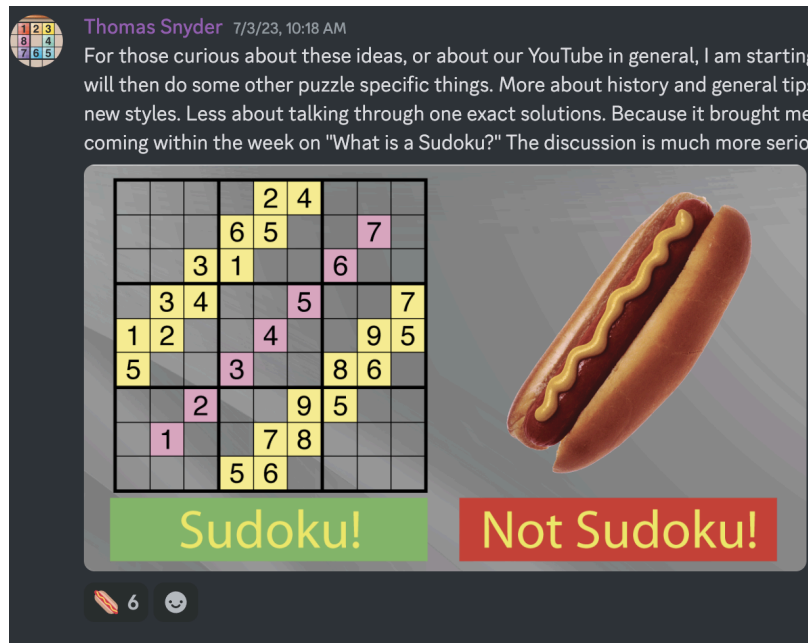


The Twelve Days of Sudoku 6th Day of Lessons and Puzzles



Ceci n'est pas un hot-dog

Author's Note:

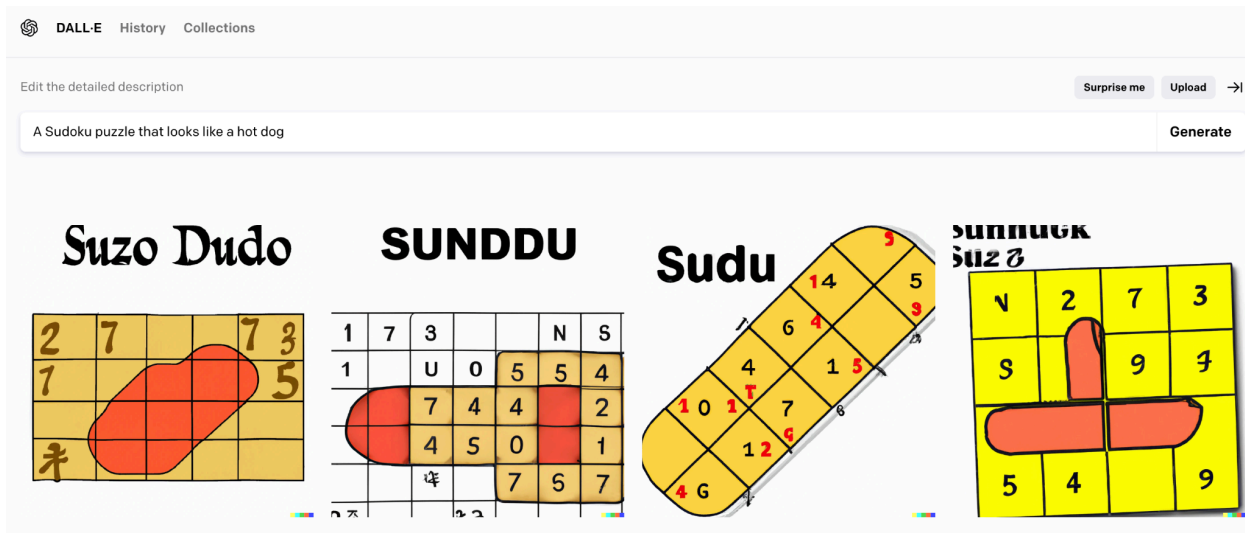
While my puzzles almost always have a clear visual appearance, like today's puzzle that is trying to not make you think somehow it is not a hot dog, my philosophy is a bit different. Whether reading mythology or playing games involving mythology, I assert that ***the nature of a thing is more important than the form of a thing.***

So what is a sudoku? Is this an easy question to answer? The World Puzzle Federation (via Tom Collyer report) still can't agree on where exactly the lines are between sudoku, variations, and other puzzles, or on what puzzles should / should not be in a competition. It may even be the wrong question.

