FREE PRINTABLE WORD LADDERS FOR ADULTS

6 ORIGINAL CLUED PUZZLES: 3 STEADY, 3 TRICKY

A word ladder joins two words by changing one letter at a time. Every step must be a real word of the same length, and you may not add, remove or rearrange letters. Each missing word in these ladders has a clue beside it, so you are never guessing blind.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Read the start word at the top and the finish word at the bottom.
2. Change one letter to make the first missing word. Its clue is beside it.
3. Keep going, one letter at a time, until you reach the finish word.
4. Stuck? Work upwards from the finish word and meet in the middle.

A QUICK EXAMPLE

C O L D	*Start word*
C O R D	*L becomes R: a length of rope*
C A R D	*O becomes A: sent on a birthday*
W A R D	*C becomes W: a room of hospital beds*
W A R M	*Finish word*

Answers are on page 5. Use a pencil: a wrong turn rubs out.

Printing tip: choose Fit To Page to print on A4 or US Letter paper.

Free for personal, family, club and classroom use. Please do not sell it.

Want 100 more? The Missing Word Files hides them inside 20 detective mysteries.

The Missing Word Files on Amazon: **Black-And-White** UK · US | **Colour** UK · US

PUZZLES 1 AND 2

PUZZLE 1 · STEADY

CHANGE HITS INTO LAMB

4 missing words

H I T S	*Start*
	1 Bowlers and berets
	2 The opposite of love
	3 Not on time
	4 Limping; feeble, as an excuse
L A M B	*Finish*

PUZZLE 2 · STEADY

CHANGE BABY INTO SORT

4 missing words

B A B Y	*Start*
	1 A little one: ‘a ___ in arms’
	2 With nothing on; uncovered
	3 A dull person; drilled a hole
	4 Aching; painful
S O R T	*Finish*

PUZZLES 3 AND 4

PUZZLE 3 · STEADY

CHANGE COST INTO WIPE

4 missing words

C O S T

Start

1. Letters delivered each morning
2. Hold still for a photograph
3. The head of the Roman Catholic Church
4. A tube for water or gas

W I P E

Finish

PUZZLE 4 · TRICKY

CHANGE SHOOT INTO STORM

3 missing words

S H O O T

Start

1. ‘Long story ___’
2. Where the tide comes in
3. Put away for a rainy day

S T O R M

Finish

PUZZLES 5 AND 6

PUZZLE 5 · TRICKY

CHANGE LUNCH INTO TEACH

3 missing words

L U N C H	*Start*
	1 'The best of the ___'
	2 Where the substitutes sit
	3 Buckets and spades go here
T E A C H	*Finish*

PUZZLE 6 · TRICKY

CHANGE COINS INTO SAINT

4 missing words

C O I N S	*Start*
	1 Signs up as a member
	2 A shared effort is a ___ one
	3 'What's the ___?'
	4 Watching it dry is famously dull
S A I N T	*Finish*

NO PEEKING UNTIL YOU HAVE TRIED

THE ANSWERS

STEADY

1. **HITS** → HATS → HATE → LATE → LAME → **LAMB**
2. **BABY** → BABE → BARE → BORE → SORE → **SORT**
3. **COST** → POST → POSE → POPE → PIPE → **WIPE**

TRICKY

4. **SHOOT** → SHORT → SHORE → STORE → **STORM**
5. **LUNCH** → BUNCH → BENCH → BEACH → **TEACH**
6. **COINS** → JOINS → JOINT → POINT → PAINT → **SAINT**

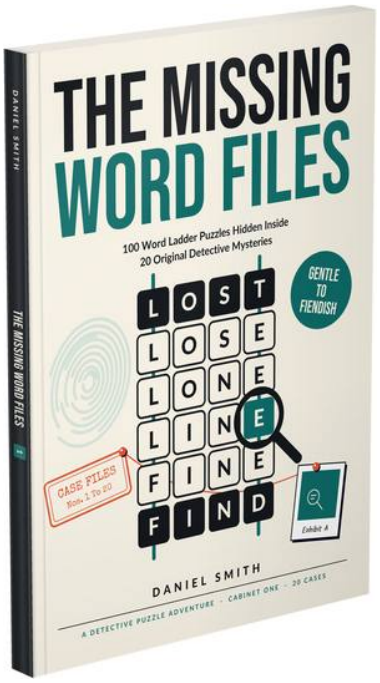
Each of these routes is the only shortest route between its two end words in our 5,861-word checking list, so if your ladder reached the finish in the same number of steps, it should match.

ENJOYED THESE?

TRY THE MISSING WORD FILES

EVERY PUZZLE IS A CLUE

The Missing Word Files is a word ladder puzzle book for adults with a story. It hides 100 word ladders inside 20 linked cosy detective mysteries set in the town of Briarbridge. Each solved ladder gives you one evidence letter, five letters spell the missing word that cracks the case, and all twenty answers reveal one final hidden message.



- **Four levels, from Gentle to Fiendish**
- **Three hints for every case**
- **Full reasoned solutions**
- **20 bonus ladders with no clues at all**
- **No murder, nothing gruesome**

Look inside the book at themissingwordfiles.com

BUY THE BOOK ON AMAZON

Black-And-White Edition

Amazon UK £9.97 | Amazon US $12.97

Colour Edition

Amazon UK £12.97 | Amazon US $16.97

Scan For The Website

List prices. Amazon may show a different price on the day.

Want to try a case first? The whole of Case 1 is free to print from the website too: the welcome pages and all five exhibits, with no email or sign-up.

Things are only lost until somebody takes the trouble to find them.

Free for personal use. Copyright © 2026 Daniel Smith. All rights reserved.