

Audioscript

Interviewer: Hi, Charlie! In case there's anyone listening who doesn't know what Sudoku is, can you just try to explain it very simply, please?

Charlie: Sure. It's a bit like a crossword puzzle but with numbers not words. You have to fill the numbers one to nine in a square grid. Each vertical and horizontal line has to include the numbers one to nine once each. To make it easier, some of the numbers are filled in for you and you have to work out what the rest are.

Interviewer: OK, enough, enough. I'm already confused. What I really want to ask you is this. What on earth do you see in Sudoku? I mean, I know it's a craze that's been sweeping the country — probably the world - in the last two or three years, but all you have to do is fill in squares with numbers. And when you've finished, you do another one. What makes it so enjoyable?

Charlie: Well, for a start I should tell you that you don't have to be good at Maths to enjoy Sudoku - I was always useless at Maths when I was at school. As far as why I enjoy it goes, that's a difficult question. You may understand it better if I tell you when and where I usually do it. The thing is on my way to and from work I spend quite a lot of my time on trains — and to me that's dead time — the perfect time for Sudoku. The time just flies by.

Interviewer: OK, I realise that being on a train can be boring, but surely there are other things you could do, like reading a book or a newspaper or chatting to other passengers?

Charlie: No — reading and chatting take too much effort. I mean you have to concentrate on Sudoku but you don't have to think deeply - and that means you can switch your brain off and relax. I suppose it's a kind of therapy which helps to keep me sane.

Interviewer: Have you always enjoyed doing puzzles?

Charlie: No, not at all. I've never really been interested in puzzles of any kind. When Sudoku came on the scene, I just couldn't see the point of it. More and more people I

knew started doing it. It was in all the newspapers and magazines and on the Internet - you just couldn't get away from it. I assumed I wouldn't be able to do it because it's all numbers. I resisted it for as long as I could, but then one of my friends, who was completely obsessed with it, persuaded me to try it. And that was it — two games later I was addicted to it.

Interviewer: And is it something you can get better at?

Charlie: Yes, of course. When I started, even the simplest puzzle would take me 20 minutes or more. Now I can do the really difficult ones in about ten minutes.

Interviewer: But doesn't it worry you that it's such an anti-social hobby? You're sort of locked up in your own little world, aren't you? Cynics might say it was a way for anti-social people to make sure they never had to bother communicating.

Charlie: There is a danger of that, I suppose, but it doesn't have to be a solitary occupation. My boyfriend and I play it together sometimes.

Interviewer: You mean you work on the same puzzle at the same time?

Charlie: Yes, we have done that, but now we have little competitions where we see which of us can finish a puzzle first. And we've done it with larger groups of people as well. We've even been to a Sudoku party!

Interviewer: Sounds terrible. Anyway, Charlie thanks. I've really enjoyed meeting you and discovering some of the mysteries of Sudoku. I'm afraid you haven't convinced me to try it, but I think I understand now why some people are so keen on it. Thanks.