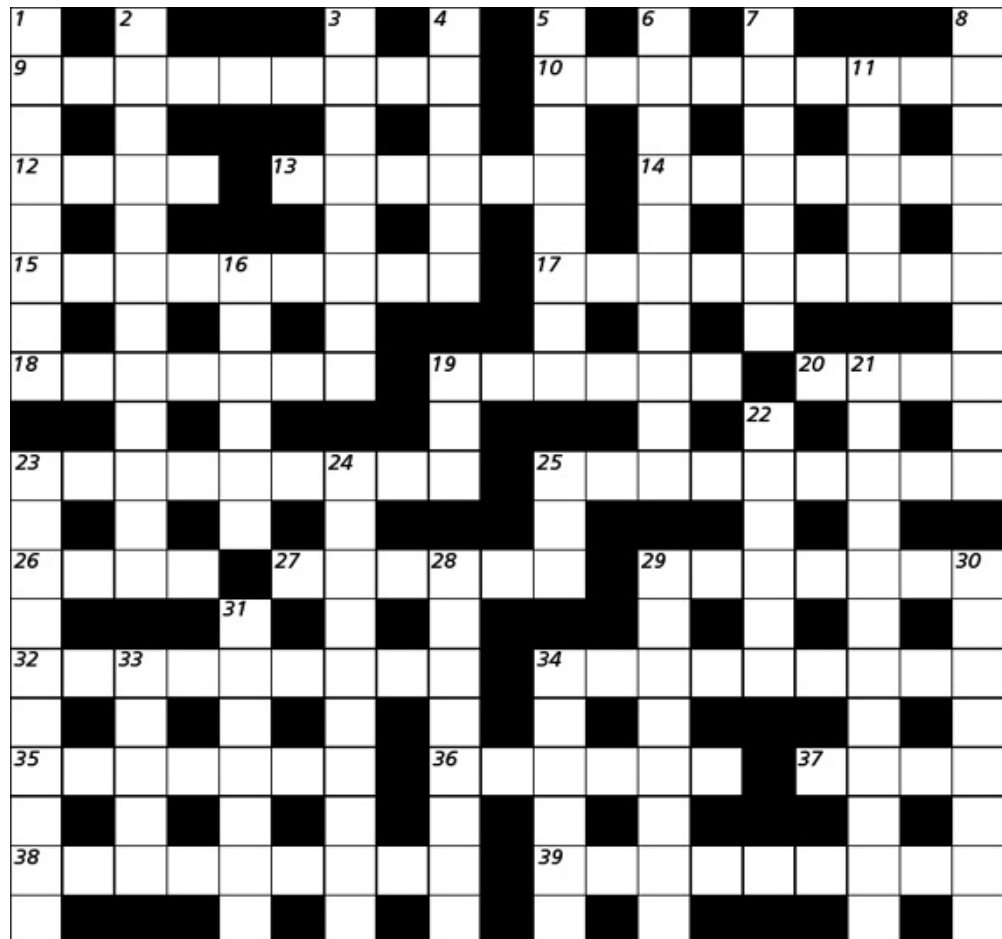


JUMBO CROSSWORD

- ACROSS:** 9 Bride's 'bottom drawer' (9) 10 Surgical procedure (9) 12 Resonance (4) 13 Satisfy (6) 14 Disturb (7) 15 Provincial (9) 17 Able (9) 18 Godparent (7) 19 Leave (6) 20 Norwegian capital (4) 23 Focus attention on (9) 25 Extremely funny (9) 26 Spool (4) 27 Aristocracy (6) 29 Quarters (7) 32 Angler (9) 34 Profusion (9) 35 Vertical (7) 36 Cunning (6) 37 Second-hand (4) 38 Earnest (9) 39 US state (9)
DOWN: 1 Tris (8) 2 Native language (6,6) 3 Strange (8) 4 Regretful (6) 5 Paper size (8) 6 Type of butterfly (3,7) 7 Seaman (7) 8 Catching (10) 11 Extremely angry (5) 16 Expensive (6) 19 Speck (3) 21 Meteor (8,4) 22 Earth (6) 23 Keenly contested (4-6) 24 Brains, commonly (4,6) 25 Dried grass (3) 28 Persistence (8) 29 Productive (8) 30 Motorcycle sport (8) 33 Middle Eastern country (5) 34 Fit for crops (6)



