Trick Question or Stupid Question?

July 7, 2025

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   - **Trick Question**
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   - **Trick Question**
   - **Stupid Question**
5. We will do this several times- there will be SIX SETS of questions.

Trick Question or Stupid Question? PART I

1. What is the least common birthday in America?
2. What US state has the easternmost point in America?
3. What is the least common first names for a U.S. President as of summer 2025?

Answer to PART I, Q1

What is the least common birthday in America?

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CORRECT ANS Feb 29.

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MISC Second Least: Dec 25.

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CORRECT ANS Feb 29.

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MISC Second Least: Dec 25.

MISC Most common: Sept 16. 9 months after Holiday Season.

Answer to PART I, Q2

What US state has the easternmost point in America?

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COMMON ANS Maine (Quoddy Head Maine).

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CORRECT ANS Alaska (Cape Wrangell Alaska). The Prime Meridian is just east of Alaska's Islands so the easternmost point in America is in Alaska.

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MY OPINION Using the Prime Meridian to define East and West this precisely is stupid.

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COMMON ANS The following presidents have a unique first name among presidents: Thomas Jefferson, Martin Van Buren, Zachery Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses Grant, Rutherford Hayes, Chester Arthur, Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Joe Biden.

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CORRECT ANS All of the names that no president had are tied.

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My Opinion Stupid. The question implies the domain is the set of presidents.

Misc Facts, NOT Trick vs Stupid

What is the **most common first name** for a president?

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5. Bush: George H.W. and George W. Father-Son.

Trick Question or Stupid Question? PART II

1. TRUE or FALSE:
   If the powerset of A has 5 elts then A is infinite.
2. Find x such that the following is true. There are 2025 cans of paint. Either (a) There are $\geq x$ cans of the same color, or (b) There are $\geq x$ cans of different colors.
3. The year is 2021. There are 23 people in REU-CAAR. If everyone hugs everyone, how many hugs are there?

Answers to PART II, Q1

T or F: If the powerset of the set A has 5 elts then A is ∞.

Answers to PART II, Q1

T or F: If the powerset of the set A has 5 elts then A is ∞.

COMMON ANS F since the powerset of A cannot be five.

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COMMENTARY I did an experiment with this question.

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COMMENTARY I did an experiment with this question. One year I put this on an exam as a **T-F-No-Explanation-Needed**.

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WHAT HAPPENED People did TERRIBLE on this question both times. Even the honors section.

Answers to PART II, Q2

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Common and Correct Answer $\sqrt{2025} = 45$.

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COMMON and INCORRECT ANSWER

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Some students think that in combinatorics the answer for a problem with n is always $n!$.

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ANSWER I HAD IN MIND REU-CAAR in Summer 2021 was VIRTUAL. So sadly, no hugs :-)

My Great Nephew Bob and his Girlfriend Alice

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BILL: 13 people. Everyone hugs everyone. How many hugs?

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ALICE: $13 \times 13 = 169$ pairs of people, but that counts every pair twice, so $\frac{169}{2} = 84.5$. Uh, I don't think you can have 84.5 hugs

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BILL: You both deserve a hug! (they all hug).

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   HOW CAN A RABBIT EAT A BEAR FOR DINNER?

2. What is the degree of $(x-a)(x-b)(x-c)\cdots(x-z)$?

Answer to PART III, Q1

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I would call him a sore loser.

Trick Question or Stupid Question? PART IV

1. What are the next two numbers in the sequence below?

   $$2, 4, 6, 30, 32, 34, 36, 40, 42, 44, 46, 50, 52, 54, 56, 60, 62, 64, \ldots$$

2. You have 6 blue socks, 8 white socks, and 10 black socks in a drawer. You take them out of the drawer randomly, one at a time. How many do you need to take out in order to ensure that you have a pair?
3. What is the next letter in the following sequence?

   W,I,T,N,L,I,T,F

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CORRECT ANS The sequence is all numbers that, when written in English, do not have an *e* in them. Answer is 66 and 2000

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CORRECT ANS Look at the sentence

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Hence the answer is S.

