

A puzzle presents a challenging but generally solvable problem. Crossword puzzles require you to recall word meanings and synonyms. Jigsaw puzzles test your visual and manual skills. When they investigate a mystery, detectives are called upon to solve puzzles that test their powers of logical reasoning. In this lesson you will learn words that may make puzzles less puzzling.

WORD LIST

ambiguous
baffle
convoluted
dilemma
enigma
intricate
labyrinth
quandary
soluble
tactic

DEFINITIONS

After you have studied the definitions and example for each vocabulary word, write the word on the line to the right.

1. **ambiguous** (ām-bīg'yōō-əs) *adjective* Having two or more possible meanings or interpretations; unclear; vague. (From the Latin *ambi-*, meaning "around," and *agere*, meaning "to drive")

1. _____

Related Words *ambiguity noun; ambiguously adverb*

Example George's *ambiguous* answer caused his friends to question what he really meant.

2. **baffle** (bāf'əl) *trans. verb* To cause uncertainty in; puzzle.

2. _____

Related Word *bafflement noun*

Example The algebra problems *baffled* the students who missed class yesterday.

3. **convoluted** (kōn'və-lōō'tīd) *adjective* a. Coiled or twisted: a *convoluted path*. b. Complicated; intricate: a *convoluted argument*. (From the Latin *com-*, meaning "together," and *volvere*, meaning "to roll")

3. _____

See *labyrinth*.

Related Word *convolution noun*

Example In the old section of Vilna, Lithuania, *convoluted* lanes wind back and forth past historic buildings.

4. **dilemma** (dī-lēm'ə) *noun* A situation forcing a choice between two alternatives that are often difficult or unpleasant. (From the Greek *di-*, meaning "two," and *lēmma*, meaning "proposition")

4. _____

USAGE NOTE: The two choices in a dilemma can also be equally pleasant. See also *quandary*.

Example Lubna was faced with the *dilemma* of living in extreme poverty or immigrating to an unfamiliar country.

5. **enigma** (ĭ-nĭg'mə) *noun* Someone or something that is hard to figure out; a puzzle. (From the Greek word *ainissesthai*, meaning "to speak in riddles") 5. _____
- Related Words** **enigmatic** *adjective*; **enigmatically** *adverb*
- Example** The cause of the rare disease was an *enigma* to the puzzled scientists.
6. **intricate** (ĭn'trĭ-kĭt) *adjective* a. Having a complicated structure or pattern; complex. b. Hard to understand: *intricate instructions*. (From the Latin *in-*, meaning "in," and *tricae*, meaning "a tangle of difficulties") 6. _____
- Related Words** **intricacy** *noun*; **intricately** *adverb*
- Example** The spider spun its web in an *intricate* pattern.
7. **labyrinth** (lăb'ə-rĭnth') *noun* A network of winding, connected passages through which it is difficult to find one's way without help; a maze. 7. _____
- Related Word** **labyrinthine** *adjective*
- Example** The confusing palace garden had tall shrubbery that was arranged in a sprawling *labyrinth*.
USAGE NOTE: *Convolut*ed and *labyrinthine* are synonyms.
8. **quandary** (kwŏn'də-rē, kwŏn'drē) *noun* A state of uncertainty or doubt. 8. _____
- Example** Patsy was in a *quandary* over what sort of gift to buy Rosemary for her birthday.
USAGE NOTE: A *quandary* can have several possible solutions; a *dilemma*, strictly speaking, can have two.
9. **soluble** (sŏl'yə-bəl) *adjective* a. Capable of being solved or explained. 9. _____
- b. Capable of being easily dissolved. (From the Latin word *solvere*, meaning "to solve" or "to untie")
- Example** The experienced police investigator found the crime easily *soluble*.
10. **tactic** (tăk'tĭk) *noun* A method of achieving a goal; a strategy. (From the Greek word *taktos*, meaning "arranged or put in order") 10. _____
- Related Words** **tactical** *adjective*; **tactician** *noun*
- Example** The captain of the basketball team developed a *tactic* that helped her team win the game.