

## HP Forum Archive 14

[ [Return to Index](#) | [Top of Index](#) ]

### Offopic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Message #1 Posted by [Ben Salinas](#) on 24 May 2004, 12:25 a.m.

Those of you who have read The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series (the trilogy of 5 books) will be interested in this post (I am sure some of you have).

As you very well know, Douglas Adams, author of this series, died on May 11, 2001. That year, the online community organized a Towel Day for May 25 (2 weeks after his death). This was a day where fans carried around a towel (considered by Douglas Adams in his book to be the "most useful object in the universe")

I just thought I would remind all of you fans to carry your towel on Tuesday, and remember, Don't Panic!

(If you haven't read the series, you really should... they are wonderful books)

-Ben Salinas

12345 to delete

(Personally, I can't wait for the movie. <http://hitchhikers.movies.go.com/main.html> )

### Re: Offopic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Message #2 Posted by [Vieira, Luiz C. \(Brazil\)](#) on 24 May 2004, 1:45 a.m.,  
in response to message #1 by Ben Salinas

Hi Ben, folks;

thnk you ofr remind us, Ben. I read two of Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker in Portuguese, but I was not aware of these other two. I thouhgt they were only three. Can you, please, post their titles? (the complete series would be even better)

Sometime ago (a year or more), the "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" was mentioned here because of one particular number: "42". I remember it was mentioned in the book I did not read. So, it's not exactly "off-topic"... d8^)

Cheers.

Luiz (Brazil)

### Re: OnTopic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Message #3 Posted by [Veli-Pekka Nousiainen](#) on 24 May 2004, 5:04 a.m.,  
in response to message #2 by Vieira, Luiz C. (Brazil)

The question is: which is the best calculator ever made?

### Re: OnTopic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Message #4 Posted by [Valentin Albillo](#) on 24 May 2004, 6:21 a.m.,  
in response to message #3 by Veli-Pekka Nousiainen

42

Best regards from V.

### Re: Offopic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Message #5 Posted by **Valentin Albillo** on 24 May 2004, 6:31 a.m.,  
in response to message #2 by Vieira, Luiz C. (Brazil)

Luiz posted:

"I read two of Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker in Portuguese, but I was not aware of these other two."

If you've read them in Portuguese then you haven't read them, at all. Trust me, these books do have so many verbal tricks and word play that they simply can't be translated with any accuracy to any other languages (such as Spanish and Portuguese). I've read both the original English version and the Spanish one, and I can fully sympathize with the translator: the task was impossible. So do yourself a favor and read them in their original English. You'll see, you'll rediscover them and notice a myriad subtle and marvelous innuendos that never made it to Portuguese.

"I thought they were only three. Can you, please, post their titles? (the complete series would be even better)"

It's a trilogy in five volumes. The books in the trilogy are named:

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (1979)  
The Restaurant at the End of the Universe (1980)  
Life, the Universe and Everything (1982)  
So Long, and Thanks For All the Fish (1984)  
Mostly Harmless (1992)

Best regards from V.

### Re: Offopic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Message #6 Posted by **Ben Salinas** on 24 May 2004, 4:08 p.m.,  
in response to message #5 by Valentin Albillo

Yep, there is also one more though (actually half of one more). When Adams passed away, he was working on another book. This was released last year along with some other works in progress (including part of the script for the movie) They were released as: Salmon of a Doubt

As far as the 42, it is the answer to life the universe and everything. A quick overview of the book.

Arthur Dent, an earthling, wakes up one morning to find a bulldozer outside his house. His house was to be bulldozed to make way for a bypass. Arthur is mad when his friend Ford Prefect (who is actually a martian who was stranded on Earth for 15 years) asks him to go to the pub because the world is about to end. It turns out that the earth needs to be destroyed to make way for an interstellar bypass. Arthur and Ford hitch a ride on the "bulldozer ship," and make their way through the universe.

It is a book of witty humor which stretches science to its limits.

As far as 42, a large computer was created to calculate the answer to life the universe and everything. After 7.5 million years, it reluctantly gave the answer: 42. Everyone was outraged. Another computer was then created to calculate the question. This computer was the Earth, which was paid for by mice (who ran experiments on humans by seeing how we/they reacted when they completed a maze etc). Unfortunately, the Earth was destroyed about 5 minutes before the program was complete. In the 2nd or 3rd book, the question is discovered. It turns out that the question is: "What do you get when you multiply 6 by 9?"

