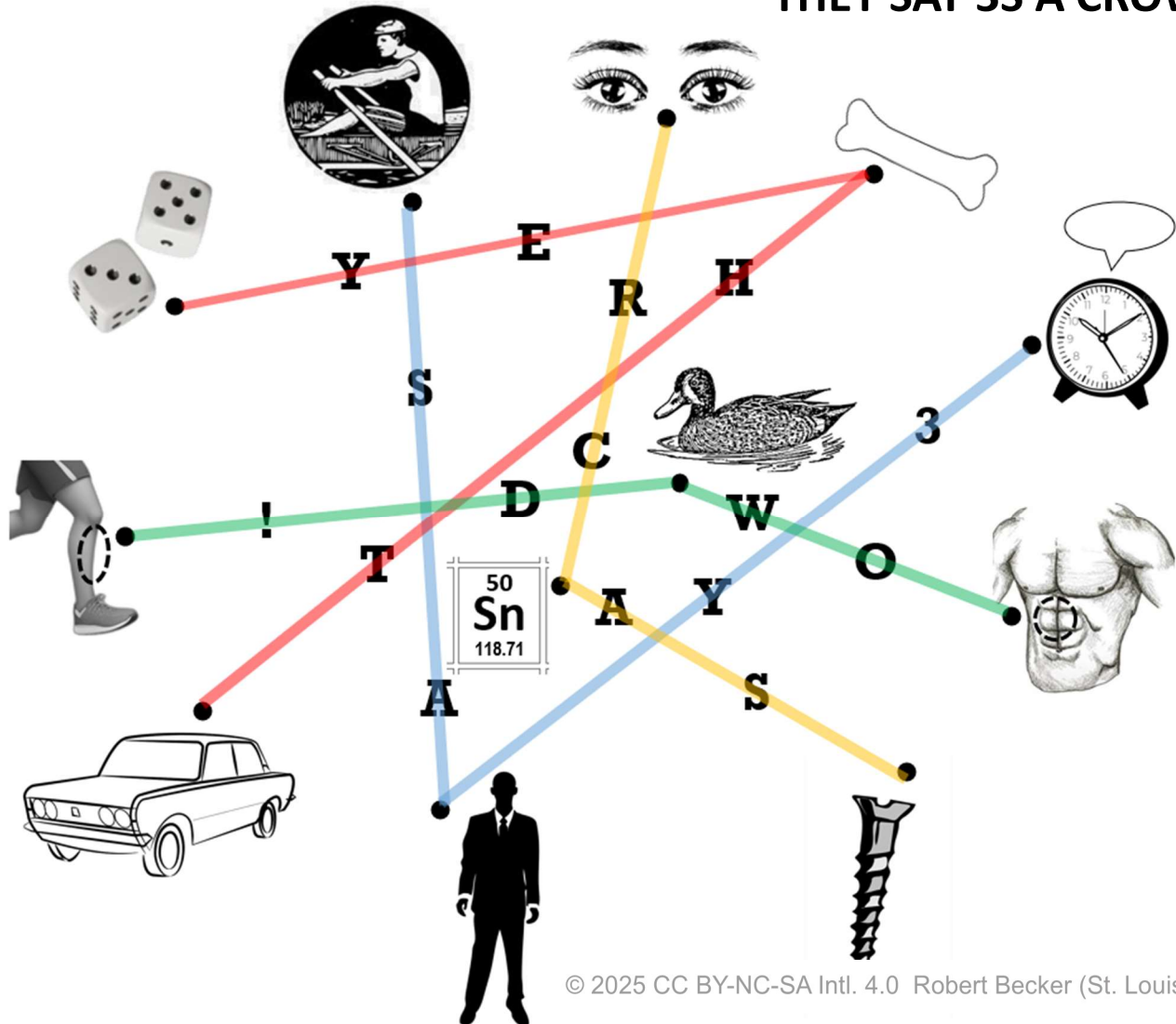
ROW-MAN-TICK (romantic)

SCREW-TIN-EYES (scrutinize)

AB-DUCK-SHIN (abduction)

When straight lines are drawn dot-to-dot to make these 4 angles, the letters/characters passed through in the order above give the solution:

THEY SAY 3S A CROWD!





