

META: Killer Croc

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Answer: **SWIM TRANQS**

Killer Croc's answers are all two-word phrases, where either the left or the right word can be read as a "clipped" word derived from a longer form in another meaning. For example, though the GAS in GAS GIANT does mean the form of matter, "gas" can be a shortened form of the word "gasoline" as well.

The capsules indicate the beginning of the clipped-out part of the original word, and whether it is the left or right word in its answer phrase. Look at the length of the removed letters and index this into the "companion" word. For example, there are four letters in the "CARA" taken out of "CARAVAN" to make "VAN" as a result; four letters into "NUYS" is an S.

Answer	Clip Bit	Other Meaning	Clipped	L	Capsule	Extract
VAN NUYS	VAN	CARAVAN	CARA	4	C Left	S
CAB CALLOWAY	CAB	CABRIOLET	RIOLET	6	R Left	W
TRIPLE SEC	SEC	SECOND	OND	3	O Right	I
PLANE SYMMETRY	PLANE	AIRPLANE	AIR	3	A Left	M
GAS GIANT	GAS	GASOLINE	OLINE	5	O Left	T
WARREN BURGER	BURGER	HAMBURGER	HAM	3	H Right	R
YERBA MATE	MATE	CHECKMATE	CHECK	5	C Right	A
CHICKEN COOP	COOP	COOPERATIVE	ERATIVE	7	E Right	N
FREQUENCY CAPS	CAPS	CAPITALS	ITAL	4	I Right	Q
LIT CANDLES	LIT	LITERATURE	ERATURE	7	E Left	S

Reading the extracted letters in order gives how to slow down Killer Croc even in his watery home turf: a few (or more than a few) rounds of **SWIM TRANQS**.

Author's Notes

Scott: Killer Croc was the second villain meta to be written and the quickest to come together in our brainstorm sessions. Right off the bat (ha) I noticed that "croc" was a clipped word, as was "tranqs" in our meta answer, and that coincidence seemed too good to ignore. It felt like the number of letters removed from the clipped word would make a good natural index.

Our first pass at this meta didn't limit the clipped words that we could use, but we thought it would be fun to only use clipped words in a different meaning than their full form (e.g. LIT CANDLES is obviously not using LIT to mean LITERATURE). This probably resulted in weaker answers overall, but hopefully a better aha moment.

One regret I have is that a few bits of ambiguity snuck their way into the puzzle. CABRIOLET vs CABERNET vs TAXICAB is something we noticed well into development. Our reasoning was a) TAXICAB itself is a compound word made of two clipped words, TAXIMETER and CABRIOLET, b) CAB as the vehicle is more common than CAB as the wine, and c) the shell disambiguated once you figured out how to use it. I realize that's not much comfort to those who got tripped up by it, and probably would work harder to remove it if I could go back. CARAVAN vs VANGUARD was one that we didn't catch until the hunt was in session.

All in all, I think it ended up as a meta that *mostly* works like I wanted it to, though I do wonder if the tradeoff of only using clipped words in their alternate meaning was worth it.

Adam: I liked an earlier version that maybe was a bit more obvious with the interpretations of the clipped words, if maybe only because "LIQUID LUNCH" was a nicer way to get a Q... but I'm happier overall with what we've got here. We also had "VAN HELSING" but ended up giving it up to cut back on some cross-meta confusion.