

Pablo's Guide To Setting the Armchair Treasure Hunt

Timetable

Start early! The effort in selecting questions, checking them, choosing a treasure site, conceiving a theme, devising puzzles and codes, arranging publicity, and getting the thing typed up should not be underestimated. Remember you will need to have finished by the end of November in order to get the quiz into *Noticeboard*. There is no harm in having the whole thing finished well before this - other than the risk of seeing your treasure-site become the local by-pass.

My timetable has been roughly this:

Jan - Sep: Collect questions. Remember to note down anything that looks like a good question at the time. You can always weed out the less good ones later.

Jan - Mar: Think about what is wrong and what is right with the ATH. What are the aims? How can I make it different? How can it be made to appeal to more people?

Mar - May: Decide on theme. Have some idea about what it will all look like.

Jun - Sep: Finalise list of questions. Determine treasure-site. Determine puzzles, red herrings and clues. If having pictures drawn then specify what is wanted to artist.

Sep - Nov: Lay out pages. Scan in pictures. Print top copy

Oct - Nov: Make a start on the "Answers" document - there won't be much time in January and everyone will want them right away.

Oct: Ask Emma Ridgeon what arrangements are for *Noticeboard* this year - e.g. is there going to be a December issue? When does she want copy?

Oct: Prepare advertisement for November *Noticeboard* asking people who want personal copies to apply directly.

Oct: Prepare and issue 'teaser' poster for coffee-point noticeboards.

Nov: Apply to LSSC (Elaine Bodenitz) for funding for prizes.

Nov: Prepare and issue poster for coffee-point noticeboards, asking people who want personal copies to apply directly

Nov: Run off approx 100 copies for personal applicants (there are always many more of these than entrants - I wonder why?). NB also that Dave Kee will want around 20 copies.

Nov: Get a good top copy to Emma to put into December *Noticeboard*.

Dec: Decide on release day for personal copies. Release these.

Dec: Bury box. Leave this as late as possible to minimise the chances of chance finds by strangers.

Dec: Be in over Christmas to cope with people lost at red-herring sites, illegible copies, questions like "what do you really mean by ... ?", first finder etc.

Jan: Prepare spreadsheet for marking. Be prepared to receive entries up to a week after official end-date (all with good excuses!) so don't be too free with telling everyone the answers. Don't leave people's answer sheets lying around in the office - the teams have worked hard for these and there are some unscrupulous entrants around.

Jan: Purchase prizes

Jan: Mark sheets. Determine strategy for 'alternative' answers and ensure marking is consistent.

Jan: Update "Answers" document with alternatives, winners, funny stories etc. Print and distribute with prizes.

Jan: Tell Emma who the winners were etc. so she can put into February *Noticeboard*.

Jan: Claim prize money from LSSC

Jan: Recover box

Jan - Dec: Recover sanity

And that's all there is to it!

Questions

The difficulty of the questions is a fraught point. My philosophy (and you may disagree) is that there is no point in setting a question answered by everybody and there is no point in setting a question that is not answered by anybody. You should be on the lookout for things that are just on the edge of being solvable because this is the only way that the top teams are going to be separated. The risk is that, as I have heard too often, that people pick up the quiz and don't even start because they can't do anything (or enough of it) straight off so don't bother to enter. My attitude is that there are enough easy quizzes around and if we are going to maintain the integrity of the ATH then it must be the hardest thing ever! We can't make it any easier or the top teams will all get 100%.

The ideal question is one which either has an intrinsic appeal in the question itself (what do Swedes eat on Thursdays?) or a "I never knew that!" quality to the answer (it was David Mann in *Duel*). Questions that smack of the schoolroom, or answers that make you go "so what?" should be avoided. A simple perusal of quizzes I have set will reveal that this is not always possible - but it is an aim. The maths puzzles (which I personally hate) are the most popular among Logi-bods - many people do those but can't be bothered to proceed further. A good spread over all subjects is essential for the quiz.

I try also to include one or more questions that can only be answered by Mums and Dads and also at least one that can only be answered by under-10's. Anything with a Christmas theme is also favoured. Don't forget the traditional Logica question - ironically this was originally inserted to discourage people from outside the company from entering; now I'm positively trying to encourage them!

Don't be tempted to copy questions from other quiz books (like I have in the past!). Many entrants have these books and the answers are often wrong. Ideally each answer should be backed up by a reputable reference book. Don't rely on things you 'just happen to know' - it's amazing how often they can't be justified. Check the questions against the original source references again just before issuing the quiz - even this year I found I had lost a few vital phrases while laying the pages out.

Finally, I would like to integrate the 'questions' side of the quiz with the 'Treasure Hunt' side. I feel this is a flaw in the aesthetics of the ATH but one I've run out of ideas to cure it - once you've ran every combination along the line of 'first letter of the answers' there doesn't seem to be much left. Perhaps you'll think of something.

Answers

Inevitably there will be a number of answers different from your own. My philosophy is that if the 'alternative' is backed up with a reference or other evidence then it is marked right (as is anyone else with that answer). Otherwise it was hard luck. I have appealed for people to justify their answers but, despite this, many do not. I am left with feeling that some of their answers are not just guesses but how can I tell? On the other hand you have to watch out for wrong answers backed up with completely spurious references - the "Wild Boys" are particularly adept at this, although they do it

purely as a joke.

If the entrant had not spotted the clues giving the first letter of the answers then I allowed some alternatives (e.g. Germany & Italy instead of Tomania and Bacteria). If they had spotted the clue then I insisted on the right answer.

Prizes

Up to now I have claimed £200 (out of £210 in prizes) from the LSSC. In fact the quiz cost me far more than this as I had the 'personal' copies made at a bureau, as well as the answers. This is not to mention the postage for people on site who want a personal copy sent to their home. And it is certainly not to mention the 16MB I had to add to my PC to get Microsoft Publisher to work - but that's another story. So you may feel that you are justified in asking for more - I think the will is there in the LSSC committee, as the ATH is a well-established tradition which draws in a lot of people for little expenditure per head, unlike some of their other activities.

I believe that the LSSC rules forbid giving prizes to people outside the company, or prizes in cash (hence the M&S vouchers). You may like to re-check this if it bothers you.

Noticeboard

I had no difficulty in getting the quiz into *Noticeboard* this year (it was a bit traumatic the first couple of times). Even though it is nominally bimonthly there always should be a December issue in order to publicise the office closing dates. Hopefully there will be a November and a December one this year; alternatively there may be one in October and December in which case your publicity will need to be prepared earlier.

I think 12 pages is the absolute maximum that Emma would put up with. Ask her to make it so the 1st page of the quiz is on the right-hand side so the rest of *Noticeboard* may be torn off (and lovingly preserved).