

"Tackling these puzzles is incredibly gratifying...There's an art to these invasive questions, as Poundstone reveals in this neat little manifesto." --New Scientist

Are You Smart Enough to Work at Google?

Trick Questions, Zen-like Riddles, Insanely
Difficult Puzzles, and Other Devious
Interviewing Techniques You Need to Know
to Get a Job Anywhere in the New Economy

WILLIAM POUNDSTONE

Author of *HOW WOULD YOU MOVE MOUNT FUJI?*

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William Poundstone

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Are You Smart Enough to Work at Google?: Trick Questions, Zen-like Riddles, Insanely Difficult Puzzles, and Other Devious Interviewing Techniques You Need to Know to Get a Job Anywhere in the New Economy William Poundstone

You are shrunk to the height of a nickel and thrown in a blender. The blades start moving in 60 seconds. What do you do? If you want to work at Google, or any of America's best companies, you need to have an answer to this and other puzzling questions.

Are You Smart Enough to Work at Google? guides readers through the surprising solutions to dozens of the most challenging interview questions. The book covers the importance of creative thinking, ways to get a leg up on the competition, what your Facebook page says about you, and much more. *Are You Smart Enough to Work at Google?* is a must read for anyone who wants to succeed in today's job market.

Are You Smart Enough to Work at Google?: Trick Questions, Zen-like Riddles, Insanely Difficult Puzzles, and Other Devious Interviewing Techniques You Need to Know to Get a Job Anywhere in the New Economy Details

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Rachel says

Short answer: no.

Nattawut Phetmak says

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Michael says

I spent 9 months unemployed after graduation and going through the same job hunting process and interview style questions as mentioned in this book. I sucked at the interview questions, I was seriously useless but this book really is brilliant. It explains what interviewers are looking for and gives answers to many common questions you'll likely face. Certainly going to recommend this to my job-seeking friends and if i find myself unemployed and going to interviews, this will be my revision book the night before. I like the author's clear writing style and explanations, so I'll check out his other books as well now.

Crina Bucur says

Great collection of brainteasers and logical puzzles to keep you entertained. The subtleties are thoroughly debated, explanations are satisfactory and the author gracefully manages not to be boring, even when getting technical. There is also a list of useful websites on the matter to refer to, at the end of the book.

Polly says

Apparently, the answer for me is no. I kept getting frustrated and then feeling grateful I have a job. One where I get to work with computers and solve puzzles that make sense.

Lisa says

In a word, "No."

Maybe it is my age, but if I ever sat down for a job interview and was asked:

"You are shrunk to the height of a nickel and thrown in a blender. The blades start moving in sixty seconds. What do you do?"

I would refuse to answer such a ridiculous question.

As I read that question on the second page, I remembered my stepsons at ages 13 and 14 arguing about whether Batman's car or the car of his nemesis was faster. They had been watching the animated TV series of Batman, and their argument became quite heated. I wanted to yell at them that they were disagreeing about an animated TV show that by definition was not real and they were wasting their time and efforts because it was all nonsense.

Google probably doesn't hire many 55 year olds.

If you have a job interview with a company like Google (one that likes to hire creative smart people) read this book to prepare for stupid questions like the blender question or a more reasonable one that you just need a little warm up for like:

What is 2^{64} ?

or

How many golf balls will fit in a school bus?

The second half of the book is devoted to finding the best way to solve each problem.

If you are thinking of finding a new job or just like brainteasers, this may be a good book for you.

Angelino Desmet says

William Poundstone underscores the right mindset any person can and should develop. The emphasized traits are *particularly* essential considering our future characterized by continuous technological advancement. A time where key skills will be adaptability and a willingness to keep learning, no matter how much you fall. Since this book has been published, there has been an increasing amount of studies and literature exclaiming the importance of the 'growth mindset.' "Google it," is therefore, an apt and timely suggestion. Aside from the main riddles for which the answers have a dedicated chapter, there are a couple of extra questions in the

main text which don't have spoiler warnings; a minor nuisance.

PS If riddles make you feel stupid, that's OK. Your brain is growing, provided that work for it.

