Making Crossword and Criss-Cross Puzzles

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2007 and 2019

Introduction

2019 Update: I originally wrote this in 2007 to help teachers in the Kanazawa City elementary school English program make crossword and criss-cross materials for their students. I've converted it to PDF, from a series of html files, to make it easier for people to get the entire thing without having to download or bookmark a bunch of web pages. Other than some cosmetic and layout changes, nothing is changed.

These pages explain how to make crossword and criss-cross type puzzles in MS Word, OpenOffice, Ichitaro, or other wordprocessing program.

A crossword puzzle is exactly that. A criss-cross puzzle is like a crossword but instead of clues, you have the words and have to figure out where they go in the puzzle. I like criss-cross puzzles because they force the kids to pay attention to the length and spelling of the words.

Documents showing the steps outlined here are available in OpenOffice and MS Word formats here. These are the ones used for the pictures in these pages.

Step 1

The hardest part of making a crossword puzzle is the puzzle itself — getting the words to fit neatly together. Luckily, there are web sites that will do this for you. Step 1 is just to go to the site below and have them do the hard part for you. After that, the rest is just making your puzzle look nice.

Crossword Puzzle Maker (www.armoredpenguin.com/crossword/) is easier to use than it seems at first. Just put in the words you want in your puzzle and some clues for each word and you are set.

Figure 1: *"Word" and "Clue" are the only parts we care about. Put your words and clues into them and then click the "Make Puzzle" button near the bottom of the page.*

Warning : You **must** put in clues for each word, even if you are making a criss-cross puzzle. This web site ignores words without clues. "A", "B", and "C" are acceptable as clues, however, so there is no need for real clues if you are not making a crossword puzzle. Even if you are making a crossword puzzle, there is no need to put in real clues — we will put the real ones in later ourselves.

Crossword Puzzle Maker makes a nice puzzle but we want the answer key. So after it makes the puzzle, click on the "Answer Key HTML" button. Now you should see your puzzle with the words filled in. Save or print this page. We will need it later.

Step 2: Make Table

The web site made your puzzle, so all you have to do is make a similar table in your document. Open a new document in your word processor and insert a table with the same dimensions as the puzzle.

In MS Word: 罫線 > 挿入 > 表

In OpenOffice: Table > Insert > Table, or Ctrl+F12

There should also be an icon on the toolbar for creating tables.
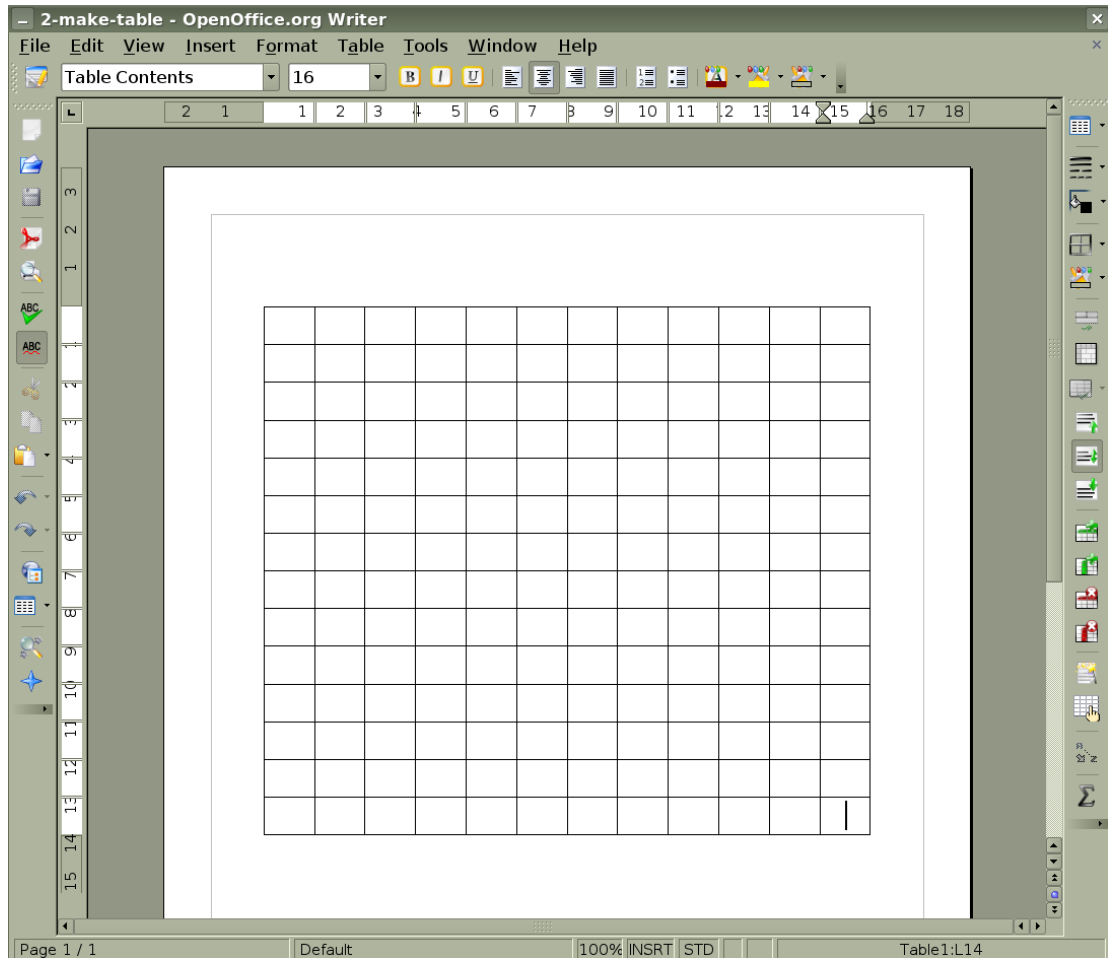
Figure 2: *The web site made me a puzzle that is 12x14, so I put in a table the same size.*

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Step 3: Add Letters

Now put the letters into the table at the same location as in the answer key we got from the Crossword Puzzle Maker site.

