

Lateral Challenges

Lateral Challenges are short story conundrums you (or someone else) tell the group. After hearing the story the group tries to solve the riddle by asking the teller questions that can be answered with either a “yes” or “no” response (another possible answer is “doesn’t matter”). These Lateral Challenges are good for developing listening skills, formulating questions, and deductive reasoning - and they are also fun. We use them during sit down times, breaks, walking from place-to-place, and sometimes for time fillers. (*Google Paul Sloane for additional Lateral Puzzle resources.*) FYI: The * indicates riddles that have a deeper meaning you might want to talk about after.

1. Early one Sunday morning in the mansion of Sir. Edward Collumstocker, it was discovered that one of Sir Edward’s precious chocolate éclairs was missing. Only three people were in the house that morning. The Maid claims she was making the beds upstairs. The Butler said he was out getting the mail and the cook was out gathering eggs from the chickens. Who Dunit? *No mail is delivered on Sunday – the Butler did it!*
2. *A young woman lives on the 12th floor of an apartment building. Every day she takes the elevator down to the first floor to go off to work. Every day, when she returns, she rides the elevator to the 6th floor and then takes the stairs the remaining six floors – unless it’s raining, then she takes the elevator all the way to the 12th floor. Why? *The woman is a dwarf. She is too short to press any elevator buttons higher than the 6th floor. When it’s raining, she carries her umbrella so she uses this to press the 12th floor button.*

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3. Two neighbors were talking over the fence when it started to rain. The one neighbor said to the other, "You're a lucky man, your lawn always gets more rain than mine." Why is this true? *The one neighbor has more land than the other.*

4. A skilled gemologist is having difficulty handling a diamond. Why? *He is on a black diamond (difficult) ski run.*

5. It is 8 pm and Billy turns on the television to watch his favorite show. It is an hour-long program, but he only watches it until 8:45 and then turns off the television. He watches the show in this manner each week – never missing an episode and is always able to tell you how the show ends. How is this possible? *He tapes the show earlier in the day and fast forwards through the commercials.*

6. A man and his wife played five games of backgammon in their living room one evening. There were no draws in any of the games, yet each won the same number of games and lost the same number of games. How could this happen? *They were not playing each other.*

7. A man bought a parrot from the local pet store that was guaranteed to repeat every word it heard. When the man brought the parrot home, the parrot did not utter a single word spoken to it. Why? *The parrot was deaf.*

8. One morning a woman was cleaning her house when she accidentally knocked the pie, that had been cooling on the sill, out the window. When she looked out the window, it is nowhere to be found. Why? *The woman lives on a houseboat.*

9. A karate expert breaks a bone. He is not in any pain, but is disappointed. His friend cries out happily. Why? *The karate expert broke off the short end of a wishbone from a chicken.*

10. When Charlie Walker joined the Hallonton Police Department, his picture was on the front page of the town's paper. All the officers liked him, and he was on some of the biggest cases the department had. When Charlie finally retired from the force he did not receive any retirement benefits or the traditional gold watch from the Department. Why? *Charlie was a police dog.*

11. Two monkeys were lying next to each other one evening. By the next morning the two had disappeared, yet they did not climb, walk, or run away. What happened? *The monkeys were animal crackers – someone ate them.*

12. *An old man with epilepsy starts shaking uncontrollably, and falls to the ground. Even though his son knows the situation is serious, he does not call for medical assistance, nor does he offer any. Why? *The two men are experiencing an earthquake.*

13. *A couple has two sons who were born in the same hour of the same day in the same year, but they were not twins. Why? *The boys were part of a set of triplets, they have a sister.*

14. After a long day at work a man walks into a bar and falls immediately unconscious. Why? *The man walked into a low-hanging iron bar and knocked himself out.*

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15. David, Scott, and Jimmy Turner all jump into Mr. Turner's Pickup truck after attending a local football game. Mr. Turner pulls into his driveway, where he, David, and Scott leave the truck and enter the house. Jimmy leaves the truck as well, waves goodbye, and heads down the street. Where is he going? *He's going home. He is a friend of David and Scott who just happens to share the same last name.*

16. *A woman stood looking through the window on the tenth floor of an office building. Suddenly, she was overcome by an urge and opened the window and jumped through it. It was a sheer drop outside the building to the ground, yet she was completely unhurt when she landed. Why? *The female window washer jumped from the outside to the inside of the building so she could go to the bathroom – to satisfy her urge to “go.”*

17. Kimberly threw a ball as hard and as far as she could. The ball did not hit the ground, nor did it hit any walls, yet it immediately returned to her. How? *She threw the ball straight up in the air.*

18. *Mr. Wallace was a prosperous investor. He made over a million dollars a year investing in stocks. However, he never paid a cent of income tax to the U.S. government. Why? *Mr. Wallace is a Canadian citizen.*

19. *Five men were going down a country road together when it started to rain. Four of the men began to walk faster, but the fifth man made no effort to speed up. However, he remained dry while the other four got wet. They all arrived at their destination together. How? *The four men were carrying a coffin with the fifth man inside.*

20. *A mother takes her small child to have her ears pierced. The mother decides that she would like to get hers pierced as well. However, the attendant states he cannot pierce the mother's ears. Why? *The mother is under 18 – she needs her mother's permission.*

21. A man takes a watch up to the sales counter and the woman behind the counter says, "\$200." Two hundred dollars are exchanged and the man leaves the shop without the watch. He never goes back. Why? *The shop is a pawnshop where the man received \$200 for a watch he brought in.*

22. *Two men break into a local business, setting off the alarms. They quickly take as many valuables as they can and run back outside where they find themselves face-to-face with a swarm of police officers and the business owner. The two men hand over all the valuables to the business owner and are never arrested. Why? *The two men are fireman who were able to save some of the business owners' valuable merchandise.*

23. Cindy buys a new pair of shoes specifically for her upcoming vacation. On the day she leaves, she does not bother packing them, nor does she ever put them on during her vacation. Why? *They are brake shoes for her car.*

24. *A nervous, shifty-eyed man steps on the train. No one notices him except a woman who gives him a questioning look. He immediately gets off the train. Why? *The man is stepping on her wedding train.*

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25. *John had been a stock salesman for 15 years. He was aware of the rules against insider trading, yet he bought stock from a friend's company after the friend confided in him about the impending good fortune of the company. The government knew of his actions, but did nothing. Why? *He bought livestock.*

26. A distraught woman is sitting in a bar frantically searching for her lost key. She knows that if she can't find the key she will lose her job. Why? *She is a singer.*

27. *A man driving through town was clocked by the police going 25 miles and hour in a 30 mile an hour zone. The police pulled the man over for passing cars that were going 30 miles and hour. Why? *The man was going the wrong way on a one-way street.*

28. A main wire going over a bridge in Boston snaps. The bridge is located within the Boston City limits. It is replaced immediately, but the taxpayers of Boston do not pay a penny for the replacement. Why? *It is a guitar string and bridge.*

29. A young lady suddenly opens the door and steps out of a car traveling 50 mph yet she is not injured. Why? *She is moving from one car to the next on a train.*

30. Ingrid lives in the Swiss Alps. One December morning, she decides to go skiing. It is 2 degrees Celsius outside in the Alps, but she does not wear a coat, hat, or gloves. Why? *She is on vacation in a warm location – she is not in the Alps - and decides to go water skiing.*