



## Rookie Advice

Here are some helpful guidelines for general expectations in these puzzles

### What do I do first?

**What indeed?** It's never made exactly clear. It's usually your first job to think of what to do.

**Read the puzzle!** Some text on the puzzle will be “flavor text” and just there to give the puzzle some interest, but most likely the text also clues to something of significance in the puzzle; either where to start, or an overview of the entire solve method or something else. You won't know if you don't READ everything on the puzzle. The instruction might be right there, just hidden in thematic text. “Right here it says ‘There are numbers of colors to use.’ Maybe we can assign each color a number.”

**Do something!** If there is task or instruction that seems to be partially doable, get started on it. Even if you don't know what it may yield, something might be revealed in the process. And it gives you and your teammates time to think about possible solve methods as you work. You will either come across one that cannot work (and you know you this was not the right path) or the words solved will have a commonality that leads you to another task or the solve. This is where a team comes in handy as different people can explore different things. “I see the number 3 referred to a lot in the text, I'm going to take the 3rd letter of each word and see what it gets me. You take the first letter of each third word.”

**Remember every puzzle solves to a word or phrase!** That means eventually you will extract letters from the puzzle. This severely limits the things you should try. Try and think of how you might get a letter or word before you start a brutally hard task.”I see this image is made up of dots. I'm going to count them all. Wait, I don't know how that will make a letter. Instead, I will squint my eyes and see if there are hidden letters.”

### Things you may encounter

**Extraction.** This is a term that refers to pulling bits of data out of a large amount of data to form a solve. Discerning what to extract and how is a big part of the puzzle and up to you to figure out.

**Numbers.** Sometimes a number is in parenthesis to indicate it is something separate from the rest of the clue. A number can mean a WORD LENGTH. If you are looking for a word from a clue, knowing the length helps you guess it. USA flag color (3) = RED and not WHITE or BLUE. A number can also mean INDEXING which means to count into something (like letters into a word) by the number. USA flag color (3) = A. Numbers can be a REFERENCE. So that if you have the word “rode” and are given the number 1421341 the final answer might be REORDER, with each number referring to a letter in the original word. Numbers can be simply ALPHANUMERIC where 1 = A and 2 = B. And others things too! If you extract (or just see) a number, try one of these methods.



**Alphabetical order.** As a rule of thumb, if data in the puzzle is in alphabetical order that means it has been altered from the solve order and reordering is probably part of the solve. Alternately if the data you receive is in no discernible order, then it's probably already in solve order. Data is rarely in a "random" order.

**Multiple steps.** Also known as "LAYERS," you can expect to have to do multiple things (simultaneously or sequentially) to get the final solve. You may find yourself reusing the same data multiple times.

**Sub-solves.** As you try to get a solve, you might extract a word or message that is not the final solve. It might be an INSTRUCTION which actually tells you what to do next (USETHIRDLETTERS). Or it might be a riddle of the final solve (USAFLAGCOLOR) though it might simply be a CONFIRMATION. This is not a clue, but a fitting word that tells you what you've done so far is correct and you can proceed to the next step with confidence. Don't forget to enter into the OWL!

## Get a clue!

**Don't be shy about taking hints.** Everyone does it, I promise! As this type of puzzle event is meant to be solved as a team over a set amount of time (not individually over the course of a week) it comes with a hint system to make sure you are always making progress. You might run a race slower, but you should never stop. A good rule of thumb is that if you are currently working on a promising task (even a grueling one) you don't need a hint. If your team has stopped working and has not come up with a promising idea (everyone is just sort of staring at the puzzle) for 5 minutes then take a hint. Let's say this game has 9 puzzles if you solve every puzzle 30 minutes, that is still 4.5 hours of solving! If you take 40 minutes per, that's an extra 90 minutes! Big difference. So depending on how long you expect to be playing, take hints accordingly. I'd like you to finish this game in 5 hours, but you can take as long as you like.