If you are making a criss-cross puzzle, make sure to set the font type, size, and alignment.
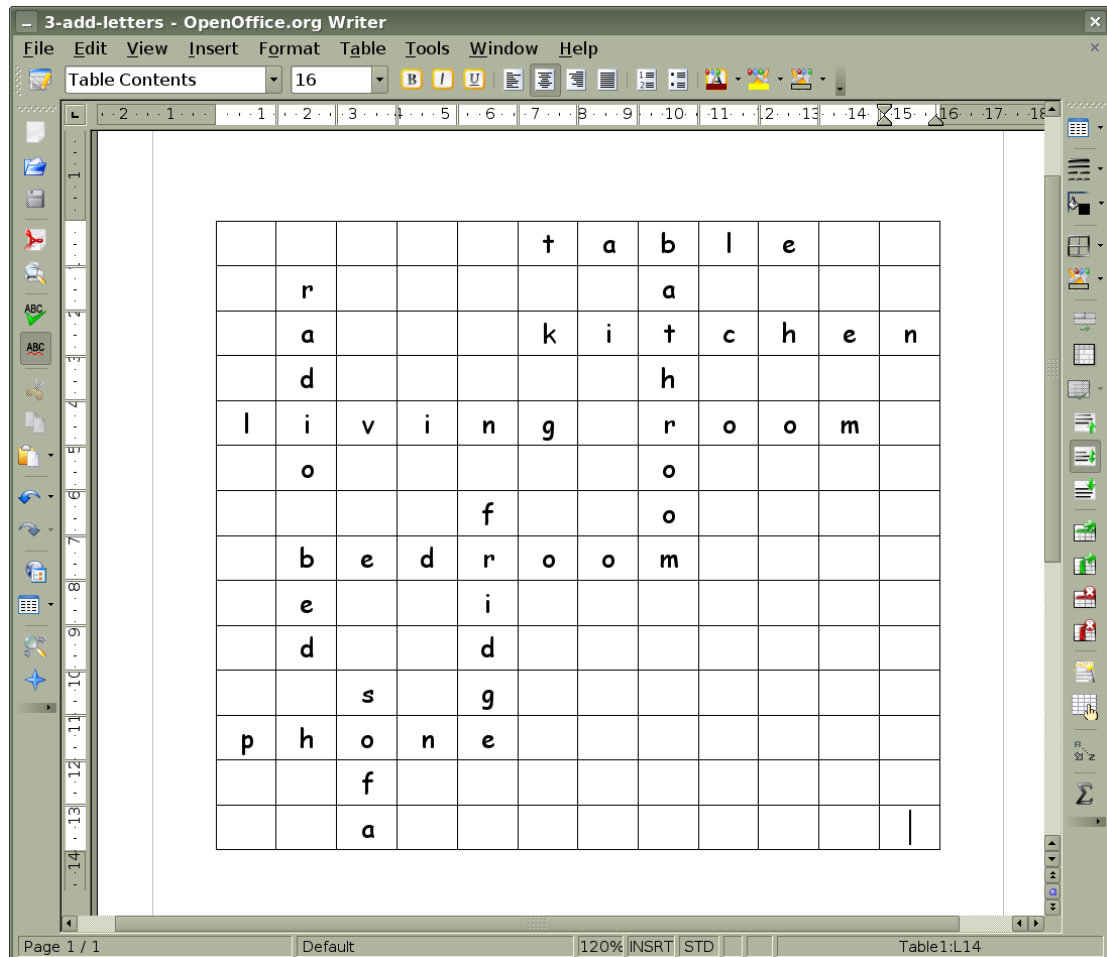

Figure 3: *Just type in the letters from the answer key.*

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Step 4: Add Gray

Now we make the unused areas gray. Select the cells (with the mouse) and change the background color to gray.

(TIP: It is often faster to set all the cells to gray and then change the background to white in the cells with words.)