Laurie says

I don't really want to work at Google, but what a trippy little book! As a mother of two teens (ugh... really?) I often complain about how easy school is with the resources today's kids have and how little time they seem to spend actually working hard at academics. But I also realize that the demands on the brains of this generation are fantastically different. Where we remembered information, they much evaluate and analyze. Where we played Ms. Pacman and ate up power pills and little ghosts, they play games where they have to use different characters with different skills and attributes to solve multi-layered problems. The demands in the current workplace are and the workplace of the near future will be, by necessity, more complex, more dependent on lateral thinking and creativity, and much less focused on the idea of "one right answer." This book is less about being hired by Google and more about how to think purposefully and creatively.

That said, would I be hired at Google? Dunno. Depends on how much time they'd spend listening to my problem solving. I was pleased that I came up with workable answers that weren't included in Poundstone's chapters. I also bailed on several and had issues with some of the lines of reasoning in others. All in all, this book was wicked fun and a challenge to be sure. There is food for thought here whether you are in the job market, in school, have kids in school, or just want to stretch your brain out a little bit. It is also a perfect pick for those of us with ADD - no need to read front to back here.

Karly Steele Lyle says

Are You Smart Enough to Work at Google? is a fascinating look into the zany trickster interview questions and hiring practices common among industry leaders today. Poundstone has packed this little book with enough mind-bending riddles to make anyone go cross-eyed. Imagine, if you will, being in an interview and having any of these bad boys dropped onto your lap:

"How would you weigh your head?"

"How many bottles of shampoo are produced in the world in a year?"

"Imagine a country where all the parents want to have a boy. Every family keeps having children until they have a boy; then they stop. What is the proportion of boys to girls in this country?"

Many of the questions have no "correct" answer, but more accurately, the company has a "preferred" answer. And for inquiring minds, no, I am not smart enough to work at Google. Although, if I could combine the riddle busting powers of my boyfriend and I into one person we might have a fighting chance of being able to... submit a resume. *Are You Smart Enough to Work at Google?* is a puzzle lover's paradise. Readers are guaranteed a good time and a roller coaster of emotions ranging from pride "Victory! I am a genius!" to despair "Who would ever get that question right? This is totally ridiculous!."

Julia Hörmayer says

I absolutely love this book!!!

I stumbled upon it at a huuuuge book shop in London, not even in the smart thinkers sections which I loved so much and where it actually would have fit, but somewhere else where I wasn't even interested in looking but mum and I met there (like I said, the store was huge). So I saw it, read the first like two pages and thought I had to buy it. I didn't regret it for a second.

Honestly, this book is amazing. Thrilling, interesting, challenging. The logic puzzles (which were the main part of this book) were great and though I felt super stupid not being able to answer the majority of them, I feel like I learned from that. Because once you got to the answer, it was simple and you got a little mad at yourself for not having thought of it earlier. I'll definitely buy the author's previous book too and search for similar ones. If you know some, please tell me!

Grampus says

The short answer to the title of this book is "No".

I just started a new job in the past month and went through the interview process a couple of times and fortunately never had any questions like this. Still, it's good to know the types of questions employers may be asking these days. This book would help you prepare your mind for that type of thinking and I would highly recommend this book if you were going to interview at Google. Also useful to scan in preparation for any interview because you never know who is sitting on the other side of the desk and what will be that ONE thing that sets you apart from the other candidates.

In my opinion though, the book seemed to drone on and I found it very repetitious. Could it be possible it was just over my head? Nah. Ok, yes.

Tapani Aulu says

Amerikkalaiselle lukijalle (ja vuonna 2012) tästä on (olisi ollut) apua ihan oikeissa haastatteluissakin, mutta itselleni tämä on mielenkiintoinen kurkistus isojen firmojen hullunkuriseen rekrymaailmaan. Ja vielä enemmän tämä on aivojumbppakirja, josta löytyy helppoja pulmia, vaikeita pulmia, ei-mitään-järkeä-kuinka-vaikeita-pulmia ja ihan oikeita matemaattisia tehtäviä, joita haastatteluissa voidaan täryyttää hakijan eteen.

