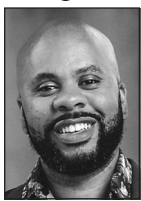


Labor Day wedding too much work for out-of-state aunt

DEAR ERIC: One of my two daughters is getting married in a very small ceremony in August. It so happens to be on Labor Day weekend. Her sister and her fiancé's sister are planning a brunch the following day to celebrate this union.

R. Eric Thomas
Asking Eric



My own sister lives in Florida. When I emailed her (and our brothers) about this event, she responded immediately that, since it is Labor Day weekend, she wouldn't be attending as she doesn't go anywhere on major holidays due to crowds and potential flight delays.

I am beyond sad and disappointed. It seems she is prioritizing her comfort over this joyous occasion. I don't know how to express this to her, if at all. She is something of a control freak, who doesn't take criticism well at all.

Do I simply let it go, or do I say anything and, if so, what? — Sad Sister

DEAR SISTER: I understand the logic of not wanting to travel around major holidays. Your sister does have other options, though. She can come early, if her work allows for it, for instance. She can travel some or all of the way using means of transportation that aren't planes. Or she can make the trek for family.

Obviously, all of these things are still her prerogative. She may have already thought through the options and still decided to decline. I understand why this is hurtful to you — it's a small ceremony and she's close family, so her presence would be missed.

There are ways of talking about this without it coming across as criticism. Start by expressing what you feel — you want her there, you're sad she can't make it, et cetera. And then ask a question — is there any way that we can make this work? Would you like my help to make this easier?

An open-ended question allows her the option of engaging or shutting it down. Whereas a criticism would make her feel more boxed in. She may still choose to stay home, but by having a conversation with her that starts with your openness to hear her and respect her opinion, you may find a solution that's not too laborious.

DEAR ERIC: A 20-something neighbor we have known since the age of three has recently come out to my husband and me as transgender. We have embraced and accepted "Sara" and are glad she feels able to be

her authentic self to us. Sara's parents, with whom she lives, are unaware of her transgender identity. Often when her parents leave the home for work, Sara will dress in skirts or dresses and walk across our street to visit with my husband and me (we are retired).

We have encouraged Sara to inform her parents of her identity and have advised her to have an exit strategy should the reveal have a negative result. Our concern is for how our neighbors, who we genuinely love, will take the fact that we knew about their child's transgender identity before them. We have told Sara that we will not "out" her to her parents, but neither will we lie if we are asked.

While we are grateful Sara felt free enough to share with us her identity, this secret is heavy on us whenever we speak to our neighbors. How should we handle the eventual disclosure that we knew long before they were told? — Mums the Word

DEAR MUMS: It's so important that anyone who is sharing a new, potentially vulnerable part of themselves has a safe space to feel seen and cared for before they tell the world. I hope her parents eventually see this as an extension of your love for their whole family.

In the interim, check in with Sara about your anxiety. It's not her job to manage her parents' emotions about this, nor is it yours, but being on the same page about the heaviness of the secret may help to unburden you. It may also help to reframe. By providing modeling acceptance for Sara, you're helping her — and eventually her parents — normalize the kind of security that she deserves in order to thrive.

Reading your letter, I grew curious and potentially concerned that by walking across the street in a dress, Sara runs the risk of another neighbor telling her parents before she's ready. This is something it may be worth talking with her about.

When you do have a talk with your friends, lead with love and with empathy. Acknowledge that it may be hard for them to find out you knew before them. It's a vulnerable conversation, but vulnerability is not a weakness. Be patient with them, be consistent and clear about your care for them, and be steadfast in your love for Sara. That's the message that will outlast the initial shock.

Send questions to R. Eric Thomas at eric@asking.eric.com or P.O. Box 22474, Philadelphia, PA 19110.

CRYPTOQUOTE

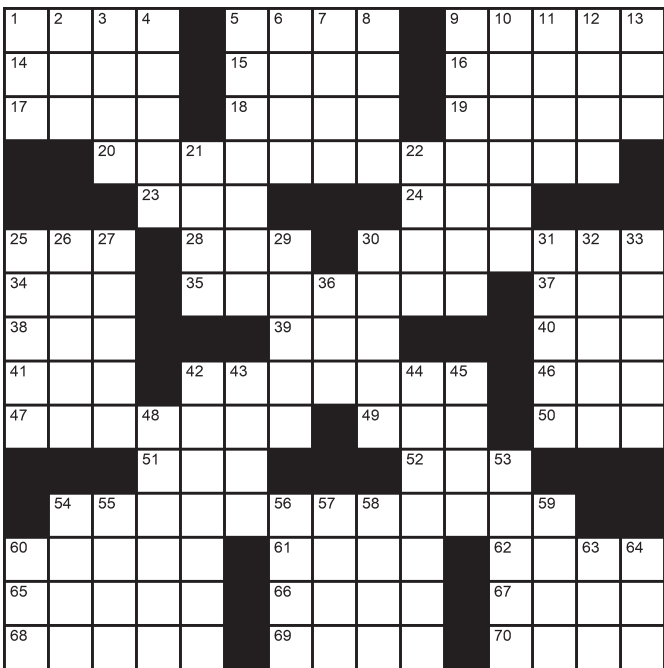
One letter stands for another. In this sample — **AXYDLBAAXR** is **LONGFELLOW** — A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

