

September 1984

ON WITH THE SHOW! SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY GALA

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GAMES

ACTING UP

If a tumbling Ringo stands for "falling star," what 7 familiar expressions do the other cover personalities suggest?

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More star-studded
Wacky Wordies
on page 34



SEPTEMBER 1984

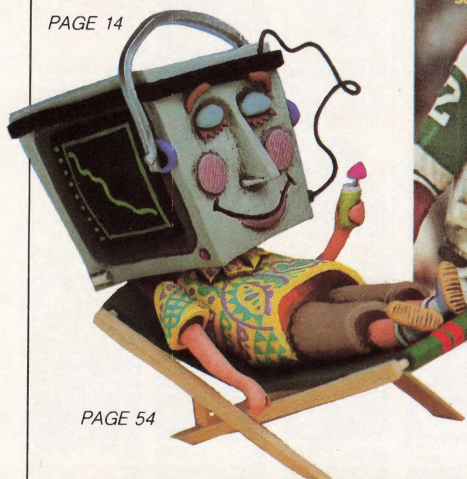
GAMES

VOL.8 NO.9 ISSUE 55

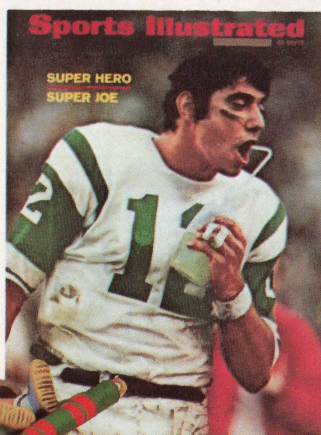


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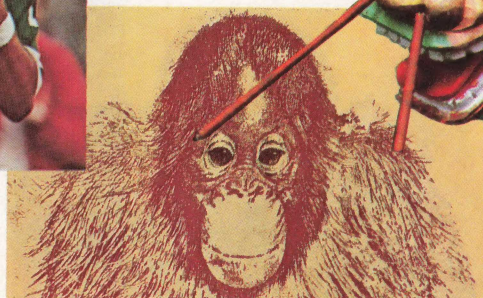
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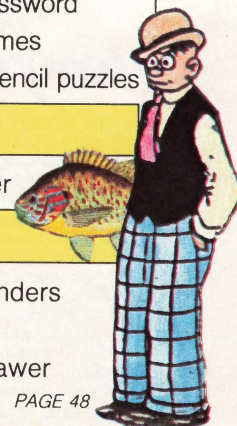
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Difficulty Rating Smooth Sailing ★ Uphill Climb ★★ Proceed at Your Own Risk ★★★ Mixed Bag ★★

Cover Puzzle Idea by Sheila Wolinsky



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It's showtime.
Time for ATARI[®]SOFT™ to show you six exciting, brand new games that are destined for stardom.

Games that can be played on your Commodore 64, IBM PC and Apple II. (Some titles available on IBM PC jr. and VIC 20.*)

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Then there's *Crystal Castles*™ where Bentley Bear™ journeys through all sorts of tantalizingly difficult paths and ramps in his endless quest for gems.

In *Donkey Kong Jr.*² by Nintendo³, Junior tries to rescue his father against immense odds. And speaking of Donkey Kong, there's also *Mario Brothers*⁴ by Nintendo³. This time, Mario and his brother Luigi battle creatures on four levels of floors, encountering all sorts of treacherous enemies.

In *Track And Field*⁵ you can compete by yourself or

head-to-head with another player. But each player must beat qualifying times, heights and distances before they can compete in each of the grueling six events.

Typo Attack is the much-acclaimed, fun-filled program that

allows you to enjoy developing your typing skills at any level.

And still playing to the delight of audiences everywhere are *Pac-Man*⁴, *Ms. Pac-Man*⁴, *Jungle Hunt*⁵, *Battlezone*[™], *Donkey Kong*³; by Nintendo³, *Centipede*[™] and *Pole Position*⁶.

