

FREE PRINTABLE Kakuro Tips to Success



1. Start with the "Unique Combinations"

The secret to Kakuro mastery lies in the small and large sums. Some totals can only be made with one specific combination of numbers. These are your "opening hooks."

- 3 across two squares must be 1 and 2.
- 4 across two squares must be 1 and 3. Because 2 and 2 would be a repetition.
- 17 across two squares must be 8 and 9. No other combination is large enough.
- 16 across two squares must be 9 and 7. Because 8 and 8 is a repetition and no other combination is large enough.
- 24 across three squares must be 9, 8 and 7. The largest sum of 3 digits.
- 30 across four squares must be 9, 8, 7 and 6. The largest sum of 4 digits.
- 45 as a sum means each digit 1-9 appears once, like a sudoku.

Memorize these "low-hanging fruit" (or download our Unique Combinations Sheet). It gives you an immediate foothold in the grid.

2. Pencil in the Possibilities

You may know the correct combination but you don't know which number goes where.

For beginners and for more challenging grids, don't be afraid to use "pencilled options" for the possible answers. Lightly jotting down the possible digits at the bottom or in the corner of a square helps you to visualize the logic. Either use a pencil or different-coloured pens for possibilities versus confirmed answers.

3. Examine the "Intersection Points"

The magic happens where a horizontal line meets a vertical one. Look for intersections where a specific number must satisfy BOTH the horizontal and vertical sums. This "cross-referencing" is the key to finding the solution that works for both directions.

4. Watch out for the Invalid Combinations

Each digit can appear only once in a cross-sum, so we look for combinations that would require multiples of the same number - these are invalid, so they help us eliminate some of the options.

5. One Solution can Solve Several Squares

With each square you solve, adjacent squares also become clear and can be completed.

We recommend erasing or crossing out your pencilled possibilities to reduce distraction for squares in unsolved chains

6. Unique Combinations for Remainder Squares

As you solve one square in a three-square chain, the Unique Combinations may apply to the two remaining squares. Subtract the solved digit from the full clue - then the remainder is the sum for the two remaining squares.

7. Use "What ifs" to evaluate options

When you have narrowed the options down to just two or three possibilities, use "What ifs". What if ... it's a X? What does that tell you about adjacent or intersecting cells. It may highlight some invalids that rule it out.

Most of all Have Fun building your mental agility!

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