In MS Word: 網かけの色 (icon on 罫線 toolbar)

In OpenOffice: "Background color" (icon on toolbar)

Sometimes you may not find a button or toolbar. In that case do this:
In MS Word: 表示 > ツールバー
In OpenOffice: View > Toolbars
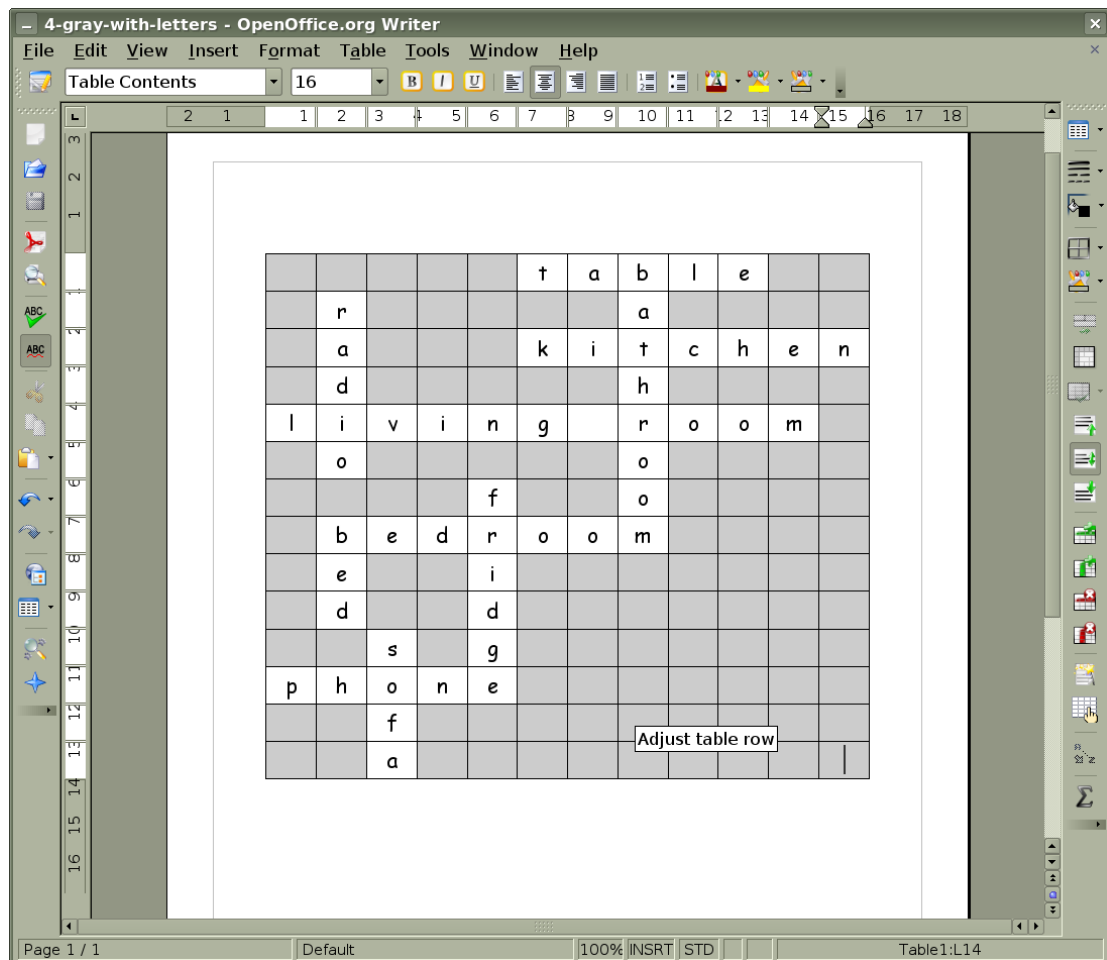and click on the toolbar you need, if it doesn't have a check mark next to it.

Figure 4: *Unused areas are gray, areas with words are white.*

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Step 5: Answer Key

Now we have a table with the answers all in it, so this is a good time to save an answer key. Really, you can do this anytime after putting the answers in. I like to do it now just so I don't forget later.

Make sure you have saved the file at least once before doing this! You want to have two files. One puzzle, to hand out, and one answer key.

In MS Word: ファイル > 名前を付けて保存..., and give your answer key a suitable name.

In OpenOffice: File > Save As..., and give your answer key a suitable name.

Now, **close** the current document — it is now the answer key! Close it and reopen the original document.

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Step 6: Add Borders

Now we add borders to the puzzle. There might already be some thin borders but I like to make the letter squares thicker so they are easy to see.

Select the cells for which you want to change the borders. Then **right click** on that area.

In MS Word: 線種罫線と網かけの設定 > 罫線

In OpenOffice: Table > Borders

Set the borders how you like them. I prefer 1 pt thickness for all the sides of each square.

These should also be available through the main menus but I find right clicking easier.