Its a great read. I recommend it to everyone.

-Ben Salinas

### Re: Offopic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Message #7 Posted by **Jonathan B. Wiebe** on 24 May 2004, 8:54 p.m.,  
in response to message #6 by Ben Salinas

> It turns out that the question is: "What do you get when you > multiply 6 by 9?"

...which is correct if you calculate using base 13...

Regards,

Jonathan B. Wiebe

**OnTopic: 42=6\*9; base=13**

Message #8 Posted by [Veli-Pekka Nousiainen](#) on 25 May 2004, 1:34 a.m.,  
in response to message #6 by Ben Salinas

Ben Salinas wrote (clipped):

As far as 42, a large computer was created to calculate the answer to life the universe and everything. After 7.5 million years, it reluctantly gave the answer: 42. Everyone was outraged. Another computer wa

As anyone can easily see that is true in base 13.

Now a minichallenge:

Write a HP calculator program to change a number from one base to another.

Input: base1, base2, number\_b1

Output: number\_b2

You may choose freely to you use strings/alpha or two digit numbers to represent base<sub>x</sub> in base10 digits

Separate entries in each calculator model.

Separate Entries using different languages and/or synthetic programming (when available).

AND

a maxichallenge:

Write a HP calculator program to calculate in a (once) selected base.

[VPN]

**OT (but desperate): Is there a support group for folks who just don't get it?**

Message #9 Posted by [Paul Brogger](#) on 25 May 2004, 10:18 a.m.,  
in response to message #6 by Ben Salinas

I've been a closet Hitchhiker's non-enthusiast for quite some time now, and wonder if there's anyone else out there with the same affliction?

I tried, genuinely tried, to get through the first book, but it just overwhelmed me with affected silliness. (Exactly like the overload I experience when trying to read anything beyond a short article by Dave Barry.)

I suppose it deserves a second shot, but I must say I've always been "on the outside looking in" on this one.

(There! I've done it! I've publicly confessed to the sorriest case of nerd-comic laughter dysfunction imaginable. I wonder if there's hope for treatment available -- perhaps a sense-of-humor Viagra analogue?)

Edited: 25 May 2004, 10:22 a.m.

**Re: OT (but desperate): Is there a support group for folks who just don't get it?**

Message #10 Posted by [Cameron](#) on 25 May 2004, 11:07 a.m.,  
in response to message #9 by Paul Brogger

Which of the following do you find funny:

Dan Akroyd

Saturday Night Live

Laugh-in

Bill Murray (ignoring his recent "Lost in Translation")

Rowan Atkinson (as Mr Bean)

Steve Martin (ignoring his first film, The Waiter)

John Cleese

Rowan Atkinson (in Black Adder)

Not the Nine O'Clock News

Terry Gilliam

Stephen Wright

Fawlty Towers

Were your answers from predominantly the same group? In which group would you put:

Robin Williams

Stephen Hawking

Pedro Almodovar

Billy Connelly

I'm curious, tis all.

Rather than tackle the Hitchhiker Trilogy Paul, I suggest you find a copy of "Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency" and see if you can get "into" that.

Cameron

**. . . in therapy.**

Message #11 Posted by [Paul Brogger](#) on 25 May 2004, 1:46 p.m.,  
in response to message #10 by Cameron

I'd say I'm more partial to the second group, though I don't think I've seen more than 5 minutes of "Fawlty Towers".

I'd include Robin Williams in that group (disregarding everything "Mork").

The latter two I'm not familiar with, and *Stephen Hawking??* (That IS funny!) (Unless, of course, I'm tragically missing something . . .)

Into which group would you put Firesign Theatre? The Bonzo Dog band? The Simpsons (excepting episodes of late)? Donald Rumsfeld whining about those naughty "foreign fighters" abusing Iraq's territorial integrity?

**Re: . . . in therapy.**

Message #12 Posted by [Cameron](#) on 26 May 2004, 12:15 a.m.,  
in response to message #11 by Paul Brogger

Quote:

I'd say I'm more partial to the second group, though I don't think I've seen more than 5 minutes of "Fawlty Towers".

Do yourself a favour. Fawlty Towers is possibly the finest British "sit com" ever written. There's only 6 episodes IIRC. The writing is exquisite; the acting preposterously believable. Basil (Cleese) is the quintessential "loser" in this piece. Many of the themes that are discussed here (WRT Carly's HP) are explored.

