

Along with the many and very serious negative results of the Covid pandemic, there have been some surprising ideas and actions born of the long period of isolation, as well. Apparently, a good many people have discovered that they like working from home and have no intention of returning to an office or other central workplace. I have read that both men and women have developed more interest in cooking and baking. Others have used the enforced time at home to adopt some kind of physical workout. And, I know people who have always liked to read but who just “haven’t had the time.” Now, they have found a new appreciation for the written word.

But, the one enhanced activity I have noticed most is the proliferation of word puzzles, primarily online. I have friends who play a game called Spelling Bee; there are those who play a kind of scrabble with distant friends; and then, there is the sensation of the pandemic—Wordle.

Apparently, this word game was invented by a man as a diversion for his girlfriend during these times. His name is Wardle, and Wordle played on that. The New York Times purchased the game and offers it free to anyone who wants to play, not only to their subscribers.

The game is simple, and it takes only a few minutes. One of the good features is that only one game is presented each day, so unless one indulges in searching out other forms of the game, it doesn’t interfere with life. And, it certainly seems to be good for the brain. Occupying the mind with words, spelling, and the vagaries of pronunciation can’t help but be beneficial—at least, that is what I think.

A niece told me to try Wordle. So, I did. Runo and I do the puzzle together, usually at breakfast each morning. Opening the game for the day, one is presented with a grid for letters, five wide and six up and down. A “keyboard” is printed under the grid. The participant types in a five letter word. If some of those letters appear in the target word, they are shown in color—green if in the right position, and yellow if in the word but in another square. The player then chooses another word, hoping to find more letters or at least, place some of the yellow ones in positions where they will show up as green. There are six chances to find the correct word. There is no time limit. This is all there is to the game.

If one is interested in the statistics of one’s own performance, those are available, too—how long the winning streak is, how many games one has played, what percentage of the games one has won. It seems like a good way to wake up for the day.

But, we couldn’t stop there. We found ordlig.se and ordel.se, two Wordle games in Swedish, and we do those, too. And we solve the Wordle.no—the Norwegian game. Occasionally, I will—just for fun—try the German version to see how much vocabulary I remember in that language.

So, most mornings, before we go to the barn, we have solved the Wordle puzzle, the two Swedish ones, and the Norwegian game. But, not always. This morning, we were hung up on a very simple word in the English puzzle, and we finished that at coffee break time. One of the Swedish games has six-letter words on the weekend, and we find them much more difficult. But, we usually

manage to solve all of them. Occasionally, we miss on one, but there is no pressure, no audience, no screaming fans if we miss. It is just a quiet time every day to enjoy one of the most basic of human abilities—words.