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The Brain Teaser Solving Guide for 2026

Most brain teasers hide one trick. This guide gives you a five-step way to find it, the trick behind each kind of puzzle, three puzzles worked through, the traps that catch most people and how to check an answer from an AI solver.

Five steps for any brain teaser

1. **Read it twice, slowly.** Most puzzles are solved by a word you skipped the first time.
2. **Name the type.** Is it wordplay, logic, numbers, a pattern or a lateral thinking story?
3. **Find the assumption.** Ask what the puzzle wants you to take for granted, then question it.
4. **Try small cases.** For numbers and patterns, test the first few terms by hand.
5. **Check every clue.** A right answer fits all of the clues, not just most of them.

The trick behind each kind of puzzle

Puzzle type	What to look for
Word riddle	A word with two meanings, or a "body part" an object has, like the keys of a keyboard.
Logic puzzle	Write each fact down, then rule options out one at a time until one is left.
Math brain teaser	The fast answer is often the wrong one. Write the numbers as a small sum and check it.
Pattern	Look at the gaps between terms, then the gaps between the gaps.
Lateral thinking	The story is true, but one word means something else, like a game instead of real life.

Three puzzles, worked through

Word riddle: What gets wetter the more it dries? A towel. Drying something means taking water away from it, and the towel takes that water in.

Math teaser: A bat and a ball cost $1.10. The bat costs $1.00 more than the ball. The fast answer, 10 cents, is wrong: then the bat would be $1.10 and the total $1.20. If the ball is x, then x + (x + 1.00) = 1.10, so the ball costs 5 cents.

Pattern: 2, 6, 12, 20, 30, ? The gaps are 4, 6, 8, 10, so the next gap is 12 and the answer is 42.

Traps that catch most people

Answering too fast: the first idea is often the one the puzzle wants you to have. **Adding rules that are not there:** nothing says the lines must stay inside the box. **Reading words literally:** a riddle's "mouth" may be a river's. **Missing one clue:** an answer that fits four clues out of five is still wrong.

How to check an AI answer

An AI solver is a quick way to see the answer and the reasoning, but it can make mistakes, most often on long puzzles or ones with a missing clue. Read the answer, then check it against every clue yourself. For a number puzzle, redo the sum. If an answer feels wrong, ask the solver to solve it another way, or ask for a hint only and try again yourself.

Checklist before you say the answer

- ☐ I read the puzzle twice
- ☐ I questioned the obvious reading
- ☐ My answer fits every clue
- ☐ I can explain the trick
- ☐ I named the puzzle type
- ☐ I tested small cases
- ☐ I redid any sum
- ☐ I could make a puzzle like it

The trick I want to remember

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