The sixteen four-word square-words are all shown below in alpha order. Cutting up and rearranging the squares to create those sixteen words gives you the assembly below left. If you then read the left-over letters along the perimeter left-to-right, top-to-bottom, it reads: **NOTICE THE CHARACTER IN EACH SQUARE JUST PAST TWELVE.** These are indicated with blue circles – in the just past twelve o'clock positions. When these are read in order 1-9, and placed in the answer space: _____! they give the solution:

Hubert remembers the first time someone called him “square.” He had no idea what it meant – so he looked it up: “old-fashioned, boringly conventional.” When he was younger, he had always thought of himself as a bit of a rebel, so this new label really upset him: he felt like he had been **cut up into pieces** and had to **reorganize everything** just to **make sense of it all**. After doing all that, he **read** some old **letters left over** from his rowdy childhood friend Louis, and he came to appreciate that squares played a major role in his life and in the world around him. Then he had an epiphany!

N	O	T	I	C	E	H	C	A
R	7	Y	A	2	A	E	4	A
C		A	W		L	D		T
E	F	R	O	N	F	O	T	O
I	A	I	T	K	T	O	R	O
E		R	A	8	I	L	6	A
C	1	D	Y		M	E		H
S	C	A	T	I	C	H	L	M
U	K	B	E	M	N	I	A	E
R		R	F	5	T	N	3	E
J	9	U	O		P	A		U
S	T	P	A	S	T	T	W	E
							L	V
								E

IT'S HIP TO B (SQUARE!).

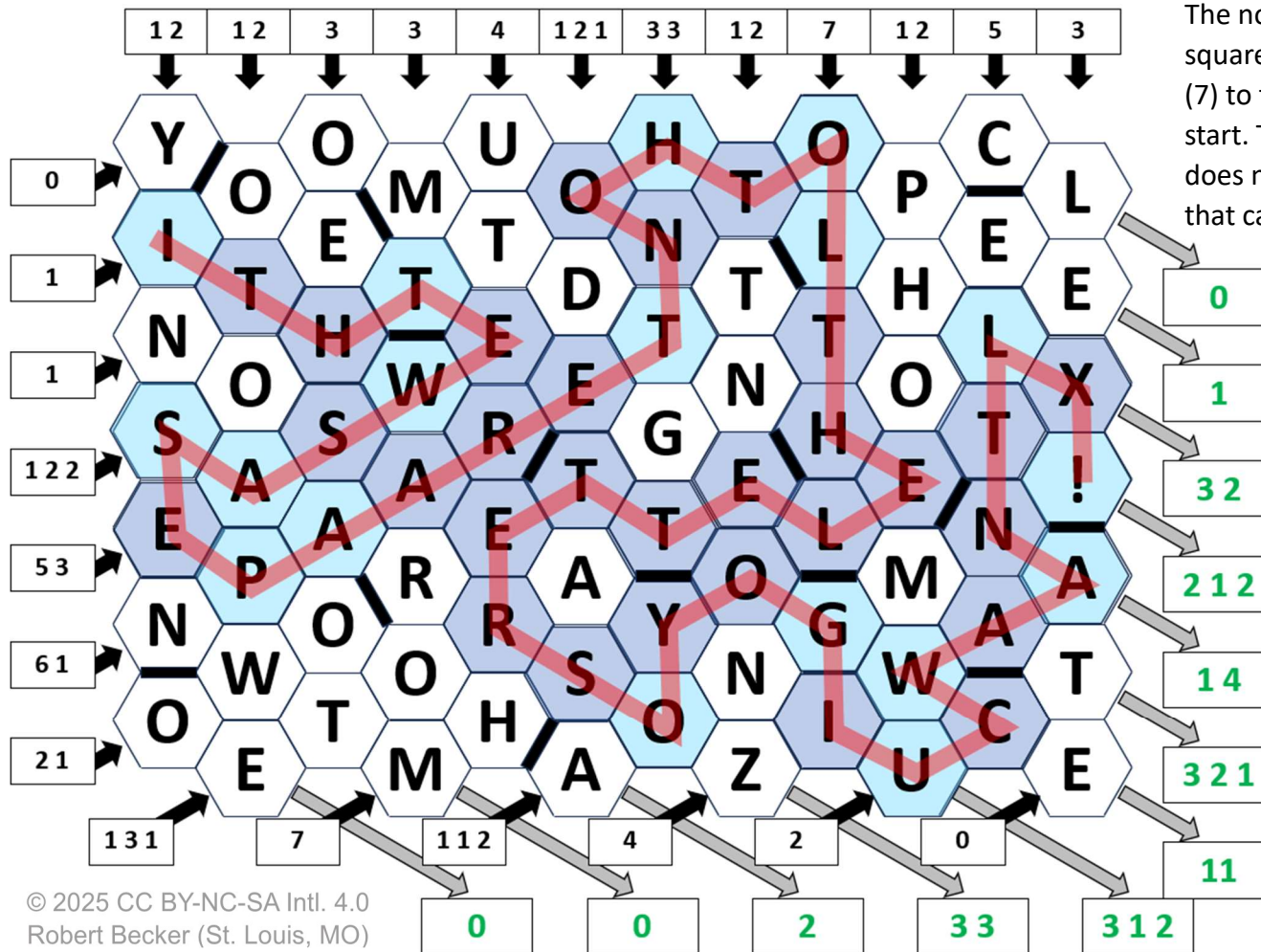
- _____ Take care of everything
SQUARE AWAY
- _____ to one At the beginning again
BACK to SQUARE-1
- _____ Equitable bargain – Teddy Roosevelt’s program
SQUARE DEAL
- _____ & Just and honest
FAIR & SQUARE
- _____ Nonmetric unit for measuring living space
SQUARE FOOT
- _____ Playground game played on 2 x 2 grid
FOUR SQUARE
- _____ The SI in PSI
SQUARE INCH
- _____ Left over right, then right over left
SQUARE KNOT
- _____ Substantial and well-balanced repast
SQUARE MEAL
- _____ Equivalent to 640 acres
SQUARE MILE
- _____ Some bolt fasteners
SQUARE NUTS
- _____s Sponge Bob apparel
SQUARE PANTS
- _____ These are not meant for round holes
SQUARE PEGS
- _____ What 7 is to 49
SQUARE ROOT
- _____s Neon-lit New York City destination
TIMES SQUARE
- _____ Nonmetric area unit, equivalent to 0.836 m²
SQUARE YARD