What is a sudoku **puzzle** is probably a better one, as it then forces separate discussion on the mathematical concept of an eighty-one cell group, each three-way constrained by identity, that grows out of Latin Squares with the region constraint, from the journey as a human to reach that point through a test of mindpower not guesswork. Sudoku-ness alone is having all three of those constraints to specify a unique complete group, and three is a perfect number of constraints, no more no less.

So how to answer for the purpose of a puzzle construction? For some, a puzzle is an activity you just do for enjoyment and it can be like games or other things that may technically be “repetitive” but still have something for you to enjoy while getting to the very last square each time. The Rubik’s Cube is a great challenging puzzle for a few times until it becomes an activity. Speed-running can still be interesting then, and mathematical explorations of God’s number, and finding ways to cheat like filming a foot solution backwards only to have the community practice doing foot solving forwards because humanity can break the world of cheating through its creativity. One of my old activities, that I even did to stay sharp between Sudoku playoff puzzles long ago, are word searches particularly if they have some gimmick to them. They work my visual cortex to scan in multiple directions. But I don’t “puzzle” with them. They don’t surprise me and awaken my brain to new creativity. Puzzles often have Aha moments. Puzzle hunts have instructionless puzzles that may only ever work once but this is that idea’s chance. Forever puzzles are fewer and farther between. Maybe sudoku is just a 10-15 heuristic puzzle and we only need 10-15 sudoku and can move onto other puzzles because the Aha moments are gone. Maybe we just aren’t trying different things with the medium. I believe I’ve written at least 100 sudoku in my life that I wouldn’t substitute for anything else in capturing a unique experience. And I’ve written at least 10 puzzles that look like sudoku or other things and absolutely aren’t and are just as special.

Are logical surprises the only surprises that can be in store with a puzzle? I wanted to do something absolutely ludicrous today because laughter helps when I feel this alone with no audience following along anymore and commenting with ideas to inspire. The idea was to ask one of OpenAI’s tools to show me a sudoku puzzle. I probably used the wrong tool and a too basic prompt, but to make my request a little spicy – because I know image AI can distinguish hot dogs from not hot dogs – I asked for “A Sudoku puzzle that looks like a hot dog”.



If I were an alien with no knowledge of a sudoku but some knowledge of a hotdog, my best guess is that the model really knows that hotdogs are red surrounded by yellow or brown and usually oval. But the rest must be whatever a Sudoku is. I'm not familiar with these particular demarcated boxes, characters, or large words. Sudoku might be a very hard word to spell but it always starts with Su and has a lot of O's and U's. It contains some numbers and letters (sometimes non-arabic/non-latin and possibly Asian). There is absolutely nothing obvious about how the digits/letters are filled in yet, certainly nothing about repetition or specific ones from 1-9 or other ranges. Although the little tiny numbers in red might be someone in the middle of solving a su* something eating a hotdog. Are the numbers the ketchup? Next time I might try asking for a "Su Doku puzzle" in the prompt instead. But perhaps the Suzo Dudo means the AI got that novelty by pappocom in its hallucinations already. The Suzo Dudo is really nice with a Japanese-like symbol in the lower left to go with the six numbers in twenty boxes, showing the origin story while taking the puzzle in some exciting new directions. I like it better than the SUNDDU SUDU pair which is the most puzzling combination of ideas for the week with numbers and letters while the Sunnuck Suz(?) just keeps me wanting to see more as it is not technically incorrect yet but stuff is cut off the screen.

Of course I made a puzzle that does look like a hot dog, that has a thematic geometry with a fairly easy interior to fill (except for very low and very high number pairs) because the top bun are all small values and the bottom bun are all large values and there is no eight/nine in the dog so you work harder for that. And it is more interesting because the AI result, and this planned YouTube video image, bring an instant smile to my face even if you shouldn't laugh too much at your own jokes. A good sudoku puzzle can also be a joke.

If a {knowledge bomb/Snyder joke} {explodes/is told} in a forest and no one is around to leave a simple Google comment by {clicking/tapping/talking to Siri/Alexa}, does it make a sound?

All joking aside, I've always wondered how the film "A Christmas Story" might differ if it weren't about a young boy obsessed with getting a gun as a gift. Like what if it still had a protagonist who was interested in games and codes and whatever was being advertised to them, who watched out for younger siblings from bigger bullies and wanted to impress their teachers to get that magic gift. And when they showed up to retail store and tried to share their gift idea with Kris Kringle they still lost their ability to talk but "football" wasn't a relevant metaphorical symbol. What would Claus offer? A key part of the answer will come after the Twelve Days, but you'll first need to know the first half of it to proceed.

— — — —
— — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
—
—
—
—
—
—
—
—
— —

9, 12

1, 4

8, 9

2, 10

4, 2

6, 1

10, 5

11, 2

5, 8

12, 7

7, 2

3, 12