

The Enterprising Snail

A group of snails had been living happily for many years at the bottom of a twenty-foot well when it suddenly ran dry. Most of the snails lay down to die, but one industrious snail decided to go elsewhere. The next dawn she began to climb to the top of the well at the prodigious rate of three inches per hour for each of the twelve daylight hours. Each night, however, she slipped back at the rate of two inches per hour. How long did it take this enterprising snail to escape from the well?

Adapted from chapter 1 puzzle #1, The Enterprising Snail, in Oswald Jacoby, *Mathematics for Pleasure*, 1962