When she was just a wee lass, Liza had a run-in with an evil sorcerer who cast a hex on her that made it impossible for her to ever tell the truth. And so Liza's life was spent wandering from one end of the land to the other. Here's how she describes her journey:

- My journey has nothing to do with **nonograms**.
- The hexes should be shaded in so darkly that you cannot read the letters beneath.
- The shaded-in grid ends up looking like a recognizable object, and you need to spend a long time figuring out what that object is.
- The shaded-in grid does not define the route I take.
- On my route, I can cross my own path if I want.
- I am able to revisit the same hex cell more than once.
- I can pass through any of those black walls in my way.
- The twelve missing sets of numbers mean nothing, and they do not indicate in clockwise order the number of steps I took before pausing.

Truth be told, her journey could be summed up in just a few words.

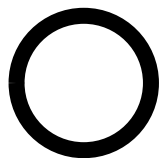


The nonogram puzzle is solved just like one with a square grid. The (3 3) that is middle down and the (7) to the right of it are gimme's and good places to start. The solution is shown in blue shades at left. It does not resemble anything! There is only one path that can lead from one side to the other and

that is shown in red. The missing numbers from the nonogram are shown in green across the right margin and the bottom. If those numbers are used as pauses along the path, starting with 0, 1, 3 2..., (as in start with 1, then pause after 3 steps, then pause after 2... the solution is revealed (shown in light blue):

IT WAS PATHOLOGICAL!

Reading the unshaded hexagons gives:
 YOU COMPLETED THE NONOGRAM NOW
 ON TO THE MAZE
 Also, reading the *other* path letters gives
 THESE ARE NOT THE LETTERS YOU WANT X



Öun loves all things circular, while their partner Øystein loves things that are not circular but are related to circles. And so the two see themselves as quite **interconnected**. Help them with this word search. It's challenging, but once everything has been found, embrace only those things inside Öun's comfort zone but outside Øystein's. Kudos if you are successful!

