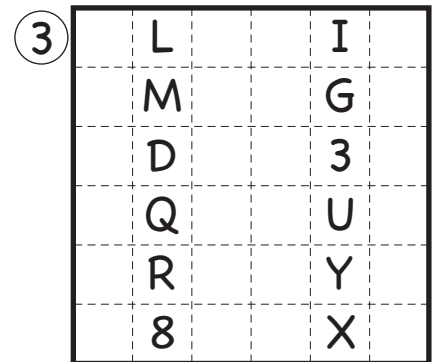
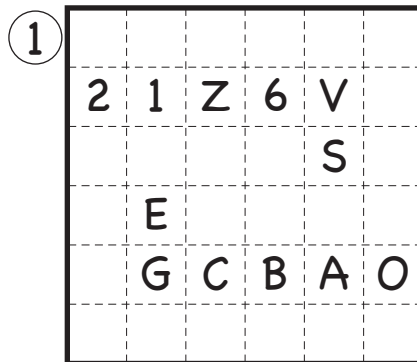
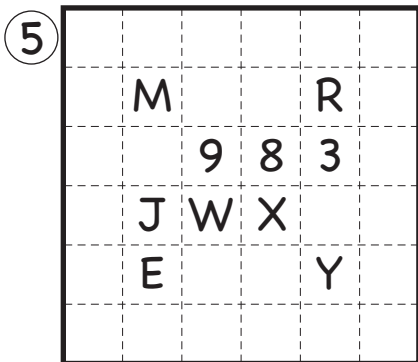
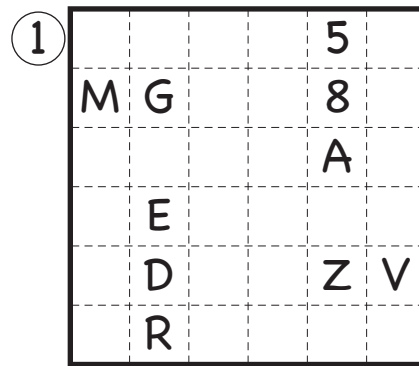
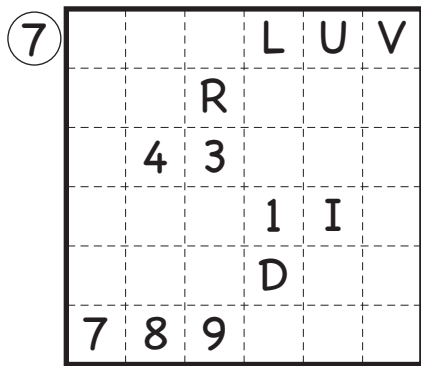


# THE MICE IN COUNCIL

The mice in a certain house, sorely vexed by the depredations of the stealthy and voracious cat, called a council to discuss how best to thwart their cruel adversary. The most popular proposal was to tie a string around the cat's neck with a bell on the end of it, so that the mice would always be able to hear her approach. Several diagrams were drawn illustrating this scheme.

Amidst the general approval, the oldest and grayest of them cleared his throat and stumped to the front of the group. He compared the five plans, eyeing the bell dubiously, and at last spoke. "This is all very well," he rasped. "But *who* exactly is to tie this contraption to the cat?" After a very long silence, he spoke again. "Exactly. Idiots." And he hobbled away, grumbling about how much better things were in his day.

MORAL: *For mice and men, across the board, the irksome old are best ignored.*



Each plan shows a different configuration of the mice's string and bell, as in the diagram shown to the right. The string is made up of the letters A-Z in order, followed by the digits 1-9 in order, ending with the bell. Each character is to be entered in a grid square orthogonally or diagonally adjacent to the one preceding it. The number accompanying each plan indicates the number of times the string crosses itself.