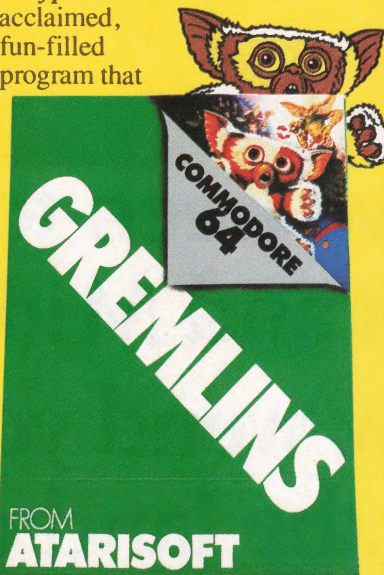
So, if you've been searching for ways to entertain your Commodore, Apple or IBM, treat it to one of the best shows in town, one of the hits from ATARI[®]SOFT.

And don't forget the popcorn.

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*Titles available on IBM PC jr. are Ms. Pac-Man, Centipede, Donkey Kong, Moon Patrol⁷ and Typo Attack. Available on the VIC 20 is Typo Attack.

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MARIO BROS.

ATARI[®]SOFT
APPLE II

DONKEY KONG JR.

ATARI[®]SOFT
IBM PC

TRACK & FIELD

ATARI[®]SOFT
COMMODORE 64

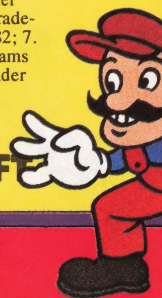
CRYSTAL CASTLES

ATARI[®]SOFT
APPLE II

TYPO ATTACK

ATARI[®]SOFT
IBM PCjr

ATARI[®]SOFT



SIX NEW HITS
ARE COMING
SOON TO A SCREEN
NEAR YOU.

GAMES & BOOKS

Edited by R. Wayne Schmittberger

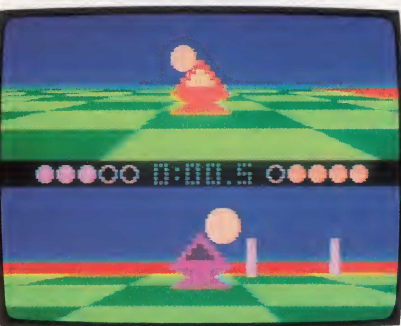
Ballblazer (Atari/Lucasfilm, on cartridge for Atari 5200; \$34.95)

Ballblazer is Lucasfilm's first electronic game, and it is very impressive—perhaps the most innovative video game of the year. Visually, it doesn't suggest any of the computer-generated special effects the company has pioneered in movies, but its designers certainly know how to create exciting play.

The game is a futuristic form of polo, played on a horizontally split screen that shows both players' points of view simultaneously. The players—either two humans or one human and a computer-controlled “droid”—race their “rotofoils” around a square playing field trying to catch a floating ball and either carry or shoot it through a goal. A rotofoil, like an amusement park bumper-car, can bounce off the opponent's rotofoil or the edges of the field, but it moves much faster. The ball tends to stick to a rotofoil, but the opponent can come alongside and blast it away by using the fire button at just the right moment. Then the scramble is on for the re-

bounce as in a game of indoor soccer.

The split screen is easy to get used to if you begin by simply ignoring the part showing the opponent's point of view. But when you get better at the game, you may find it useful to steal a glance at it occasionally. The abrupt turns of the rotofoil are less easy to get used to, since it



cally turns to face the ball, even at very high speeds.

The two goals move slowly around the edge of the playing area. Often you can't see them, but they appear on the horizon and grow larger as you streak downfield with the ball. As you approach, you have only a split second to decide whether to run the ball through the posts (scoring one point) or to try to shoot it through using your fire button (two points). If you hesitate, the opponent is likely to blast the ball away. To get more breathing room, learn how to “dribble” by repeatedly shooting the ball forward and catching up with it. A dribbling rotofoil moves faster than one simply carrying the ball.

You can adjust the length of each game from one to five minutes (plus sudden-death overtime if the score is tied after regulation play). When playing the computer, you can face nine different droids of increasing skill. Even the third-level droid is tougher than most humans you'll face. —R. W. S.



Trivia (Avalon Hill, around \$38)

Since the phenomenal success of Trivial Pursuit, a dozen companies have raced to put out trivia games. This one, though just released, has a copyright date of 1981, and it doesn't seem to have been done in haste.

