

# Problem Collection for Introduction to Mathematical Reasoning

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**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.** 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 5.** 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 6.** 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 7.** 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?

**Problem 8.** Four red ants and two black ants are walking along the edge of a one meter stick. The four red ants, called Albert, Bart, Debbie, and Edith, are all walking from left to right, and the two black ants, Cindy and Fred, are walking from right to left. The ants always walk at exactly one centimeter per second. Whenever they bump into another ant, they immediately turn around and walk in the other direction. And whenever they get to the end of a stick, they fall off. Albert starts at the left hand end of the stick, while Bart starts 20.2 cm from the left, Debbie is at 38.7cm, Edith is at 64.9cm and Fred is at 81.8cm. Cindy's position is not known—all we know is that he starts somewhere between Bart and Debbie. Which ant is the last to fall off the stick? And how long will it be before he or she does fall off?

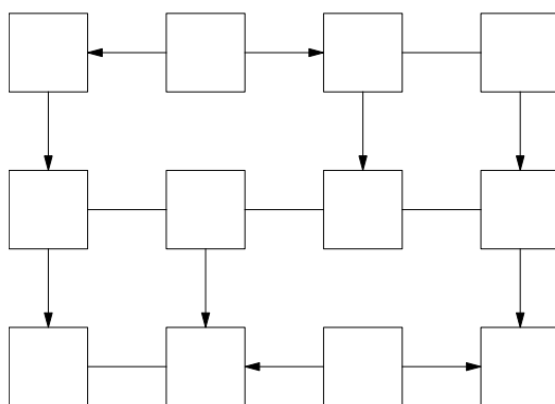
**Problem 9.** Suppose you have 6 toothpicks that are exactly the same length. Can you arrange the toothpicks so that 4 identical triangles are formed? Justify your answer.

**Problem 10.** 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 11.** The grid below has 12 boxes and 15 edges connecting boxes. In each box, place one of the six integers from 1 to 6 such that the following conditions hold:

- For each possible pair of distinct numbers from 1 to 6, there is exactly one edge connecting two boxes with that pair of numbers.
- If an edge has an arrow, then it points from a box with a smaller number to a box with a larger number.

You do not need to prove that your configuration is the only one possible; you merely need to find a configuration that satisfies the constraints above.



**Problem 12.** Take 15 poker chips or coins, divide into any number of piles with any number of chips in each pile. Arrange piles in adjacent columns. Take the top chip off every column and make a new column to the left. Repeat forever. What happens? Make conjectures about what happens when we change the number of chips.

**Problem 13.** The  $n$ th triangular number is defined via  $t_n := 1+2+\cdots+n$ . For example,  $t_4 = 1+2+3+4 = 10$ . Find a visual proof of the following fact. By “visual proof” we mean a sufficiently general picture that is convincing enough to justify the claim.

$$\text{For all } n \in \mathbb{N}, t_n = \frac{n(n+1)}{2}.$$

**Problem 14.** Let  $t_n$  denote the  $n$ th triangular number. Find both an algebraic proof and a visual proof of the following fact.

$$\text{For all } n \in \mathbb{N}, t_n + t_{n+1} = (n+1)^2.$$

**Problem 15.** Let  $t_n$  denote the  $n$ th triangular number. Find both an algebraic proof and a visual proof of the following fact.

$$\text{For all } a, b \in \mathbb{N}, t_{a+b} = t_a + t_b + ab.$$

**Problem 16.** We have two strings of pyrotechnic fuse. The strings do not look homogeneous in thickness but both of them have a label saying 4 minutes. So we can assume that it takes 4 minutes to burn through either of these fuses. How can we measure a one minute interval?

**Problem 17.** Show that in any group of 6 students there are 3 students who know each other or 3 students who do not know each other.

**Problem 18.** Suppose someone draws 20 random lines in the plane. What is the maximum number of intersections of these lines?