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Which is a shift by 1 of the original sequence.

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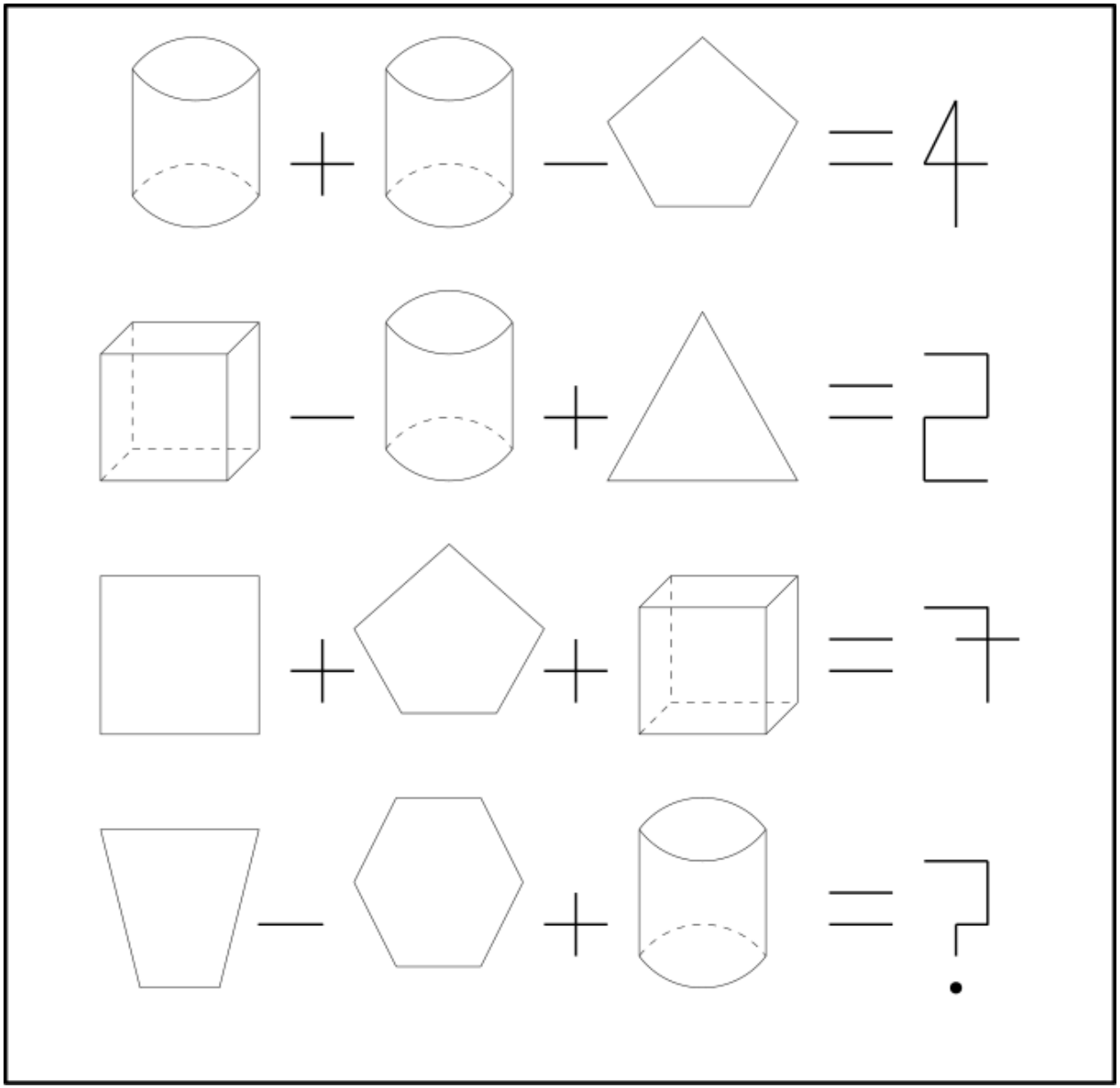
Which is a shift by 1 of the original sequence.

