
Lateral Warm-up

Puzzle 1 – Hints

- Is this a problem that can ever occur?
- Are you sure the question makes sense?
- Think about the status of the man.

Lateral Warm-up

Puzzle 1 – Solutions

It isn't legal, because the man would be dead – otherwise he wouldn't have a widow!

Thinking It Through

Puzzle 2 – Beginner

Try this lateral-thinking puzzle, which requires you to connect together a couple of pieces of knowledge to reach a definite conclusion:

An explorer builds a house on a particular spot where all sides of the house have fantastic southern views. From one window she can see a bear.

What colour is the bear?

Now try this second teaser:

A window cleaner is standing on a ledge to clean the windows on the 20th floor of a large skyscraper. He's high above the ground, when all of a sudden a strong gust of wind causes him to lose his balance and he falls off the ledge.

He is not fastened to the ledge and falls freely, yet survives without injury. How is this possible?

See overleaf for hints to both puzzles.

Thinking It Through

Puzzle 2 – Hints

Bear

- Where in the world must the house be for this to be true?
- So what sort of bear must be visible from the house?

Window Cleaner

- Where exactly is the window cleaner standing?
- He falls off a ledge thanks to a gust of wind, but where is the ledge?

Thinking It Through

Puzzle 2 – Solutions

Bear

The bear is white. The house must be at the North Pole, so she must be looking at a polar bear, which are always white.

Window Cleaner

The window cleaner is cleaning the inside of the window. He is standing on a raised ledge, and the gust of wind blew in through an open window panel. He falls just a couple of feet to the floor below, so is not injured.

Baby Births

Puzzle 3 – Beginner

In a particular society the following rule applies to all women:

You can have as many children as you like,
until you bear a male baby. At that point
you may have no further children.

Question

How does this rule affect the overall balance of male and female children in that society?

- You should assume that male and female children have exactly the same chance of being born, for any given birth.
- You should also assume that no other external factors apply to influence the answer in any way.

See overleaf for hints.

Baby Births

Puzzle 3 – Hints

- There is equal chance of any one baby being a boy or a girl. So if all parents only wanted one child, this policy would have no effect at all.
- What if all parents want two children? How does this effect the overall relative numbers of boys and girls?
- If all children are equally likely to be born as a boy or as a girl, what does this tell us about how the policy will affect the overall balance of genders in society? If you look at just one birth, does it affect it? What about two, three, four or even five births?

Baby Births

Puzzle 3 – Solutions

The policy has no effect on the overall gender balance, because it does not change the likelihood that any particular baby is born as a boy or as a girl. Some parents get to have more children if they wish, but the chance of each child being either a boy or a girl remains the same, so overall there will remain on average an equal number of boys and of girls in that society.

It's easy to confuse the effect it will have on some parents with the effect on society. Of course, in real societies with rules such as this there does tend to be an imbalance, because sadly some in that society will go to extreme means to prevent a child of the "wrong" gender from being born.

Distance Dilemma

Puzzle 4 – Beginner

I'm waiting at a bus stop in order to travel to a supermarket, but the bus fails to show up and so I decide to walk to the supermarket instead.

After I've walked 250 metres from the bus stop where I was waiting, I realise that I've already passed a grocery shop that sells the vegetables I want more cheaply than the supermarket does, so I turn around and walk directly back to the grocery. Then I leave the grocery and walk straight to the supermarket. The distance from the grocery to the supermarket is 500 metres.

As soon as I leave the supermarket, I walk straight back to the original bus stop to wait for a different bus.

The bus stop, grocery shop and supermarket are all on a completely straight road.

How many metres have I walked in total along the road, as described above?

Just to be clear, this is not a trick question – there is a precise numeric solution to be found.