The game comes with cards containing 6,600 questions divided into six categories, covering a broad range of topics. They are harder, on the average, than the questions in Trivial Pursuit's basic “Genus” edition, but easier than those in most of the specialized trivia games like *TV Guide*. Some questions (we wish there were even more) contain extra information or other hints, giving players a chance to make an educated guess when they don't know the answer.

The game play itself is more interesting than that of the other trivia board games we've seen. The board has two tracks on which players move their tokens according to the throw of a die; the space landed on determines the category of question the player must answer. Initially, players can move their tokens only clockwise around the outer track, and so have no control over their question categories. But when a player answers his fifth question correctly he's promoted from “freshman” to “sophomore” and may then move either backward or forward on the outer track (usually giving him a choice of two categories). A later promotion to “junior” earns the right to enter the inner track and to select a “major” and a “minor” category. Players should choose their two best categories, as these will be used whenever they land on the many “major” or “minor” spaces on the inner track.

After answering 15 questions correctly, a player moves to the Final Exam space, where he must answer two questions—one in his major and the other in his minor—in order to graduate and win.

One of the best features of the game is that missed questions may be attempted by the other players, beginning with whoever is furthest behind. (In a two-player game this rule doesn't apply.) Players can therefore make up a lot of ground between turns, especially when opponents land on spaces requiring two questions to be answered.

Trivia's questions may not be quite as playful as those in Trivial Pursuit, but Trivia plays more like a true board game. And there's no reason you can't use the questions from your Trivial Pursuit or other trivia game.

—Paddy Smith

Zenji by Matthew Hubbard (Activision, on cartridge for ColecoVision/Adam, Atari 5200, and Atari and Commodore 64 computers; \$34.95; on disk for Commodore 64; \$31.95)

Although technically a maze game, Zenji is an original puzzle concept with an intriguing Oriental flavor and a compulsive quality that makes it difficult to stop playing.

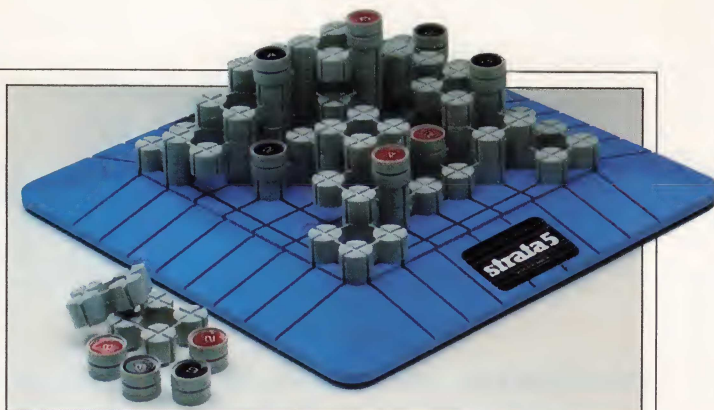
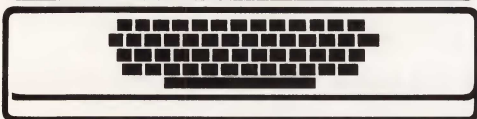
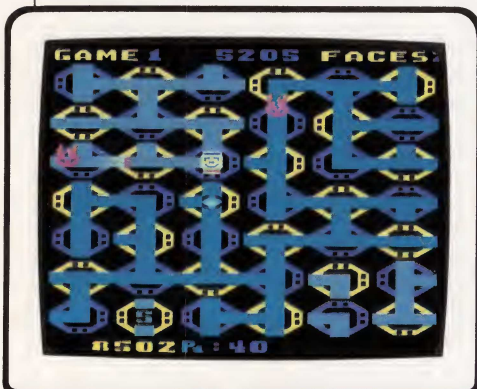
The layout is a symmetrical grid made up of octagons, each of which contains a path segment that can be rotated with the joystick. The object is to link all octagons to the power source near the center of the grid by rotating the appropriate segments before the timer runs out. Easier said than done, since rotating a segment to connect two octagons may also disconnect others. Connected paths turn green, making it easy to see what's going on.

Path segments are of three types: straight bars, L-shaped segments, and T-shaped segments. To rotate a segment, use the joystick to move a round smiling face along connected paths to the exact center of an octagon, and then move the joystick right or left while holding down the fire button.

