FREE PRINTABLE

Wacky Wordies Puzzle Cards

24 cut-out word puzzles that hide everyday sayings, plus a code-breaker sheet to crack them.







What's inside

- **24 puzzle cards** on two pages: 8 Easy, 8 Medium and 8 Hard
- **Decode the tricks** student sheet: the 9 tricks behind almost every wordie
- **Answer key** with the trick used for each card
- **Teacher notes**: a ready-to-run 40-minute lesson and quick game ideas

Ages 8–14 | 6 pages | Print, cut and play

Hint for solvers: say what you see out loud. "MIND over MATTER" is the answer to the first puzzle above. Can you solve the other two?

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Puzzle cards 1 to 12

✂ Cut along the dashed lines. Solve each card and write the saying on the line.

Card 1 EASY

MIND
MATTER

Answer: _____

Card 2 EASY

HEAD
HEELS

Answer: _____

Card 3 EASY

DEAL

Answer: _____

Card 4 EASY

STAND

Answer: _____

Card 5 EASY

KCAP

Answer: _____

Card 6 EASY

4GIVE
&
4GET

Answer: _____

Card 7 EASY

C U L8R

Answer: _____

Card 8 EASY

HE ART

Answer: _____

Card 9 MEDIUM

ONCE
A TIME

Answer: _____

Card 10 MEDIUM

WEATHER
FEELING

Answer: _____

Card 11 MEDIUM

NEPAINCK

Answer: _____

Card 12 MEDIUM

C I 2 I

Answer: _____

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Puzzle cards 13 to 24

✂ Ready for a challenge? These cards get harder. Look for two tricks working together.

Card 13 MEDIUM

TURN

Answer: _____

Card 14 MEDIUM

TABLES

Answer: _____

Card 15 MEDIUM

R
O
R O A D S
D
S

Answer: _____

Card 16 MEDIUM

MEAL

Answer: _____

Card 17 HARD

NEW LEAF

Answer: _____

Card 18 HARD

MOONCEON

Answer: _____

Card 19 HARD

ccccccc

Answer: _____

Card 20 HARD

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

Answer: _____

Card 21 HARD

PO FISH ND

Answer: _____

Card 22 HARD

AUPIR

Answer: _____

Card 23 HARD

MY ~~HEART~~

Answer: _____

Card 24 HARD

BEND

SDRAWKCAB

Answer: _____

Decode the tricks

Each puzzle uses one trick. Read the clue, say what you see out loud, then write the saying.

LONG DUE	**Position** Where is one word sitting? Over, under, in, on, between, before, after or outside another.	What saying is it?
WORLD	**Size** Is a word big, small, tall, thin or growing?	What saying is it?
DNAH	**Direction** Is a word backwards, upside down, mirrored, going up or going down?	What saying is it?
WHEEL WHEEL WHEEL WHEEL DRIVE	**Repetition** Count! How many times does a word or letter appear?	What saying is it?
_HICKEN	**Missing letters** Which letters have gone? Is a word headless, endless, short or unfinished?	What saying is it?
F A L L I N G	**Split and scrambled words** Is a word broken, spread out, split or jumbled up?	What saying is it?
I C U	**Letters as sounds** Say the letters out loud. C = see, U = you, Y = why, I = eye, B = bee, T = tea, R = are.	What saying is it?
2 GOOD 2 B TRUE	**Numbers and symbols** Say the numbers. 2 = to or too, 4 = for, 8 = ate, 1 = one or won.	What saying is it?
ENVY	**Colour and style** Is a word coloured, faded, bold or crossed out?	What saying is it?

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Answer key

Puzzle cards 1 to 24, with the trick (or tricks) each one uses.

1.	**Mind over matter**	Position
2.	**Head over heels**	Position
3.	**Big deal**	Size
4.	**Stand up**	Direction
5.	**Backpack**	Direction
6.	**Forgive and forget**	Numbers
7.	**See you later**	Letters as sounds, Numbers
8.	**Broken heart**	Split and scrambled words
9.	**Once upon a time**	Position
10.	**Feeling under the weather**	Position
11.	**Pain in the neck**	Position
12.	**See eye to eye**	Letters as sounds, Numbers
13.	**No U-turn**	Missing letters
14.	**Turn the tables**	Direction
15.	**Crossroads**	Position, Repetition
16.	**A square meal**	Position
17.	**Turn over a new leaf**	Direction
18.	**Once in a blue moon**	Position, Colour and style
19.	**The seven seas**	Letters as sounds, Repetition
20.	**Missing you**	Missing letters, Letters as sounds
21.	**A big fish in a small pond**	Size, Position
22.	**Up in the air**	Position
23.	**Cross my heart**	Colour and style
24.	**Bend over backwards**	Position, Direction

Decode the tricks sheet

- **Position:** Long overdue
- **Size:** It's a small world
- **Direction:** Backhand
- **Repetition:** Four-wheel drive
- **Missing letters:** Like a headless chicken
- **Split and scrambled words:** Falling apart
- **Letters as sounds:** I see you
- **Numbers and symbols:** Too good to be true
- **Colour and style:** Green with envy

Bonus challenge: make your own wordie

1. Choose a saying you know well, for example *"falling behind"*.
2. Find the trick word that tells you where to put things (here it is *behind*).
3. Arrange the other words to show it, then test your puzzle on a partner.

Students can draw theirs on the back of a used card. Add the best ones to a class puzzle box.

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Teacher notes

Wacky wordies (also called rebus puzzles) hide a familiar saying in the way words are arranged: their position, size, direction, colour or how many times they appear. They build close reading, flexible thinking and knowledge of idioms.

A 40-minute lesson

1. **Hook (5 min).** Show card 1 (MIND over MATTER). Ask students to describe exactly what they see in a full sentence until someone hears the saying.
2. **Learn the tricks (10 min).** In pairs, students work through the *Decode the tricks* sheet. Share answers and add each trick to a class chart.
3. **Solve (15 min).** Groups get a set of cut-out cards. They solve as many as they can and record the answer and the trick used. Easy cards first, then Medium and Hard.
4. **Idiom talk (5 min).** Pick three answers. What does each saying really mean? When might someone use it?
5. **Exit ticket (5 min).** Students invent one wordie of their own on a sticky note. Test it on a partner next lesson.

Quick game ideas

- Morning warm-up: one card on the board each day
- Team race: first table to solve 6 cards wins
- Early finishers: keep the cards in a box

Tips for stuck solvers

- Read it aloud, sound out letters and numbers
- Check small words: over, under, in, on, after
- Count anything that repeats

Want the full set? 101 Wacky Wordies Puzzles

Created by our team of expert classroom teachers and available on Teachers Pay Teachers.

- 202 PowerPoint slides with questions and answers
- A paper-based test of 101 wacky wordies
- Use it as an icebreaker, a critical thinking challenge or a fun activity for all ages

Find it and more free resources at **literacyideas.com**