

## Sudoku!

By Paul Gibson

Can you solve this puzzle?

	6		1		4		5	
		8	3		5	6		
2								1
8			4		7			6
		6				3		
7			9		1			4
5								2
		7	2		6	9		
	4		5		8		7	

There is absolutely no room in my brain for any more numbers! And just in case you didn't have any more energy to count the cents in your pockets to pay the toll on your way to work... you get to spend your free time counting between 1 and 9...

That is, if you like Sudokus as much as I do, you are absolutely hooked...

The puzzle consists in "aligning" or "placing" any number between 1-9, in such way that in each row and each column, you have all the numbers from 1-9. Some of the squares already give you some of the numbers, but you have to find the correct order of the rest of them.

This is actually a lot more educational than you might think. There are very few people who know that all of our computers were based on what they call "binary codes" or "numeric codes" which go from 0-9. In fact, computers receive and interpret your commands from a keyboard using the binary system.

But today we are going to talk about the Business side of Sudoku..

When I typed the word "s-u-d-o-k-u" into my web browser, it comes up with over 38.5 million "hits." Hits are what they call "possible references" to a web page. So we can talk about a web page having several hits or one-time visits. As you can imagine, with that type of popularity there are some major money-makers behind all this... But who are they?

In the US, the authorities in that country have dubbed it with the name "Number Place," while Great Britain has kept the original name Sudoku.

The original name "Sudoku" is a combination of the English words "number" and "single." The puzzle originated in Japan, where in any given month, consumers buy 600,000 copies of Sudoku puzzle books and brain teasers.

Can you imagine the New York Times selling an email suscription (together with other crossword puzzles) to 30,000 people a year for a modest \$35 (that's roughly 30 euros) suscription... well, it's true and in case you were wondering, that's a cool \$1.05 million. And that's just one magazine... In the US, Sudoku puzzles are said to have generate \$200 million a year, and that's aside from thousands of other companies that provide their clients with "brain teasers" for free as part of their promotions.

Even here in Spain, magazines, newspapers and even booksellers are filled with thousands of Sudoku puzzles and solutions. Even this Christmas, you can buy your loved one an electronic Sudoku with an unimaginable amount of puzzles for only 29 euros. (That's more than my daily New York Time magazine!)

In the 80's we talked about "desktop publishing", in the 90's about website design, and now in the '00s we talk about blogs and sudokus. Maybe we can blog in "soduku"s... that is, if someone comes up with a "decoder ring" to send secret messages...wait a minute, we already do that with computers!

**Happy New Year!**... and don't forget to try and solve the Sudoku above and let me know how it goes!

(Portions of information are taken from statistics published in the May 19<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Economist)