

Sudoku allows students to use creativity in new ways

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Reporter

You look in the paper and it's there. You're waiting for class and someone's doing it. You go to the store and there's a book full of it.

It's Sudoku. This puzzle game, which appeared almost overnight three years ago, continues to gain fans. Although still a new phenomenon, Sudoku has actually existed for more than 1,000 years.

The game went through a couple hands throughout the years. According to www.chinaconnection.com, the Romans, Arabs and Swiss all had a version of it before the United States reinvented it in 1980. The game didn't catch on in the States until Wayne Gould, a New Zealander, wrote a computer program that generated Sudoku puzzles at several levels of difficulty. He then sold them to newspapers in the U.S. and Great Britain, allowing the game to suddenly take off.

Many people find Sudoku a nice alternative to the crossword puzzle.

"I actually see it as more of a challenge than traditional crossword puzzles because if you make a mistake it's almost impossible

to fix," freshman Kirsten Yarwood said. "With crosswords you can just go back to that word and change it."

However, junior Hillary Stoker likes Sudoku for a different reason. "I like Sudoku better than regular crossword puzzles because it doesn't use words. It's simple numbers and I like that."

For those who have never played the game before, Sudoku consists of one large box divided into nine even squares. Each of the squares is then divided into nine smaller squares.

The point of the game is to include the numbers one through nine in each of the larger squares. What makes the game difficult is that each vertical and horizontal row must also include those same numbers.

To start off, some numbers are already filled in, so working around those fixed numbers can be challenging. Depending on the difficulty, Sudoku forces you to use patience and logic.

Sudoku's popularity spans not just newspapers or magazines, but also online. You can download the puzzle from the Internet as a Widget (for you Mac users) and on to cell phones. There's even a card game ver-

sion involving several players. Online tournaments allow people around the world battle to complete a given puzzle in the shortest amount of time.

Freshman Danielle Rounds downloaded Sudoku on her phone and likes to play it when she's "sitting around waiting for something or trying to pass the time." She added, "I feel like I'm challenging myself."

Sudoku is even more popular in Japan than in the U.S., hence, the Japanese name "Sudoku." In English, the name means "solitary number" or "count only one number" referring to the instructions of the game. Another name variation for Sudoku is "Number Place," and is often referred to as "the new Rubix Cube."

Even if you're intimidated by math, these are just small numbers and you don't even have to do simple addition or subtraction to play Sudoku. And if you're already into the game, you won't run out of puzzles any time in the future because there are 6,670,903,752,021,072,936,960 possible variations. So go enjoy!

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Sudoku is...

- A logic-based placement puzzle
- Japanese- The term "Sudoku" is defined as "the digits must occur only once"
- Also referred to as "Number Place" and "the new Rubix Cube"

Try a game of
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(includes easy-hard levels)
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