

How to Host a Puzzle Swap

What is a puzzle swap?

A puzzle swap is an in-person gathering where people bring puzzles to trade with others.

Rules

Rules may vary but it helps to have some guidelines to start with.

For example:

trade for a puzzle of similar quality brand and/or piece count.

Disclose if any pieces are known to be missing OR if you bought used and have not completed it yourself

Make sure pieces are enclosed in a bag or box is taped shut so you don't have loose pieces everywhere.

How to start your own

The first thing is to find people who want to attend the event! I suggest using social media for this: Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, etc. there are many groups on Facebook for puzzlers, so you could post there, post to local puzzle groups, Buy/Sell/Trade groups, and browse Facebook marketplace local listing and invite those sellers.

Next, you need a location. The simplest option is a large parking lot at a location such as a mall. You would need to be very clear on the location, such as near which store, or cross streets. An aerial view with the meeting point circled is helpful. Other options, especially if weather does not permit, could include a library, church or community center.

Setup:

If you are meeting in a parking lot, you can have people bring a folding table or blanket to lay out their puzzles, or they can show them out of the trunk of their vehicle. If you are using an indoor location, you could use just tables or floor.

Typically, people will walk around, see a puzzle they like, and then look for the puzzle's owner to arrange a swap.

Things you may need

Name tags and pens

-if setting up in/at vehicle, suggest including vehicle description on name tag

Tables

Boxes

Tape

Resealable bags

Tarp

Things to Consider

You can collect puzzles for free/donation as well

- My group has someone who kindly manages this stash. She brings them home and posts to the group which are available, which is nice for people who were not able to come in person. They can then meet up/pick up.
- Or just bring them all for donation at senior center or thrift store

As the group gets bigger, 1:1 swaps are harder to manage. One swap has members put an adhesive note with their own name on the puzzles they brought. It can be good to know where you got the puzzle, in case there are missing pieces - for accountability and/or in case the piece is found.

People may want to socialize after

Some enthusiastic participants will want to arrive early and start trading early. Consider a rule that no trades can occur before the stated start time

Name tags, as mentioned above, are helpful for the community to get to know each other, and to facilitate swaps. One attendee posts a sign by her car with her name on it and also wears a large sign on the back of her shirt with her name and vehicle description.

It is very difficult to maintain accountability when it comes to missing pieces, another challenge as the group grows. One option is to have swappers pre-label the puzzles they bring with their name and specify “complete” or “missing x” or “not completed by me”, so people can have appropriate expectations. Some people don’t mind doing a puzzle that’s missing a piece or 2, if it is disclosed up front, and especially appreciate notating where the missing piece belongs in the picture.

This photo is a swap where about 35 different vehicles attended



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