



# 7

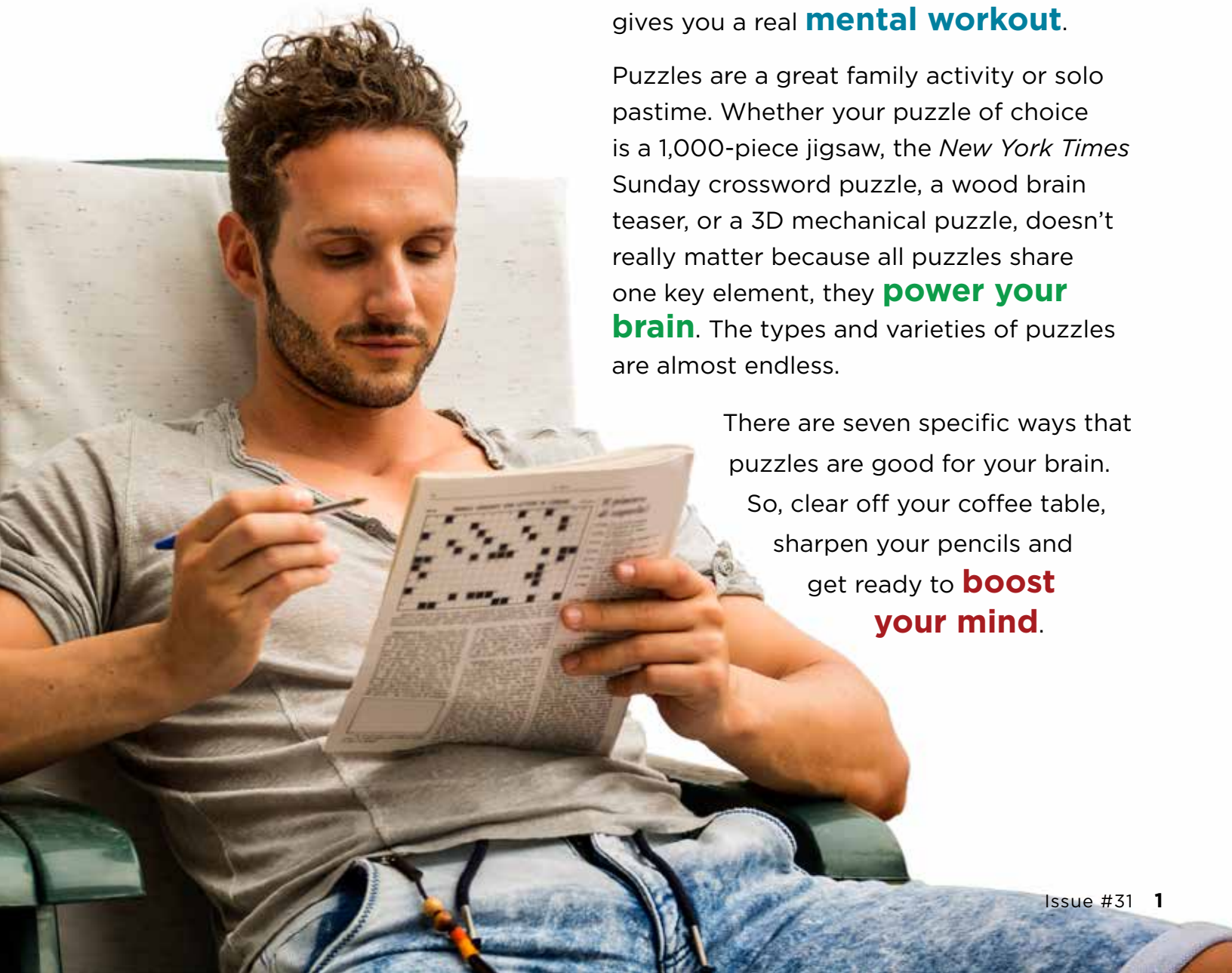
## Surprising Ways Puzzles Are Good for Your Brain

Besides being fun, working on puzzles gives you a real **mental workout**.

Puzzles are a great family activity or solo pastime. Whether your puzzle of choice is a 1,000-piece jigsaw, the *New York Times* Sunday crossword puzzle, a wood brain teaser, or a 3D mechanical puzzle, doesn't really matter because all puzzles share one key element, they **power your brain**. The types and varieties of puzzles are almost endless.

There are seven specific ways that puzzles are good for your brain.

So, clear off your coffee table, sharpen your pencils and get ready to **boost your mind**.



## ANALYTICAL

# 1

### Puzzles Exercise Both Sides of Your Brain



## CREATIVE

The two hemispheres of your brain control different functions. The left side of your brain controls analytic and logical thinking and the right-side controls creativity. When you are working on puzzles, you are engaging both sides and giving your brain a real mental workout.

# 2

### Improve Your Memory



Working on puzzles reinforce the connections between our brain cells—and form new ones—so they are a great way to improve short-term memory. We use memory in the process of completing a jigsaw puzzle when we remember shapes, sizes, and pieces and visualize where they fit in. Studies have shown that the growth of new brain connections that are formed to help reduce the amount of brain damage in Alzheimer's patients.

# 3

### Improve Your Problem-Solving Skills

The ability to solve problems and think critically is useful in almost any life situation and puzzles help us develop these skills. Since puzzles require us to take different approaches to solve them, we learn how to work by trial and error, formulate and test theories, and how to change tracks if not successful according to *USA Today*.







## 4 Improve Visual and Spatial Reasoning

You need to be able to look at individual parts of a jigsaw puzzle, or available spaces in a crossword puzzle and figure out how to fit the pieces or words into their space. If done regularly, according to *USA Today*, this will

improve your visual and spatial reasoning skills and that translates into being a better driver and can make you a Tetris-like packer (especially when loading your car to take a college-age child to school).

## 5 Enhance Your Mood

One of the brain benefits of puzzles is that they increase the production of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that regulates mood, memory, and concentration. Dopamine is released with every success as we solve the puzzle. No wonder puzzles are so much fun!



## 6 Lower Your Stress Levels

Puzzles invigorate our brains, but they are also very relaxing. While we are concentrating on how to solve the puzzle, our minds are only on one task and that encourages our brains to go into a meditative state. This leads to a better mindset and better stress coping skills.

## 7 Can Improve Your IQ Score

Since puzzles can improve our memory, concentration, vocabulary, and reasoning skills it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that they also raise our IQs. A study at the University of Michigan showed that doing puzzles for at least 25 minutes a day can boost your IQ by 4 points.

