WELCOME TO ANA-LINKS PUZZLES

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What are Ana-Links puzzles?

Ana-Links are a new kind of puzzle, invented by designer Pavel Curtis (aka Lambda), that combines aspects of jigsaws, wordplay, and mechanical puzzles in a unified, multi-stage solving experience.

How do they work?

Every Ana-Links puzzle consists of a set of large, plastic, jigsaw-like pieces, typically with five to eight pieces per puzzle. Each piece has one 'outie' jigsaw tab and one 'innie' jigsaw socket; this makes it possible to assemble the pieces into a single, continuous loop where every piece's outie has been fitted into some other piece's innie. This assembly is made a bit more difficult, though, by the fact that all of the innies and outies have exactly the same shape, so that almost every outie will fit nicely into all of the other innies! There's only *one* way, though, to put all of the pieces together in a complete loop.

To solve an Ana-Links puzzle, you need to collect three separate clues:

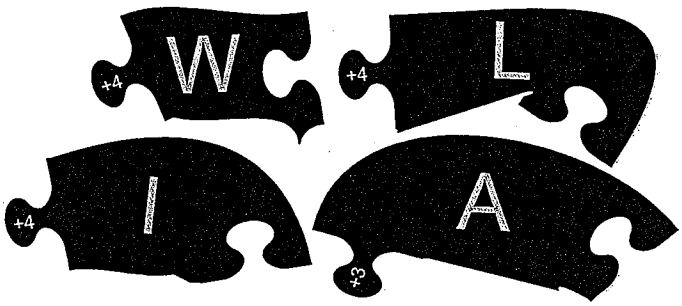
- First, notice that each puzzle piece has a large letter etched onto it. For your first clue, you must arrange those letters to make a single word. We call this the *anagram clue.*
- Second, assemble the pieces into a single, complete loop, as described earlier. When you've done that, the edges of the pieces on the inside of the loop will form the outline of a picture, a silhouette of some familiar shape. We call this the *picture clue.* We forewarned, though: sometimes it can take some noodling to figure out just what the picture represents, since you won't have any information about which way is up!
- Third, now that you've assembled the pieces into a loop, notice that each letter is followed, reading clockwise around the loop, by a little bit of arithmetic, like "+7" or "−5". Shift each letter forward or backward in the alphabet as indicated by the arithmetic. For example, if the letter "A" was followed by "+3", that would yield the new letter "D", and if "B" was followed by "−7", that would lead to "U". Reading these new letters in clockwise order around the loop (you'll have to work out the starting point) will reveal one more word or phrase. We call this the *shifted clue.*

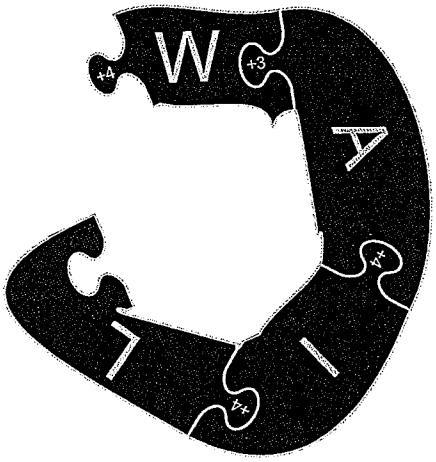
Now that you have all three clues, you're ready to find the answer to the puzzle! One of your three clues (it could be any of the anagram clue, the picture clue, or the shifted clue) will be the *category* that the answer fits into (like "movies" or "country" or "flower"). The other two clues will work together, using a little wordplay, to indicate the answer in that category. You might use *synonyms* of the clue (like in a crossword puzzle), or words that just *sound like* the clue, or possibly other kinds of wordplay. Then put both clues together in one order or the other to point you at the answer.

Look at the next page for a fully worked-out example puzzle!

An Ana-Links Puzzle Example

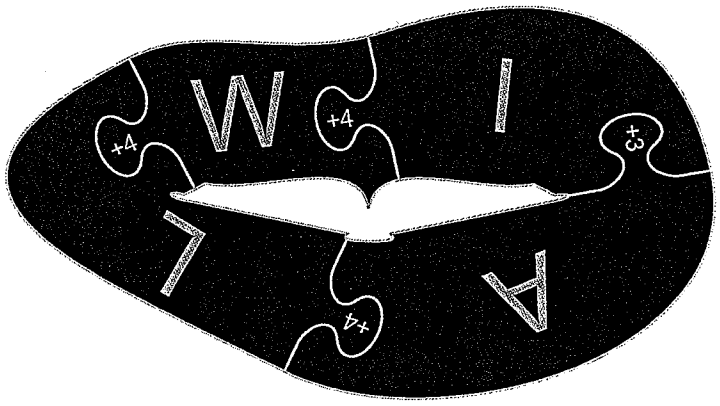
The four pieces at right make up our example Ana-Links puzzle. To find the first of our three clues, we need to rearrange the letters on the pieces to spell a single word. In this case, since there are only four letters, that's not too hard: they spell "**WAIL**".





