

# Course work on cognition and intelligence

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



In this exercise, I was required to find a system that would ensure a safe passage of three animals across a river. These animals were a cat, a dog and a mouse. The catch was that the raft could only transport the man and just one animal for each trip time across the river. The problem was that if the cat and dog were left alone on the river bank, the dog would eat the cat. Similarly, if the cat was left alone with the mouse on the river bank, the cat would eat the mouse. This called for a coming up with a way to safely get all these animals across the river without harm to either one of them. This is how I interpreted the problem.

The strategy that I used is the subgoals strategy (Sternberg & Pretz, 2004, p. 156). This involves breaking down a problem into smaller more manageable pieces and then solving each problem at a time instead of taking the whole issue head on. This subgoals strategy aims at first getting an animal across safely while ensuring the safety of the ones left on the other side. Using this strategy I decided to transport the cat first to the other side because the dog can be left alone with the mouse without harming it. Secondly I decided to transport the dog to the other side and then I transported the cat back to the original side instead of leaving it with the dog. Then I transported the mouse and left it with the dog and finally I came for the cat. This way all the animals were safely across.

The obstacle that I encountered while solving this problem was low motivation after trying out three times and failing, it seemed impossible to solve it. However after going through the text on problem solving and the various examples given especially the one involving Hobbits and Orcs, I had a clue on how to tackle this problem and on giving it another shot, I

managed to crack it (Sternberg & Pretz, 2004, p. 265). Where I was failing is focusing too much on having them on the other side without thinking that I could bring back one animal ( the cat) to the original side, leave it and pick up the one that had remained, that is the mouse, carry it over to be left with the dog then come back for the cat.

I was aware of the thought process as I worked through the problem (Sternberg & Pretz, 2004, p. 354). I knew the survival two of these animals mainly the cat and the mouse depended on the strategy I would use to transport them across the river. At the back of my mind, I knew that the only two animals that could be left alone were the dog and the mouse, and the only animal that could be the first to cross would be the cat. I also had to factor in that the raft could only transport one animal across each time together with the man commanding the raft. The most important thing was to securely get all the three animals across the river in one piece.

## **References**

Sternberg J. Robert PhD, & Pretz E. Jean. (2004). *Cognition and Intelligence: Identifying the Mechanisms of the Mind*. England: Cambridge University Press.