CRYPTIC CLUES

- 9 Drying while you're phoning (2,3,4) 10 Better than, when it comes to barbering? (1,3,5) 12 Delighted to defect, you say (4) 13 Said it's a surface charm (6) 14 After half an hour I send food round to feed (7) 15 A miniature plane, perhaps (5,4) 17 Sets straight on the subject of clothes (9) 18 On the day, dead annoyed about its being full of holes (7) 19 An animal and one dicky bird! (6) 20 Decline to become enamoured of (4) 23 Giving a guarantee, which is auspicious (9) 25 Set off and left after the other three, we're told (4,5) 26 Moor by the river bank (4) 27 Even though one has the odd bleat about it (6) 29 Is he grumbling about the old-fashioned transport? (7) 32 With set ideas, going off to do some bird-watching? (9) 34 Is clearly irritated by and cancels (9) 35 An advertisement from "15"? (7) 36 About a quarter recover? How surprising! (6) 37 Fool who will, given time, get sense (4) 38 An ally in one form or another (9) 39 Pay my debts? Lay off! (9)

DOWN

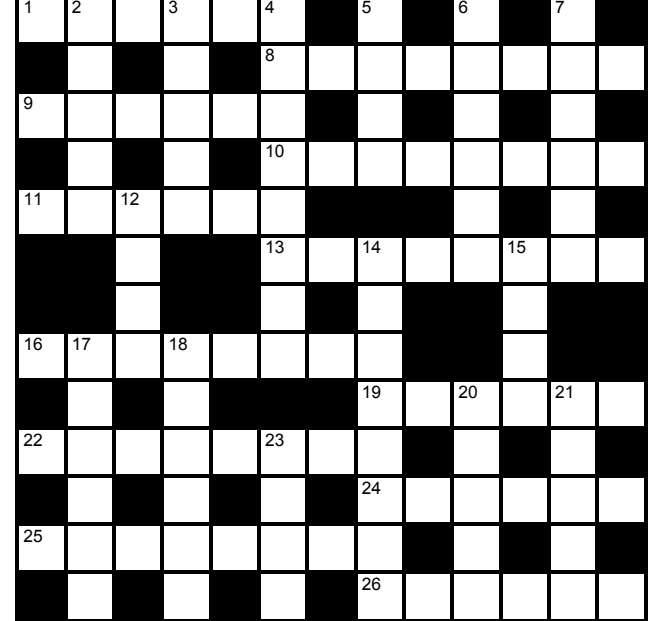
- 1 Deem to be deliberate (8) 2 What happened when the flag was hoisted showing a flower? (8,4) 3 Smiled when the spider got me agitated (8) 4 The girl's been stood up again and that's tough (6) 5 Speak ill of as "a ruddy awful paper" (8) 6 Prepared the bed for sleeping in didn't like it (6,4) 7 Downcast and carrying an instrument, said hello (7) 8 The old man, like myself, had so healthy an upbringing (10) 11 Misses one most, being crazy about (5) 16 Brief one on how to be a substitute? (4,2) 19 The girl who took your coat? (3) 21 Spring water (5,7) 22 Attempt to get the keys to the garrison (6) 23 Like the shorts dirty from playing football? (5,5) 24 The salesman's favourite words? I believe you! (3,3,4) 25 It is to the point, showing intelligence (3) 28 Authorises at last the transplantation of the roses (8) 29 Left inside so germs spread, which is stupid (8) 30 As favours, prepared to keep in store, packaged (8) 31 "A terrible slob," I add, "hard to get rid of" (7) 33 A drink before the play (5) 34 Supports the defensive efforts (6)

