

• 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

• P U Z Z L E S E T B •

• 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

- NASA or GIF
- From Ethiopia, say
- Hay fever, for example
- Feeling that might be inspired by a long lecture
- Goes over (as the speed limit)
- Dream up
- Not this or that one
- Irrational fears
- Narrow your eyes
- Many an early Clint Eastwood movie

• 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: PANE

1. Change the first two and last two letters to make _____.
2. Surround your word with A, E, R, and S, in some order, to make _____.
3. Change the last letter. Spell the string backwards to make _____.
4. Drop one vowel, and swap the other two vowels, to make _____.
5. Change the odd letters to make _____.
6. Turn three consecutive letters to a single U to make _____.
7. Change the middle letter. Add three letters to the front to make _____.
8. Extract three consecutive letters from the word you were given. Place the same letter before and after these letters to make _____.
9. Add three different Roman numerals—two in front and one before the end—to make _____.
10. Drop one letter and scramble what remains to make _____.

COMPLETE THE RULES WITH ONE OF THESE:

An island • A reference book • A musical instrument • Something associated with a baby •
A word that means “suspend” • An adjective related to size • A pluralized body part •
Something on a keyboard (2 words) • A word that means “possible” • An item in a travel kit

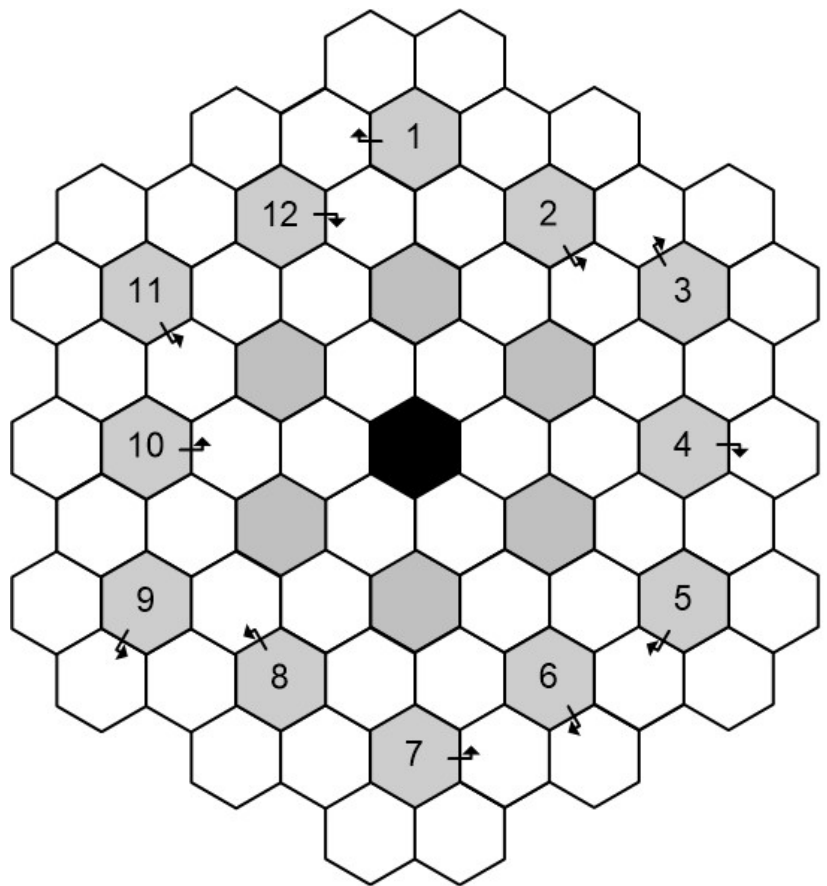
• SOUNDS GOOD TO ME •

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, say "SILL FUR WHERE WIDTH ABLE AID" out loud and 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 in the numbered hexes, beginning in the hex 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 MENSCH HAT (8 5 2 2)
- *2 WEAR HERS FOUR DEARTH HERS (5 6 7 2 3 8)
- 3 CHIRP TAN TIN HER (6 7 3 4 2 7)
