

# Lateral Thinking

You are driving down the road in your car on a wild, stormy night, when you pass by a bus stop and you see three people waiting for the bus:

1. An old lady who looks as if she is about to die.
2. An old friend who once saved your life.
3. The perfect partner you have been dreaming about.

Knowing that there can only be one passenger in your car, whom would you choose?

# Solution

- The old lady of course! After helping the old lady into the car, you can give your keys to your friend, and wait with your perfect partner for the bus.

# Lateral Thinking

- Acting on an anonymous phone call, the police raid a house to arrest a suspected murderer. They don't know what he looks like but they know his name is John and that he is inside the house. The police bust in on a carpenter, a lorry driver, a mechanic and a fireman all playing poker. Without hesitation or communication of any kind, they immediately arrest the fireman. How do they know they've got their man?

# Solution

- The fireman is the only man in the room.  
The rest of the poker players are women.

# Lateral Thinking

- A man and his son are in a car crash. The father is killed and the child is taken to hospital gravely injured. When he gets there, the surgeon says, 'I can't operate on this boy - for he is my son!!!' How can this possibly be?

# Solution

- The surgeon can not operate on her own son; she is his mother.

# Lateral Thinking

- There are six eggs in the basket. Six people each take one of the eggs. How can it be that one egg is left in the basket?

# Solution

- The last person took the basket with the last egg still inside.



# Lateral Thinking

- There was once a recluse who never left his home. The only time anyone ever visited him was when his food and supplies were delivered, but they never came inside. Then, one stormy winter night when an icy gale was blowing, he had a nervous breakdown. He went upstairs, turned off all the lights and went to bed. Next morning, he had caused the deaths of several hundred people. How?

# Solution

- He was a lighthouse keeper who switched off the lighthouse.

# Lateral Thinking

- Many shops have prices set just under a round figure, e.g. £9.99 instead of £10.00 or £99.95 instead of £100.00 . It is assumed that this is done because the price seems lower to the consumer. But this is not the reason the practice started. What was the original reason for this pricing method?

# Solution

- The practice originated to ensure that the clerk had to open the till and give change for each transaction, thus recording the sale and preventing him from pocketing the bank notes.

# Lateral Thinking

- Why is it better to have round manhole covers than square ones?

# Solution

- Round covers cannot be dropped or fall down a manhole, unlike square ones.

# Lateral Thinking

- The famous 'Penny Black', the world's first postage stamp, was introduced in England in 1840. The idea of postage stamps was a great success and was taken up worldwide. Yet the 'Penny Black' was in use for only one year before it was replaced by the 'Penny Red'. Why?

# Solution

- The postmark used at that time was always black. It was therefore difficult to tell whether a stamp had been franked or not. This led to people re-using used stamps. On a 'Penny Red' the black postmark was clearly visible.



# Lateral Thinking

- Assume there are approximately 5,000,000,000 (5 billion) people on Earth. What would you estimate to be the result, if you multiply together the number of fingers on every person's left-hands? (For the purposes of this exercise, thumbs count as fingers, for five fingers per hand.) If you cannot estimate the number then try to guess how long the number would be.

# Solution

- The product of the number of fingers on the left-hands of every person is zero. It only takes one person to have no fingers on their left hand for the product to be zero, because anything multiplied by zero equals zero.

# Lateral Thinking

- A man holidaying abroad fell off a yacht into deep water. He could not swim and he was not wearing anything to keep him afloat. It took 30 minutes for the people on the yacht to realize someone was missing. The missing man was rescued two hours later. Why didn't he drown?

# Solution

- He fell into the Dead Sea, which lies between Israel and Jordan. The water is so salty and dense that anyone in it floats very easily.

# Lateral Thinking

- Five pieces of coal, a carrot and a scarf are lying on a hill near a remote house. Nobody put them on the lawn but there is a perfectly logical reason why they should be there. What is it?

# Solution

- They were used by children who made a snowman. The snow has now melted.

# Lateral Thinking

- A woman gave natural birth to two sons who were born on the same hour of the same day of the same month of the same year. But they were not twins and she had no access to a time machine. How could this be?

# Solution

- They were two of a set of triplets (or quadruplets, etc.)



# Lateral Thinking

- A man was driving alone in his car when he spun off the road at high speed. He crashed through a fence and bounced down a steep ravine before the car plunged into a fast flowing river. As the car slowly settled in the river, the man realized that his arm was broken and that he could not release his seat belt and get out of the car. The car sank to the bottom of the river. He was trapped in the car. Rescuers arrived two hours later, yet they found him still in the river, but alive. How come?

# Solution

- The water in the river only came up to the man's chest.

# Lateral Thinking

- A police officer saw a truck driver clearly going the wrong way down a one-way street, but did not try to stop him. Why not?

# Solution

- The truck driver was walking.

# Lateral Thinking

- A man buys rice at \$1 a pound from American growers and sells them at \$0.05 a pound in India. As a result of this he becomes a millionaire. How come?

# Solution

- The man is a philanthropist who bought great quantities of rice to sell to poor people at prices they could afford. He started out as a billionaire, but lost so much money in his good works that he became a millionaire!

# Lateral Thinking

A man lives in the penthouse of an apartment building. Every morning he takes the elevator down to the lobby and leaves the building. Upon his return, however, he can only travel halfway up in the lift and has to walk the rest of the way - unless it's raining. What is the explanation for this?

# Solution

- The man is too short to reach the upper elevator buttons, but he can ask people to push them for him. He can also push them with his umbrella.



# Lateral Thinking

- A New York city hairdresser recently said that he would rather cut the hair of three Canadians than one New Yorker. Why?