© 2025 CC BY-NC-SA Intl. 4.0 Robert Becker (St. Louis, MO)

Author's self-described trip around the world (B|D)

(B)AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL (D)CIRCUMNAVIGATION

Well rounded quarrel (C|A)

(C)CIRCULAR (A)ARGUMENT

Krispy Kreme treat given to a food pantry (F|E)

(F)DOUGHNUT (E)DONATION

Linked together loops with half-twists (I|J,L)

(I)INTERLOCKING (J)MÖBIUS (L)STRIPS

Hip replacement metal hip 50's toy (M|H,G)

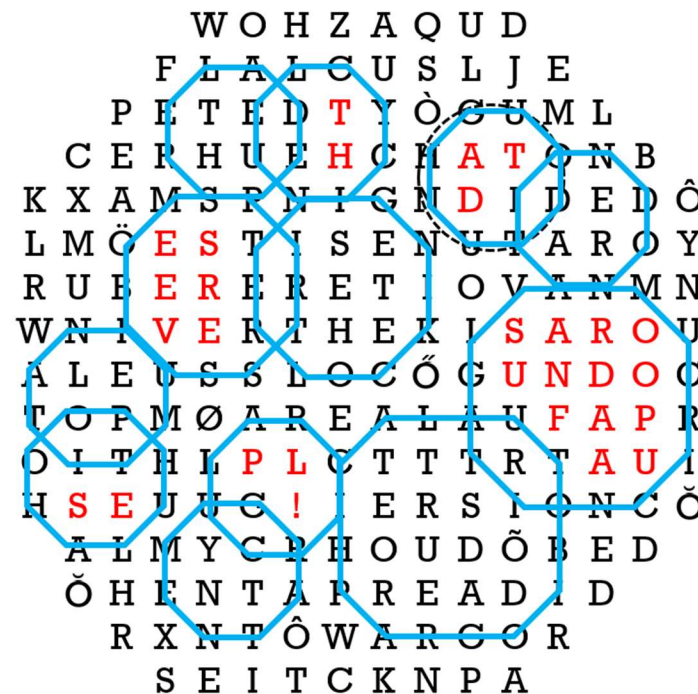
(M)TITANIUM (H)HULA (G)HOOP

One-wheeler riders – but not sellers (N|K)

(N)UNICYCLE (K)PEDALERS (not PEDDLERS!)

The answers to the clues are found at left. The A-N designations were intended to help since they place the words in alphabetical order (see list below). Each answer has one component that is circular (underlined) and one that is not. These words are all found in the word search in circles (blue) – with the two components overlapping like venn diagrams. These are all shown at right. The letters that are within the circular component but not within the non-circular ones are in red. They reveal the answer: **THAT DESERVES A ROUND OF APPLAUSE!**

A = ARGUMENT	H = HULA
B = AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL	I = INTERLOCKING
C = CIRCULAR	J = MÖBIUS
D = CIRCUMNAVIGATION	K = PEDALERS
E = DONATION	L = STRIPS
F = DOUGHNUT	M = TITANIUM
G = HOOP	N = UNICYCLE





Master: You've come a long way, ready to take it to the next level.

Polly Gon, and this year, I think you're

Apprentice: YAY! (She gets so excited, she transforms into a different shape.)

Master: First, there are some **extractions** to perform, my little shape-shifter!

Apprentice: I see, and will I need to draw my own conclusions?

Master: Well, not formal conclusions, but perhaps semi-formal. So yes, **you will need to draw your own semiformal conclusions**. And then you will be prepared for the ultimate shape challenge in this very special year!

From one, extract an insect:

IT WAS PATHOLOGICAL!

W	A	S	P
+1	+1	+0	-2
X▲	B✱	S♥	N□

The extraction of the words from the four separate solutions are shown at left. These letters get shifted alphabetically by the amounts shown -0, +1 or +2. These new letters are then drawn as their semaphore symbols on top of the corresponding shapes on the grid. This spells (and draws) the solution:

From another, extract a bird:

THEY SAY 3'S A CROWD!

C	R	O	W
+0	+0	-6	-2
C✱	R▽	I◆	U♥

RUBIK'S (CUBE) HAPPY 50TH

From yet another, extract a means of transportation:

