

# The Next Sudoku?

Part jigsaw puzzle, part math test, KenKen began as a game for 8-year-olds, but adults are horning in

BY M.J. STEPHEY

WILL SHORTZ IS TO PUZZLES what Oprah is to books—an endorsement by the New York Times crossword editor is as good as gold. He helped popularize Sudoku in the U.S. and has sold more than 5 million volumes of the number-sequencing game. Now he's moved on to another numerical brainteaser, KenKen, which boasts something Sudoku does not: actual math. The game was invented by a teacher in Tokyo to help kids learn arithmetic; *kenken* means “cleverness squared” in Japanese.

“I’m a pretty busy guy, and I don’t solve many puzzle books anymore, certainly not from start to finish,” Shortz says of his becoming addicted to KenKen a year and a half ago. “I just loved it.” He persuaded his newspaper to start publishing the game last month and just held KenKen’s first U.S. competition at the annual American Crossword Puzzle tournament, in New York City, which drew more than 900 people from around the world—including KenKen’s creator, Tetsuya Miyamoto.

So far, the reception has been good, though not Sudoku-mania good. (Then again, Sudoku wasn’t an instant hit either; an Indiana architect devised the game in the 1970s, but it languished for decades under the unfortunate name Number Place.) Only five years old, KenKen already appears in the *Times* of London and *Le Figaro* in Paris, and it’s coming soon to an iPhone near you.

If nothing else, the name KenKen has been well received. It even inspired NYU professor Amanda Yesnowitz to pen a parody of Cole Porter’s “Can-Can,” which she debuted at the tournament: “If a lad called

**From start ...**

24X			4+
4X	1	7+	
			2÷
3	3-		

**... to finish**

24X 4	3	2	4+ 1
4X 2	1 1	7+ <del>7</del> 4	3
1	2	4/3	2÷ 7/4
3 3	3- 4	1	4 <sup>2</sup>

Jennings, Ken, can ... If John Glenn, in his den, now and then can ... Can Obama? Yes, he KenKen!” Afterward, the president of Nextoy, which owns the puzzle’s rights outside Japan, approached her about posting the song on his

company’s website, but she was too distracted by a nearby conversation, gasping, “Did Will just say my name?” ■

1+1 KenKen creator Miyamoto with Shortz

**THE RULES**

**A** As in Sudoku, the object is to fill in the grid with digits in such a way that no digit is repeated in any row or column

**B** Because the puzzle to the left is a 4-by-4 grid, only the digits 1-4 should be used; 5-by-5 grids use 1-5; 9-by-9 grids use 1-9

**C** Treat each heavily outlined set of boxes (called a cage) as an equation. Work backward to figure out which digits can be combined to reach the target number in the top left corner using the mathematical operation provided. (Example: “24X” is short for “Which numbers, when multiplied, equal 24?”)

**D** In cages that consist of a single square, simply enter the target number. (This grid’s “freebies” are the “1” and “3” cages)



**Still Confused?**

For a video tutorial and more puzzles, go to [time.com/kenken](http://time.com/kenken)



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