

# Department of Christmas Spirit – Solution

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This puzzle presents you with 11 sequences of letters. There are two main mechanics that the flavor text clues about this puzzle.

Firstly, the "three ghosts" are a reference to *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. In the story, Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by three ghosts: the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.

Secondly, "their notes have gotten all mixed up" clues that there are words mixed together in the letter sequences. The particular way they've been mixed together is having substrings interlaced together, but maintaining order. For example, you can find the word DECEMBER inside the first letter sequence: JADEDNUNCOVEMEMEABBEERRARY.

Combining these two clues, one will find that each sequence contains three phrases and three leftover letters. The three phrases form a set and can be mapped thematically to "past", "present", and "future", referencing the three ghosts that the notes belong to.

LETTER SEQUENCE	PHRASES	SET	EXTRA
JADEDNUNCOVEMEMEABBEERRARY	NOVEMBER DECEMBER JANUARY	Months at the time of this hunt	DEA
TELPHLHOLTONEOCAEGVIHDRAMLL	TELEGRAM PHONE CALL HOLOVID	Communication technology	LTH
MIAPHOCRYTRRTOSTALEGRORBALLAPH	PHOTOGRAPH MIRROR CRYSTAL BALL	Used for seeing things	ATE
NWDIWILSSLASBE	WAS IS WILL BE	Conjugations of the verb "to be"	NDS
STARMAANSKINGTEDDPROGIPUZZRESSWERZLE	STARTED PUZZLE MAKING PROGRESS ANSWER	The solving of this puzzle	DIS

NPHFOOITREVUHERERTOT MOWRE	HITHERTO NOW FOREVERMORE	Adverbs about time	PUT
GMYEHISSBIFTTORYETERY	HISTORY GIFT MYSTERY	From the popular quote "Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. But today is a gift, and that is why it's called the present." of uncertain attribution.	EBE
RUFBLUEBUIPRILDINTOINN GSR	RUINS BUILDING BLUEPRINT	States of a building (can switch past and future, doesn't matter)	FOR
TELHORCEPOESEACRTRE RO	HORSE CAR TELEPORTER	Transportation technology	ECO
TOYTOMUESTERRORDAYT ROWDAY	YESTERDAY TODAY TOMORROW	Days	URT
LITEBIRDEFEATHNTH	BIRTH LIFE DEATH	Life stages	TEN

The extra letters in given order spell out DEAL THAT ENDS DISPUTE BEFORE COURT TEN, which is the clue phrase and letter enumeration for the final answer: **SETTLEMENT**.

## Author's notes

I started with the idea of writing a puzzle that somehow used "past", "present", and "future" clued by the three ghosts from *A Christmas Carol*. Initially, I tried to make something with verb conjugations work, but verb conjugation in English is mostly pretty homogeneous and boring. The only surviving part of this idea in the final puzzle is the set WAS, IS, and WILL BE—one of the more unique sets of verb conjugations in English that I could think of.

It was actually somewhat challenging to find sets that (1) clearly map to past, present, and future from the point of view of a solver in the hunt, (2) were interesting and varied, and (3)

would still be identifiable if you smashed the words together. The first version of this puzzle had FEZZIWIG, CRATCHIT, and FUNERAL for the three actual scenes in *A Christmas Carol*, but none of the test solvers were able to identify that set. I also really liked the set URD, VERDANDI, and SKULD (the [Norns](#)) thematically, but they didn't make it into the puzzle since they felt too challenging to identify. My favorite is STARTED PUZZLE, MAKING PROGRESS, and ANSWER as a meta set about the activity of solving this puzzle.