Tehtävien ratkaisut ja pitkät perustelut ovatkin kirjan parasta antia.

Tässä muutama helppo:

1. Miten 4 minuutin tiimalasilla ja 7 minuutin tiimalasilla mitataan tasan 9 minuuttia?
2. Kuinka monessa lukujen 1 ja 1000 välisessä kokonaisluvussa on numero 3?
3. Kuinka monta kertaa analogisen kellon kaikki kolme osoitinta ovat päällekkäin?
4. Montako hiihtohissin istuimista ohitetaan matkalla alhaalta ylös?

Hyviä "fermi-kysymyksiä"

1. Paljonko perisit Seattlen kaikkien ikkunoiden pesemisestä?
2. Kuinka monta golfpalloa mahtuu linja-autoon?
3. Montako shampooa valmistetaan maailmassa vuosittain

Ja tässä pari, joita en osannut, hokannut tai edes jaksanut yrittää

1. Mitä tarkoittaa dead beef?
2. Mies työnsi autonsa hotellin eteen ja menetti omaisuutensa. Mitä tapahtui?
3. Simuloi 7-tahkoinen noppa 5-tahkoisella nopalla. Miten tuotat 5-tahkoisella nopalla satunnaisluvun, joka on välissä 1-7?

Ja bonus:

Mikä on kaunein tuntemasi yhtälö?

Vadim Sviridovich says

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Aimeekay says

I loved this book! It was funny and informative. Poundstone presents some of the toughest interview questions that are actually being asked by companies today. In addition to the answers, he delves into the histories of the questions themselves. Who thought them up, how they relate to the job at hand, and how some don't have any relevance to the job at all, but why the interviewer is asking them anyway. I found the background on some of the questions almost as interesting as some of the questions themselves. It was also quite fun trying to figure out the answers. I read with two bookmarks. One keeping my place in beginning of the book, and one in the back were Poundstone had listed each questions answer in order that they had appeared in the book itself. I'm not going to even try to pretend that I have the genius to work at google, or some of the other companies that these questions were gleaned from, so it shouldn't be a surprise when I say that more often then not the answers I came up with were no where near correct. I still had fun though. The author also gave quite a few tips on what to do if you're hit with questions you don't quite know how to answer. How to brainstorm on the fly, ways to question you interviewer to buy time and get extra hints to help solve the problem. Also ways to phrase your answers so that even if they are wrong you don't look like

a complete idiot. Plus other interview tips, such as making sure you research the company you are applying at and making sure you clean up your public sites, such as facebook or myspace, before applying. After all if you are googling them, then they definitely are googling you. Especially if the company you are applying for is GOOGLE!. Whether you have interviews looming in the near future, or if you just want to give your brain a good work out this book is definitely gonna help either way. Even if you plan on being the interviewer instead of the interviewee it might help. After all, according to the data the author presents, interviews really are no true reflection on how the applicant is actually going to perform on the job. But maybe if you use some of these more interesting questions, or versions of them, you can at least see who REALLY wants the job. (if they are going to put up with some of the crazier questions and actually try to answer them, then obviously they want it right?)

In compliance with FTC guidelines, I'm disclosing that I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

David says

This is a fun book of puzzles of all types; mathematical, logical, algorithms, estimation, mind games and creativity. There is also lots of interview advice, when applying for a job. The advice is good not just for Google, but for many other companies as well.

It was fun trying to solve the puzzles. Lots of them are quite tricky. I was able to solve some, others I flubbed.

The book correctly points out that, even though lots of companies rely on such puzzles during interviews, they are not reliable predictors of eventual performance on the job. In fact, sometimes there is zero correlation between interview performance and job performance.

The book mentions the "20% project" at Google, where employees are allowed to work on any idea they may have, for one day a week. The book cites a list of highly-regarded products that came out of these 20% projects. I recently read that, unfortunately, this perk has been rescinded at Google.

The last half of the book supplies not just the answers to all the puzzles, but detailed explanations as well. The style of the writing has a light touch, and is often subtly humorous. I recommend the book for all those who like a diverse range of challenging puzzles.
