

# FOURSQUARES: FOUR LETTER WORD FUN

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The four-letter words in this article are neither offensive nor vulgar, and for the most part do not relate to excrement or copulation. This disavowal is made up front so that you won't waste time looking for the nonexistent X-rated words.

Things that look like Foursquares have been around for a long time, so you may think I'm a bit presumptuous in claiming to introduce them. While they have been around, they have not been widely used, probably because they look too simple and/or brief for serious crossword consumption. Diet habits can change, however, and perhaps a coffee-break sized puzzle with a few unique twists can change some minds about their crossword fare.

Foursquares are mini crossword puzzles based upon four-letter double word squares.

Every word in a Foursquare is a straightforward, honest-to-goodness, all-American four-letter word that you can find in a paperback dictionary. There are no abbreviations, no combined forms, and absolutely no foreign, obsolete, or archaic words.

The definitions (clues), however, are not so commonplace. They are based upon the fact that many four-letter words also are the first, last, or middle letters of longer words, or simply made by using every other letter in a longer word. Also, the letters in many four-letter words can be rearranged to form other words (anagrams), and some four-letter words sound like other words (homophones).

You will recognize these clues as simple word games. Certainly they are much more challenging than the typical American crossword puzzle and not quite so arcane as the British cryptic clues. All sorts of jokes and riddles have four-letter words as their punch lines, so you'll find Foursquares liberally laced with humor, albeit mostly unoriginal.

Following is a Foursquare with the kind of clues I've been talking about:

ACROSS 1. a change in form 2. curtail one who avoids others  
3. begin one who is unrealistic 4. end of a violent windstorm  
DOWN 1. half lacking in proper respect 2. sounds like a kind  
of hog 3. hidden in trustworthy 4. what a fat 6'2" butcher  
weighs

It's a good bet that you don't need an explanation but take a look anyway:

FROM is a rearranged FORM  
 LONE is LONER with its tail cut off  
 IDEA is the beginning of IDEALIST  
 PEST is the end of TEMPEST  
 FLIP is half of FLIPPANT  
 RODE sounds like ROAD  
 ONES is in the middle of HONEST  
 MEAT is a riddle

<sup>1</sup> F	<sup>2</sup> R	<sup>3</sup> O	<sup>4</sup> M
<sup>2</sup> L	O	N	E
<sup>3</sup> I	D	E	A
<sup>4</sup> P	E	S	T

Here are a few more Foursquares using the same kind of clues. So what does it matter that you can solve a Foursquare with only eight words? The clues are all fun word games, so try them all before you peek in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue:

- 1 ACROSS 1. always happens at the end of a dry spell 2. remedy change 3. end of a ball of fire 4. beginning of mental strain
- DOWN 1. kind of oration 2. hidden in illegal hunters 3. half of a football field 4. reverse shock
- 2 ACROSS 1. open an authorized sales agency 2. hidden in a form of social security for men 3. end of some big-mouthed mammals 4. usually made in a home workshop
- DOWN 1. kind of an edible stick 2. most of an artist's stand 3. mix up four six packs 4. half indifferent
- 3 ACROSS 1. mixed marbles 2. what month has 28 days? 3. hidden in self-denial 4. how to start an old pocket watch
- DOWN 1. skip through noon-time rest periods 2. sounds like a pound or a kilogram 3. comes after the highest point in the dictionary 4. end of a hymn of praise
- 4 ACROSS 1. mixed assets 2. skip through a wrestling hold 3. half of little old ladies 4. end of a blunder
- DOWN 1. sounds like curses 2. hidden in mutual courtesy 3. what Mother Hubbard's dog got 4. begin a ship captain
- 5 ACROSS 1. a sport that's turned around 2. make-up artist 3. begin one of the longest words in the English language 4. mixed up anti-prohibitionists
- DOWN 1. where a contemptuous law violater winds up 2. editor: \_\_\_\_\_ tamer 3. behead patsies 4. precious mettle

Some Foursquare buffs prefer a puzzle that has the same clue style throughout. In Puzzle 6, insert "rearrange"; in Puzzle 7, insert "hidden in the middle of":

