

• T H E •

• S O C I A L •

• D I S T A N C I N G •

• P U Z Z L E S •

by Eric Berlin

It's often said that two heads are better than one. For this set of puzzles, two heads are mandatory! These puzzles were specially designed to be tackled by a pair of solvers. One person should print out Puzzle Set A, and the other person should print out Puzzle Set B. Sometimes you'll work on your own, exchanging answers with your partner when you have them. Other times you won't be able to reach those answers without close consultation with your co-solver.

The answer to every puzzle is a common word. (Okay, one is a little less than common, but it's still gettable. You'll see.) Save these answers—you'll need them to solve the last puzzle, "The Finish Line."

If you have come here via my main puzzle outlet, Puzzlesnacks, you will find these puzzles a fair bit more challenging. Never fear: A separate file contains a series of hints for each puzzle, as well as all of the answers.

Whether you're solving with someone you live with or with a friend over Zoom, I hope you enjoy these puzzles!

Eric Berlin  
June 1, 2020

• PUZZLE SET A •

# • A S M A L L C H A N G E •

Each of the boldface words shown below will undergo a small change: You'll add a letter of the alphabet to each one, and then scramble to make an answer to either one of your clues or one of your partner's clues. Write the new word in the appropriate box, then cross out the letter you added—a letter will not be used more than once. Six letters will go unused. These can be scrambled to make the answer to this puzzle.

As additional assistance, the clues are presented in alphabetical order by their answers.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

ADMITS	ARCANA	AROUND	BLAMES	BOOMER
BUSHEL	CRANIA	ENTIRE	GEMINI	LESLIE
MACRON	NONET	REALLY	REIGN	RENEWS
SECEDE	SOPHIA	THINE	TRIAGE	TUNIS

- End a meeting
- Reacts with embarrassment
- Long line of vehicles all going to the same place
- Geometrical figure with a major and minor axis
- Snub
- Chinese checkers pieces
- Unit of force named after a famous physicist
- Piano music genre most popular in the early 20th century
- Large, often domed arena
- Acme

# • F O L L O W I N G T H E R U L E S •

---

Start by giving your partner the word below, and receiving one in return. Follow the rules in order, but after each step, you should give the result to your partner, and receive a new word to continue with. The last bit of each rule has been cut out and moved below. Figuring out how to complete each rule is up to you.

Keep doing this until all of the rules have been used. At that point, divide up your final word and your partner's final word into two-letter bits. Rearrange these bits to spell your final answer.

GIVE YOUR PARTNER THIS STARTING WORD: ROMANCE

1. Move every letter four places forward in the alphabet to make \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Drop the first and last letters. Change the even letters to make \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Reduce the word down to its unique letters. These can be scrambled to make \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Take a three-letter antonym of this word. Make these the odd letters in a six-letter word. Fill in the even letters to make \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Change the 4th letter to an I. Spell backwards. Add a letter in front and in back to make \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Drop the second-to-last letter and scramble the rest to make \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Change the last letter to C. Scramble all the letters to make \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Spell backward. Take three consecutive letters that spell \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Spell the word you've been given backward. Replace two consecutive letters with the same letter to make \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Drop two letters to make \_\_\_\_\_.