The mechanics of play are a cinch, but the puzzle isn't. Each time you complete a grid you get a new one that's both bigger and tougher, beginning with 12 octagons and working up to 36, after which previous grids appear randomly. Beginning with the third, indestructible enemy faces, whose touch

is fatal, try to prevent you from completing the grid. Often they temporarily force you to abandon an area you were working on—while the clock keeps ticking.

The game can be played solo or by two players alternating turns. If you're a whiz at this type of puzzle, try playing it at a faster speed and learn a lesson in humility. —B. H.



Strata 5 (Milton Bradley, around \$12)

Few two-player strategy games offer such a bizarre mix of tactics. The strange-looking three-dimensional board grows as the game progresses, with curious and often chaotic effects on play.

At the start of the game, four identical building blocks, each a square containing four spaces, are placed on the corners of the board. Players each have six pieces, numbered from 2 through 6 to indicate how many spaces they move. Each player in turn places two of his pieces on the starting blocks and then adds a new block to the board. Thereafter, each player moves two of his pieces (or enters new ones), and adds another block. New blocks may be placed not only directly on the board but also on top of pieces and existing blocks according to certain rules. An irregular structure of up to five levels is gradually built up.

The object of the game is to get one of your pieces on top of a block that is on the fifth level. It is an important tactic to place blocks on top of the opponent's pieces, thereby burying them permanently. Since pieces may only move up or down one level at a time, another key tactic is to place blocks where they will obstruct the opponent's pieces.

Players can capture opposing pieces by landing on them, and thereby make them their own by flipping them over (opposite identifying colors appear on the two faces of every piece) and reentering them later. There is so much capturing and recapturing, and burying and building, that it's hard to know how to emerge from the early skirmishing in a good position to achieve the final goal. But after all, the challenge of figuring out a new game's best strategies is one of the best reasons to play it. —R. W. S.

Beggars and Thieves (Parker Brothers, around \$4)

In this clever new card game, you're on your own even when you have a partner. Alliances change randomly from hand to hand, and you can seldom be sure who your friends are.

The four- or five-player game described here is much better than the different two- or three-player game. The deck consists of 38 cards—14 of the Thief (trump) suit, and 8 each of the green, blue, and red Beggar suits. Each card is numbered to identify its rank and many cards also have a second number that is used in scoring. Although this is a trick-taking game, scores are based not on the number of tricks taken but on the scoring values of the cards in those tricks.

After the deal, the two extra cards—"the blind"—are placed face down on the table. The player to the left of the dealer has the first option to "take the blind." If he passes, the next player has the option. Whoever finally takes it must

remove two cards from his hand and begin play by leading a card. The other players must follow suit if able. The high trump, or high card of the suit led, wins the trick.

The player with the blind automatically becomes the partner of the player with the six of Thieves; if it's the same player, he may play without a partner or require the player with the next higher Thief card to be his partner. The remaining players become partners automatically. When all the cards have been played, the partnership with the higher combined score earns points towards victory.

Although only one player knows he's the partner of the player with the blind, the others may *claim* to be his partner to encourage him to play his good cards on their tricks. There's likely to be a lot of deceptive winking and smiling going on—and that's the real point of the game.

If no player takes the blind, there are no partnerships and the object is to take the *fewest* points. In the four-player game, however, there's no reason not to take it, and in such games we suggest that the partners with the blind be required to score at least 65 points. —L. P.

Computers Do the Darndest Things

You knew, when you invested in that computer, you'd eventually have to get down to some serious business with it. Sure checkbook balancing, word processing, and generating those cunning little pie charts representing the Gross National Product are fun, fun, fun, but that sort of thing simply doesn't justify the expense of a home computer. What does? How about making yourself into a healthier, happier, more omniscient person? With the proper software you can do anything from foretelling the future to lowering your blood pressure. This brief roundup of some of the more unconventional software programs now available may finally give you that elusive rationale for owning a computer.

There are already two programs designed to appeal to the dormant gypsy in all of us, both from Warlock Software for the Apple (\$39.95 each).

