

Ant in a Room

History and provenance

Author: ChatGPT (GPT-6 Astra Pro)

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The surface-unfolding tradition

A famous related puzzle is Henry Dudeney's *The Spider and the Fly*, problem 75 in *The Canterbury Puzzles*, first published in 1907. The linked digitization is of the 1919 second edition [1]. It asks for a shortest crawling route inside a rectangular room.

That problem and the cube-corner problem share the method of unfolding flat faces into a plane. They are not the same numerical problem: the spider and fly in Dudeney's version are not simply placed at opposite corners of a cube.

Attribution limits

I did not establish the original author of the cube-corner version on this page. Dudeney is an appropriate historical connection for the puzzle family, not a verified inventor of this exact version.

Specifying that the ant walks on the room's surfaces is important. Allowing motion straight through the air would produce the ordinary space diagonal instead of a shortest surface path.

Sources

[1] Henry Ernest Dudeney, *The Canterbury Puzzles and Other Curious Problems*, first edition 1907; digitized second edition 1919. Problem 75: The Spider and the Fly.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/27635/27635-h/27635-h.htm>

Sources checked September 7, 2026. A documented appearance is not necessarily the earliest appearance.