**COMPLETE THE RULES WITH ONE OF THESE:**

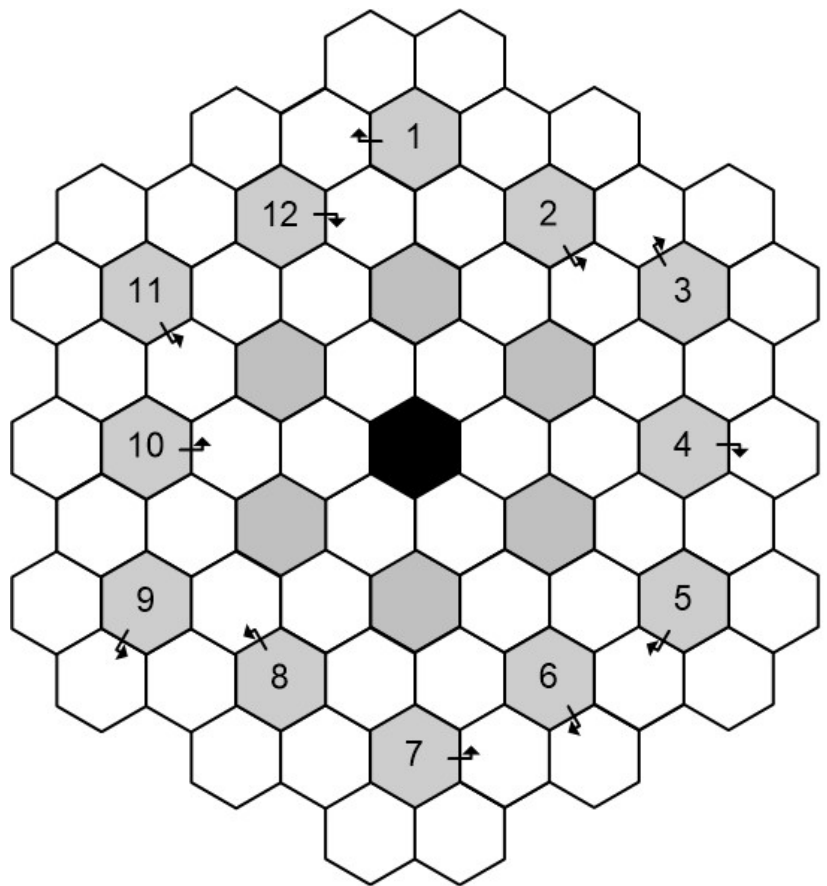
A tree • A card game • A word that means “atmosphere” • An animal • A word that frequently precedes the word you were just given, in a phrase • A woman’s name • A man’s name • A world capital—but then give your partner its country • A nationality • A genre

# • SOUNDS GOOD TO ME •

Each clue here needs to be read out loud to be understood. Alternate reading the words of each clue, beginning with the solver who has that clue's asterisk. Listen to what you're saying and try to figure out the real clue. (For example, if you say "SILL FUR WHERE WIDTH ABLE AID" out loud, you get "SILVERWARE WITH A BLADE," a clue for the word KNIFE.) The numbers following the clue show how many letters are in each word of the clue.

All of the answers in this puzzle are six-letter words. The first twelve answers go around its appropriately numbered hex, beginning in the space with the arrow and continuing in the direction the arrow points. Use those answers to figure out where the remaining six answers should be placed. The central, unclued entry is the final answer for this puzzle.

- \*1 MARX HOOT HIT (8 5 2 2)
- 2 HACKED PURR MINT HEAT (5 6 7 2 3 8)
- \*3 FEW RESIN PASS GRAHAM (6 7 3 4 2 7)
- 4 GULLET ARCH HOKE FIE HEATS (9 3 11 8 6)
- \*5 MEN GUARD STET (4 6 7)
- 6 SPEAR ANTS PAY (12 4)
- \*7 SHY MEDALS FUN ARE (5 5 5 2 1 3)
- 8 SIPPER HID HUN LINDT (4 9 5 7, 2 words)
- \*9 HANG HOOKS (5 5)
- 10 HER HALL FUR (6 4 4)
- \*11 CAW WHO AS INN (5 10 2)
- 12 HAL EWE LEST DUG MINT (2 6 3 2 3 4 2 3 10, 2 words)
  
- \*a CLAW TOOTH GUY (6 2 3 3)
- b HOEING FISSION RAM (7 10 7)
- \*c ORE SAUNA HINT TAKE (6 2 1 10'1 3 4)
- d HELEN TEN ALICE (6 2 7 3 6)
- \*e PLAY HUMP BIG (5 5 9 6)
- f HAVE HOUR HARASS (3 4 2 3 8)



# • CONNECTIONS *page 1* •

---

First, rearrange each set of three-letter “trigrams” to make a sequence of words that matches the given enumeration. Match your answers up to your partner’s answers—you’ll see how. Then, on the next page, draw lines connecting your lettered answers to your partner’s numbered answers. If you make all the right connections, the letters not crossed out by your lines will spell out your answer, reading down.

