

Neat-freak’s girlfriend sweeps suggestions aside

DEAR ABBY: Is nitpicking a poor trait to have? I see it as a positive thing as long as matters are brought up in a helpful way. If you want a healthy relationship with the person you live with, isn't it best to tell her what you think should be done and how?

Two examples: My girlfriend likes to take her socks off when she's lying on the couch. She rolls them off her feet with the opposite foot and they sometimes end up in the corner of the couch, but most of the time on the floor. Also, dishes never get rinsed off, washed or put away on time. The sock thing is gross, and the dishes end up stinking or the food gets stuck on them. Also, the dishes sit in the strainer, not the cupboard.

My girlfriend thinks I go overboard and bombard her with these suggestions. I'd like to know how you and your readers feel about nitpicking. — **LIKES THINGS NEAT IN LOUISVILLE**

DEAR LIKES THINGS NEAT: I find it interesting that you used the term “nitpicking.” Is that what your girlfriend calls it when you tell her she's doing something that bothers you? Nitpicking encompasses more than asking someone to pick up her socks or not leave the dishes in the sink or on the counter. (If she washes them, shouldn't YOU put them into the cupboard?)

There are few things that



DEAR ABBY

a neatnik finds more upsetting than living with someone who is disorganized. You and your girlfriend appear to have some very basic differences. If you're planning to make this romance a lifelong commitment, I'm warning both of you in advance that you can't change another person. Got it?

DEAR ABBY: I've been doing my mother-in-law's hair for the last seven years. I became very busy with clients and had her double-booked in between clients because she wasn't a paying customer. She felt “shuffled around” and decided to text me, telling me she will go to another hairdresser.

I'm hurt and don't understand why she wouldn't communicate this to me directly so we could have worked something out. What's the best way to handle this? — **HAIRDRESSER IN CALIFORNIA**

DEAR HAIRDRESSER: Talk with her directly. Tell her you received her text

and the snub wasn't intentional. One would think she'd realize you were doing her a favor by working her in, but if she can't understand that, then perhaps it's better she see another stylist. Accept it and move on.

DEAR ABBY: My daughter calls me (hands-free) when she is driving in her car. We have lively conversations and I enjoy her calls. However, she is always either running errands or on her way to work when she calls. I can be in the middle of a sentence when she announces, “Oops, Mom, I've reached my destination. Gotta go. Love you!”

Am I wrong to feel she is “fitting” me in? Or should I just be happy for the call? — **A MOM IN CONNECTICUT**

DEAR MOM: It may seem like your daughter is “fitting you in,” but at least she ends the conversations with an expression of love. If her schedule is busy, her drive time may be the optimum time for her to talk privately. So be happy – it's better than never hearing from her at all.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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	7		8		3	
5			7			2
			6	3	9	
		4			3	
1	9	8			7	6
		6			1	
			3	6	1	
3				4		7
	4		5		1	

Instructions for play: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9.

That's all there is to it. There's no math involved. The grid has numbers, but nothing has to add up to anything else. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic. It's fun. It's challenging. It's addictive!

Solving time is typically from 10 to 30 minutes, depending on your skill and experience.

The solution for today's puzzle will be published in Saturday's paper. Or you can go to www.sudoku.com to find the solution.

7	2	1	4	3	6	5	9	8
6	5	9	7	2	8	1	4	3
4	3	8	9	1	5	7	6	2
1	9	7	8	6	2	4	3	5
5	6	4	3	9	7	8	2	1
3	8	2	5	4	1	6	7	9
8	4	6	2	5	9	3	1	7
2	1	5	6	7	3	9	8	4
9	7	3	1	8	4	2	5	6

HOROSCOPES

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

It may seem that you have your head in the clouds, Aries. But you know that you have everything under control. Disregard the critics and keep plugging away.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, look inside yourself for the solution to a problem that has puzzled you. You understand the situation better than anyone else, so bear down and find the solution.

GEMINI - May 22/Jun 21

There is no easy way out of the work you have to get done, Gemini. Just hunker down and accept that these tasks have to be completed before you can move on.

CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22

You may feel some pressure from higher-ups, Cancer. But don't allow that pressure to distract you from the tasks at hand. You will get things done on time.

LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, after weeks of running around, it is finally time to kick your feet up and relax. The concept may seem strange to you, but soon enough you will get the hang of it.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, you have been stuck on a problem but the solution is right around the corner. Perhaps you should change your perspective and go about it in a new way.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Focus on the positives of a new venture even if you're nervous about the outcome, Libra. If you let negative thoughts slide in you can quickly be overwhelmed.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

New possibilities seem to arise out of nowhere, Scorpio. Embrace the good fortune coming your way and make the most of these wonderful and exciting opportunities.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

It will take some energy to referee a situation at home, Sagittarius. Strong personalities can clash at times, but you have a way of working through the obstacles.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Don't try to hide your emotions this week, Capricorn. If others know just how you are feeling they will be more likely to offer a helping hand and some valuable advice.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

You have an infectious amount of energy this week, Aquarius. That will serve you well because many things are piling up on your to-do list. You're ready to meet tasks head-on.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Do you feel like you're being pulled in too many directions, Pisces? Let up on accepting any new responsibilities for now.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

DECEMBER 28
Joe Manganiello, Actor (38)

DECEMBER 29
Alexa Ray Joel, Singer (29)

DECEMBER 30
Kristin Kreuk, Actress (32)

DECEMBER 31
Richie McCaw, Athlete (34)

JANUARY 1
Meryl Davis, Athlete (28)

JANUARY 2
Dax Shepard, Actor (40)

JANUARY 3
Danica McKellar, Actress (40)