- ACROSS:** 9 Drying while you're phoning (2,3,4) 10 Better than, when it comes to barbering? (1,3,5) 12 Delighted to defect, you say (4) 13 Said it's a surface charm (6) 14 After half an hour I send food round to feed (7) 15 A miniature plane, perhaps (5,4) 17 Sets straight on the subject of clothes (9) 18 On the day, dead annoyed about its being full of holes (7) 19 An animal and one dicky bird! (6) 20 Decline to become enamoured of (4) 23 Giving a guarantee, which is auspicious (9) 25 Set off and left after the other three, we're told (4,5) 26 Moor by the river bank (4) 27 Even though one has the odd bleat about it (6) 29 Is he grumbling about the old-fashioned transport? (7) 32 With set ideas, going off to do some bird-watching? (9) 34 Is clearly irritated by and cancels (9) 35 An advertisement from "15"? (7) 36 About a quarter recover? How surprising! (6) 37 Fool who will, given time, get sense (4) 38 An ally in one form or another (9) 39 Pay my debts? Lay off! (9)

- DOWN:** 1 Consider 2 Standard rose 3 Discharge 4 Classmate 5 Dried grass 6 Turned down 7 S'ever-re 8 Belly-rag 9 Operate 10 Echidna 11 Fulfill 12 Competent 13 Rival 14 Rival 15 Rival 16 Rival 17 Rival 18 Rival 19 Rival 20 Rival 21 Rival 22 Rival 23 Rival 24 Rival 25 Rival 26 Rival 27 Rival 28 Rival 29 Rival 30 Rival 31 Rival 32 Rival 33 Rival 34 Rival 35 Rival 36 Rival 37 Rival 38 Rival 39 Rival

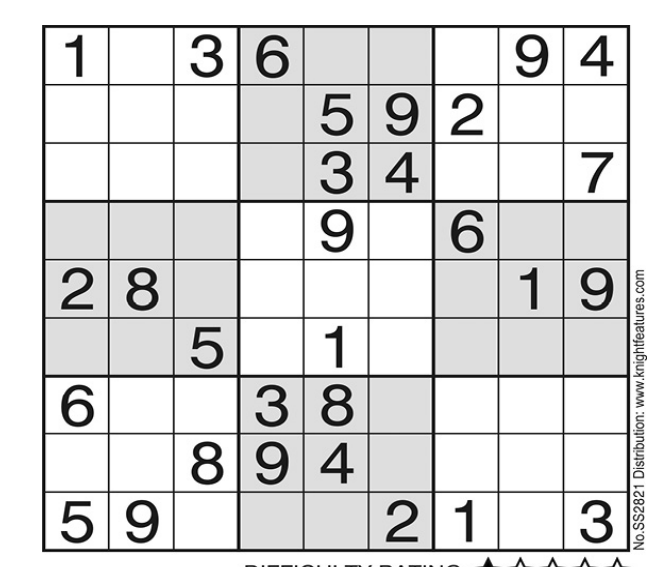
- CRYPTIC SOLUTIONS:** 9 On the line. 10 A cut above. 11 Sent (sent). 12 A ruddy awful paper. 13 Said it's a surface charm. 14 After half an hour I send food round to feed. 15 A miniature plane, perhaps. 17 Sets straight on the subject of clothes. 18 On the day, dead annoyed about its being full of holes. 19 An animal and one dicky bird! 20 Decline to become enamoured of. 23 Giving a guarantee, which is auspicious. 25 Set off and left after the other three, we're told. 26 Moor by the river bank. 27 Even though one has the odd bleat about it. 29 Is he grumbling about the old-fashioned transport? 32 With set ideas, going off to do some bird-watching? 34 Is clearly irritated by and cancels. 35 An advertisement from "15"? 36 About a quarter recover? How surprising! 37 Fool who will, given time, get sense. 38 An ally in one form or another. 39 Pay my debts? Lay off!