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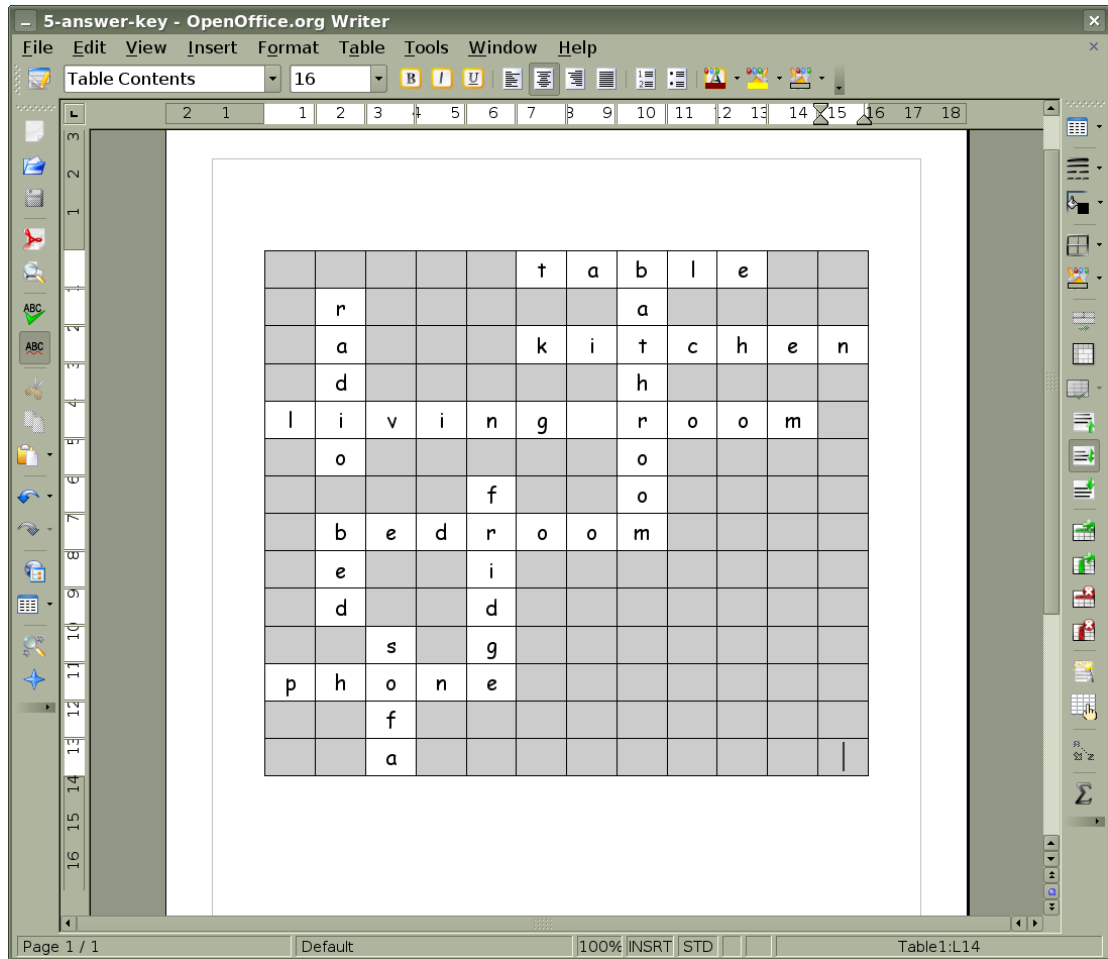
Figure 5: *This is a good time to save an answer key.*

File   Edit   View   Insert   Format   Table   Tools   Window   Help

Table Contents   16   **B** *I* U

				t	a	b	l	e		
	r					a				
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	o						o			
			f				o			
	b	e	d	r	o	o	m			
	e			i						
	d			d						
		s		g						
p	h	o	n	e						
		f								
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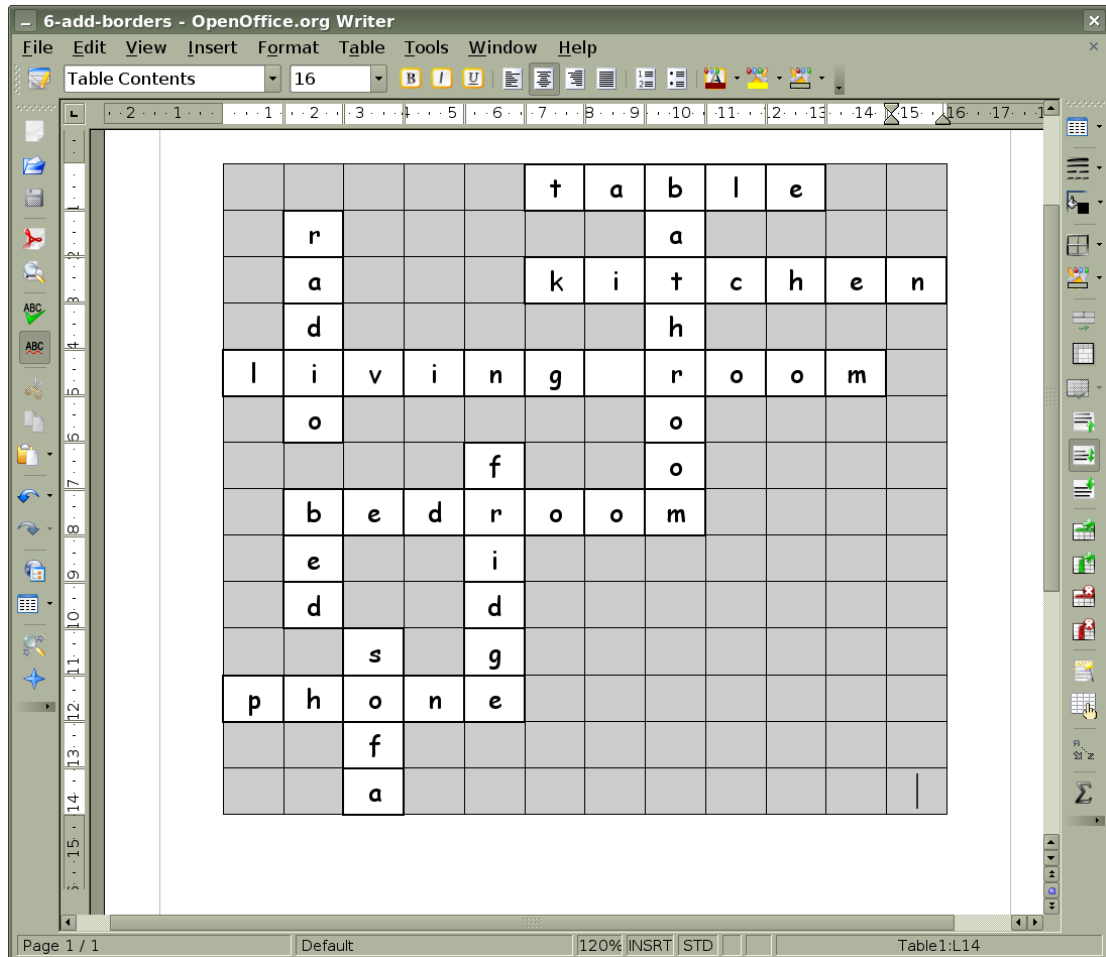Page 1 / 1   Default   120% INSRT STD   Table1:L14

