

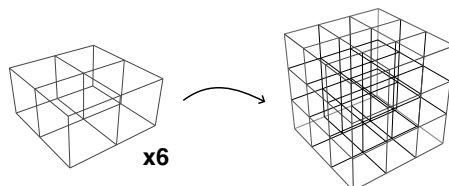
A Simple 3D Puzzle

Tyler Neylon

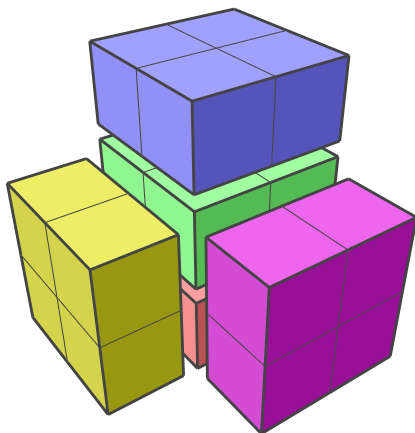
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Here's a fun puzzle: Take six boxes, each $1 \times 2 \times 2$ in size, and find a way to pack them into a $3 \times 3 \times 3$ cube.



I learned about this puzzle through Donald Knuth's *The Art of Computer Programming*, §7.2.2.1. The six boxes have a total volume of 24 cubies (I'll call a $1 \times 1 \times 1$ unit a "cubie," as Knuth does). They certainly have a chance of fitting into the 27 cubie spaces of the larger $3 \times 3 \times 3$ volume. But the initial configurations I tried failed to fit more than five boxes in the space allowed:



You might be able to solve this by simply thinking about it. But it's even more fun to play with a physical model.