

Nine Five-by-Fives

Many crossword grids are 15 × 15. You can break a 15 × 15 grid down into nine 5 × 5 grids. In a regular crossword, the nine grids won't be closed off; each 5 × 5 will have entries linking to any other grid it's adjacent to.

Not so in this puzzle. The entries are closed off, but these 5 x 5 grids are linked through their clues. The grid in the middle is the key. All five-letter words in its clues must be determined from the other eight grids. Of the forty-eight five letter words in those grids, twenty-one are used in the clues for the middle grid. It is for the solver to determine which 1D or which 4A goes where. Each grid contributes at least twice, and no five-letter word appears more than once. Hints are provided should the mapping prove too frustrating.

All the entries are playable in Scrabble, except six proper nouns. (Two of the proper nouns don't have to be proper nouns, but they are as clued.) Ignore punctuation, which is intended to deceive.

Thanks to Bob Fink, Eric Klis, and Jerry Miccolis for test-solving and editorial suggestions.

Square One

Across clues

1. Ingests chopped steak
4. Terrible but legal after one
5. Gangsta involved somewhat in ugliness

Down clues

1. Captures tricky parts
2. Magic realism author found in western Kansas on Friday and Alaska upon returning
3. Floating loans to a group of artists

Square Two

Across clues

1. Apparent in piper sounds
4. Mario's brother is one private soul, but so withdrawn, it turns out
5. Indigo Girls at last return and fifty thousand touched by Emily's "Closer to Fine"

Down clues

1. Chopin and Madame Curie prevail in popularity contests taken over the phone
2. Some type of a liar prevaricating
3. Loud and obtrusive around me

Square Three

Across clues

1. Intimidation largely through differences between expectations and reality
4. Beer tossed back in August

5. How you might get in? Prayer, but eat less

Down clues

1. The water around Toledo sounds scary
2. Custom proclaimed by Dexter
3. Find renewed strength through an interlude of several shots

Square Four

Across clues

1. Enmity at shooting range
4. For the future: a pronoun and no name
5. Tormé improvised underground

Down clues

1. Something set Marla off
2. Terrific—be like nails on a chalkboard to the ear
3. Some of the media do air remakes

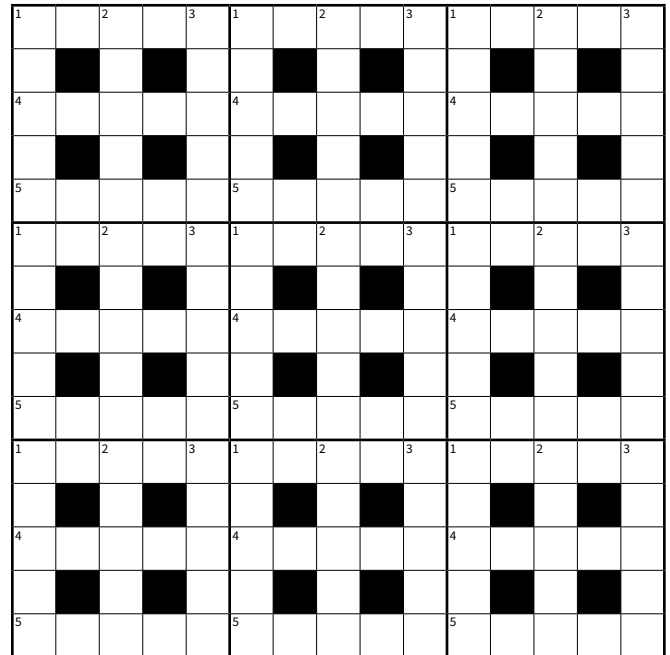
Square Five

Across clues

1. Listen, any upright delivers impure tones from the get-go
4. Alternatively, on the way back, get a reference
5. Mat, our side has commented

Down clues

1. Scopes's lawyer, after opening, creates piercing defense
2. Credo for Fido and mom
3. Name starts to tarnish if the libel emerges



Square Six

Across clues

1. Not needing support, Sharif leads a big gun
4. Deal with blackmail without cash, ultimately
5. More than forty, she is not the same

Down clues

1. Reminiscent of the past, Porter turns powerless
4. Novel from Marrakesh's outskirts
5. Come in! It's more job-like after four

Square Seven

Across clues

1. Let Tom go back and waste time at a Best Western, maybe
4. Sex trafficking covers more than you'd expect
5. Some children can carry good tunes

Down clues

1. Dispenses utterly with tournaments

4. T'ain't funny, big guy
5. Starts out with shots

Square Eight

Across clues

1. Pelts from sea creatures
4. Prosperous look in cobblestone
5. Tracking system both coming and going

Down clues

1. Solemn, and without the head of management, solemn again
2. Texting, you stay in disarray
3. Rita's exotic stringed instrument

Square Nine

Across clues

1. 4A 4A be 1A
4. 2D from the 2D or the 5A way
5. 1A between both 1D 3D to 1D

Down clues

1. 3D 1D at 1D 1A
2. Introvert exposed by 3D 1A
3. 2D 5A on 5A 5A

HINTS

Across clues
 1. 4A (Square 1) 4A (Square 8) be 1A (Square 8)
 4. 2D (Square 5) from the 2D (Square 3) or the 5A (Square 6) way
 5. 1A (Square 4) between both 1D (Square 2) 3D (Square 7) to 1D (Square 4)
Down clues
 1. 3D (Square 2) 1D (Square 1) at 1D (Square 3) 1A (Square 7)
 2. Introvert exposed by 3D (Square 1) 1A (Square 3)
 3. 2D (Square 6) 5A (Square 1) on 5A (Square 2) 5A (Square 5)