Figure 6: *Nice thick lines around the letters. You can get rid of the lines around the gray squares if you like. I leave them in because I am lazy.*

Step 7: Remove Letters

Now it is time to remove the letters. If you are making a crossword puzzle you will want to delete them all. For a criss-cross puzzle, I often leave in a couple as hints for the students.

Don't forget that with crossword puzzles you will need to add the small numbers. You can do that now, or in step 8 or 9. Now is probably easiest. You will need the web page we saved back in step 1.

Put a number into its cell, set the style as "superscript". Aligment should be "top" and "left". Much of this, including superscript, can be done from right-click context menus.

To get superscript (上付き) from the main menu, first select the text with the mouse, then :
In MS Word: 書式 > フォント > フォント > 上付き
In OpenOffice: Format > Character > Position > Superscript

After formatting one small number, it is easiest to just copy and paste it into the other squares and then change the number. (To be safe, paste, put in the new number, and then erase the first number.)

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Step 8: Add Wordlist or Clues

Time to add the hints for the students. I like to use another table for the clues or wordlist. To insert a new table, click below the puzzle (so the cursor is not in the current table) and then add a table as in step 2:

In MS Word: 罫線 > 挿入 > 表

In OpenOffice: Table > Insert > Table, or Ctrl+F12

There should also be an icon on the toolbar for creating tables.

After entering the words or clues and formatting the text and the table (width, borders, etc.) you should have something like in the pictures below. The clues and the small numbers should be on the page we saved from the web site, back in step 1.