CRYPTIC 320



- ACROSS:** 1 Pat's given notice and now makes it suitable (6) 8 Provide people who are mainly popular (8) 9 Some sign or examine something then willfully disregard it (6) 10 Assembled a gathering of witches in the end (8) 11 They played and it was enough for that robber (6) 13 About luxuries provided when an army falls back (8) 16 The work of our man overseas is to run around distributing coals? (8) 19 I'm to love Sam, the sensitive one (6) 22 What a bind this is! (8) 24 How to undo the French small lump (6) 25 The tide's out and men go in looking for the remains (8) 26 Rarely do you find such a solution (6)
- DOWN:** 2 Belief that a man's best friend and his mother are both needed (5) 3 That haughty Public Relations duo (5) 4 Some respect rallies that show a lot of spirit (8) 5 Frank can't be shut up (4) 6 One that is well-armed (6) 7 Bear witness that I was at the game (6) 12 Anyway, it's lunchtime (4) 14 How it annoys Tom to see the rent's due (8) 15 There's a lot to be said for such a voice (4) 17 Nothing exists like these oily ones (6) 18 It acts as if it wasn't moving (6) 20 Left when made confused by the decoration (5) 21 One salute that goes off with a bang (5) 23 Employs most fuses (4)

SUDOKU



Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 grid contains the digits 1 through 9 with no repeats.

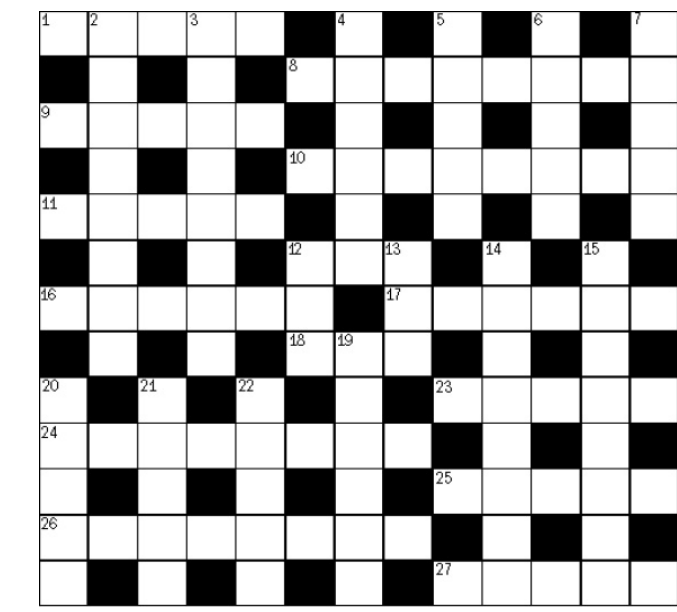
LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

