

# Problem Collection for Introduction to Mathematical Reasoning

By Dana C. Ernst and Nándor Sieben  
Northern Arizona University

**Problem 1.** Three strangers meet at a taxi stand and decide to share a cab to cut down the cost. Each has a different destination but all are heading in more-or-less the same direction. Bob is traveling 10 miles, Sally is traveling 20 miles, and Mike is traveling 30 miles. If the taxi costs \$2 per mile, how much should each contribute to the total fare? What do you think is the most common answer to this question?

**Problem 2.** Multiply together the numbers of fingers on each hand of all the human beings in the world—approximately 7 billion in all. What is the approximate answer?

**Problem 3.** Imagine a hallway with 1000 doors numbered consecutively 1 through 1000. Suppose all of the doors are closed to start with. Then some dude with nothing better to do walks down the hallway and opens all of the doors. Because the dude is still bored, he decides to close every other door starting with door number 2. Then he walks down the hall and changes (i.e., if open, he closes it; if closed, he opens it) every third door starting with door 3. Then he walks down the hall and changes every fourth door starting with door 4. He continues this way, making a total of 1000 passes down the hallway, so that on the 1000th pass, he changes door 1000. At the end of this process, which doors are open and which doors are closed?

**Problem 4.** Suppose you have 6 toothpicks that are exactly the same length. Can you arrange the toothpicks so that 4 identical triangles are formed? Justify your answer.

**Problem 5.** I have 10 sticks in my bag. The length of each stick is an integer. No matter which 3 sticks I try to use, I cannot make a triangle out of those sticks. What is the minimum length of the longest stick?

**Problem 6.** Imagine you have 25 pebbles, each occupying one square on a 5 by 5 chess board. Tackle each of the following variations of a puzzle.

- (a) Variation 1: Suppose that each pebble must move to an adjacent square by only moving up, down, left, or right. If this is possible, describe a solution. If this is impossible, explain why.
- (b) Variation 2: Suppose that all but one pebble (your choice which one) must move to an adjacent square by only moving up, down, left, or right. If this is possible, describe a solution. If this is impossible, explain why.
- (c) Variation 3: Consider Variation 1 again, but this time also allow diagonal moves to adjacent squares. If this is possible, describe a solution. If this is impossible, explain why.

**Problem 7.** Consider an  $n \times n$  chess board and variation 1 of the pebble puzzle from above. For what values of  $n$  is the puzzle solvable? For what values of  $n$  is the puzzle unsolvable? Justify your answers by either providing a method for a solution or an explanation for why a solution is not possible.

**Problem 8.** Consider an  $n \times n$  chess board and variation 2 of the pebble puzzle from above. For what values of  $n$  is the puzzle solvable? For what values of  $n$  is the puzzle unsolvable? Justify your answers by either providing a method for a solution or an explanation for why a solution is not possible.

**Problem 9.** An ant is crawling along the edges of a unit cube. What is the maximum distance it can cover starting from a corner so that it does not cover any edge twice?