A) GES SSA TEX TME (4 8)

B) INS PHO RAM TAG TOS (9 6)

C) AIL COM ERR MUT (8 4)

D) ALC CTR ELE ICC TOR ULA (8 10)

E) APP IEW ING NTV OIN TME (11 7)

F) CEI DER DMS MAN NVA PAC SAN SPA (5 8 3 2. 3-3)

G) APA FTI ING IRO NCA NDS NSA OME STR (1 4 2 3 4 3 4 6)

H) ARS ESB GOI NGL NGT OSI (5 2 7 4)

I) CYC EWS FOU LES NTY RHO TWE URN (6-4 4 4 6)

J) DIO NSI RRA STO TRA (10 5)





# • STAIRCASE •

This staircase is made up of five different “landings,” each made up of four rows. For each landing, you have two of the Row clues, and your partner has the other two. Work together to figure out how these answers fit into the grid.

In addition to words reading across, five-letter words (the gray squares) zigzag down the outer edges of each landing. And a string of seven words reads down the whole of the staircase. The clues for all of these zigzagging words are presented out of order, and are divided up between you and your partner.

The two-letter connection points between the landings will reveal your answer.

**Landing 1**

**Landing 2**

**Landing 3**

**Landing 4**

**Landing 5**

**ROWS**

**Landing 1**

- This place
- Created

**Landing 2**

- Story about the gods
- Jazz subgenre associated with Charlie Parker

**Landing 3**

- First Best Picture winner
- Subject of a sentence, generally

**Landing 4**

- Block of hay
- One-time anesthetic

**Landing 5**

- Items on a stage
- Performed on a stage

**ZIGZAGS**

- Archie’s “dingbat”
- Become fewer in number
- Creamsicle color
- Interjection akin to “grumble, grumble”
- Last name in a Dickens title
- Mid-sentence punctuation mark
- Pleasantly warm
- Skill, in slang

# • NAME GAME •

Each name on the left can be placed into a blank on the right to make a word or common phrase, which can then be found in the word search grid. Some names can fit in more than one blank, but there is only one way to place all the names.

Answers in the grid can be found in a straight line in any direction. The word search grid has been cut into two pieces—some of the words can be found in your piece, some in your partner's, and some will start in one and end in the other. When all the words in the grid have been found, the leftover letters will spell a message, row by row.

- ALICE
- ANNE
- ANYA
- CALEB
- ELI
- ELLE
- EMMA
- ETHAN
- GRACE
- GRANT
- HOPE
- IRA
- IRIS
- IVAN
- KARA
- LEON
- LIAM
- LINDA
- LOGAN
- LOIS
- MARA
- ROSE
- SEAN
- STELLA

