

Quiz 1

By William Reville, University College, Cork.

1. What is the estimated age of the universe?
2. What is the name of the generally accepted theory of the origin of the universe?
3. What is the commonest element in the universe?
4. What is a red giant?
5. What class of astronomical object has been described as 'a dirty snowball'?
6. Who made the first detailed and revolutionary observations of the moon, using a telescope?
7. Who is called 'The Father of Modern Philosophy'. He made the famous statement - 'I think, therefore I am'.
8. Who is commonly thought to be the greatest scientist who ever lived?
9. Who has been called 'The Father of Symbolic Logic'? He was the first Professor of Mathematics at University College, Cork.
10. How long ago was our solar system formed?
11. When did life begin on earth?
12. What is the name of the layer of gas surrounding the earth that protects us from ultraviolet light?
13. What is the name of the man who co-introduced, with Charles Darwin, the Theory of Evolution?
14. What can be neither created nor destroyed according to The First Law of Thermodynamics?
15. According to The Second Law of Thermodynamics, something always tends to increase to a maximum in a closed system. (a) What is the common name for this something? (b) What is the technical name?
16. What does the theory of panspermia propose?
17. Who finally disproved the theory of the spontaneous generation of life?
18. What is the name of the Polish astronomer who first declared that the sun, not the earth, sits at the centre of our solar system?
19. How many naturally occurring elements are there?
20. Name (a) the lightest, and, (b) the heaviest natural elements.
21. On what element is life based?
22. What chemical compound makes up 75% of body weight?

23. Name the chemical on which heredity is based?
24. What is the average life expectancy now in the developed world?
25. What was the average life expectancy in 1900 in the developed world?
26. Name the ship on which Charles Darwin sailed when he gathered much of his evidence for The Theory of Evolution.
27. What is the title of Charles Darwin's most famous book?
28. Who was Charles Darwin's principal early defender?
29. What is the name given to the school of thought that life, basically as we know it now, was created by God, several thousand years ago?
30. What is the fastest speed allowed by the laws of physics?
31. Name Albert Einstein's most famous theory.
32. Who said - 'God does not play dice with the universe'?
33. What is radon?
34. Does aerobic fitness refer to (a) muscle strength, or, (b) efficiency of heart and lungs?
35. What is a light-year?
36. Why does ice float on water?
37. Why are penguins not afraid of polar bears?
38. Who discovered X-rays?
39. Who discovered radioactivity?
40. Name the only Irish Nobel Laureate in science.
41. Name the Austrian monk who did pioneering work on the mechanism of heredity.
42. Name (a) the largest, and, (b) the smallest planets in our solar system.
43. Name the closest and the most distant planets from the sun in our solar system.
44. How does the sun generate its energy?
45. How long more will our sun last before it dies?
46. What proportion of the earth's surface is covered by water?
47. Name the most abundant gas in the earth's atmosphere.
48. Life on earth is ultimately dependent on what energy source?
49. Increase in the amount of what gas in our atmosphere has been mainly responsible for the warming up of the earth over the past 100 years?
50. Name the first civil nuclear power plant in the world.

(This quiz first appeared in The Irish Times, November 4, 1996.)