

January 2022



Celebrating January

**International Creativity
Month**

Black Diamond Month

Mentoring Month

New Year's Day

January 1

Bird Day

January 5

**Make Your Dream Come
True Day**

January 13

Use Your Gift Card Day

January 15

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 17

**World Snow Sculpting
Championship**

January 18–23

***Compliment Day**

January 24

Activity Professionals Day

January 28

Novelty Acts



January might be International Brain Teaser Month, but no matter the time of year and no matter our age, our brains love to be teased! Brains are built to enjoy the novelty of a wide variety of challenges. Attempts

to overcome those challenges keep our brains limber and help slow age-related cognitive decline. Whether it is a puzzle like a sudoku or a crossword, a mental challenge like a riddle or logic puzzle, or a device like a Rubik's Cube, it is beneficial whenever we force our brains to overcome a task or learn something new.

Our brains find *novelty*, or the quality of learning something new, original, or unusual, powerfully attractive. Novelty is not just related to new games or overcoming unique tasks. Newness takes many forms—hearing a new song, buying a new outfit, traveling to a new place—and is almost always accompanied by a rush of dopamine to the brain. Through this chemical rush, novelty makes us happy. Yet, as soon as a song gets overplayed, an outfit becomes outdated, or a new place becomes familiar, we find ourselves restless, seeking novelty once again. Brain teasers often offer our brains tiny daily doses of novelty.

The crossword puzzles and sudoku found in the daily news certainly challenge our creative thinking, but even these can become routine and lose their novelty. This is why experts believe it is best to challenge your brain with different types of brain teasers. Learning a new board game is one type of challenge. Trying a new sport, practicing a new hobby, or even attempting to learn a musical instrument is another type of brain teaser. Furthermore, trying something new with a group of friends stretches your brain even more because now you must not only overcome a new challenge but also navigate social dynamics. The science is clear that there is no single type of brain teaser that will keep our brains young and sharp. Luckily, society offers an almost infinite variety of experiences that offer novel challenges to our hungry brains.

Out of the Minds of Babes



American founding father Ben Franklin was renowned as a writer, printer, scientist, inventor, philosopher, and politician. His birthday on January 17 was declared Kid Inventors' Day so that

innovative kids could find inspiration to turn their own inventive dreams into reality.

At age 11, Ben Franklin invented the first swim flippers. Chester Greenwood was only 15 when he developed the first earmuffs. And Louis Braille, at age 12, began his work inventing a new language for the blind. Well into the 21st century, kids are still innovating. Fourteen-year-old Sarah Buckel wanted an easy way to decorate her locker. Thanks to her, kids now have magnetic locker wallpaper. Children are the future, and their inventions are bound to improve the way we all live.

Tomb of the Boy King

British archaeologist Howard Carter spent two years exploring and excavating a tomb in Egypt's famed Valley of the Kings before making the find of a lifetime. On January 3, 1924, he discovered a solid gold coffin containing the mummified remains of the boy-king, Tutankhamen.

King Tut was just nine years old when he began his rule. His time as pharaoh lasted just 10 years before he died at age 19. Historians are unsure how Tut died. Following tradition, Tut was mummified and buried with myriad treasures. The tomb was sealed, and the desert sands swallowed its entrance, hiding the tomb for over 3,000 years.

When Carter first arrived in Egypt in 1891, many of the tombs of Egypt's greatest pharaohs had been discovered. But the tomb of one little-known pharaoh, the boy-king Tutankhamen, was unaccounted for. Carter spent 30 years searching Egypt's shifting sands. Carter intensified his search for King Tut's tomb after the end of World War I with financing from one of the world's wealthiest collectors of antiquities. In November 1922, Carter's water boy stumbled across some ancient steps hidden in the sands. Carter knew that he had stumbled on a find of great importance.



Carter opened the tomb and was amazed to find that its contents had not been looted. According to Carter's diary, "Details of the room within slowly emerged from the mist, strange animals, statues, gold—everywhere the glint of gold." It took nearly two years for Carter and his team to reach the Pharaoh's burial chamber. It was filled with golden shrines, jewel-studded chests, and Tutankhamen's sarcophagus. He raised the lid to reveal a coffin of pure gold. Carter's discovery ignited a worldwide fascination with Egyptology and turned him into a celebrity. Meanwhile, his wealthy financier had been bitten by a mosquito and soon died of an infection. Journalists attributed his death to the "Mummy's Curse."

History Down Under



January 26 brings Australia Day in the country Down Under. This national day remembers the landing of Britain's First Fleet at Sydney Cove in 1788 under the command of Naval Captain Arthur Phillip. Phillip raised the British flag, declaring the land for Britain and establishing the first colony in Australia. Of course, Australia was already inhabited at the time of Phillips' arrival by Aboriginal Australians. For this reason, protests have erupted in recent years asking for a change in the date of Australia's National Day. The Australian government has responded by making concerted efforts to make Australia Day a day for all Australians, especially recognizing Indigenous Australians and their contributions to Australian society.

Around the World in 72 Days

In 1873, Jules Verne fascinated the world with his tale of a whirlwind trip around the world in 80 days. In 1888, intrepid investigative journalist Nellie Bly proposed to turn fiction into fact when she suggested to her editor at the *New York World* newspaper that she would attempt her own circumnavigation of the globe. On January 25, 1890, she arrived in New Jersey not only victorious but having completed her journey eight days faster than the heroes of Verne's story.

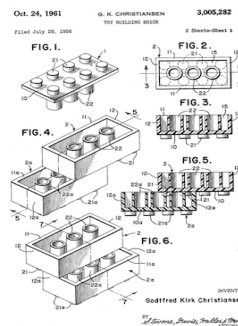
Bly was born Elizabeth Cochran. She adopted the pen name Nellie Bly when she became a columnist for the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. But she soon became dissatisfied with her work as editors asked her to repeatedly write only fluff pieces for women readers. Bly headed to New York City looking for more serious work. She pretended to be mentally ill for 10 days to infiltrate a local mental hospital and detail the treatment of its patients. Her firsthand account was so fascinating that the *New York World* published her work as a six-part series. It made Bly famous and inspired a new sort of first-person news investigation known as *investigative journalism*.



By the time Bly suggested her around-the-world trip, she had her editors' full support, so there was no question that she would undertake the adventure. Bly's proposition was so intriguing that a rival newspaper, the *New York Cosmopolitan*, sponsored a competing voyage for a female journalist of their own, Elizabeth Bisland. Bly did not get word of Bisland's competing trip until she reached Hong Kong, and she promptly dismissed the challenge as a publicity stunt. Readers, however, were fascinated. Bly sent dispatches detailing her travels, which were printed in the paper. Readers participated in a paper-sponsored contest to guess the date of her arrival. Bly's arrival home 72 days, six hours, and 11 minutes later established a new world record and bested her rival Bisland by over four days. Her adventure even inspired a board game for children.



Building Blocks



On January 28, 1958, Danish toymaker Godtfred Kirk Christiansen submitted a design to the patent office for a plastic building block known as a "Lego brick." The toy bricks had been produced since 1949, but their flimsiness and poor sticking

power did not make them popular with children. In January 1958, Godtfred gathered his best engineers and sketched some designs to improve their construction, including three inner tubes that would improve the bricks' sticking power. These three inner "clutch tubes" became the design feature that helped Lego bricks become one of the world's most iconic and beloved toys. For over 60 years, Lego has produced toys that are affordable, durable, and fun for both boys and girls. The freedom and creativity with which people can build have made Lego bricks attractive to not only kids but also adults all over the world.