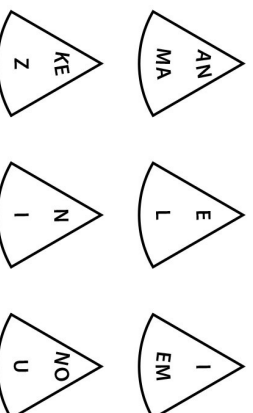
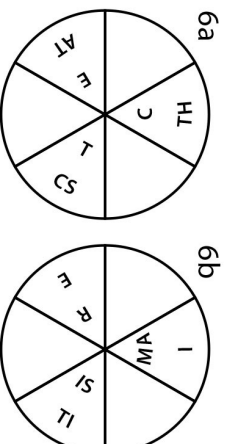
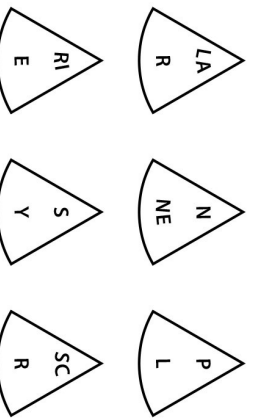
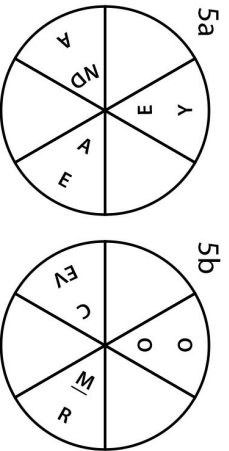
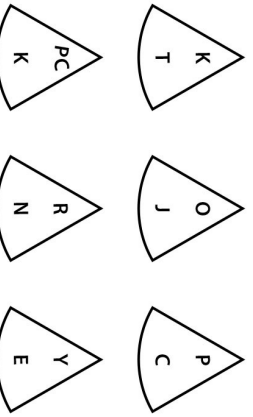
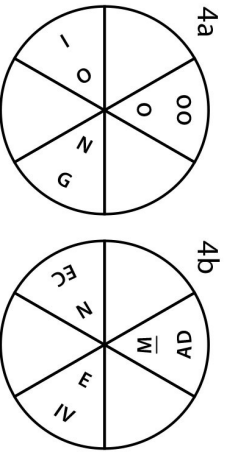
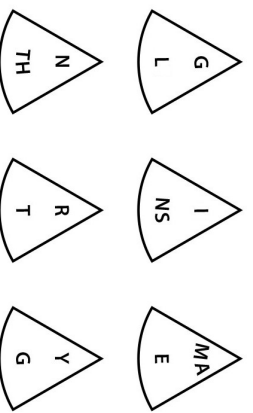
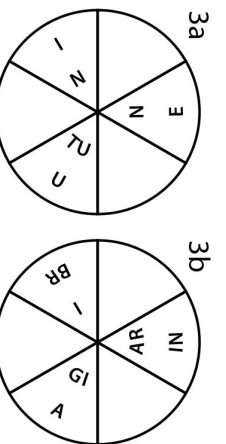
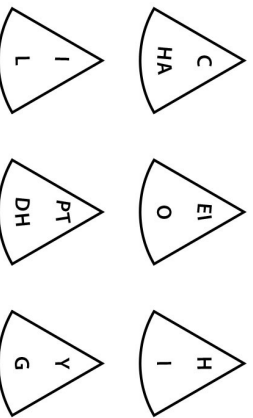
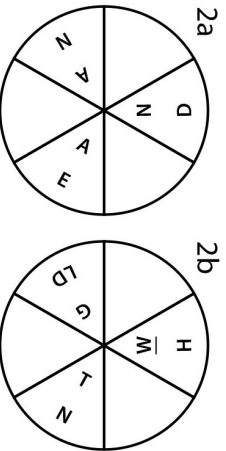
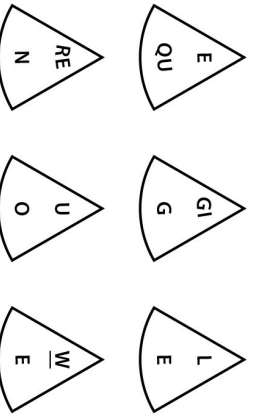
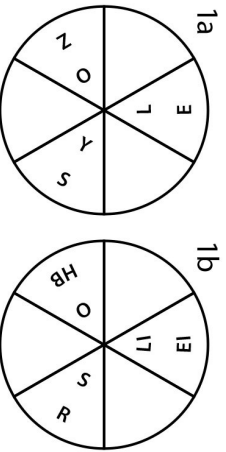


- \_\_\_\_\_CE
- \_\_\_\_\_TE
- \_\_\_\_\_THON
- B\_\_\_\_\_LLEY
- CH\_\_\_\_\_L
- CHAME\_\_\_\_\_
- CON\_\_\_\_\_TION
- DIL\_\_\_\_\_
- DRA\_\_\_\_\_
- F\_\_\_\_\_NE
- FLA\_\_\_\_\_
- KE\_\_\_\_\_NE
- L\_\_\_\_\_RD
- M\_\_\_\_\_
- M\_\_\_\_\_E
- MIN\_\_\_\_\_
- ORT\_\_\_\_\_DIC
- PAR\_\_\_\_\_ENT
- REP\_\_\_\_\_D
- S\_\_\_\_\_
- S\_\_\_\_\_ACK
- SAT\_\_\_\_\_T
- SO\_\_\_\_\_TS
- SP\_\_\_\_\_L

# • FULL CIRCLES •

The six wedge-shaped puzzle pieces can be placed into the spaces of the two circles above them so that each circle spells out two words. These words will always go counterclockwise, and in any given circle they will begin in the same place (which you must determine).

The two words formed in each circle can be combined with your partner's words for that same circle to make a four-word clue to an answer word. The two answers for each pair of circles will have exactly one letter in common. These letters will spell out your final answer for this puzzle.

