Curiosity Driven Inquiry – Some Examples of Questions

Is fizzy water lighter than still?

How do traditional Inuit avoid scurvy?

Sometimes during a quiz, we know that we know the answer to a question even though we can't bring it immediately to mind. How?

Mustard and chillis are both hot, but the burning sensation from a chilli stays in the mouth for ages while the sensation from hot mustard disappears in a few seconds. Why is this?

What is the purpose of the small hole halfway down the outside shell of a Bic ballpoint pen?

My father-in-law used to tape family mealtime conversations. When played back, the background noise - like silverware hitting plates and doors closing - is surprisingly prominent. Why is it that we filter these sounds out as they happen, but seem unable to filter them out when we listen to the recording?

Why do wet things smell more than dry ones?

The first time I had two pints of beer in my late teens I was horribly sick. Now I can drink two pints of beer without feeling any ill effects. What is the mechanism by which our bodies become tolerant to alcohol, or indeed other drugs, all of which have a smaller and smaller effect with regular use?

What would happen if a man took the contraceptive pill, either once, accidentally, or daily? Are there any published cases?

Do whales and dolphins get thirsty? And if they do, how do they drink?

Is there a single foodstuff that could provide all the nutrients that a human needs to stay reasonably healthy indefinitely?

Is it possible for it to be too cold to light a fire? In the same vein, is it possible for it to be so cold that a fire, with enough fuel to keep it going under normal circumstances, goes out?

If you have a hollow cube whose internal sides are made of perfectly reflecting mirrors, and you switch on a torch and wave it around, then turn it off, would the light keep bouncing around the cube or would it go dark? If it goes dark, where does the light go? If the light continues to bounce around, how long would it do so?
Why is it so much easier to drink a whole pint of beer or orange squash, say, in one go than it is to down a pint of water?

It has been reported that the rivers in the Himalayas will be starved of water when the glaciers disappear. If the glaciers are neither shrinking nor growing, the amount of water fed into the rivers from the Himalayan glaciers in a year should presumably be approximately equal to precipitation in the Himalayas over the same period. Assuming that rainfall remains about the same after the glaciers disappear, why shouldn’t the rivers still receive the same amount of water?

How many human faces will I, an average person, see in my lifetime? What proportion of all the people that have ever lived am I likely to have seen?

Why does white beach sand squeak when you walk on it?

If two sexes are needed to create genetic competition, why aren't there three, four or a million sexes to create even more competition? So why are there only two?

Human cells are continually dying and being replaced, but how much time does it take an entire organ, such as the liver, to replace itself? Also how long does it take to replace all the cells in the human skeleton, and how many times would this process be completed in an average lifespan?

If I tap my nose with my finger I only register a single touch, yet the sensation from nerves in my nose has only a few centimetres to travel to my brain, while the one from my finger tip has to travel about a metre up my arm and shoulder. Is this an illusion arranged by my brain, or is the brain unable to distinguish between two events so close together in time?

How do large shoals of fish and flocks of birds change direction very quickly without colliding with each other? We humans have the greatest difficulty achieving even two-dimensional travel without walking into each other, yet mass formations of fish and birds seem able to manage it in three dimensions.

Occasionally, and for no apparent reason, everyone gets little shivers running up and down their spine. What causes this to happen?