

How to become a brain teaser whiz



I left you with this brain teaser to figure out.

Farmer Jones wants to cross a nearby river. He wants to get his goat, his wolf and his head of cabbage across this river. He can only bring one at a time across the river. He can't leave the goat and wolf together and he can't leave the goat with the cabbage. How does he get all three across the river?

As with most brain teasers, once you learn the answer you want to groan.

- How could the answer be so simple?
- Why didn't I see it in the first place?
- I'm sure my answer, even though it is more convoluted, would have worked too.

Most of us approach brain teasers by using our everyday problem solving skills. When the answer is not immediately apparent, we shift brain gears to a higher order of thinking. But after a few minutes of vexing thought, we either give up, believe there's an inherent error that prevents it from being solved, or buckle down to find the answer because we won't admit defeat.

In problem solving **knowing the short cuts and tips can speed up the process.** Laura Vork, author of *How to Solve Brain*

Teaser Games has 7 great tips to turn you into a brain teaser solving whiz.

#1 Read slowly, read carefully, re-read

Reading too fast may cause us to miss clues, overlook important details or jump to early conclusions. Hint: look for any common factors

Farmer Jones wants to cross a nearby river. He wants to get his goat, his wolf and his head of cabbage across this river. He can only bring one at a time across the river. He can't leave the (goat and wolf together) and he can't leave the (goat with the cabbage). How does he get all three across the river?

#2 Identify the objective and make a list of requirements and obstacles

- Objective: farmer gets a goat, a wolf and a cabbage across the river
- Requirement: Farmer has to do so, one at a time.
- Obstacles: 1) can leave wolf and goat alone together 2) can leave goat alone with cabbage

When working on a solution see if it meets the original objective, requirements and obstacles.

#3 Use the physical approach

Use representative objects and physically work out the scenario, or recreate the scenes with drawings.

#4 Use your imagination and place yourself in this imaginary sequence

By making it more real you may see options that you had not considered before.

#5 If your stuck with a solution that not's getting you

anywhere go back and rethink your approach

Ask yourself what is the basic assumption I'm making here? (Your basic assumption might be that each time the farmer crosses the river he is carrying one of the items.)

#6 If the answer still eludes you, let it go.

By stepping away from trying to find the answer, your subconscious mind can take over and surprise you with a fresh idea or insight.

#7 Notice the common mistakes that take you down rabbit holes

Once you know what they are, you can avoid them in the future and become a brain teaser solving whiz.

So, let's hit the refresh button.

My first mistake was to look for different sequence combinations of the farmer taking one of the three objects across. – no luck as they did not meet the requirements and obstacles.

Next: I realized my assumption was based on the farmer making 3 round trips which could not have overcome the obstacles.

Next: I looked for a common factor(s). Found one – Goat (any solution I tried was always thwarted by the goat).

Next, I diagrammed the sequence:

- Farmer takes goat
- Farmer takes wolf
- Farmer takes cabbage

(Now, this sequence doesn't work because it puts the goat and wolf together alone)

After taking a break there's a bright idea: Farmer returns from other side of river empty handed (an assumption without

merit since nothing was said that he had to return empty handed).

New diagrammed sequence:

- Farmer takes goat across first
- Farmer returns from first crossing empty handed
- Farmer takes cabbage across next
- Farmer returns from second trip with goat
- Farmer takes third trip across with wolf
- Farmer returns from third trip empty handed
- Farmer takes fourth trip across with goat

Voila! Problem solved.

Once you know not to be too hasty and follow these tips, you'll be just amazed at how smart you are.

Source:

http://www.ehow.com/how_4815250_solve-brain-teaser-games.html

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