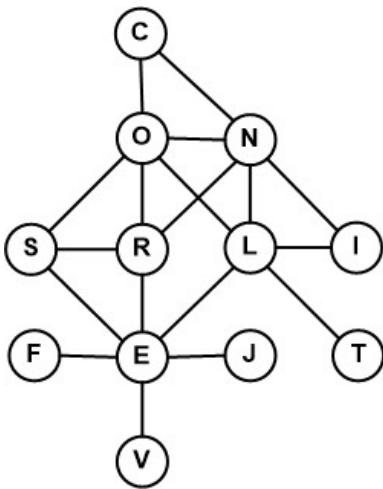


# • FOUR MINUS ONE page 1 •

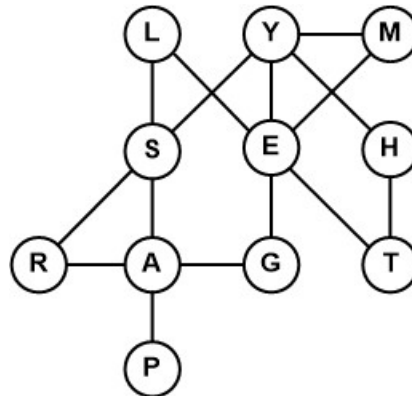
In each network of letters below, you can trace a continuous path connecting three members of a famous foursome, starting at a letter you must determine. Every path will be used at least once, and you can stand on a letter to use it two times in a row.

The blanks show the number of letters in each word. Determine the missing item, write that into the final set of blanks, and give your partner the numbered letters. The letters you receive in turn can be filled into the first two puzzles on the next page. You'll then repeat the process with these puzzles.

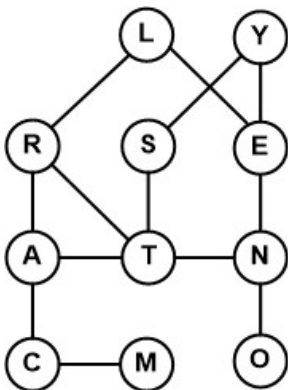
The final puzzle on the next page will require letters from both you and your partner; the missing member of this set is the answer to this puzzle.



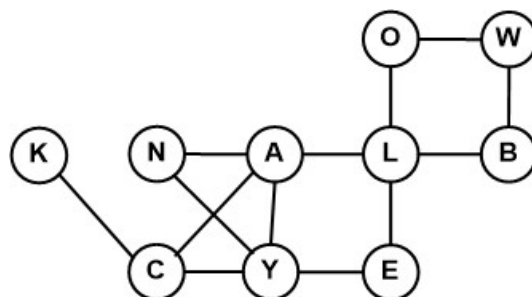
-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----  
 1 2 3 4 5 6



-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----  
 7 8 9 10 11

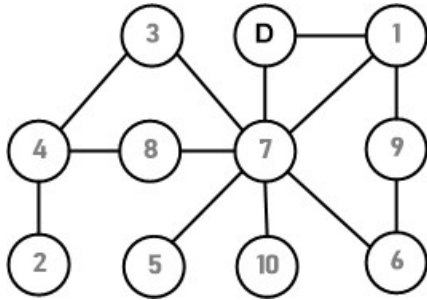


-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----  
 12 13 14 15 16



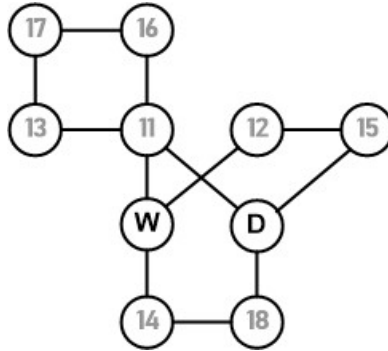
-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----  
 17 18 19 20