Don't forget that with crossword puzzles you will need to add the small numbers. Put a number into its cell, set the style as "superscript". Aligment should
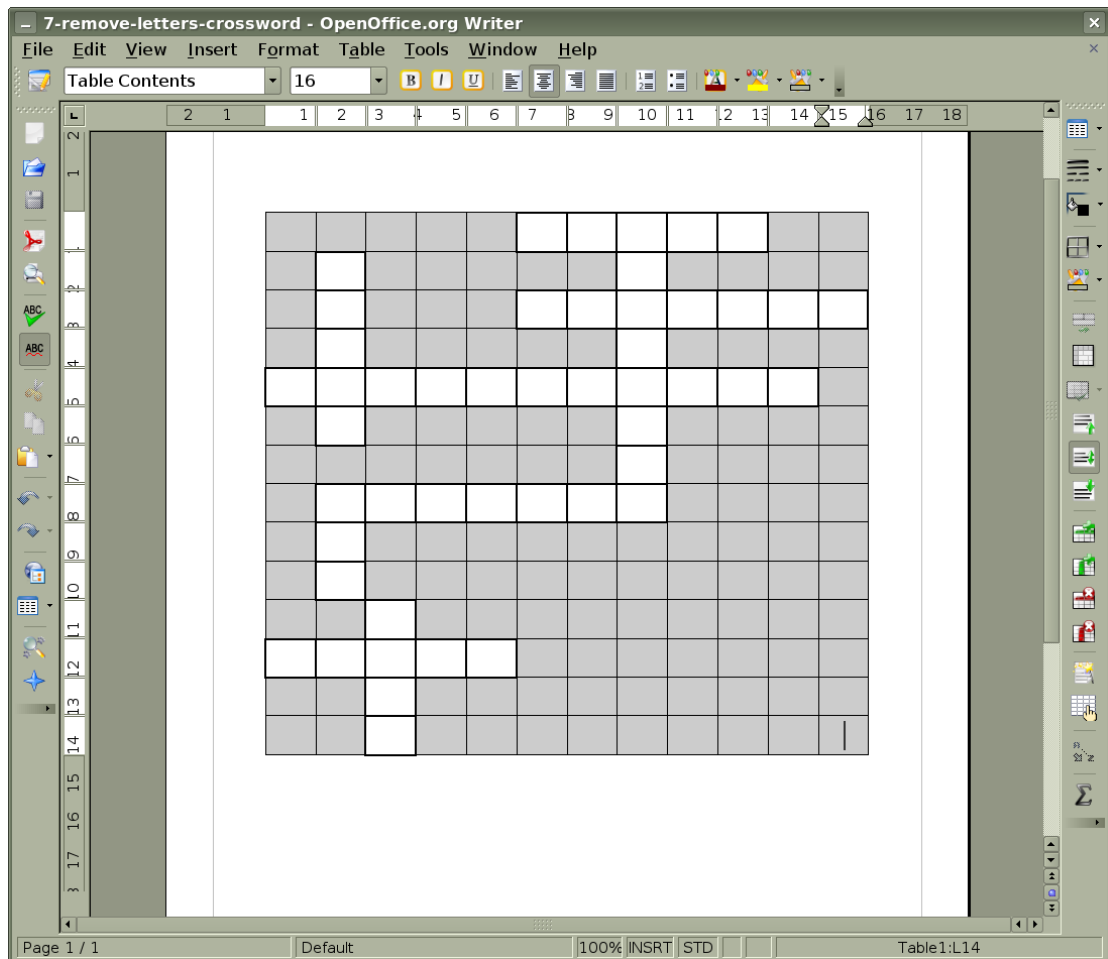
Figure 7: *Crossword puzzles or blank criss-cross puzzles. Now you see why we saved the answer key earlier, right?*
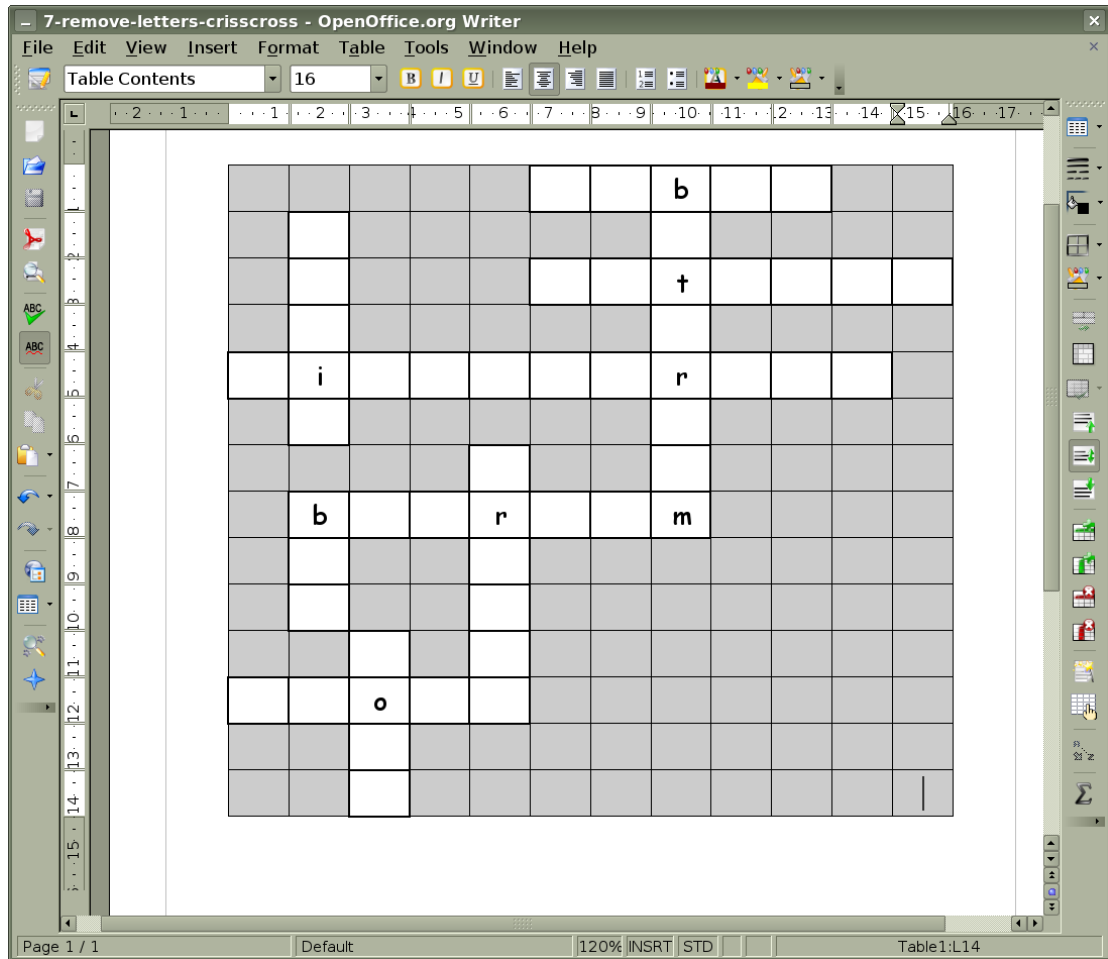
Figure 8: *A criss-cross puzzle with some of the letters left in*

be "top" and "left". Much of this, including superscript, can be done from right-click context menus.

To get superscript (上付き) from the main menu, first select the text with the mouse, then :
In MS Word: 書式 > フォント > フォント > 上付き
In OpenOffice: Format > Character > Position > Superscript