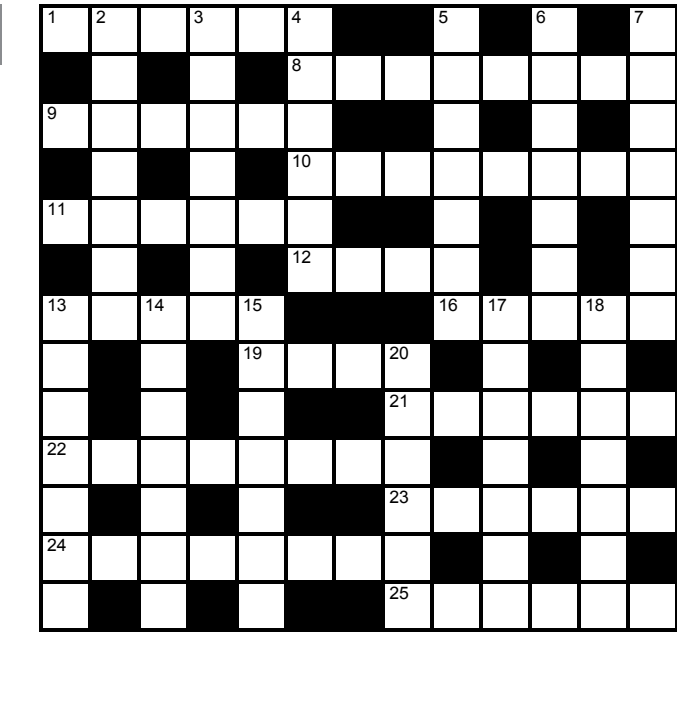
10 MINUTE CROSSWORD

- ACROSS:** 1 Moneylending at exorbitant rate (5) 8 Banter (8) 9 To erect (3,2) 10 In effect (2,4,2) 11 Primitive (5) 12 Play on words (3) 16 Deaden someone's words (9) 17 Recently (4) 18 Small amount (3) 23 Weaken (5) 24 Native country (8) 25 Loathe (5) 26 Shipwrecked (8) 27 RedEx Express clearly (5)
- DOWN:** 2 Settle an account (6,2) 3 To complete neatly (5,3) 4 Capital of the Bahamas (6) 5 Obstinately opinionated person (5) 6 Conveniently near (5) 7 Smallest (5) 12 Favourite (3) 13 A sign of assent (3) 14 ABC (8) 15 Police surveillance (8) 19 Toughen (9) 20 Stupid (5) 21 Shatter (5) 22 Understandpromising (5)

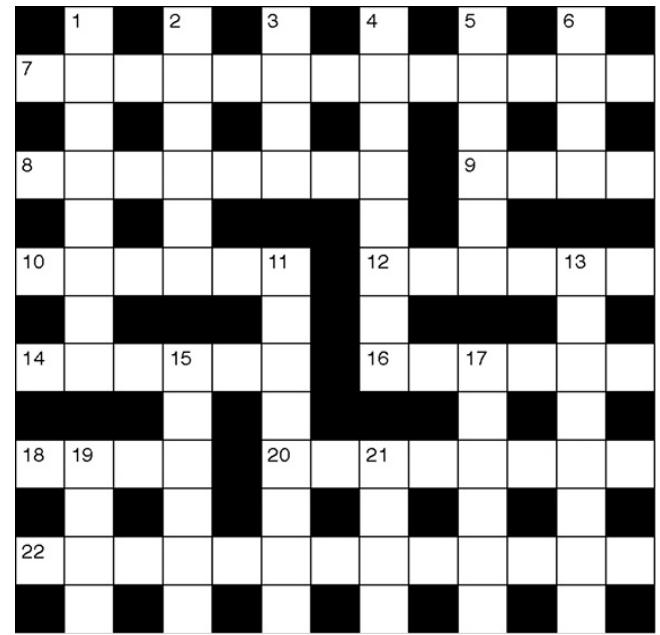


GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

- ACROSS:** 1 Name a number of eggs incubated at one time (6) 8 Which term means conventional (8) 9 To receive with approval, is to do what (6) 10 What is a lift also known as (8) 11 What is the act of placing under the ground (6) 12 Which term means before long (4) 13 What is a limiting border of something (5) 16 Name some bands or groups (5) 19 Former name the monetary unit of Italy (4) 21 What is a fixed periodical payment for regular work (6) 22 What are conquests (8) 23 To make beloved, is to do what (6) 24 Which term means extremely hungry (8)
- DOWN:** 2 Lecture 3 Training 4 Hotels 5 Sharing 6 Edition 7 Express 8 Contents 9 Type 10 Astory 12 Easter 14 Cover 15 Antelope 18 Ages 20 Antelope 22 Accommodation 23 Writer 3 Lion 4 Eggshell 5 Mantle 13 Election 15 Vision 6 Strip 11 Brackets 17 Nudity 19 Pick 21 Tidy