- *4 CHALK ANNUM MEL HEMP HURTER (9 3 11 8 6)
- 5 KNEE HEN CHOOSE (4 6 7)
- *6 EGG HE SING YEN (12 4)
- 7 KNEE TOUGH HAKE (5 5 5 2 1 3)
- *8 FIE HESS HINT DIRK HUN (4 9 5 7, 2 words)
- 9 REEL (5 5)
- *10 KNEE LEAF OAF (6 4 4)
- 11 SYNTH SEE HIM (5 10 2)
- *12 HIT LOUSE TOUPEE WHO HOVER
(2 6 3 2 3 4 2 3 10, 2 words)

- a SIR HUSK (6 2 3 3)
- *b HONG TELLER BROKE (7 10 7)
- c GUN FAIL HINDS HARD (6 2 1 10'1 3 4)
- *d PEEP USED HAND (6 2 7 3 6)
- e SWEARS DING INNS (5 5 9 6)
- *f WON HUFF KONG (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 numbered answers to your partner’s lettered answers. If you make all the right connections, the letters not crossed out by your lines will spell out your answer, reading down.

1) COU ERS ING NGO NTI NYO URF (8 2 4 7)

2) EST IPH LAT ONE THE (3 6 6)

3) ALS IGN KES SMO (5 7)

4) EAM ICA ING MUS PPS STR (9 5 4)

5) AGE HOR NCA RAW RRI SED (5-5 8)

6) IER NCR THE TOW (3 4 5)

7) AME ARO IDC POL RAS (8 7)

8) ATC BIN GEW GNE HIN IXA NDH TFL ULU (5-8 7 3 4)

9) DTI GRI NDE NDR OKC ROR UPI (7 6 2 6)

10) ALI EAD LRE SET TUA TYH VIR (7 7 7)

• **CONNECTIONS** *page 2* •

1 •										• A
2 •										• B
3 •										• C
4 •										• D
5 •										• E
6 •										• F
7 •										• G
8 •										• H
9 •										• I
10 •										• J

Scattered letters in circles: R, T, M, G, A, U, E, R, D, H, C, I, E, L, G, N, O, Y, R, T, E.

• 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.

ROWS

Landing 1

- Gave in (to demands)
- Signs of things to come

Landing 2

- Move slowly
- False name

Landing 3

- Slow-cooked one-pot meal
- Characteristic

Landing 4

- “From this date to that date,” on some signs
- Story of your life?

Landing 5

- Sharpen, as a skill
- Burden

ZIGZAGS

- Area beyond the Pearly Gates
- Australian marsupial
- Cook’s protection
- Hank, in *Finding Dory*
- Meters, gallons, and fathoms
- Olympic event with rifles
- Requires
- Some wind instruments
- Wary