Soothsayer is an electronic I Ching. For those who don't know what a nonelectronic I Ching is, it's an ancient Chinese method of divination. You ask the cosmic powers a question while throwing a set of 48 yarrow stalks (go find a yarrow stalk these days) or three pennies. Each toss, depending on the pattern (with pennies, how many heads and tails), is represented by either a broken or an unbroken line. You get six tosses, thus ending up with six lines, which are piled one on top of the other to form a vertical hexagram. The hexagram is the really important thing. It is the symbol of something that, when interpreted, should be germane to your question.

The computer version gives you the option of either yarrow stalks (thrown electronically by the computer) or coins (thrown manually by you). After the toss is completed, the text associated with your hexagram is shown on the screen. Often the answer is couched in abstruse Oriental prose. For example, when I asked it if I would be rich and famous, it said: "Khwan represents what is great and originating, penetrating, advantageous, correct, and having the firmness of a mare." I took this to mean yes. Sometimes, though, it

comes up so exactly on target it's spooky. When I asked it if I should get married and where, it answered, in part: "Advantage will be found in the southwest . . . It will be advantageous also to meet the great man." (No kidding.)

Strange Brew lets you in on the future with an electronic Tarot deck. Each Tarot card has a symbol on it that can be interpreted according to the order it's chosen in, which cards it's near, whether it's upside down or right side up, and so on. So picking the card with Death on it isn't necessarily bad.

The computer gives you two choices:



the Yes and No Spread and the Magic Seven. In either case, you must once again concentrate on a question until beads of sweat form on your brow, this time while choosing cards from a face-down on-screen array (five in the Yes or No Spread, seven in the Magic Seven). The answer to your question now appears. When I asked if I would be rich and famous, it said "Yes." I took this to mean yes.

Let's say that the future doesn't bother you as much as the past and present owing to the fact that you have what is known as a lousy memory. In this case, you can skip the prediction programs and get the **Einstein Memory Trainer**. This three-disk program, from Alison Software for Apple (\$89.95), Atari (\$79.95), and Commodore 64 (\$59.95) computers, will teach you mnemonic devices and other tricks to help you remember that your best friend's name is Jane. If her name is in fact Jane, Ein-

stein recommends that you associate her with a mental image of a chain around her forehead. (Chain rhymes with Jane, see?)

Often, the method for remembering is far more complicated than what you're supposed to remember. Let's say you're having trouble remembering 23 skiddoo. The skiddoo part is a snap, but the 23 is giving you a lot of grief. According to Einstein, you simply associate 23 with the words "knee" and "ma." Why? Because, says Einstein, a 2 looks like an N on its side, and to remember N you remember "knee,"

which has an N sound in it (are you with me so far?), and a 3 looks like an M on its side and there's an M sound in "ma." Following Einstein, then, to remember my ZIP code all I'd have to do is remember "dew sea sea knee ma." See, a 1 looks like an upside-down T, and T sounds like D as in "dew" and . . . oh, never mind, I'll just write it down somewhere. If you'd rather improve your muscles than your memory, you can carry the program around with you. It's so heavy it could be called the Einstein Workout. Go for the burn.

Even a great memory, however, won't help you remember the thousands of ancestors and descendants dangling from your family tree. For this, you can purchase **Family Ties**, the complete genealogy program from Computer Services (\$75). Family Ties, which runs on the IBM PC, can display as many as four generations and print out as many as five. You can enter your family, your spouse's family, your parents' families, and so on. Each entry can be cross-referenced, and when one reference is updated, the others are automatically updated as well. You can even create fictitious relatives and unions, but don't blame us for how the kids turn out.

Naturally, mating takes a lot out of a person, so it's a good thing there's a computer program to help you relax. Created by Synapse Software for Atari computers (\$139.95), **Relax** is a bio-feedback device, something like a massage for the gray matter. You strap on an electrosensor sweatband that att-

by Randi Hacker

ches to the computer and measures your galvanic skin response, which is the same thing that a polygraph measures and it isn't contagious. On the screen are a bunch of numbers and a thin line. The numbers represent your tension level; the line traces a path that shows how tense you are. As you listen, through earphones, to a soothing voice talk of surf, seagulls, and other relaxing things beginning with the letter S, the line drops lower and lower on the graph. Soon you're asleep. No. Just kidding. Soon you do notice a significant drop in your tension.