Nobody ever got it right so I thought I made it easier.

PART V: Fill in the ?



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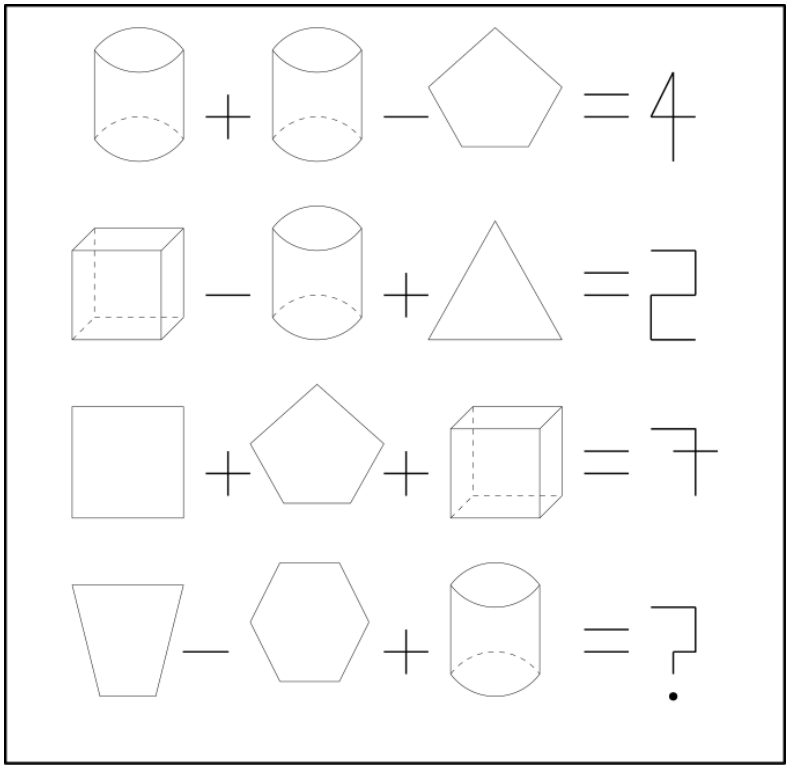

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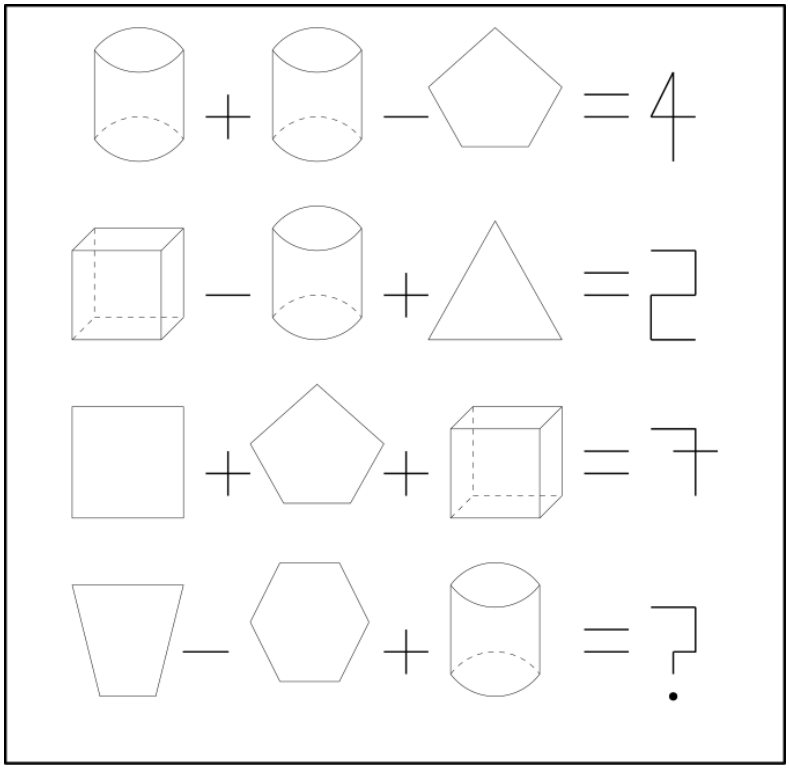

Sum the dimensions.