• 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

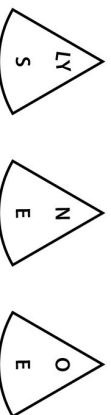
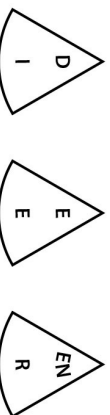
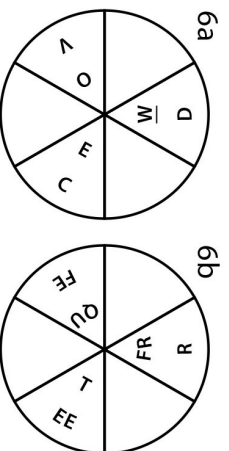
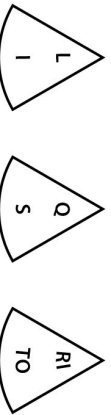
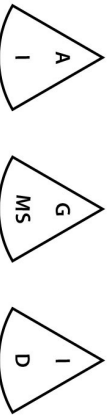
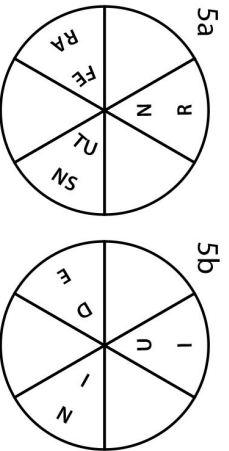
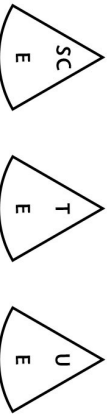
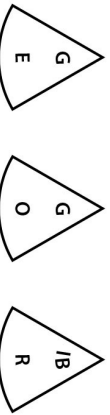
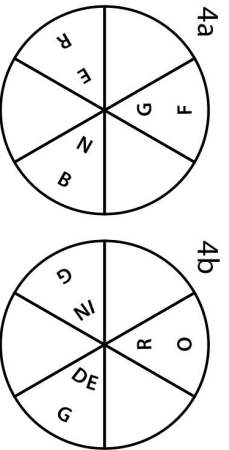
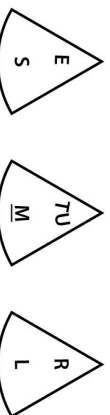
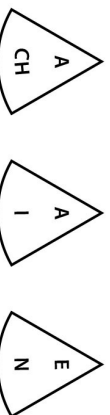
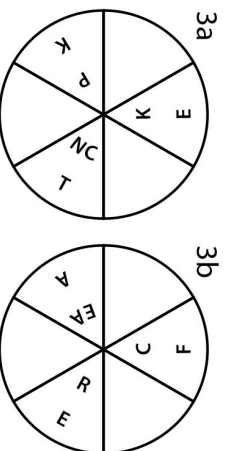
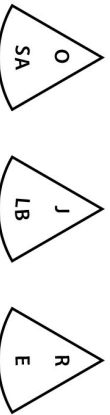
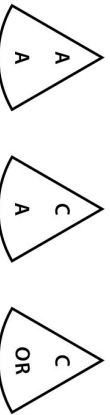
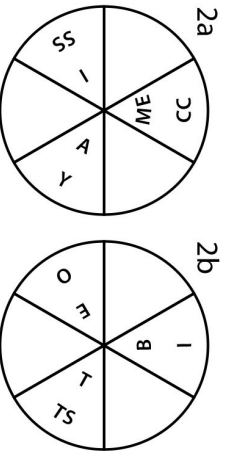
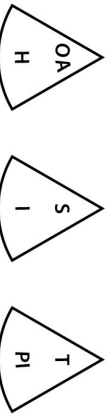
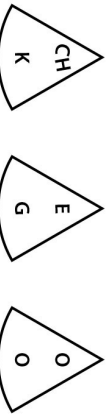
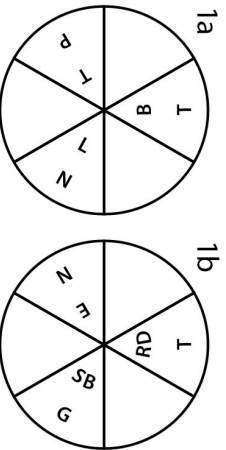


- _____CE
- _____TE
- _____THON
- B_____LLEY
- CH_____L
- CHAME_____
- CON_____TION
- DIL_____
- DRA_____
- F_____NE
- FLA_____
- KE_____NE
- L_____RD
- M_____
- M_____E
- MIN_____
- ORT_____DIC
- PAR_____ENT
- REP_____D
- S_____
- S_____ACK
- SAT_____T
- SO_____TS
- SP_____L

• 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.