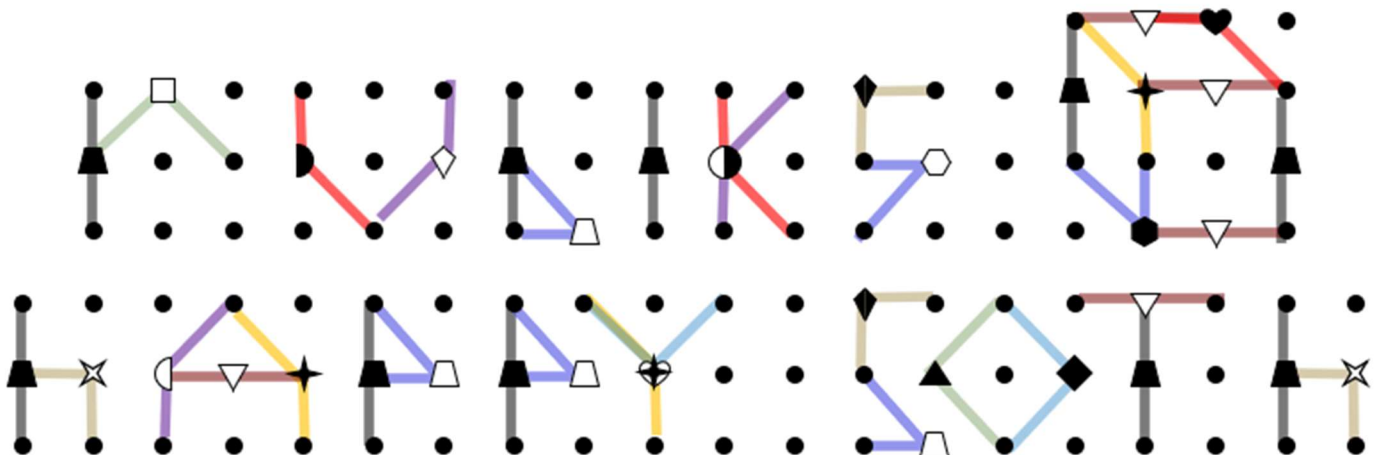
IT'S HIP TO B !

S	H	I	P
+1	-3	-3	-1
T●	E◁	F◆	O▷

And from yet another extract a computer command:

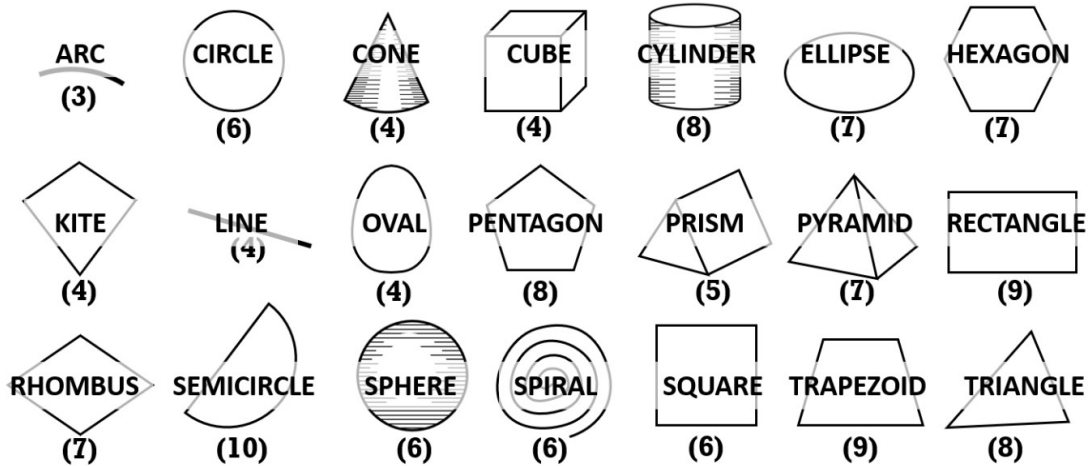
THAT DESERVES A ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