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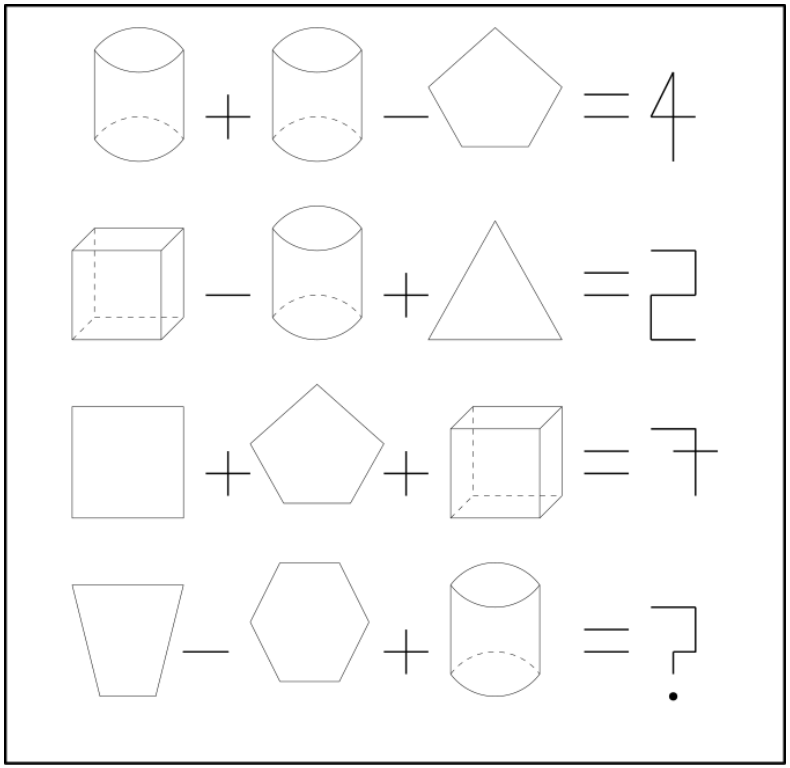

Sum the dimensions.

$3 + 3 - 2 = 4$

$3 - 3 + 2 = 2$

$2 + 2 + 3 = 7$

$2 - 2 + 3 - 3$

Trick Question or Stupid Question? PART VI

The following are two real conversations. For each one: (1) Is the examiner correct? (2) Where and when do you think this conversation took place?

Conversation 1:

Examiner: What is the definition of a circle?

Student: The set of points equidistant from a given point.

Examiner: Wrong! It is the set of *all* points equidistant from a given point.

Conversation 2:

Examiner: What is the definition of a circle?

Student: It is the set of all points equidistant from a given point.

Examiner: Wrong! You must say the distance is nonzero.

Answers to PART VI, Q2

The questions were in the USSR and used for the sole point of not letting Jews into the best schools.

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Comment Any system which blocks qualified people from doing what they are good at is stupid.
See next slide for more thoughts on this.

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I wonder how the team owner would fill in this sentence
On the one hand, if I hire black players I expand my talent pool, get better players, and have a better chance of getting into the World Series, which would increase my profits (baseball didn't make as much money then as now). On the other hand FILL IT IN.

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Continued on the next slides.

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In 2011, when the army finally dropped dont-ask-dont-tell, it was the Generals who wanted it dropped.

More Generally

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How would they fill in the following sentence?

On the one hand if we let people participate in our society we will get more talented people channeled into activities that will benefit our society. On the other hand, if we ban Y from doing X then FILL IT IN.

To End on a Brighter Note

Back to our original theme.

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- Trick
- Stupid
- Enlightening

It can also be some combination of these.

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NOT five.