After formatting one small number, it is easiest to just copy and paste it into the other squares and then change the number. (To be safe, paste, put in the new number, and then erase the first number.)
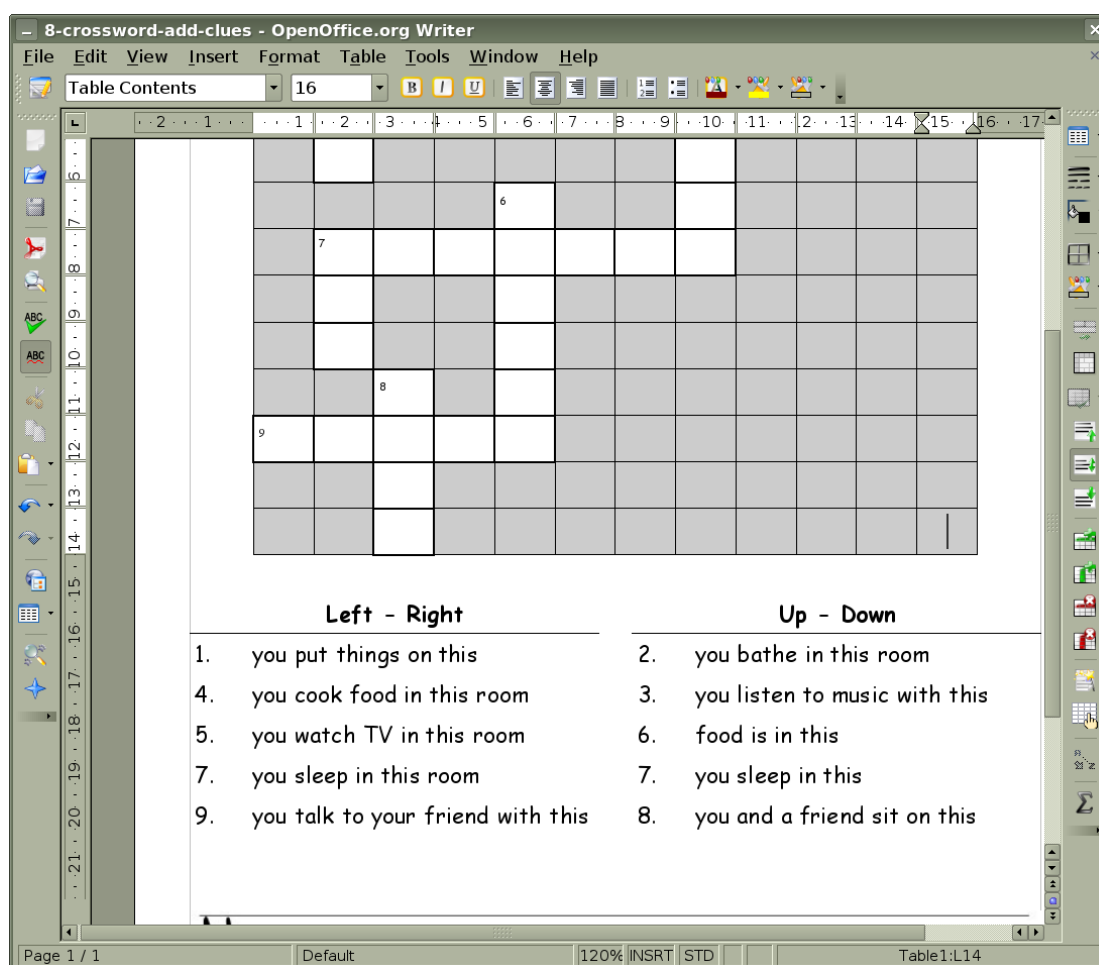

Figure 9: *Crossword puzzle. The clues table has three columns, one header row and five rows for the clues. Using three columns allows for nicer spacing and the break in the border line between the header and the clues.*

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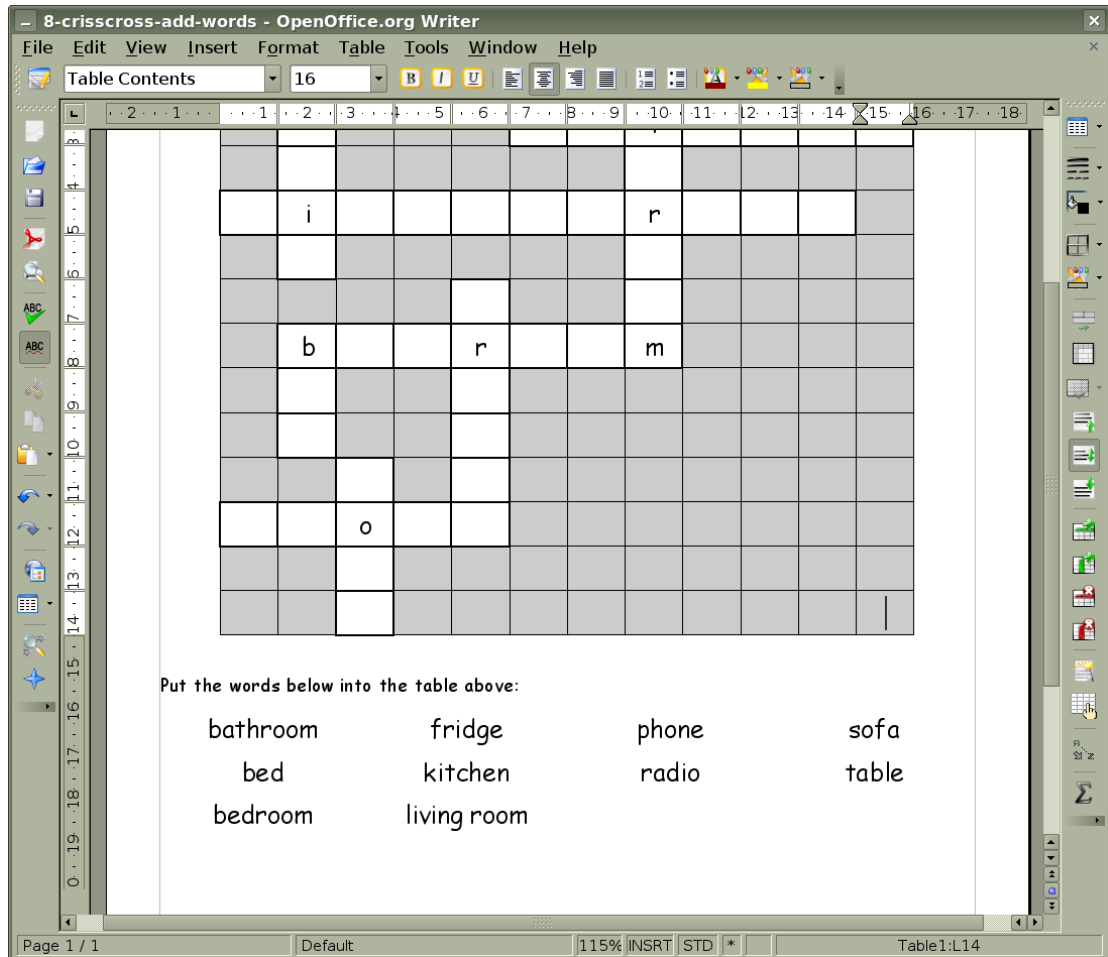
Figure 10: *Simple 4x3 table with the words for the puzzle. The directions text is not in the table.*