DOUBLE CROSSWORD



- CRYPTIC CLUES:** 7 Group of paying guests embarking (8,5) 8 Satisfies the inside (8) 9 Kind of thing a secretary may do (4) 10 Hothead leaves smoker's receptacle in a lost state (6) 12 More oriental festival? (6) 14 Four-leaved one, perhaps got by many a swimmer? (6) 16 Came down to earth, owning an estate (6) 18 Animals featuring in any tapestry (4) 20 A cure for weakly affection? (8) 22 A loan for lodgings (13)
- DOWN:** 1 Tremendous deficit in fuel (8) 2 The author sounds to be more than correct (6) 3 Fifty to one on this animal (4) 4 Its 8 are the makings of a bird (8) 5 10000 people against praying with this insect? (6) 6 Red light for the organist? (4) 11 36-inch guns which carried sails? (8) 13 In which the favourite will get cross many times (8) 15 Sight of 6's charge (6) 17 Production of strip (6) 19 Choose a digging implement (4) 21 Neat change of end of (17,4)
- QUICK CLUES:** 7 Vicinity (13) 8 Occupied (8) 9 A fabric (4) 10 Enclosed (6) 12 Pact (6) 14 Shrink (6) 16 Intensely (6) 18 Worry (4) 20 Recklessness (8) 22 Weather-man (13)
- DOWN:** 1 Demote (8) 2 Appalled (6) 3 Help (4) 4 Outlets (8) 5 Virtuous (6) 6 Implement (4) 11 Slow (8) 13 Discourse (8) 15 Beginning (6) 17 Anger (6) 19 Spool (4) 21 Jetty (4)

NICK BARNETT CHESS

AS AT SEPTEMBER 2020 these were the top 20 FIDE ratings by country. Each rating is the average of the top ten players in each country: 1 Russia 2739; 2 United States of America 2715; 3 China 2705; 4 India 2668; 5 Ukraine 2663; 6 Armenia 2652; 7 Azerbaijan 2652; 8 Hungary 2644; 9 France 2638; 10 Poland 2637; 11 Germany 2630; 12 Netherlands 2622; 13 England 2620; 14 Spain 2617; 15 Israel 2615; 16 Czech Republic 2605; 17 Georgia 2584; 18 Norway 2584; 19 Croatia 2577; 20 Serbia 2567.

What puts a country on the top of the list? Of all the factors, an ancient tradition of chess playing should have put India in the forefront, but in terms of modern competitive chess, it was only after 1988 when Viswanathan "Vishy" Anand's became the first grandmaster from India, that it introduced a new era which has now propelled India into 4th place. Before the age of digital accessibility, cold climates supported the hours of shut-in time chess players needed to perfect the craft, but that too is changing. Today population plays a role. Of note: China with its 1.4 billion, India with 1.3 billion and United States with 331 thousand people. Russia believes the truth of that with 145 thousand, because globally, Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Mexico boast more inhabitants. Another factor in explaining why one country and not another is at the top, is the influence of the old Soviet system which led to systematic training from an early age and the promotion of chess stars in the USSR. Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia continue the tradition. Then their partners in communism: East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were also heavily influenced by the zeitgeist of fierce competition and national pride and it still influences them today. Outliers: Poland is an interesting outlier because so many of her top players in the 30's and 40's were Jewish and many left to escape Nazi occupation, but clearly the tradition they left behind lingered. Many of the people who left, settled in the USA and carried the practices forward there. Another outlier is Norway with a small population (5.4 million), but a great role model in Magnus Carlsen. This example and that of India cannot be overstated in how much a tiny country can be propelled into the top league by a star. South African organisers should take note! How does Africa fare? Egypt sits at 48 with an average rating of their top

ten at 2480. Zambia sits at 75 with rating of 2311. South Africa is at 76 with an average rating of 2304. Nigeria with its population of 195 million stands at 88.



NEIL HAYWARD BRIDGE

Opening Lead: ♠6. What is your plan?

Recommended Line: The club lead is fishy. It looks suspiciously like a singleton. You can tell that the highly rated habit of drawing trumps right away, will probably end in disappointment. West will win the first trump, lead a diamond, and receive a club ruff. That's three tricks to them, with a further top trump to come. Once you see the movie, you can change the script. Play the ♠A, overtake the ♥Q, and lead the ♥K. East plays low, and you discard a diamond. West wins, but East cannot be reached in diamonds, so the club ruff evaporates. You lose just two top spades and a heart. You have succeeded by cutting communications between them. No wonder it's called the Scissors Coup.