For our other two clues, we need to put these pieces together in a single, continuous loop. In general, every piece will fit plausibly with every other piece, but most ways won't make a complete loop. At left, we've tried putting them together in the order of the word we found in the first clue. One thing you can count on, though, is that *that* trick will never work: the pieces never make the loop in the order of the anagram clue. We wouldn't want to make the puzzle too *easy*, would we? Of course not!

After a little bit of fiddling around with the pieces, though, the correct assembly emerges, as shown below:



Now we look at the silhouette formed in the space *inside* the loop; what *is* that a picture of? Could it be a moustache, or perhaps a bird? Ah, no, now we can see it: it's an open **BOOK**! That's our second clue.

For the third clue, we shift each letter forward or backward in the alphabet as indicated by the bit of arithmetic after it, clockwise around the loop. So 'L+4' is (M, N, O, ...) '**P**', 'W+4' is (X, Y, Z, and wrap around to ...) '**A**', 'I+3' is '**L**', and 'A+4' is '**E**'. Altogether, that spells "**PALE**"!

One of these clues is the *category* our answer fits in; "BOOK" appears the likeliest. We use wordplay on the other two clues: "PALE" could mean "WHITE", and "WAIL" sounds like "WHALE", giving us "WHITE WHALE", a clear indication of the well-known book, "**MOBY DICK**"!

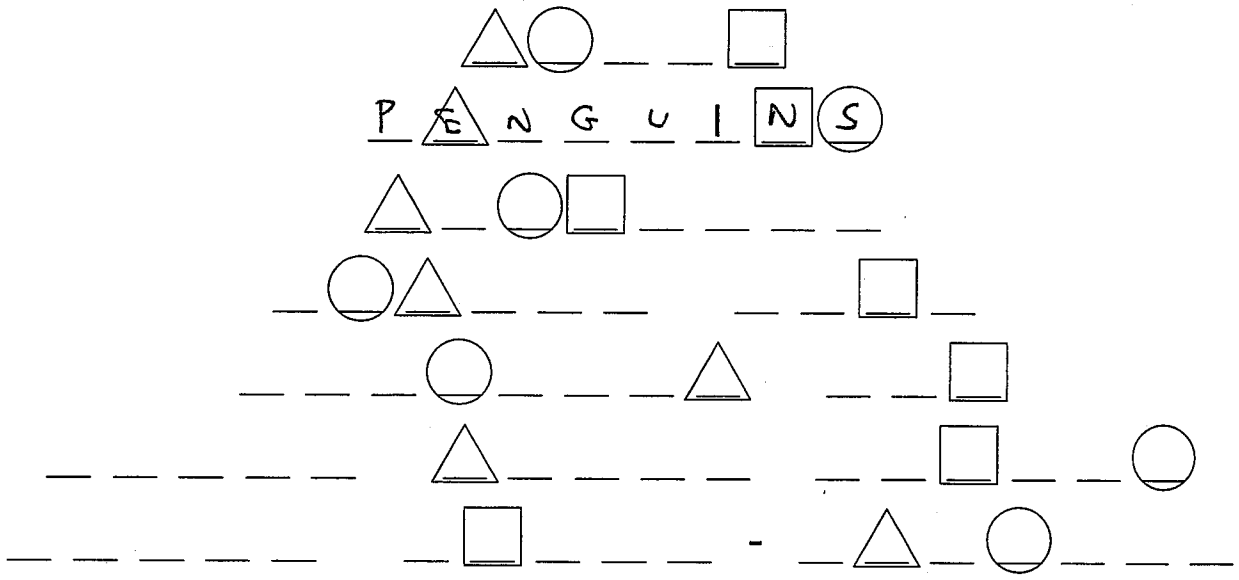
MaineCon Ana-Links Challenge

By Lambda

Somewhere near where you picked up this handout, you should find a box containing various Ana-Links puzzles; Lambda brought two identical copies of each of seven puzzles. Working in teams of two to four people, solve all seven puzzles and enter each answer on one of the following lines of blanks. It's up to you to figure out which answer goes on each line.

There should also be a 'Welcome to Ana-Links Puzzles' pamphlet nearby. Make sure you pick up a copy of that if you've never solved an Ana-Links puzzle before; it could prove helpful.

As soon as you know the final answer, write your noms on this page and give it to Lambda. Right after the Sunday wrap-up session, he'll be awarding prizes to two randomly selected teams of successful solvers.



Anagrams:

○ : _ _ _ _ _ _ _

□ : _ _ _ _ _ _ _

△ : _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Final Answer:

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _