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The History of Sudoku

By Andy Hope

Hailed as the Rubik's Cube of the 21st century, Sudoku is the current rage among number puzzles.

It may sound surreal but at an age where bubblegum pop music has successfully reinvented itself as punk rock through the likes of Avril Lavigne and Simple Plan, a puzzle and a number puzzle at that is able to establish itself as a global phenomenon. Sudoku, which is sometimes spelled as Su Doku, is pronounced as soo-doe-koo. It is an abbreviation of the Japanese phrase *suuji wa dokushin ni kagiru* which means the digits must remain single. Most people are under the wrong impression that sudoku is of Japanese origin when the only thing Japanese about sudoku is the word sudoku.

Nikoli Publishing House Nikoli is the publisher of the leading Japanese puzzle publication Monthly Nikolist. The think tanks of Nikoli noticed an interesting number puzzle called The Number Place published by their American counterparts, Dell Puzzle Magazines. Sudoku made its debut on the pages of Monthly Nikolist in April of the year 1984. It was initially christened *Suuji wa dokushin ni kagiru* by Kaji Maki, Nikoli's incumbent president at that time. The maiden issue of Sudoku enjoyed modest success. Its success is due in large part to the fact that the Japanese people are inherently puzzle-crazy.

It was not until two significant developments occurred that the puzzle began to really catch fire. First, the name *suuji wa dokushin ni kagiru* was shortened to sudoku which was easier to remember and to market. Second, Nikoli modified the game by introducing two new rules in 1986: the digits of are to be arranged symmetrically; and the given numbers are not to exceed 30 digits. As of today, there are at least five publishing companies that print monthly magazines solely devoted to the game in Japan. Sudoku is, for all intents and purposes, a brand name; it is not the generic name of the game. It is a lawfully registered mark of the Nikoli Company in Japan. This means that the other publishers of the game in Japan are legally obligated to provide their own brand names for their versions of the popular number puzzle.

Made in Manhattan According to urban legends, sudoku was created by a team of puzzle creators from New York. Another version of the story credits a certain Howard Gerns, a retired architect and puzzle enthusiast, as the true father of the modern sudoku. Although the legends conflict and give credit to different inventors, they coincide on two important details:

The History of Sudoku

Sudoku was first published in 1979 by Dell Puzzle Magazines under the title The Number Place; and Gerns and the team of puzzle creators were both inspired by the Latin Square of Leonhard Euler. Sudoku: The Old Testament Leonhard Euler, a Swiss mathematician, presented a paper entitled De Quadratis Magicis before the St. Petersburg Academy in 1776. Euler demonstrated that a magic square can be created through the use of 9, 16, 25 or 36 cells. He imposed conditions on the value of his number variables to bring about the creation of his magic square. His magic square evolved into the Latin square in his later papers.

The versions of Gerns and the team of puzzlers differ from Euler in two ways: First, Euler's Latin square does not have a regional restriction; and Second, Euler neither created nor did he intend to create a puzzle. On the other hand, Gerns and the team saw the potential of a hit puzzle in Euler's works and proceeded to create the grandfather of modern day sudoku with this specific frame of mind. No Fool's Gould Wayne Gould, a retired judge based in Hong Kong, chanced upon a sudoku puzzle in a Tokyo bookstore in 1997; Gould could not help but gravitate towards the blank squares of the puzzle.

He felt compelled to create a digital version of the puzzle and worked on the sudoku computer program from 1997 to 2003.

In 2004, he found himself pitching an unknown puzzle called Su Doku to The Times of Britain. The results were overwhelming; within a few days, other newspapers began printing their own versions of the game. The popularity of the game snowballed and spilled over to Australia and New Zealand. By 2005, it had earned the moniker the fastest growing puzzle in the world. What Goes Around, Comes Around American newspapers caught wind of the sensation created by sudoku in Britain and the rest of the world, and found themselves jumping on the sudoku bandwagon. The New York Post published its own version of sudoku in April of 2005; this marked the homecoming and belated public acceptance of a New York native who went unnoticed in its own backyard since its birth for more than 20 years.

Within a few days sudoku made its presence felt throughout the country when major dailies such as USA Today and The Daily News began replacing their usual crosswords with the number game. The appeal of modern sudoku appears to be infinite and without boundaries. As a number puzzle, it does not make use of letters from any particular language; thus easily dispensing with the language barrier factor. Publications numbering in hundreds of thousands, from magazines to newspapers and digests, solely devoted to the game are testaments to the puzzle's popularity and profitability. The numerous websites that offer digital versions of the game, for free or for fee, guarantees the game's continuous development and improvement; it also provides a platform most accessible to the younger population.

Sudoku has even gone mobile as companies race to create sudoku games specifically for mobile phone users. Sudoku is a game of logic that challenges the young and old alike. In fact, studies on the mental benefits of regularly playing sudoku have been conducted; and the results have been positive so far. From the fastest growing puzzle in the world, sudoku has evolved into the most contagious puzzle virus the world has seen in years. Go and play sudoku.

This article was written by Andy Hope of SudokuPuzz.com that offers online

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Sudoku - Mind Games At Their Best?

By Gabriel Adams

Sudoku is a logic based puzzle, somewhat similar to a crossword puzzle, except it uses digits instead of words. The name Sudoku is an abbreviation of a Japanese phrase which means "the digits must remain single". It is also sometimes called Number Place or Nampure.

The history of Sudoku

You can find predecessors of Sudoku as early as 1895, when an early version or variant of Sudoku appeared in a French newspaper.

The game now known as Sudoku was not invented until 1979, however, and was actually invented in Indianapolis, not Japan. Sudoku became widely popular in 1986, when the Japanese puzzle publisher Nikoli found and published the puzzle.

The game of Sudoku

Sudoku is based on a graph of squares, nine squares by nine squares. This graph is sub-divided into 9 3x3 squares or regions. The board looks much like 9 tic tac toe games all together.

The game is played by placing digits (1–9) in the squares on the game. Easy enough. The tough part is that each region (3x3 square, each diagonal row, each horizontal row, and each vertical row of squares must contain one of each of the nine digits, but may not have duplicates.

Each Sudoku game has some of the fields pre populated with numerals, called givens or clues. The difficulty is not necessarily related to how many fields are populated, though.

Difficulty

Sudoku is a very simple game in it's construction, but it can require some serious brain effort and skill to solve. Publishers often rank games according to difficulty, using 4–5 levels to organize games by their difficulty.

Accessibility

Sudoku puzzles are published in many newspapers and magazines around the world. They are also available in print form, and as computer games. Probably the easiest way to get them, though, is from a website that features free Sudoku puzzles. Many websites can also generate custom puzzles for free.

Visit

<http://www.sudoku-puzzles.net>

for free sudoku games and more.



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