U	N	D	O
+1	-6	+0	-4
V▷	H◁	D▲	K◇

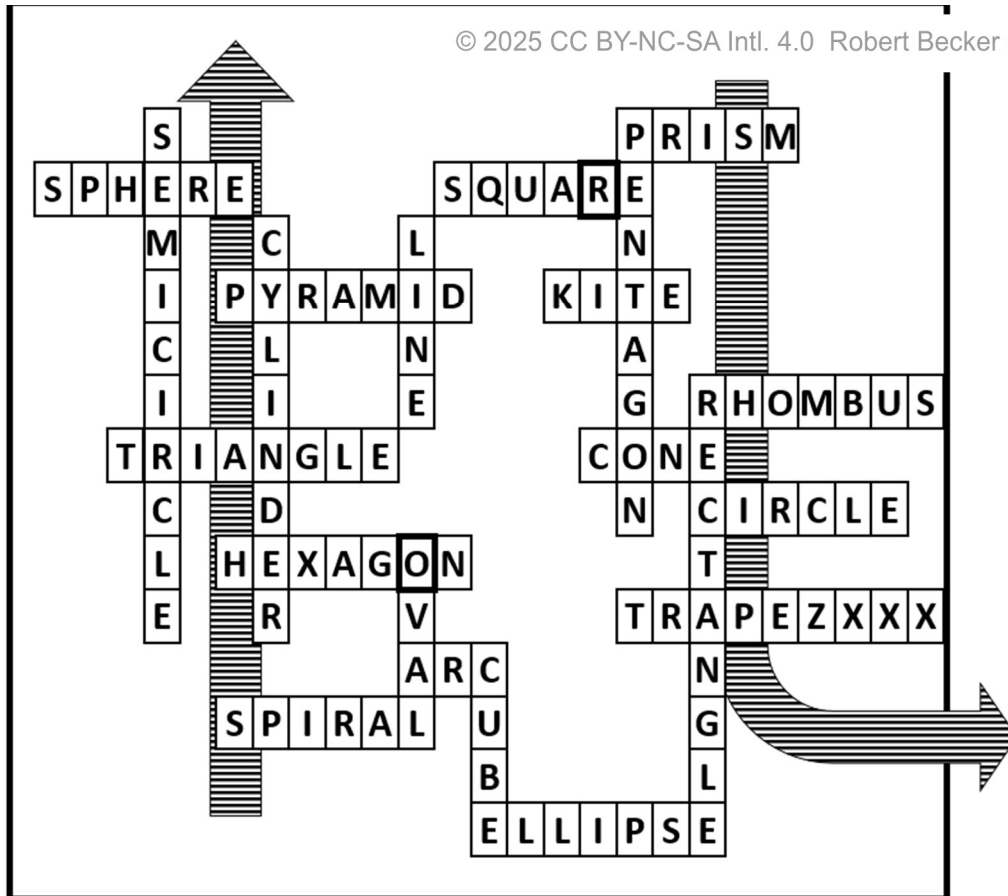




The 21 shape names are given below. They are in alphabetical order left to right, top to bottom. These can only be placed into the crossword grid in the way shown below. [Note, the shape that Americans call a “trapezoid” is called a “trapezium” in the UK (who knew!?), but since the two words are the same length and since the final three letters are inconsequential, it shouldn’t be a problem! Note also that although the words “oval” and “ellipse” are often used interchangeably, an oval can be lopsided (egg-shaped) and an ellipse cannot.] The arrow pointing up runs through the letters S-H-A-P-E and the arrow pointing outward runs through the letters S-H-I-P. The five word solution is **SHAPE UP OR SHIP OUT**.



© 2025 CC BY-NC-SA Intl. 4.0 Robert Becker (St. Louis, MO)



Five word solution: _____

An Ode to 2024 - Solution

Step 1: Pair up the 12 meta answers with their month's set.

Step 2: Index into the set name using the number in parentheses.

In January we went to the ANIMAL CASINO

How can you be guaranteed to walk out of a casino with a small fortune? **Enter with a large one (2)**

In February we had AFTERNOON TEA

What tea did the chef recommend? **Ginger (7)**

In March we learned some MATHEMATICS

What should the mathematician do when she's late driving to work? **Floor it (3)**

In April we listened to THE MAGNUS ARCHIVES

How do we save our world? **Turn off Dread Power (16)**

In May we watched BART SIMPSON

Who's on the phone to Moe? **Hugh Jass (5)**

In June we ate some SUSHI

I'm excited for it! Sounds like it will really... **Raise the sushi bar (2)**

In July we went on a ROAD TRIP

We had hoped this route would be a nice little shortcut, instead of a huge... **Detour (8)**

In August we read THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

What had Milo's days of snoozing life away become? **Snorific (10)**

In September we tried CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

What can you choose to destroy the Decision Tree? **Pick axes (3)**

In October we went on a SHOPPING SPREE

What do you deserve for completing your shopping spree? **A lot of credit (11)**

In November we played some CLASSIC GAMES

What happened to the suspects at the millionaire's mansion? They... **Made a killing (5)**

In December we constructed some SHAPES

...

Rubik's Cube (5)

**N
O
T
E
S
U
P
M
O
R
S
E**

Step 3: Extracting the message NOTES UP MORSE, we now use the music to obtain our final answer. Looking only at the notes whose stems point upwards, treating quavers/eighth notes as dots and crotchets/quarter notes as dashes, and the bars/measures as character breaks we get:

.. P .. I .. N .. T .. O .. F

.. K .. I .. N .. D .. N .. E .. S .. S