- 6 ACROSS 1. ...milieus for chemists 2. ...a word always pronounced right 3. ...the most common murder victim 4. ...dawn lawn damp
- DOWN 1. ...a needle point 2. ...a miss's equivalent 3. ... an incursion 4. ...a good superlative
- 7 ACROSS 1. ...a sweet dessert wine 2. ...pilfered 3. ...church council laws 4. ...wanting more than your share
- DOWN 1. ...those with an exaggerated sense of their own importance 2. ...small biscuits 3. ...headlights

## 4. ...contact persons for Bacchus

An August 1986 **Word Ways** article by Richard Lederer introduced the "Whose What" word game. Here is a Foursquare version (the clue always is a possessive noun plus a noun):

- 8 ACROSS 1. map's right 2. certain fever's end 3. DNA's site  
4. bigot's love  
DOWN 1. ache's anagram 2. square's surface 3. delta's  
composition 4. the living end's homophone

The double wordsquare format lends itself to a variety of "topical" Foursquares, where the clues and/or answers all relate to the same subject matter. Since the pool of available words is more restricted, from time to time a proper noun or non-paperback dictionary word may be used. In Puzzle 9 the topic is "animals"; in Puzzle 10, it is "persons":

- 9 ACROSS 1. what do you call a hoary horse? 2. the end of the  
beginning of a frog 3. hidden in a reputed eggsucker  
4. kind of a top-banana fish  
DOWN 1. copycats 2. Capricorn 3. Born Free 4. antelope's  
playmate heroine
- 10 ACROSS 1. begin the superior of a convent 2. begin a  
salesman with lots on his mind 3. kind of a telecommuni-  
cations girl 4. behead pals  
DOWN 1. end of a venerable old man 2. begin a panhandler  
3. hidden in one who treats corpses 4. half stupid persons

Of course when the "topicals" refer to celebrities or place names, all the words are proper nouns or Foursquare words that are part of proper nouns. Puzzle 11 deals with "celebrities", and Puzzle 12 with "place names":

- 11 ACROSS 1. Tennis star Arthur 2. Anthropologist Margaret  
3. Mystery first name 4. actress Anna  
DOWN 1. Singer Ed 2. Spanish painter Jose 3. 1776 martyr  
Nathan 4. Actress Barbara
- 12 ACROSS 1. first part of the capital of Utah 2. a Pennsylvania  
port 3. end of the capital of S. Australia 4. noted resort  
in northern New Mexico  
DOWN 1. begin a port on the eastern shore of Puget Sound  
2. end of a country on the Balkan peninsula 3. Italian  
island resort 4. river of northeastern England

So much for "topicals", though I have only hinted at the possibilities. In regular Foursquares there are at least a score or more of word games that can be used to make lots of fun-type puzzles.

In order for them to be fun, though, some explanation/examples should precede the puzzles (as was done in the first paragraphs). Space does not permit more discussion here, but this final Foursquare will pose no real threat to the readers of **Word Ways**:

- 13 ACROSS 1. take a twitch from a military science 2. sounds  
like a two-hat trick 3. what two dice rolls have in common  
4. a legal document that's reversible

- DOWN 1. deception caused amazement (5) (4) 2. marsupial  
 underground chamber 3. Berry: Bush = Cherry: \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. on a ladder from seek to find

I hope it's been fun. If you want more Foursquares, send a SASE to me at 744 Redwood Lane, Glenview IL 60025.

### **WICKED WORDS**

*Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me...* This old saw is a lie, as attested by many a battered wife or barroom brawler. Hugh Rawson's book, published by Crown in hardcover in 1989 but now available in paperback for \$14, spells them out in detail, from **abortion** to **Zulu**, accompanied by etymologies and citations from Chaucer to the 1988 presidential campaign. Although most entries are fairly short (three to five per page), the old standbys get much fuller treatment. The word for fornication covers nearly ten pages, the word for the posterior, seven, the word for the female pudendum, five, and the word for defecation, five. Whether you wish to polish your own invective or merely listen to other verbal combatants, Wicked Words is an indispensable guide to the field of maledictive play. The Republican ticket for 1992 will be less than thrilled to learn that both **bush** (small-time, rinky-dink, second-rate) and **quail** (a woman, especially a prostitute) appear in the book, but **gore** does not. Other readers will be bemused by the large number of putdowns beginning with a country name, such as **Irish daisy** (dandelion) or **Mexican overdrive** (disengaging the clutch and coasting downhill); although the most-anathematized ethnics are well-represented, Polish does not have a single entry!