

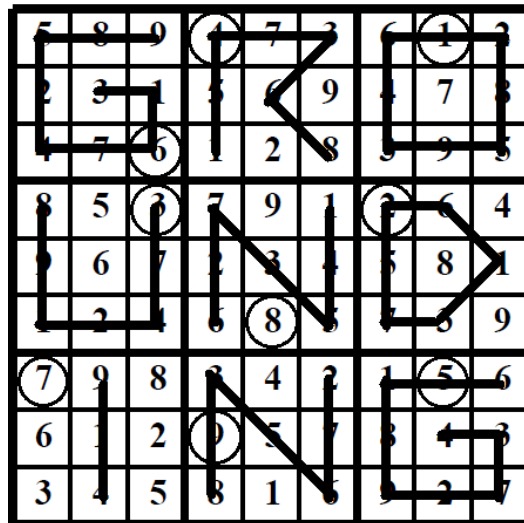
# BUILDING BLOCKS



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The obvious first step here is to solve the Sudoku. Once you do, you can turn your attention to those gates at the bottom of the page. A quick investigation of those numbers reveals that not only are they all of the form <A-I><1-9><1-9>, but for each letter, there is a series of numbers with consecutive second digits, and unique third digits (for instance, C18, C29, C31, C42, C54, where the second digits are unique and sequential from 1-5, and the third digits are unique as well).

Next, note that the circled digits are also all unique. Since we have the numbers 1-9 and the letters A-I, it seems that we should map the two alphanumerically. We now have a bunch of gates mapped to 3x3 squares in the Sudoku. The flavor text hints we want to travel from gate to gate, so we need to figure out where each gate is located and how to traverse them. The second digits within a 3x3 square are always sequential from 1-N, where N is the number of gates, so it seems fit for an ordering. That just leaves the third digit, which is also unique within a 3x3 square, indicating the square with that value within the 3x3. So I18 would reference the 3x3 square with 9 circled (bottom middle), and the first gate in the 3x3 square is the square where 8 is located. Then we look at I29, and find the second spot in the 3x3 square is the square where 9 is located. If you trace those squares in order in each grid, you get the following:



This spells out **GROUNDING**, which is the answer.