Once you get so relaxed you can even tolerate smart-alecky children, it's time for Art Linkletter's **Kids Say the Darndest Things to Computers** (HomeComputer Software, \$39.95), which runs on the Apple. This is a very enjoyable variation on the old Mad Libs theme. Remember Mad Libs? One person read a story with certain parts of speech left out, and the other members of the group had to supply these without knowing into what context they would be placed. The resulting story, when read aloud, could be sidesplitting.

Art basically does the same thing. First you see a computerized portrait of old Art himself, who tells you he is, like Tron, right inside your computer. He asks for your name and age. (He refuses, by the way, to believe you're 32—chivalry is not dead.) Then he gives you a choice of 10 stories you and he can write together: "Visitors From Another World," "Randi's Very Strange Day," and more. After this, he asks you a bunch of seemingly irrelevant questions, but be on guard—the answers come back to haunt you later. He asks for your second favorite color, your best friend's name, a sound you can make with your mouth without talking. Then he plugs your answers into the story of your choice. And each story ends with a quaint little moral, Norman Rockwellian bromides like never judging people by their appearances.

As you can see, the computer is being used for things that its inventors never dreamed of. What I need, however, is a computer that will get up at 6:30 A.M. and go out and run 10 or 12 miles before breakfast for me while I sleep. It does all the work and I get the legs that won't quit. Anybody out there working on this particular kind of program should contact me at once. Don't worry about waking me. It will be worth it.

Randi Hacker, a freelance writer specializing in computer coverage, expects to be rich and famous any day now.

EXCELLENCE IN

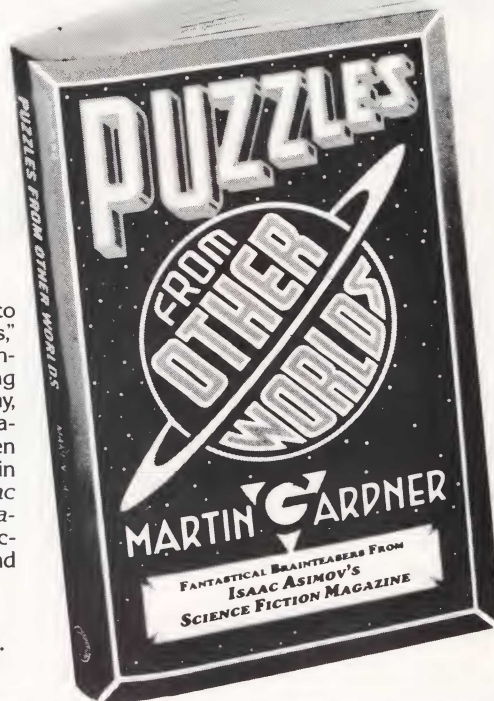


PAPERBACKS

Cranium-cracking SF puzzles

From "The Polybugs of Titan" to "Tethered Purple-Pebble Eaters," each of these 37 fantastical brain-teasers contains a challenging puzzle involving logic, wordplay, palindromes, geometry, probability, or magic numbers. Written by master puzzle maker Martin Gardner, and taken from *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, this is an irresistible collection for both science fiction and puzzle fans.

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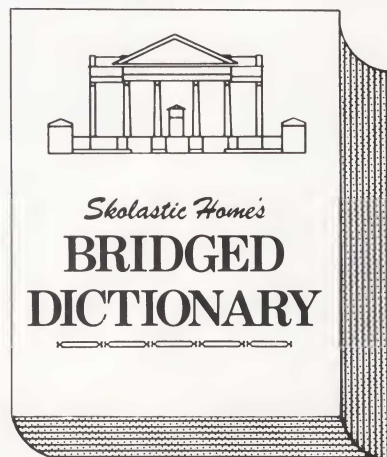
TRADITION

Skolastic Home's BRIDGED DICTIONARY

Oph.thal.mo.dy.na.mo.me.ter *n*: An instrument used to determine the nearest point at which the left and right eyes can be made to converge

As fields of knowledge become more and more specialized, you never know what you'll need to know. Which is why Skolastic Home's Bridged Dictionary is an essential reference tool for home and office. It's the only dictionary that specifically lists all those words normally omitted from an abridged dictionary, including:

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