**Problem 19.** Two different positive numbers  $a$  and  $b$  each differ from their reciprocal by 1. What is  $a + b$ ?

**Problem 20.** My Uncle Robert owns a stable with 25 race horses. He wants to know which three are the fastest. He owns a race track that can accommodate five horses at a time. What is the minimum number of races required to determine the fastest three horses?

**Problem 21.** A father has 20 one dollar bills to distribute among his five sons. He declares that the oldest son will propose a scheme for dividing up the money and all five sons will vote on the plan. If a majority agree to the plan, then it will be implemented, otherwise dad will simply split the money evenly among his sons. Assume that all the sons act in a manner to maximize their monetary gain but will opt for evenly splitting the money, all else being equal. What proposal will the oldest son put forth, and why?

**Problem 22.** Imagine that in the scenario of the previous problem the father decides that after the oldest son's plan is unveiled, the second son will have the opportunity to propose a different division of funds. The sons will then vote on which plan they prefer. Assume that the sons still act to maximize their monetary gain, but will vote for the older son's plan if they stand to receive the same amount of money either way. What will transpire in this case, and why?

**Problem 23.** Let  $a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h$  be distinct elements in the set  $\{-7, -5, -3, -2, 2, 4, 6, 13\}$ . What is the minimum possible value of  $(a + b + c + d)^2 + (e + f + g + h)^2$ ?

**Problem 24.** We have the following information about three integers:

- (a) Their product is an integer;
- (b) Their product is a prime;
- (c) One of them is the average of the other two.

What are these numbers? *Hint:* You need to find all such triples and show that there are no others.

**Problem 25.** A mouse eats her way through a  $3 \times 3 \times 3$  cube of cheese by tunneling through all of the  $27$   $1 \times 1 \times 1$  sub-cubes. If she starts at one corner and always moves to an uneaten sub cube, can she finish at the center of the cube?

**Problem 26.** Four prisoners are making plans to escape from jail. Their current plan requires them to cross a narrow bridge in the dark that has no handrail. In order to successfully cross the bridge, they must use a flashlight. However, they only have a single flashlight. To complicate matters, at most two people can be on the bridge at the same time. So, they will need to make multiple trips across the bridge, returning the flashlight back to the first side of the bridge by having someone walk it back. Unfortunately, they can't throw the flashlight. It takes 1, 2, 5, and 10 minutes for prisoner  $A$ , prisoner  $B$ , prisoner  $C$ , and prisoner  $D$  to cross the bridge and when two prisoners are walking together with the flashlight, it takes the time of the slower prisoner. What is the minimum total amount of time it takes all four prisoners to get across the bridge?

**Problem 27.** An overfull prison has decided to terminate some prisoners. The jailer comes up with a game for selecting who gets terminated. Here is his scheme. 10 prisoners are to be lined up all facing the same direction. On the back of each prisoner's head, the jailer places either a black or a red dot. Each prisoner can only see the color of the dot for all of the prisoners in front of them and the prisoners do not know how many of each color there are. The jailer may use all black dots, or perhaps he uses 3 red and 7 black, but the prisoners do not know. The jailer tells the prisoners that if a prisoner can guess the color of the dot on the back of their head, they will live, but if they guess incorrectly, they will be terminated. The jailer will call on them in order starting at the back of the line. Before lining up the prisoners and placing the dots, the jailer allows the prisoners 5 minutes to come up with a plan that will maximize their survival. What plan can the prisoners devise that will maximize the number of prisoners that survive? Some more info: each prisoner can hear the answer of the prisoner behind them and they will know whether the prisoner behind them has lived or died. Also, each prisoner can only respond with the word "black" or "red."

**Problem 28.** Consider the prisoners with dots on the back of their heads puzzle that we introduced above. However, this time suppose that there are 11 prisoners. Describe a strategy for maximizing the number of prisoners that will live. What if there are  $n$  prisoners?