U X O N R K C I Q N J C U C R K C
Q I C N R C V R Q D O R N W X Z W C
L Z F B A Q D J C N W Z R K C I
E C I V Z W : K C G C B D C J C A D W
U C . — S D U J N B J N W Z

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

- ACROSS**
- 1 As well
5 Performs like Eminem
9 Synagogue leader
14 High jump
15 Don't include
16 Cameo shapes
17 Border
18 City near Phoenix
19 Restaurants' lists
20 "Wicked" star: 2 wds.
23 ___ Arbor, Michigan
24 Insurance company bailed out in 2008
25 Blonde shade
28 Baby skunk
30 Toughens, as metal
34 Poseidon's realm
35 Bratwurst, for example
37 Orchestra's spot
38 Game, ___, match
39 "Uh-uh"
40 Broad street: Abbr.
41 Look over
42 Shish kebab sticks
46 Sales agent, for short
47 Corn plant parts
49 Morning moisture
50 6-point plays: Abbr.
51 ___ at a time
52 Spot for a pet cat
54 Film venue: 2 wds.
60 AM/FM device
61 Boxing match
62 Price
65 Reporting to
66 Certain
67 Samoa's capital
68 Birds' homes
69 Leave it to the ___
70 Loch ___ Monster

- DOWN**
- 1 Drink in a stein
2 Headed up
3 Multigenerational story



Created by Stella Zawistowski

6/26/25

Today's solution

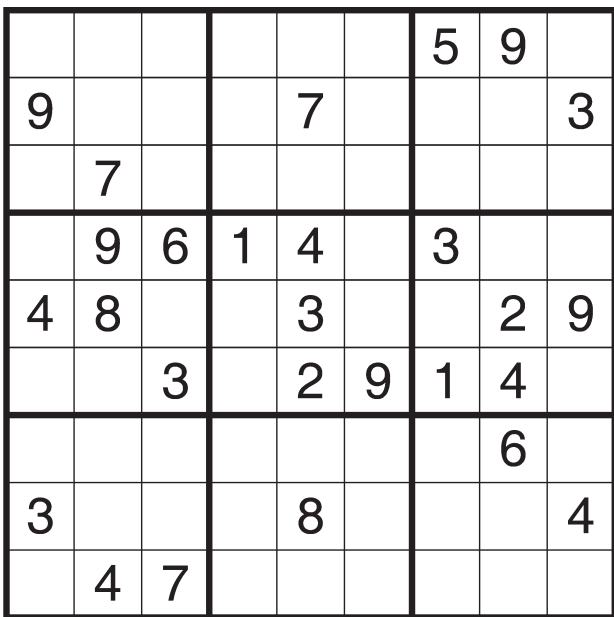
4 "Tosca," for example
5 Nadia Comaneci's homeland
6 "You said it!"
7 Leaning Tower of ___
8 Male deer
9 Lettuce variety
10 Get even for
11 Musical group
12 Clear sky's color
13 2023 sci-fi film: Abbr.
21 Pen liquids
22 Told
25 Good thing
26 "Bye!": 2 wds
27 Can't stand
29 Songs to sing
30 Oohed and ___
31 Separated
32 Dwelled
33 Parts of a process
36 Tool with teeth
42 Many AARP members
43 Painter Paul
44 Pertains

45 Whack with the hand
48 The first "S" in USSR
53 Pie nut
54 Horse's hair
55 ___ and ends
56 Recipe measurement: Abbr.

57 1/24 of a day
58 Coin used in Paris
59 Double Dutch equipment
60 Go fast on foot
63 Aunt, to mom
64 Professors' helpers: Abbr.

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6/26/25



SUDOKU

How to play: Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9.