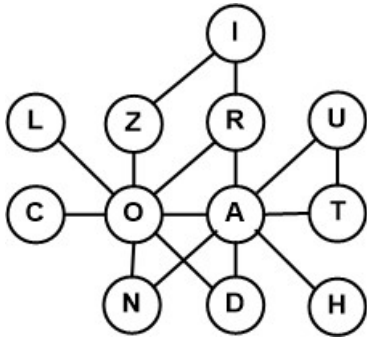


• FOUR MINUS ONE page 1 •

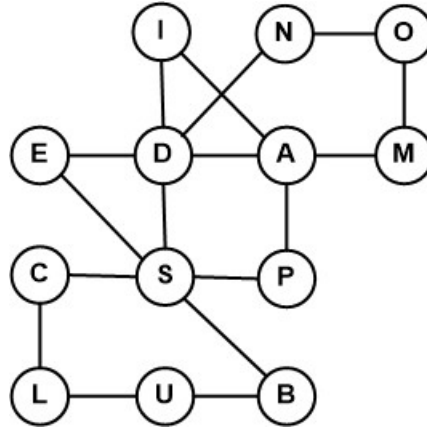
In each network of letters below, you can trace a continuous path connecting three members of a famous foursome, starting at a letter you must determine. Every path will be used at least once, and you can stand on a letter to use it two times in a row.

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.

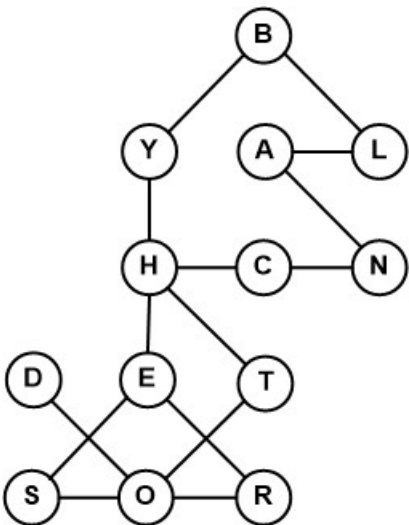
The final puzzle on the next page will require letters from both you and your partner; the missing member of this set is the answer to this puzzle.



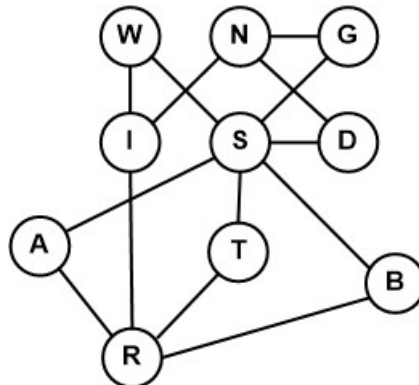
 1 2 3 4 5



 6 7 8 9 10

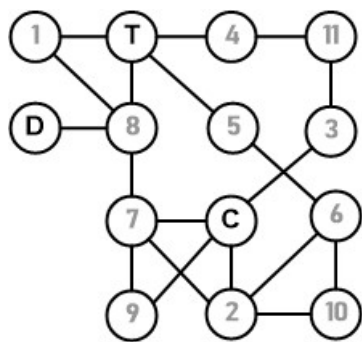


 11 12 13 14

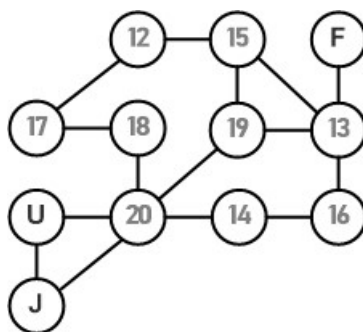


 15 16 17 18

• **FOUR MINUS ONE** page 2 •

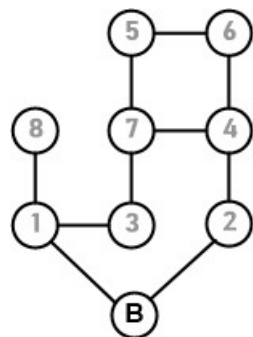


1 2 3 4 5



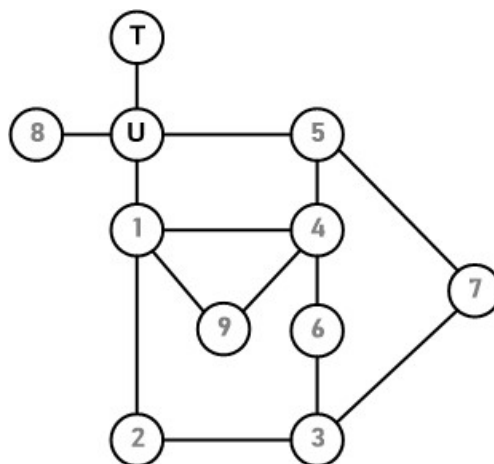
6 7 8 9

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



1 2 3 4

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.

