

## Websites offer puzzles, games and brain teasers



**C**omputer technology is a double-edged sword. One edge helps you cut through many tasks — communication, banking, shopping, education and more — with much less effort than before. The other edge can cause you harm if you're not careful.

Cell phones have intruded into almost all aspects of life, social media has become a dangerously divisive force in the world, and conducting our financial business online has made us vulnerable to cyber crime.

The technology itself is not innately good or bad. It's how people use it that makes it beneficial or detrimental. A mobile phone can be a great convenience if you aren't compelled to look at it every few minutes. Social media is a good way to stay in touch with loved ones, but you have to be careful not to use it as your only source for news and information. Shopping and banking online is very useful as long as you're careful with passwords, links and personal information.

The same cautions apply when using digital tools for recreation. There is a lot of

good entertainment to be found online and in apps. Choosing the sites and apps you use carefully, and limiting the amount of time you engage with them, determines if you're spending your time wisely or not. The wrong sites can also put your personal information at risk of being used in ways you don't want it to be.

For this week's column, I wanted to find a website with puzzles, brain teasers and other games that are fun and educational. I came across many sites full of a wide range of different games for kids and young adults, but that's not what I was looking for. I wasn't in the market for flashy graphics, mindless repetition, shooter or multi-player games. I wanted fairly simple games that didn't take too long and made you have to think about the solutions.

Basically, I was looking for the types of games you can do in the newspaper or puzzle books, but I want to do them online. And I wanted them free and without having to register.

I didn't find one site that had everything I was looking for, but I found a couple that had some of the things I wanted. **Webgamesonline.com** features what it calls Games for the Brain. That includes memory and logic games, Soduku, crosswords, solitaire, number games

and more. There are instructions for each game. The site's design is bare bones. The games are displayed in a grid, and you click on one to play. You often have to use the browser back button to exit a game page because most pages don't have any navigation buttons.

**Braingle.com** is another site that met most of the criteria I was looking for. It has puzzles, brain teasers, trivia, games and a section called Mentalrobics, which features articles on healthy brain habits. In addition to the traditional puzzles on the site, there is a section called PuzzleTales. It features stories accompanied by puzzles. You have to solve the puzzles to advance the story. You can create an account in Braingle if you want to access additional features, such as social media and rankings. The site is organized and has decent navigation. My one knock against it is it doesn't have crossword puzzles.

I'm at an age where I worry about losing my marbles down the road. The jury is still out on whether doing puzzles and other "brain games" can help ward off dementia. Some articles say it can help, others say it's inconclusive. However, none of the articles I've read say exercising your brain does any harm.

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