# How To Hunt an Elephant

*Over the years, the problem of finding the right person for the right job has consumed thousands of worker-years of research and millions of dollars in funding. Recently, however, years of detailed study by the finest minds in the field of psycho-industrial interpersonal optimization have resulted in the development of a simple and foolproof test to determine the best match between personality and profession.*

*The procedure is simple. Each subject is sent to Africa to hunt elephants. The subsequent elephant-hunting behavior is then categorized by comparison to the classification rules outlined below. The subject should be assigned to the general job classification that best matches the observed behavior.*

## *Classification Guidelines*

**Mathematicians** hunt elephants by going to Africa, throwing out everything that is not an elephant, and catching one of whatever is left.

**Experienced mathematicians** will attempt to prove the existence of at least one unique elephant, before proceeding to step 1 as a subordinate exercise.

**Professors of mathematics** will prove the existence of at least one unique elephant and then leave the detection and capture of an actual elephant as an exercise for their graduate students.

**Computer scientists** hunt elephants by exercising Algorithm A:

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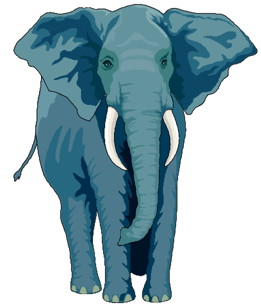
1. Go to Africa
2. Start at the Cape of Good Hope
3. Work northwards in an orderly manner,
   traversing the continent alternately
   east and west.
4. During each traverse pass,
    (a) Catch each animal seen
    (b) Compare each animal caught to a
        known elephant
    (c) Stop when a match is detected
```

**Experienced programmers** modify Algorithm A by placing a known elephant in Cairo to ensure that the algorithm will terminate.

**Assembly language programmers** prefer to execute Algorithm A on their hands and knees.

**ORACLE users** obey a slightly different algorithm. They round up all the elephants in the known world and shoot one. This takes longer but the end result is the same. All remaining elephants are released.

**Mainframe operating system designers** will all hunt the same elephant, and all claim credit for the kill on the grounds that each was working on a virtual elephant.



**MS-DOS support people** will not bother to hunt elephants in the first place, because everyone knows that you can't fit an elephant into 640K.

**Engineers** hunt elephants by catching grey animals at random, and stopping when any one of them weighs within +/- 15 percent of any previously observed elephant.

**Economists** don't hunt elephants, but they believe that if elephants are paid enough then they will hunt themselves.

**Statisticians** hunt the first animal they see N times and call it an elephant.

**Consultants** don't hunt elephants, and have never hunted anything at all, but they can be hired by the half-day to advise those people who do.

**Operations research consultants** can also measure the correlation of hat-size and bullet color to the efficiency of elephant-hunting strategies, as long as someone else will identify the elephants.

**Politicians** don't hunt elephants, they will share the elephants that you catch with the people who voted for them.

**Lawyers** don't hunt elephants, but they do follow the herds around arguing about who owns the droppings. Software lawyers will claim that they own the entire herd based on the look-and-feel of one dropping.

**Vice-presidents of R&D** try hard to hunt elephants, but their staff are designed to prevent it. When the VP does get to hunt elephants, the staff will try to ensure that all possible elephants are completely pre-hunted before the VP sees them. If the VP does see a no pre-hunted elephant, the staff will (i) compliment the VP's keen eyesight, and (ii) enlarge itself to prevent any recurrence.

**Senior managers** set broad elephant-hunting policy based on the assumption that elephants are just like field-mice but with deeper voices.

**Quality assurance inspectors** ignore the elephants, and look for mistakes the other hunters made when they were packing the jeep.

**Salespeople** don't hunt elephants, but spend their time selling elephants they haven't caught, for delivery two days before the season opens.

**Software salespeople** ship the first thing they catch and write up an invoice for an elephant.

**Hardware salespeople** catch rabbits, paint them grey, and sell them as desktop "elephants."