# • FOUR MINUS ONE page 2 •



-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

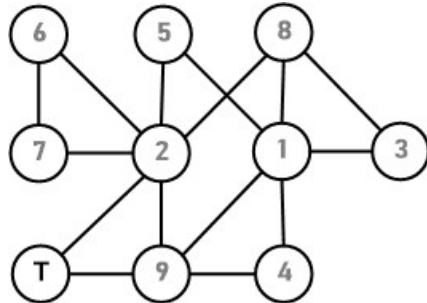
1 2 3 4



-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

5 6 7 8

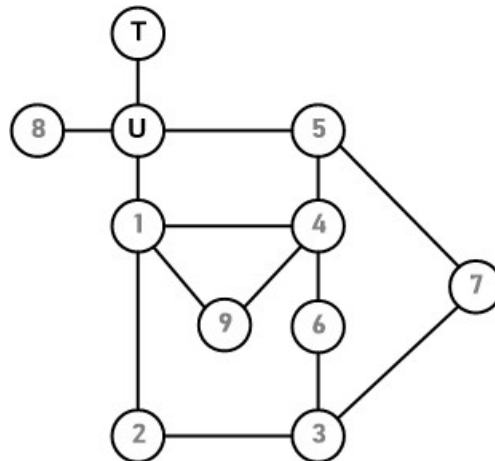
The numbered letters from this puzzle will go into the final puzzle, along with other letters supplied by your partner.



-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

5 6 7 8 9

No enumerations are given for this final puzzle. The missing element is the answer you need.



# • H Y B R I D S •

---

You have an assortment of five-letter words; so does your partner. You can drop one letter from each word, and place what remains on one side or the other of a word from your partner's list (also with a letter dropped) to make the eight-letter answer to one of the clues below. For example, FORCE + COAST can make the answer FORECAST. The dropped letters, in order, should be written into the boxes.

When you're done, read down the two columns for a clue to this puzzle's answer.

ATTIC • AUDIT • BRATS • CAN DO • CLONE • EERIE •  
GUEST • HERON • MANIA • NEIGH • ON ICE • PARSE •  
SOUND • TANKS • WEAVE

- |   |                      |                      |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| Certain seedpod (2 words)                       | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Most forward                                    | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| The Dalai Lama and others                       | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| One who's up when others are sleeping (2 words) | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Sudden and striking                             | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Concertgoers, say                               | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Repeating curve in a calculus class (2 words)   | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Certain spa treatment                           | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Slower than Mach 1                              | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Relating to mom and dad                         | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Deep and thoughtful                             | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Psychological wholes                            | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Like some draws                                 | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Like some fancy beds                            | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Some nightwear                                  | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

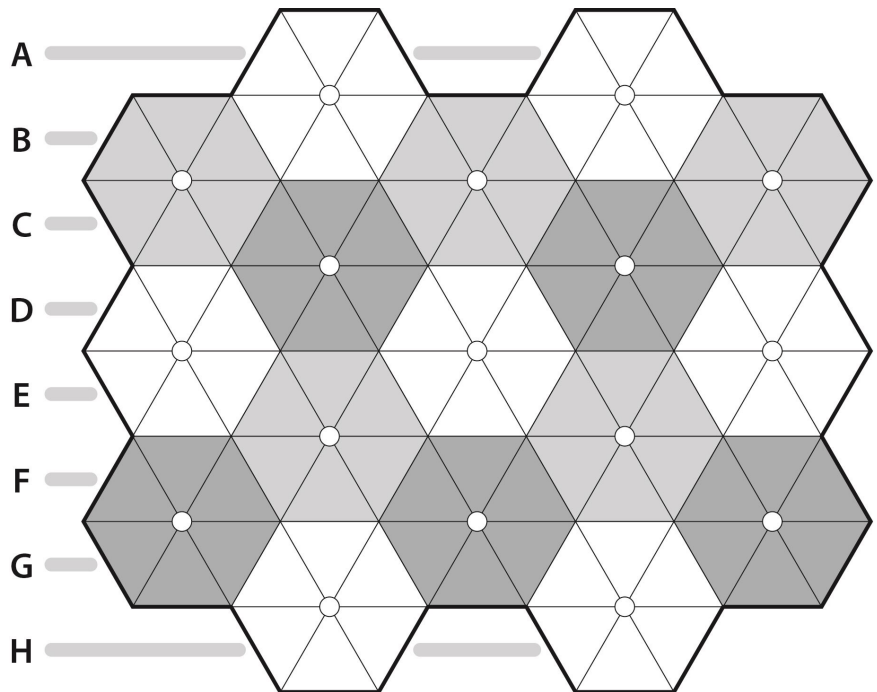
# • R O W S G A R D E N •

In this garden, two Row answers read horizontally from the lettered markers. (Rows A and H contain one answer each.) While the first clue is always for the first answer and the second clue for the second answer, note that one clue in each pair is actually for your partner's puzzle.

