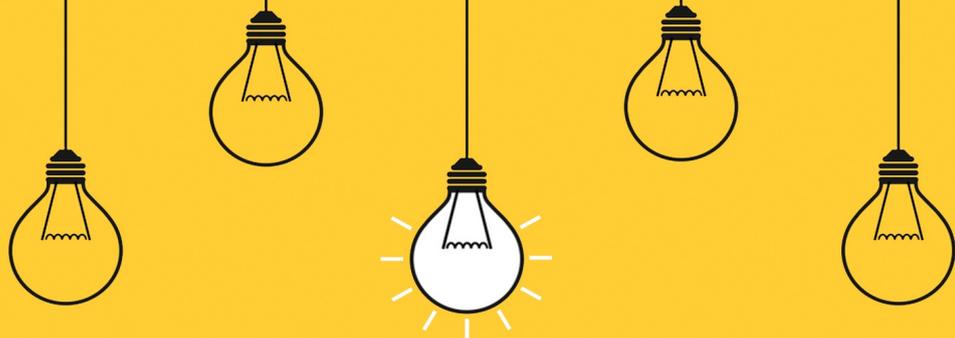


# 100 AWESOME



# LATERAL THINKING PUZZLES



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## About the Author

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# **100 Awesome Lateral Thinking Puzzles**



**Lloyd Strickland**

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100 Awesome Lateral Thinking  
Puzzles

With illustrations by  
Abigail Hall  
Eve Riddle  
Min Su

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## Dedication

For my mum. Thank you for everything



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# Introduction

The term ‘lateral thinking’ refers to a style of thinking that is different from the ‘logical’ or ‘vertical’ style of thinking with which we are all familiar. In normal logical thinking, progress is made step by step in a structured and orderly way. In lateral thinking, the aim is to abandon this approach in order to generate alternative ways of looking at a situation or piece of information. This is achieved by means of suspending assumptions, which makes room for random insights, sideways leaps, and the use of intuition and imagination. Suspending assumptions can be quite difficult. Indeed, it is not always obvious what assumptions we are making when we are faced with a novel situation. To see this, consider a classic lateral thinking puzzle about an unsuccessful bombing mission:

A pilot is flying on a bombing raid over enemy territory. As he nears his designated target, he presses the button to open the bomb doors. When a light flashes in the cockpit to indicate that the bomb doors are open, he presses the button to release the bomb. The plane is in full working order and has no faults, mechanical or otherwise, yet when he does this, nothing happens. Why did the bomb not drop from the plane?

This is a typical set-up of a lateral thinking puzzle, as it

describes a situation which at first sounds odd or unlikely, and then invites the reader to provide a plausible explanation for the scenario given. Now, normally, if a bomb fails to release, we would suppose that the pilot has done something wrong (such as pressing the wrong button), or that the bomb was not installed properly, or that there are mechanical problems preventing its release. In themselves, these are quite plausible suggestions, but of course the scenario described by the puzzle has already ruled them out. In fact, the traditional answer to this puzzle is that the bomb was not released because the plane was flying upside down! When encountering this puzzle for the first time, it is natural to make the assumption that the plane is flying the right way up. Once that assumption is made, however, it becomes impossible to reach the correct answer. Only when that assumption is suspended does it become possible to arrive at the reason for the bomb not dropping.

Because assumptions inhibit lateral thinking, it is a good idea when approaching the puzzles in this book to try to identify and examine any assumptions you might be making about the situations described. This ‘sideways approach’ should enable you to see the problems from different angles, and therefore make it easier to generate promising new lines of enquiry into the set of circumstances you are trying to explain.

This book is divided into three main sections. The first contains the puzzles, which are arranged into Easy, Moderate, and Difficult categories. The second section contains a series of corresponding clues designed to provide guidance towards each puzzle’s solution. The third section contains the answers.

The best way to work through these puzzles is in a group, with one person acting as ‘quizmaster’. The quizmaster should

read out the puzzle to the others in the group, then look at the answer so that he or she can then answer any questions that may be put to him. Questions should be framed in such a way that they can only be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' (or, if necessary, 'irrelevant'). 'Open' questions, which require a more detailed answer than 'yes' or 'no' should only be used as a last resort, when there is no other line of enquiry that appears to hold promise. Alternatively, the quizmaster can read out one or more of the relevant clues. Try using the clues sparingly — one at a time is best. If you are still stuck after reading the first clue then move on to the next one. Some of the clues merely close off a potential line of enquiry, while others hint at or even suggest a more fruitful approach.

Enjoy the puzzles!



# The Questions



# Easy Puzzles

## **The Meaning Of Life**

Joy was keen to discover the meaning of life, so one day she went to see her uncle, a very wise man, hoping to receive some insight into the matter. Her uncle told her that the information she was seeking could be found in a particular book. It was a well-known book, but not one of a religious or spiritual nature. What was the book?



## **The Well-Known Figure**

There is one man, known throughout the world, whose instructions are always heeded because it is widely known that those who fail to carry them out risk swift and serious injury. Who is he?

### **147 Maximum?**

A professional snooker player claims to have achieved an exceptional score of 148. No one saw her do it, and there is no film of her at the table whilst she was doing it, yet not one of her fellow players disputes that she did indeed achieve such a score. Why not?



### **The Mystery Of The Pyramid**

A supermarket worker was given the task of stacking 140 cans of baked beans in the form of a pyramid\* for a promotional display. The cans were of identical size and shape, and he was stacking them on a flat and stable surface, yet every one of his attempts to arrange them this way ended in failure. No one interfered with the display while he was building it, so why was he unable to complete the pyramid?

\* That is, in seven layers of 1, 4, 9, 16, 25, 36 and 49 cans.