North: ♠T854, ♥KT3, ♦95, ♣AQ92

South: ♠QJ932, ♥AQ, ♦7, ♣KJT54

West: ♠K6, ♥J942, ♦KJT832, ♣6

East: ♠A7, ♥8765, ♦AQ64, ♣873

South: ♠16, ♥1, ♦1, ♣1

West: ♠16, ♥1, ♦1, ♣1

North: ♠16, ♥1, ♦1, ♣1

East: ♠16, ♥1, ♦1, ♣1

♠ Shows spades
♦ Artificial. A good diamond raise



YOUR STARS
Barbara Kiselev

If today is your birthday:
This new year expects new developments. But it's not without work, without having a burning ambition. So give it your all and you can live a new life. It's all about knowing yourself and building on your potential. There's much you can do.

Aries (21 March-20 April)
Yes you can dream big. This week take the path less travelled by, while aiming high. You never know what you can achieve. All you need is a lot of drive. But you always are in the fast lane.

Taurus (21 April-21 May)
Anything you want this week, you got it. There is a new energy in your life, particularly your career. Maybe you've neglected your ambitions, now is the time to re-invent your purpose. And go for the ultimate. It's yours.

Gemini (22 May-21 June)
Sometimes you need to re-evaluate where you stand, and re-adjust where you were going. This week things can be intense, but when you're ready for anything, nothing will hold you back. So take the plunge, even if you can't swim.

Cancer (22 June-23 July)
Time to turn things around this week. Maybe you're stuck in a rut, and your career needs a new direction. Maybe you've hit a snag in your relationship, and you need to refresh the passion. Whatever it is, take a chance.

Leo (24 July-23 August)
This week you have to up the pressure, and keep pushing. If you believe in yourself and what you're capable of, all will fall into place. These are the times when hard work pays off, and you've been putting in the hours.

Virgo (24 August-23 September)
So you were looking for that one true love, that person that gets you. This week maybe, just maybe, it's all yours to be had. All you need is that self-belief, that confidence that makes you shine. Shine on!

Libra (24 September-23 October)
Things were peachy last week, the sun's in Libra, after all, but this week there is a new challenge to be had. But you've been planning ahead, you anticipated this. So take all that you've got and you can carry on.

Scorpio (24 October-22 November)
Somehow you always go off on the deep end. This week, however, you're trending. Saying all the right things, having all the right moves. Getting all you want, and you want a lot. As always, beware of yourself.

Sagittarius (23 November-21 December)
This week you're moving into a new zone. Somehow you're no longer without potential. So take all you got, and more. You always have more, and all the good luck in the world. No time for questions, you're worth it.

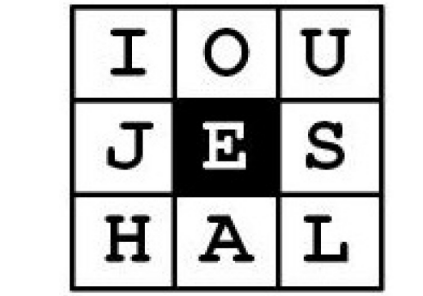
Capricorn (22 December-20 January)
You've got a busy life, no time to spare. This week you can take a breather, enjoy your place in the sun. You're a true survivor, you weathered the storms, you fought for it, you deserve it.

Aquarius (21 January-19 February)
Some things you can't change, some things you have to bring into the equation. This week it's all about working with what you have. And turns out that's quite a bit. So keep everything in mind, and maybe you can overcome it.

Pisces (20 February-20 March)
It's always about your self-worth. This week give your self-esteem a boost, and try something new. How about aggressively pursuing your dreams? Who knows? maybe you'll get even further than you thought possible. So new things, and a new you.

WORD PLAY

We have found 33 words that can be made from the letters in the square, each of which uses the letter in the middle and contains at least four letters. We challenge you to beat this, and also to make at least one nine-letter word. No abbreviations, initials or foreign words unless they form words in everyday use. No plurals.



Dear readers.
We regret to inform you that comics, as supplied by Press Features, have been temporarily suspended. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.