

Buying Mechanical Puzzles in Maine by Rick Eason

Mechanical puzzles (aka physical puzzles or 3D puzzles) provide a fun and entertaining way to get a mental workout. But where can you buy such puzzles in Maine? Here are a couple places we know about in the Bangor area: The Store Ampersand in downtown Orono has increased the number of puzzles they carry. They have a number of \$3 to \$5 puzzles (great stocking stuffers!) as well as several others (including the very popular Rush Hour). In downtown Bangor, The Grasshopper Shop (toy store) carries several puzzles (Rush Hour, Hoppers, miscellaneous other puzzles), and puzzles have also been seen at the Discovery Museum gift shop. As for puzzles in the Portland area, we have heard that the Maine Mall, which is located near the intersection of the Maine Turnpike and I-295, has a fair sized booth in the common area called "Serious Puzzles" dedicated to mechanical puzzles, and Northern Sky Toys at the Old Port in Portland also carries them. Of course you can also buy puzzles online (e.g., www.puzzles.com for "Think Fun," formerly "Binary Arts," puzzles), but it is nice to support our local merchants (and local economy), and it is also much nicer buying in person. There must be more places in Maine to buy puzzles, so if you know of any others, then please let us know and we will compile a more complete list.

Note to teachers who are interested in using puzzles in the classroom:

Are you a teacher who is interested in using "mechanical puzzles" in your classroom? UMaine professor Rick Eason has a supply of puzzles from Think Fun, formerly Binary Arts, which can be loaned at no charge for use in the classroom. These puzzles include Rush Hour, Hoppers, Lunar Lockout, and a number of others. Teachers in the area are welcome to borrow some of these for use in the classroom with a few simple expectations: the teacher is responsible for pick-up and return of puzzles (or postage if required), and a reasonable effort is made to control the use of puzzles to minimize the loss of pieces. Also, it is hoped that the puzzles will be used in more or less a classroom environment (not just a free time activity) and the teacher will provide feedback on how they used the puzzles. Also, if you know of other (non

Think Fun) puzzles which are being used or would be good to use in the classroom, then we would like to hear about it, too. Interested teachers should contact Rick Eason at 581-2242.

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Rick Eason