CURSE • DREAM • HALTS • HEIST • HENCE • NATAL •
PAINE • PRIED • PROOF • TOWEL • TRIBE • SHINE •
SLING • SNOUT • STUBS

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

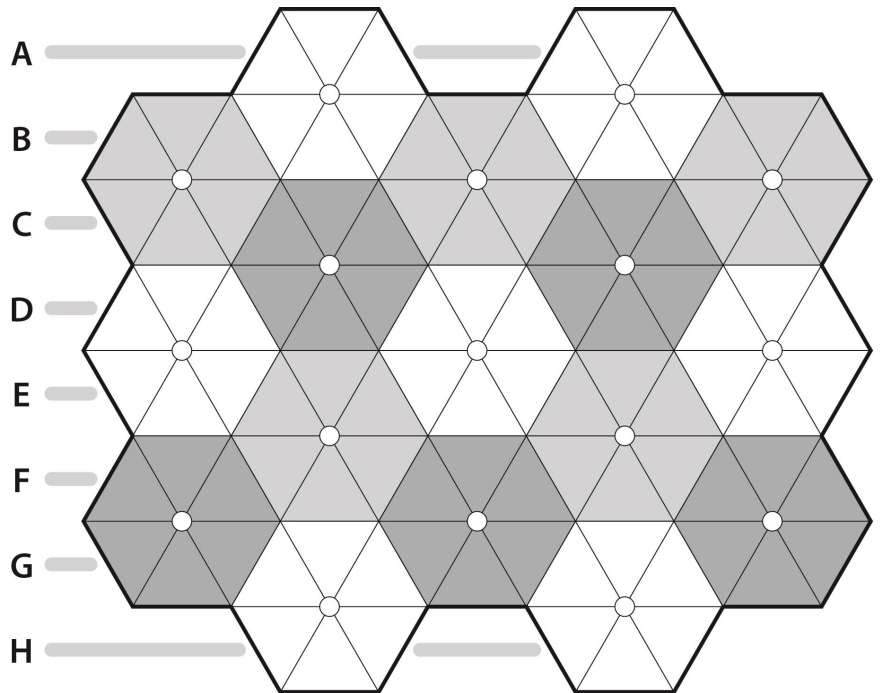
• R O W S G A R D E N •

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 Muscle-to-bone connection
- B They get out of jail early
Adopts an attitude
- C It brings up the rear (2 words)
Agreements
- D Stairway handholds
Like rude remarks
- E One who makes the grade
They're caused by overactive pigment cells
(2 words)
- F Many a science-fiction weapon
Expanded, as a bruise
- G Long throwing weapon
Some fringe decorations
- H Very small



White Blooms

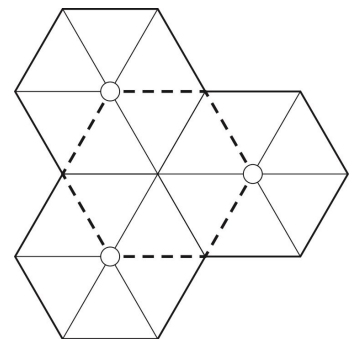
- Be a tattletale
- Big boxes
- Cooks quickly on the stovetop
- Dextrous; agile
- ___ fork
- Hat that ties under the chin
- Homer's favorite snack
- One in a bunch
- Say "Don't forget..."
- Setting
- Setting in many a Western
- Sums
- Xbox aficionados

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 _____

Allergic reaction...

...silently agrees

Bit of magic...

...to visit Napa Valley

Fasteners that hold shut...

...upper legs

Pleasant...

...using a razor

Typeface that looks like...

...who lives in the sky

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.