

WORD SUDOKU

ANIL

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Sudoku, a fairly new type of puzzle from Japan, has very recently become popular worldwide. It involves placing the digits 1-9 into a 9x9 grid which is divided into nine 3x3 squares such as those below. Enough numbers are placed in the grid as clues to enable the puzzler to solve it. The object is to make all nine rows, all nine columns and all nine 3x3 squares each contain all nine digits. This means that no row, column or 3x3 square can have more than one of each digit.

Here I have adapted the same idea and rules to a word puzzle based on nine letters rather than numbers. I give fewer starting letters than in the number version because of the added constraint that every fully blank triplet (across and down) holds a three-letter word and a few of these are given as additional clues. The first puzzle is the easier one because the positioning in the grid of three of the clue words is unambiguous. The second puzzle is harder, even though more letters *and* clue words are given, because it is not immediately clear where any of the clue words goes. Both are solvable with fewer clues than given here but with much greater difficulty.

All the blank triplet words are listed in *Chambers Official Scrabble Words* (1999). You shouldn't need that book to solve the puzzles, but it might help. A few additional words listed in Webster's Third NI Dictionary 1987 are present but not in the fully blank triplets. However, they along with a few inferred plurals are included in the total word count given with each puzzle. Since I couldn't make words of all 54 triplets (27 across and 27 down), the majority of triplets containing the starting clue letters are not words. Both puzzles have unique solutions, given the clue words.

#1. **AEILNOPST** (25 words) clue words: ELS NOS OIL TAP

N		I					T	
	T		E					L
					I	P		
		P					E	
					P			S
I				L		O		
	A							N
		O			L			
				S		A		

#2. ADEINORST (28 words) clue words: DEN IDE RAT RID TON

A								
	I	T						
				I	A	R		
		S				I		
	N							E
	D		I		O		T	
		O		D	E		N	
		N	S		R		A	
			O					

Challenge: Being “computer challenged” myself, I challenge computer-savvy readers with enlarged word lists to construct such a grid in which *all* 54 trigrams are words, or as near 54 as possible. Like a spaceless crossword puzzle. (The above two only have words as 46% and 52% of their trigrams.) Use any nine letters and use proper names if necessary. Or do it without a computer if you can!