Nonogram solving tips

Six moves that solve almost every beginner nonogram (also called picross, griddlers or hanjie).

The rules in three lines

1. Each number is a block of filled cells in that row or column, in the order shown.
2. Between two blocks there is at least one empty cell. A `0` means the line is empty.
3. Fill cells so every line matches its clue: a picture appears. Never guess — logic always gives the next cell.

1 Start with the biggest clues.

A block of *b* in *n* cells always covers its middle **2b – n** cells. Clue 7 in 10 cells: 2×7–10 = 4 certain cells.



2 Lines that add up.

Add the numbers plus one gap between each pair. If that equals the line length, the line is fixed. `2 3 4` in 11 cells: 2+3+4+2 = 11.



3 Mark empty cells at once.

A finished block has an empty cell on each side. Crosses are information: in our 10 × 10 example, 23 of 41 steps marked cells empty.



4 Edges and crosses are walls.

A wall gives the block less room, so more of it is certain. Clue 8 with cell 1 empty: 9 cells left, 2×8–9 = 7 certain.



5 Switch to the crossing line.

Every new cell is a clue for the line that crosses it. After filling a cell in a row, read its column; after a column, read the rows.

6 Stuck? Do not guess.

Find a line you have not re-read since a crossing line changed. List where each block could start and end — usually one position is impossible.

Start-here checklist

- Circle every clue that adds up to the full width (tip 2) and fill those lines.
- Apply the overlap (tip 1) to every clue bigger than half the line.
- Cross out the cells beside each finished block and in every finished line.
- Go round rows, then columns, then rows again until the picture appears.

Free to print for personal and classroom use.

Play, solve and print nonograms: gamepalo.com/games/nonogram