HOROSCOPE

JUNE 26

ARIES (March 21-April 19) Make choices guided by logic rather than emotion. Avoid collecting things you'll never use. When someone points out your mistakes, take it as a chance to grow — correcting errors can teach valuable lessons for the future.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) You may sense pivotal changes ahead, but turning insights into action might require a partner's guidance. Stay focused and avoid distractions to keep your work aligned. Be sure you fully understand all essential requirements.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Network to boost your income. Staying connected with friends and business contacts might be the key to advancing career and finances. Reach out when you have the clarity and inspiration to make those connections count.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Honesty and sincerity can build friendships and impress key figures. If you feel underappreciated, improve your self-validation game. Professional advice can help prioritize your best interests; group gatherings could highlight your wisdom.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) You could be in top form today, showcasing skill in financial strategy and business planning. A knack for uncovering truths and being a creative thinker can be razor sharp. Don't let a mis-aligned social scenario deplete funds.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) The missing parts of a conversation can be where problems and issues are hidden. Instead of reacting, discuss thoroughly and fill in the gaps to clarify the situation. What was heard may not have been what was said.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) You can shine and win admiration anytime, remember the competition is only to be your best self. The most worthwhile people judge you by how you treat loved ones, honor promises, and follow social norms, not by possessions.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Your cheerful attitude and friendly vibe may be hard to dampen today and your creative side could be enhanced. Do a deep dive on details to avoid squandering money needlessly. Always be fully accountable to maintain trust and respect.

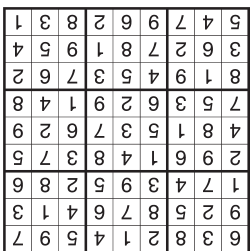
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) A warm conversation can do wonders. Clear up misunderstandings in a calm chat by focusing on shared goals. A significant other or kindred spirit may offer a soothing presence and truly grasp your deepest creative needs.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Someone may target your vulnerabilities with precision, remind yourself that doing harm is ignorance, an unhealed flaw in their character, and stand strong. Process emotions before they cloud your judgment and lead to reactive decisions.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Cooperation on the job can be a clear route to success. Do your fair share and hopefully others will do their share as well. Your attention may shift to accumulating power as you focus on money making activities.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Harness both logic and creativity to achieve brilliance. Your ability to recognize hidden themes and subtle nuances gives you a unique awareness. Lead with empathy, ensuring that business decisions create opportunities for everyone to benefit.

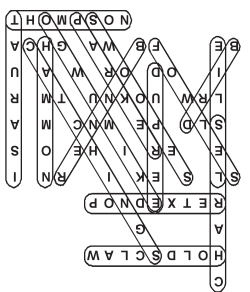
Sudoku solution



Jumble solution

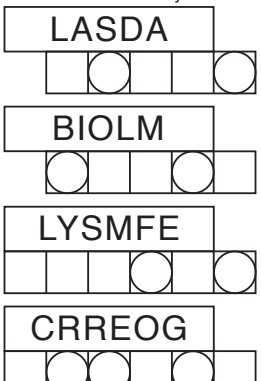
SALAD LIMBO MWSOLF GROCCER
left hat, he looked "FEDORABLE"

Sleuth solution



JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

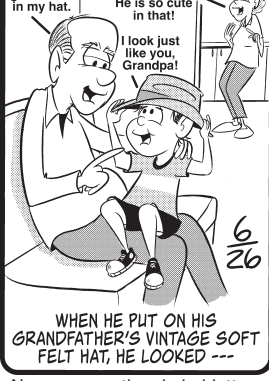


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Answer "here:"

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

SPORTS SLEUTH

WNBA ALL-TIME SCORING LEADERS

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

Wednesday's unlisted clue: BEYOND

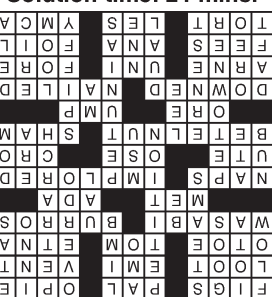
Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions - forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.
Thursday's unlisted clue hint: CENTER BRITNEY —

Bird	Dupree	Leslie	Swoopes
Bonner	Fowles	Ogwumike	Taurasi
Catchings	Hammon	Parker	Thompson
Charles	Holdsclaw	Pondexter	

SHEFFER CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 Pear-shaped fruits
5 Chum
8 Mayberry moppet
12 Booty
13 Brit. record label
14 Air outlet
15 Okla-homa tribe
16 Quarter-back
17 Sicilian volcano
18 Sushi
20 Pack animals
22 Ran into
23 Okla-homa city
24 Siestas
27 Entreated
32 Multi-purpose truck
33 Sugar suffix
34 —
35 Seed of a palm tree
- 38** Counterfeit
39 Mined matter
40 Ref
42 Gulp
45 Executed perfectly
49 "Rule, Britannia!" composer
50 Half of bi-
52 Golfer's cry
53 Bank charges
54 Navarro of "The View"
55 Thwart
56 Legal wrong
57 Guitar great Paul
- 58** Village People hit
59 Village People hit
- 21** "Friendly skies" co.
24 Gist
25 Noshed
26 Cat food purchaser
28 The Spartans' sch.
29 Funnel-shaped flowers
30 Historic period
31 —
36 Papa Hemingway
37 Golfer
38 Dapper
41 Bell or Barker
42 Loony
43 Popular layered cookie
44 Two-way
46 Weaver's device
47 Idle of Monty Python
48 Crème —
51 Away from SSW

Solution time: 24 mins.



Today's solution