# Solution

- Because he would earn three times as much money!

# Lateral Thinking

- A man is lying dead in a room. There is a large pile of gold and jewels on the floor, a chandelier attached to the ceiling, and a large open window. How did the man die?

# Solution

- The room is the ballroom of an ocean liner which sank some time ago. The man ran out of air while diving in the wreck.

# Lateral Thinking

- How could a baby fall out of a twenty-story building onto the ground and live?

# Solution

- The baby fell out of a ground floor window.

# Lateral Thinking

- A woman has incontrovertible proof in court that her husband was murdered by her sister. The judge declares, "This is the strangest case I've ever seen. Though it's a cut-and-dried case, this woman cannot be punished." Why?

# Solution

- The sisters are Siamese twins.



# Lateral Thinking

- A man walks into a bar and asks for a drink. The bartender pulls out a gun and points it at him. The man says, "Thank you," and walks out. Why?

# Solution

- The man has hiccups; the bartender scares them away by pulling a gun.

# Lateral Thinking

- A hunter aimed his gun carefully and fired. Seconds later, he realized his mistake. Minutes later, he was dead. Why?

# Solution

- It was winter. He fired the gun near a snowy cliff, which started an avalanche.
- OR...
- He shot an elephant with a low calibre rifle. Not powerful enough to kill it, the elephant became enraged and trampled him.

# Lateral Thinking

- A man is returning from Switzerland by train. If he had been in a non-smoking car he would have died. Why?

# Solution

- The man used to be blind -- he's returning from an eye operation which restored his sight. He spent all his money on the operation, so when the train (which had no internal lighting) goes through a tunnel, he thinks he's gone blind again and decides to kill himself. But before he could do it, he saw the light of the cigarettes people were smoking and realized he could still see.

# Lateral Thinking

- A man is dead in a puddle of blood and water on the floor of an otherwise empty locked room.

# Solution

- He stabbed himself with an icicle.



# Lateral Thinking

- A man is lying dead, face down in the desert. He's wearing a backpack.

# Solution

- He jumped out of an airplane, but his parachute failed to open.

# Lateral Thinking

- A man is lying dead, face down in the desert. There's a match near his outstretched hand. Why?

# Solution

- He was with several others in a hot air balloon, crossing the desert. The balloon was punctured, and they began to lose altitude. They tossed all their non-essentials overboard and then their clothing and food, but they were still sinking too fast. They drew matches to see who would jump over the side and save the others. This man lost.

# Lateral Thinking

- A man is driving his car. He turns on the radio, listens for five minutes, turns around, goes home, and shoots his wife. Why?

# Solution

- The radio program is one of those shows where they call up someone at random and ask them a question. The announcer states the name and town of the man's wife as the person he would call next. He does so, and a male voice answers. From this, he gathered his wife was having an affair.

# Lateral Thinking

- A man is driving his car. He turns on the radio, then pulls over to the side of the road and shoots himself. Why?

# Solution

- He's a DJ at a radio station and decides he wants to kill his wife. To establish his alibi, he puts a pre-recorded record on the air, quickly drives home, and kills her. On the way back, he turns on his show and discovers the record is skipping.



# Lateral Thinking

- The music stops, and a woman dies.  
Why?

# Solution

- The woman is a tightrope walker in a circus. Her act consists of walking the rope blindfolded, accompanied by music, without a net. The conductor is supposed to stop the music when she reaches the end of the rope, signalling that it's safe to step off onto the platform. That day, the usual conductor was ill. The substitute stopped the music early.

# Lateral Thinking

- A cabin, locked from the inside, is perched on the side of a mountain. It is forced open, and thirty people are found dead inside. They had plenty of food and water. Why did they die?

# Solution

- It was an airplane cabin; the plane crashed into the mountain.

# Lateral Thinking

- A man marries twenty women in his village but isn't charged with polygamy. How come?

# Solution

- He's a priest - he's marrying them to other people, not to himself.

# Lateral Thinking

- A dead man lies near a pile of bricks and a beetle on top of a book. How did he die?

# Solution

- The man was an amateur mechanic, the book is a Volkswagen service manual, the beetle is a car, and the pile of bricks is what the car fell off.



# Lateral Thinking

- A man goes into a restaurant, orders albatross, eats one bite, and kills himself. Why?

# Solution

- The man, his wife, and a second man were in a ship that was wrecked on a desert island. The man's wife died in the wreck. When there was no food left, the second man brought what he said was an albatross but was really part of the dead wife. Later they were rescued, and at some point, the first man decides to order albatross at a restaurant. It tastes nothing like what he was told was albatross on the island, which makes him realize he really ate his wife. Unable to cope with the realization, he kills himself.

# Lateral Thinking

- Not far from Madrid, there is a large wooden barn. The barn is completely empty except for a dead man hanging from the middle of the central rafter. The rope around his neck is ten feet long and his feet are three feet off the ground. The nearest wall is 20 feet away from the man. There is a puddle of water nearby. It is not possible to climb up the walls or along the rafters. The man hanged himself. How did he do it?

# Solution

- He climbed on a block of ice which has since melted.

# Lateral Thinking

- There is a dead man lying in the desert next to a rock. How did he die?

# Solution

- The dead man is Superman; the rock is Green Kryptonite.

# Lateral Thinking

- Bruce wins the race, but he gets no trophy. Why not?

# Solution

- Bruce is a horse.



# Lateral Thinking

- Two people in a room alone. One looks around and realizes he's going to die. Why?

# Solution

- It's night time. The one who looks around sees his own reflection in the window, but not his companion's. He realizes the other is a vampire.