Step 9: Finishing Touches

The puzzle is all done but the worksheet isn't finished yet. We need to add a title and subtitle and make any other cosmetic changes that you want.

Below are my completed worksheets. I started with a template that has the 4-line name image and space for grade, class, and number already in it. So those are already done. In this case, I added a simple title and the usual subtitle.
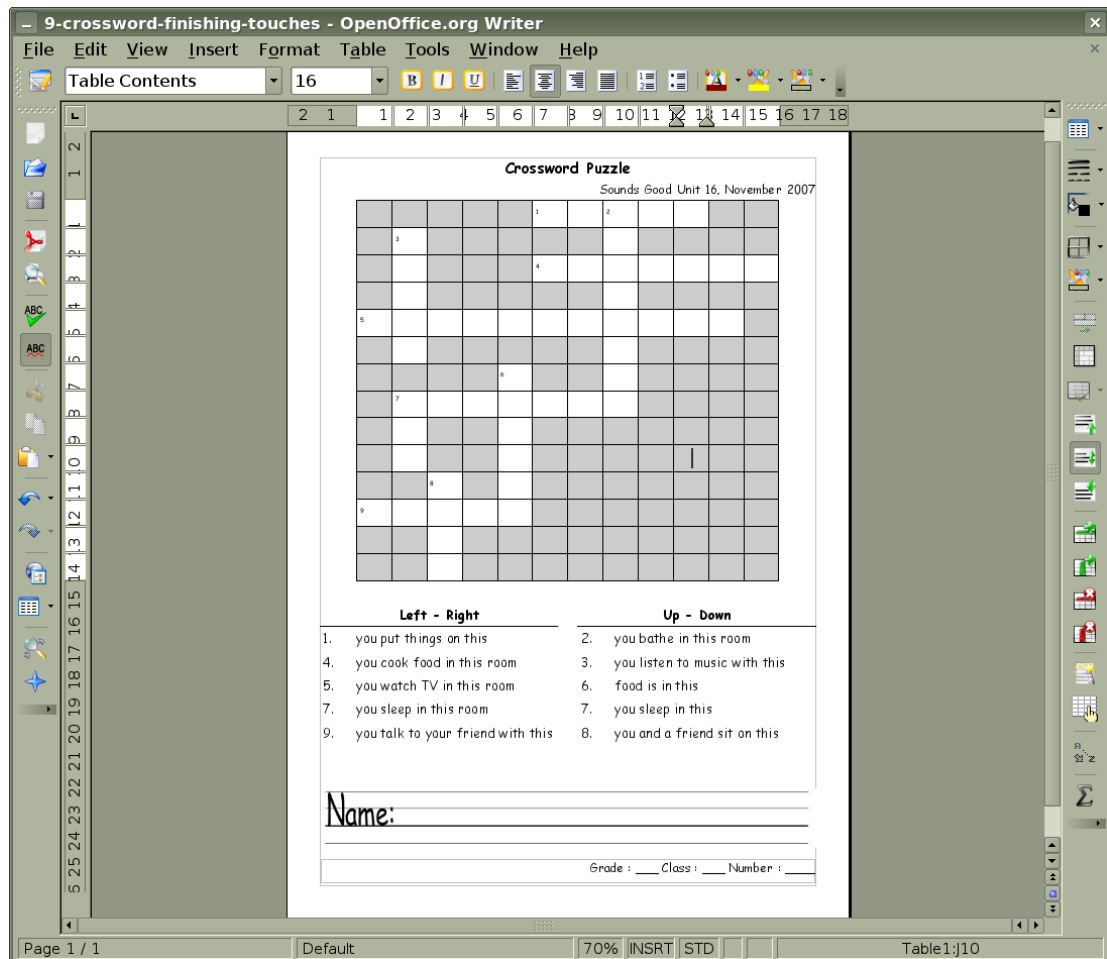

Figure 11

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Figure 12