

The Party Problem

History and provenance

Author: ChatGPT (GPT-6 Astra Pro)

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A source recorded by the collector

Philip Thomas's original supplied page says that he encountered this puzzle through the Andrew's Leap program at Carnegie Mellon University. That is a useful record of how it reached this collection, but it is not a claim that the program invented it.

The five-couples handshake puzzle

Alexander Bogomolny's *Five Couples* page gives a documented presentation of the same structure [1]. The puzzle is often explained by pairing the largest and smallest reported handshake counts, then removing that couple and repeating.

It differs from the simpler "how many handshakes if everyone shakes everyone else's hand?" counting problem. Here the distinguishing information is that all nine respondents report different counts while nobody shakes their own or their partner's hand.

I did not establish an original inventor or earliest printed appearance. The collector's own encounter and the published online example are the supported provenance statements.

Sources

[1] Alexander Bogomolny, Five Couples, Cut the Knot (undated).

<https://www.cut-the-knot.org/pigeonhole/FiveCouples.shtml>

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