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Believers

5 Goes downhill

10 Opera's Callas

12 Runway worker

13 Conspicuous

14 City on the Mohawk River

15 Pres. Day mo.

16 Chick holder

18 Kayo count

19 Wall art

21 Type-setting choice

22 Place to go downhill

24 Sad sack

25 Machine at 22-Across

29 "— Gone" (Hall and Oates song)

30 Set upon

32 Glutton

33 Writer Tarbell

34 Bond, for one

35 Oscar or Tony

37 After a while

39 Necessary

40 This group of things

41 Opposition

42 Liberal study

DOWN

1 Parting words

2 Thrifty folks

3 His job's in "Jeopardy!"

4 Knight's title

5 Self-satisfied

6 Auction buy

7 Paper worker

8 Respectable

W	A	G	S			S	I	F	T
A	M	O	U	R		M	A	C	A
N	U	E	V	O		A	G	I	L
E	L	S		M	I	R	A	C	L
D	E	B	A	C	L	E	L	E	T
T	Y	R	O	L		D	E	N	
				O	M	E	G	A	
	C	O	W		G	E	N	O	A
S	O	N		M	A	N	A	C	L
C	O	R	A	C	L	E		E	G
A	L	I	B	I		V	A	L	O
R	I	C	C	I		A	D	O	R
F	O	E	S		S	T	E	T	

Previous Puzzle

- 9 Bias
- 11 Admitted an error
- 17 Cracks up
- 20 Farm sights
- 21 Setting items
- 23 Natural seasoning
- 25 Act the usher
- 26 Make void
- 27 Spring holiday
- 28 Best for picking
- 29 Barber-shop offering
- 31 Harp's ancestors
- 33 Without basis
- 36 Zodiac animal
- 38 Discoverer's cry

THOMAS CROSSWORD BOOKS 1 AND 2! Send \$4.75 (check/m.o.) for each book to P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10				11		12		
13						14		
15				16	17			18
19			20			21		
22					23			
24								
25	26						27	28
29				30				31
32				33			34	
35			36			37	38	
39						40		
41						42		

12-27

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 China flaw

5 Smart-phone downloads

9 Trailblazer Daniel

10 Pub projectiles

12 Wear away

13 Horse sound

14 Last

16 Phone bill addition

17 Golf pegs

18 Buff buff

21 Melancholy

22 Lets on

23 Feel blindly

24 Toasting word

26 Orange seed

29 O'Neill works

30 First-rate

31 Unrefined

32 Salad green

34 Be patient for

37 Bygone auto

38 Move on the ice

39 Exact copy

40 "The King and I" setting

41 Lane's co-worker

DOWN

1 Eye part

2 Like cobras

3 River of Pakistan

4 Gaze

5 Spots on TV

6 Skillet

7 Bottom line

8 Empha-size

9 Borscht base

11 Proofreading mark

15 Sign, as a check

S	L	E	D			C	I	L	I	A
P	O	L	O		S	O	W	E	R	S
A	V	O	W		W	R	E	A	T	H
R	E	I	N	D	E	E	R			
				P	R	E	S	E	N	T
I	N	F	A	N	T		O	R	O	
N	E	A	T	O		K	N	E	E	L
T	A	W		P	E	E	L	E	D	
O	R	N	A	M	E	N	T			
				C	A	R	O	L	I	N
L	I	G	H	T	S		O	B	O	E
A	P	I	E	C	E		S	E	R	A
W	O	O	S	H		S	T	A	R	

Previous Puzzle

- 19 Baseball officials
- 20 Spotted cube
- 22 Region
- 23 Tiara feature
- 24 Goes on all fours
- 25 Mauna Loa setting
- 26 Arsenic, for one
- 27 Dream up
- 28 Key's comedy partner
- 29 Pull along
- 30 Confuse
- 33 Adam's apple spot
- 35 Writer Tarbell
- 36 President pro —

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	1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	
9						10				11
12						13				
14					15			16		
17					18	19	20			
21					22					
				23						
	24	25						26	27	28
29								30		
31					32	33				
34				35	36			37		
38							39			
	40						41			

12-29

Daily Cryptoquote – Here's how to work it:

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

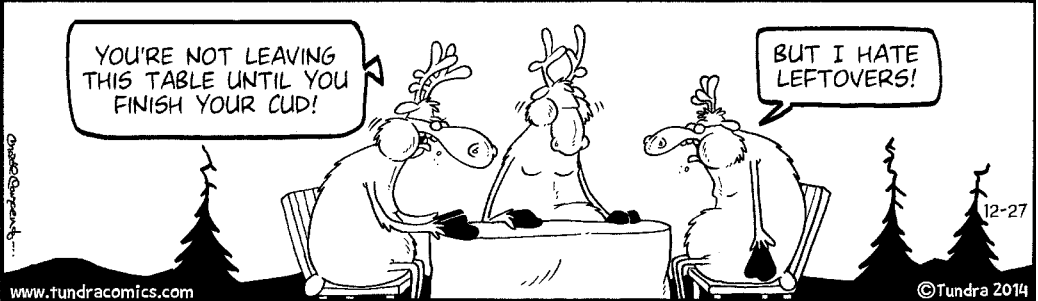
12-27 CRYPTOQUOTE

G X X W F L M M E T G X X W F L M M L A K
W L M N A W E T W L M N A W . F J W W Y N
Q E A K T N W X G Z X J P W N L Q Q L C N T
L M M W Y N K E G G N P N A B N .
— P X F N P W H P E G G E A E E E

Previous Cryptoquote: HAVE A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND ENJOY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON. – Your Puzzle People

COMICS

Tundra



Hagar the Horrible



Peanuts



Baby Blues



Dilbert

