Riddlepedia Name _____ Date _____

Inventor Riddles



30 riddles from easy to tricky. Write your answer on the line. Answers are on the last page.

Easy riddles ★

1. We were two brothers who fixed and sold bicycles in Dayton, Ohio. On December 17, 1903, at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, we made the first powered, controlled airplane flights. Who are we?

   ANSWER _____

2. I wasn't the first person to make an electric light glow, but in 1879 my team at Menlo Park, New Jersey, made a bulb with a carbon thread inside that lasted for many hours. I ended up with more than 1,000 US patents. Who am I?

   ANSWER _____

3. In 1876 I received the patent for the telephone. My first words on it were to my assistant in the next room: "Mr. Watson, come here." Who am I?

   ANSWER _____

4. Nobody knows who invented me, because I'm one of the oldest inventions of all. I helped people move heavy loads on carts, and today I'm on bikes, cars and skateboards. What am I?

   ANSWER _____

5. I was invented in ancient China around 2,000 years ago, made from plant fibers mashed with water and dried in thin sheets. You might be holding me right now. What am I?

   ANSWER _____

6. My magnetized needle always swings to point north, so sailors and hikers use me to find their way. Early versions of me were made in ancient China. What am I?

   ANSWER _____

7. I ran experiments with electricity, printed newspapers, helped write the Declaration of Independence and invented a metal rod that protects buildings from lightning. My face is on the US $100 bill. Who am I?

   ANSWER _____

8. Before they built airplanes, the Wright brothers repaired and built me in their shop. I have two wheels, a chain and pedals. What am I?

   ANSWER _____

9. A scientist made a glue that was too weak to hold things together for good. Years later, a coworker used it to make bookmarks that stayed put but peeled off without tearing the page. What am I?

   ANSWER _____

10. Which invention lets you see right through a wall?

ANSWER _____

Medium riddles ★★

11. In the mid-1400s, in the German city of Mainz, I built a printing press with metal letters that could be moved around and used again. Books could now be made far faster than by hand, and my famous Bible was printed in the 1450s. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

12. I lost my sight in an accident when I was 3 years old. As a teenager in France, I invented a reading and writing system of raised dots that blind people use all over the world today. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

13. With my husband Pierre, I discovered two new chemical elements, radium and polonium. I was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, and I won a second one in a different science. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

14. I was born into slavery in Missouri and became a famous plant scientist at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. I taught farmers to plant peanuts and sweet potatoes so worn-out soil could recover after years of cotton, and I found many new uses for those crops. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

15. I was a painter before I helped build the electric telegraph. In 1844 I sent a message along a wire from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore, and a code of dots and dashes still carries my name. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

16. In 1877, Thomas Edison invented me. I could record a voice and play it back, which amazed everyone who heard it. What am I?

ANSWER _____

17. After a walk in the Swiss mountains, an engineer noticed burrs stuck all over his dog's fur. He copied their tiny hooks to invent me. Now I close shoes, jackets and bags with a loud rip. What am I?

ANSWER _____

18. On a snowy streetcar ride in 1902, I watched the driver keep stopping to wipe his window. I invented an arm that cleared the glass with a handle from inside, and I got a patent for it in 1903. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

19. I didn't invent the telescope, but in 1609 I built better ones. Pointing one at Jupiter in 1610, I spotted four moons circling it, and those moons are named after me today. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

20. I'm a pair of glasses with two kinds of lens in each frame: the top part for seeing far away, the bottom part for reading. Benjamin Franklin is credited with inventing me. What am I?

ANSWER _____

Tricky riddles ★★★

21. I was a Hollywood movie star in the 1940s, but I also loved inventing. With a composer named George Antheil, I patented a way for radio signals to hop between frequencies so enemies couldn't jam them. Bluetooth uses frequency hopping today. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

22. In 1843 I published long notes about Charles Babbage's planned Analytical Engine, including step-by-step instructions for the machine to calculate a tricky series of numbers. My father was the famous poet Lord Byron. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

23. I didn't invent the internet, but in 1989, while working at CERN, a physics lab near Geneva, I came up with the World Wide Web, with web pages and links you can click. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

24. Marie Curie named one of the elements she discovered after her home country. What is it called?

ANSWER _____

25. I patented a smoke hood that helped rescuers breathe, and in 1923 I patented a traffic signal with an extra position that told every car to stop so people could cross safely. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

26. I was tired of my best dishes getting chipped when they were washed by hand, so I designed a machine with wire racks and spraying water. I patented it in 1886. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

27. In 1871 I patented a machine that folded and glued paper into bags with flat bottoms, so they could stand up on their own. Grocery bags are still made that way. Who am I?

ANSWER _____

28. The Wright brothers made their first flight in 1903. People first walked on the Moon in 1969. How many years apart were these two events?

ANSWER _____

29. A Braille cell has six spots, and each spot can be raised or flat. How many different patterns have at least one raised dot?

ANSWER _____

30. People often say the light bulb was invented by one man in 1879. What's the more accurate story?

ANSWER _____

Answers

Inventor Riddles · answer key · print or fold this page away before you hand out the sheet

1. **The Wright brothers.** Orville flew first, for about 12 seconds.
2. **Thomas Edison**
3. **Alexander Graham Bell**
4. **The wheel**
5. **Paper**
6. **A compass**
7. **Benjamin Franklin**
8. **A bicycle**
9. **Sticky notes**
10. **A window**
11. **Johannes Gutenberg.** Movable type had been invented earlier in China and Korea, but my press spread printing across Europe.
12. **Louis Braille**
13. **Marie Curie.** She discovered things rather than inventing them, and she is still the only person to win Nobel Prizes in two different sciences.
14. **George Washington Carver.** A popular myth says he invented peanut butter, but he didn't.
15. **Samuel Morse**
16. **The phonograph**
17. **A hook-and-loop fastener**
18. **Mary Anderson.** She invented one of the first windshield wipers.
19. **Galileo Galilei**
20. **Bifocals**
21. **Hedy Lamarr**
22. **Ada Lovelace**
23. **Tim Berners-Lee**
24. **Polonium**
25. **Garrett Morgan**
26. **Josephine Cochrane.** She invented one of the first successful dishwashers.
27. **Margaret Knight**
28. **66 years. 1969 − 1903 = 66.**
29. **63 patterns. 2 × 2 × 2 × 2 × 2 × 2 = 64, minus the blank one.**
30. **Many inventors made electric lights first.** Inventors in several countries, including Joseph Swan in England, worked on them for decades, and Edison's team made a practical, long-lasting bulb.

Need a hint? Every riddle has one at riddlepedia.com/inventor-riddles/, where you can also play them as a game.