

# NY Times Problem-Solving Puzzle

More Game Resources: [CQII.org](https://www.cqi.org)

Fun Scale ● ● ● ○ ○

Ease of Play Online ● ● ● ● ●

Connection to QI ● ● ● ● ○

**Type of Game:** A problem-solving game that requires identifying patterns in numbers to test individual hypotheses

**How Long:** 10-15 minutes

## Learning Objectives

- Learn about the reiterative learning process and the importance of creating a hypothesis
- Understand that we often learn more when our hypothesis fails
- Allow participants to problem solve
- Encourage critical thinking and articulation of a problem

## Suggested Audiences

Anyone, whether clinical and administrative staff, QI team members, managers, people with HIV who test out various improvement ideas

## History and More Information

This game was found in a *New York Times* article titled “A Quick Puzzle to Test Your Problem-solving” which was written by David Leonhardt on July 2, 2015.

## Materials

For this game, you will need:

- The link to the *New York Times* article ([nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/03/upshot/a-quick-puzzle-to-test-your-problem-solving.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/03/upshot/a-quick-puzzle-to-test-your-problem-solving.html))
- CQII instructional slides and additional resources ([targethiv.org/virtual-game-guide](https://targethiv.org/virtual-game-guide))
- Zoom account (or other video conferencing platform) with breakout room access
- Access to a computer and/or handheld mobile device, and internet connection

## Preparation

To prepare for this session:

- Familiarize yourself with the game’s structure
- Access the *New York Times* link ([nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/03/upshot/a-quick-puzzle-to-test-your-problem-solving.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/03/upshot/a-quick-puzzle-to-test-your-problem-solving.html))
- Prepare the game:
  - Read through the game instructions and key teaching points in its entirety
  - Practice the game itself
  - Practice presenting the key teaching points

## Playing the Game

### *Welcome and Introductions*

To begin the game, welcome participants and thank them for their participation. If necessary, ask individuals to introduce themselves to the group.

### *Agenda*

Provide a brief description of the game's primary components:

1. Setting the stage for the interactive exercise
2. Playing the NY Times Problem-solving Puzzle
3. Debrief and discussion on what lessons are learned and how they apply to HIV care
4. Feedback and close

### *The Game*

**Step 1:** Provide a brief introduction of the game to participants, including the instructions and rules to play; the premise of the game is to guess the underlying rule by testing out three numbers using the provided website

**Step 2:** Display the *New York Times* Puzzle ([nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/03/upshot/a-quick-puzzle-to-test-your-problem-solving.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/03/upshot/a-quick-puzzle-to-test-your-problem-solving.html)) using the Zoom share screen functionality; identify one volunteer to share guesses to test out his/her hypotheses

**Step 3:** Type in the participant guesses and ask what the underlying rules are; continue and encourage participants to learn from past guesses

**Step 4:** After multiple participants made their guesses or the time elapses, reveal the correct underlying hypothesis and debrief

## Debrief and Discussion

- Engage the audience in a discussion on creating a hypothesis
  - Often we learn more when we are proving wrong rather than right; review the findings from the New York Times article on the same web page
  - Reflect on what we are testing and that we are often not thinking outside the box
- Ask the participants, what did they observe? Any trends? Thoughtful comments?
- Ask for their conclusions about this process/game
- How does this game apply to HIV care and/or your HIV program?

## Feedback and Close

- Ask your audience for feedback on whether this session met its objectives; take note of their responses and keep it for your use in the future
- Schedule an informal follow-up session with any audience member who wants clarification or more information on the game or the concepts you discussed
- Thank your audience and congratulate them on their hard work and success