Blooms are six-letter answers that fill the shaded and unshaded hexagons, reading either clockwise or counterclockwise, starting from a petal that you must determine. Bloom clues are divided into three lists: Light, Medium, and Dark. You must determine which answer goes into which bloom. Some of the Bloom clues are for your puzzle, and others are for your partner's puzzle. One bloom of each color, however, is used in *both* puzzles. These answers should be placed into the smaller grid, without rotating the blooms, to make an appropriate answer word.

## Rows

- A More sedate
- B Chocolate-covered treats  
Establish, as an elusive fact (2 words)
- C Ice cream, brownies, etc.  
They're often covered with shingles
- D Give to charity  
Cerebral
- E Scramble the letters  
Shade of reddish-brown
- F One half of table salt  
Notable science-fiction weapon
- G They're clumsy  
Bill Watterson, notably
- H Some electric cars



## White Blooms

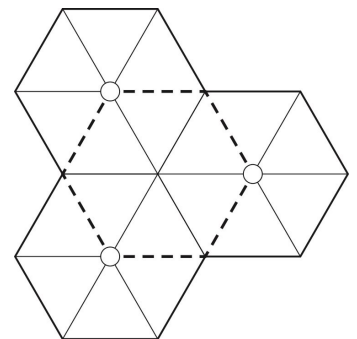
- Be a tattletale
- Big boxes
- Cooks quickly on the stovetop
- Dextrous; agile
- \_\_\_ fork
- Hat that ties under the chin
- Homer's favorite snack
- One in a bunch
- Say "Don't forget..."
- Setting
- Setting in many a Western
- Sums
- Xbox aficionados

## Medium Blooms

- Actor Robert (2 words)
- Closest to the bottom
- Get
- Hits Ctrl-V, in many programs
- Is much louder than, with "out"
- Made sense of, as a complicated sentence
- More sizable
- Puffball seeds, for example
- Sags

## Dark Blooms

- Collections of songs
- Involving dark magic
- Legal entitlements
- Lug, as something heavy and awkward
- Mother \_\_\_
- Noiseless
- Rises up (against)
- Stir up, as unrest
- Swaps one for another



# • THE FINISH LINE •

---

You're at the finish line! Write the answers into the blanks as you acquire them. Then use the clues below to figure out why it's so amazing that you were able to solve these puzzles.

Rows Garden \_\_\_\_\_

Following the Rules \_\_\_\_\_

A Small Change \_\_\_\_\_

Staircase \_\_\_\_\_

Name Game \_\_\_\_\_

Full Circles \_\_\_\_\_

Sounds Good To Me \_\_\_\_\_

Four Minus One \_\_\_\_\_

Connections \_\_\_\_\_

Hybrids \_\_\_\_\_

Boyfriend...

...a small bird

Freshly unwrapped...

...caused by hamburger

Mischief maker...

...countryside resident

One who is unlikely...

...from composer Joseph

Scary sea creature...

...toothpaste containers



**ERIC BERLIN** is the creator of Puzzlesnacks (<http://www.puzzlesnacks.com>), which delivers weekly “snack-sized” pencil puzzles to subscribers around the world. A collection of Puzzlesnacks puzzles was published by Simon & Schuster in 2019. He is also the author of the Winston Breen series of mysteries for children: *The Puzzling World of Winston Breen*, *The Potato Chip Puzzles*, and *The Puzzler’s Mansion*, which together have been nominated for over a dozen state reading awards. He has created live puzzle events for the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament, the Connecticut Library Association, and New York City’s Museum of Mathematics, among others.

Follow Eric on Twitter: [@puzzlereric](https://twitter.com/puzzlereric)

All profits from The Social Distancing Puzzles will be donated to FEEDING AMERICA.

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/>

With thanks to Mark Halpin, Dave Shukan, Scott Weiss, Sandor Weisz, Dan Katz, Jackie Anderson, Jen McTeague, Ange Strom-Weber, and Jacob Ford.