

THE ALPHABET PUZZLE

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For the Alphabet Puzzle, you need eight nickels, eight pennies and eight dimes, and a smooth surface to slide them on. The coins, all touching, must be lined up in eight nickel-penny-dime sets: NPDNPDNPDNPDNPDNPDNPDNPD.

You are allowed to move two adjacent coins of different denominations, and you must place them somewhere else in the line where they are touching other coins. In 26 moves you must arrive at a position where all the nickels are on the left, all the pennies are in the middle and all the dimes are on the right, with no unsightly gaps. As you make the moves, call them out by letter from A to Z. This makes it scary for those who are watching, because they can't imagine how you can possibly get to the final state by the time you get to Z. For, after all, after 26 there is 27, but after Z there is nothing!

To make the Alphabet Puzzle more colorful, you can use 24 pennies and stick on them red, yellow and green color-coding disks, obtainable from a variety store. Then you can print across, in the starting position

I A M T H E A L P H A B E T P U Z Z L E
H U M T N N S L O I A F E K R O V Y O G

with scrambled letters, as shown, across the bottom. When you have successfully made the moves from A to Z, the top line will be scrambled, but the bottom line will express the Alphabet Puzzle's heartfelt gratitude:

T H A N K Y O U F O R S O L V I N G M E

The 26 moves are given in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.