

Down clues are normal, but 5 down is unclued

Across clues are of two types:

- (i) *Clues for the eight entries that cross or meet with 5 down (such as 4A and 12A) are normal cryptic clues, but lead to answers that are one letter shorter than is available in the grid, and the (shaded) checking cell with 5 down should be left blank.*
- (ii) *The other seven across clues (those that don't intersect 5 down, such as 1A), have a normal definition, but the wordplay generates an extra letter.*

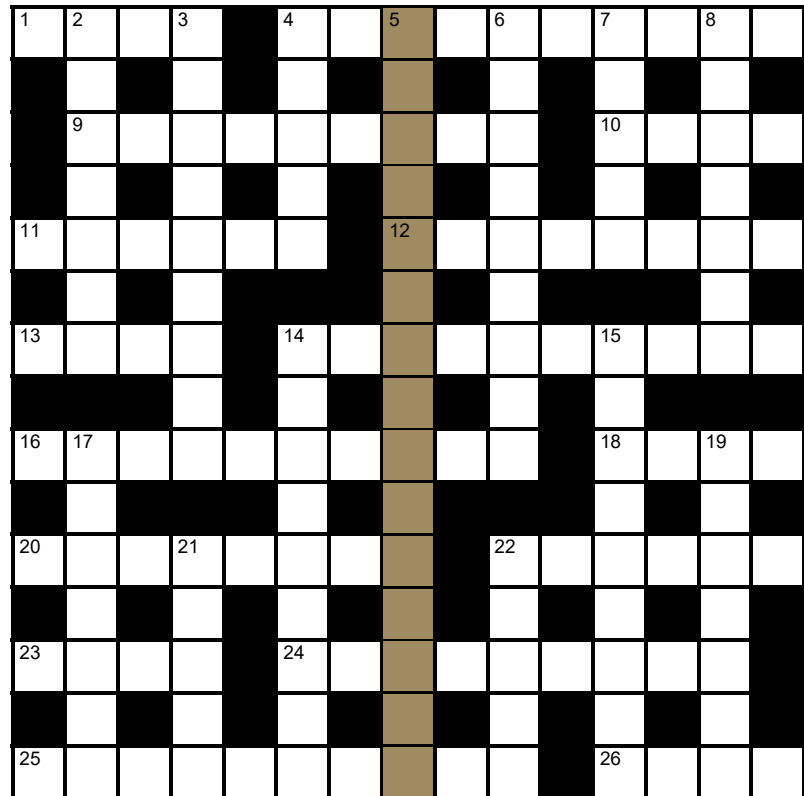
To complete the puzzle, determine the value of 5 down. The letters to go into its 8 checked cells must result in real words in the corresponding across entries. The extra letters from the wordplay of the other across clues, (in clue order), provide the 7 unchecked letters.

Across

- 1/26 Liberal Prime Minister formerly actor (4,4)
- 4 Gent, I hear, cooked using microwave? (9)
- 9 Officer charged with mass dishonesty follows instruction (8)
- 10 Oscar admitted lying about weight (4)
- 11 Clairvoyant claiming is at game (6)
- 12 Released bird repelled bear (7)
- 13 Twin European states defending The States (4)
- 14 Adjective - without name - used by unknown interminably shy person? (9)
- 16 Stand-in retiring go on Sunday rate? (6,3)
- 18 Reverse turn and duck (4)
- 20 Rebels fiddle relative, ignoring graduates (7)
- 22 Censors gut issue featuring strip viewed from behind
- 23 Empty farm building, far side of village (4)
- 24 US time of abstinence provokes stud's ire (8)
- 25 Politicians joining clubs after nothing works (9)
- 26 See 1

Down

- 2 Topless sports revealing boobs (and getting complaints) (7)
- 3 Question probes angry pubmaid's disappointment (4,5)
- 4 Shift closer to door and lock up (5)



5 See preamble

6 Struggling, regularly mad, yes I'm vexed, only no gain without pain? (4,5)

7 Fish trader filleted in the shops (5)

8 Recently arrived, and tour over, had fun intrinsically (7)

14 Bell maybe a tragic lover ringing ex (9)

15 Technique Pasteur developed to produce cheese (9)

17 Order portion of food on a table (7)

19 Bank returned bribe, shares level (7)

21 Deal with nozzle, water finally stops (5)

22 Clipped naughty little girl's bottom (5)