Quote:

I'd include Robin Williams in that group (disregarding everything "Mork").

I'd put him in the second group too. There's a few other roles I'd add to Mork though. ;-)

Quote:

The latter two I'm not familiar with, and *Stephen Hawking??* (That IS funny!) (Unless, of course, I'm tragically missing something . . .)

Douglas Adams, Stephen Hawking and string theory have a \*lot\* more in common than you might think. Almodovar is a Spanish film director/writer (Women on the verge of a nervous breakdown; Tie me up, tie me down) with a very black sense of humour. I'd put both of these into the second group.

Quote:

Into which group would you put Firesign Theatre? The Bonzo Dog band? The Simpsons (excepting episodes of late)?

Firesign Theatre is new to me. The Bonzo Dog Band belongs in the second group (IMO). Discussion of Donald Rumsfeld might be better had in email given the current state of affairs and the fact that this is a politically neutral forum. :-)

Cameron

xyzy

*Edited: 26 May 2004, 12:18 a.m.*

**Re: OT (but desperate): Is there a support group for folks who just don't get it?**

Message #13 Posted by **Tom (UK)** on 25 May 2004, 12:03 p.m.,  
in response to message #9 by Paul Brogger

Try the radio play, it's been on BBC Radio 4 every so often and is available on CD. The TV version isn't so good.

For a run down on the versions see my posting at:

<http://www.hpmuseum.org/cgi-sys/cgiwrap/hpmuseum/forum.cgi?read=57450>

**Hello, Valentin!**

Message #14 Posted by **Vieira, Luiz C. (Brazil)** on 25 May 2004, 9:05 a.m.,  
in response to message #5 by Valentin Albillo

Hi, Valentin; long time no... read!

I was about to post a message asking about news from you. Good reading your posts again. Hope everything is fine.

Now for the matters: thank you so much for the additional information. I remember having such good moments and laughing out loud when reading The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy and Life, the Universe and Everything, both in Portuguese. And yes, I'll try to find the others, mainly in the original Language, because I know what you mean about translations and "versions": even the most competent team will, at some point, feel the lack of the language when trying to find some terms or equivalent expressions. For example, I remember reading one issue of a classic MAD magazine when a storm is shown with falling cats and dogs. We don't use "It's raining cats and dogs" in Brazil, instead we use the equivalent to "It's raining penknives" (it doesn't necessarily mean that our storms are deadly...). If the reader is not aware of the English expression, this particular drawing has no meaning (BTW, I was told about the origin of this expression, so it made perfect sense since). And this is only one single example.

Well, I hope my one-year-and-a-half English (the total time I spent attending English classes) is enough to understand Adam's subtle expressions and language tricks.

Thanks again.

Cheers.

Luiz (Brazil)

(P.S. - I did not spell check the message, so please, forgive any errors... I edited the message to add this, only)

*Edited: 25 May 2004, 9:09 a.m.*

**Re: Hello, Valentin!**

Message #15 Posted by **Valentin Albillo** on 25 May 2004, 10:46 a.m.,  
in response to message #14 by Vieira, Luiz C. (Brazil)

Hello, Luiz !

Luiz posted:

*"Hi, Valentin; long time no... read!"*

Yes, it's been indeed. More than two months ...

*"I was about to post a message asking about news from you. Good reading your posts again. Hope everything is fine."*

Thanks a lot, you're always far too kind. It's just that I was extremely busy, out of my usual environment. Back to normal (if there's such a state).

*"I remember reading one issue of a classic MAD magazine when a storm is shown with falling cats and dogs. We don't use "It's raining cats and dogs" in Brazil, instead we use the equivalent to "It's raining penknives"*

Same here. The equivalent Spanish is "Esta lloviendo chuzos de punta" with more or less same literal meaning as your Brazilian version.

*"Well, I hope my one-year-and-a-half English (the total time I spent attending English classes) is enough to understand Adam's subtle expressions and language tricks."*

Judging from your usual proficiency here, I daresay you're sure to understand and enjoy it to the most. As for the problems inherent in translating "Hitchhiker ..." from English to (say) Portuguese, try these examples:

- "I am so amazingly cool you could keep a side of meat in me for a month. I am so hip I have difficulty seeing over my pelvis." (Zaphod Beeblebrox in "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy")
- "The other Shaltanac's joopeberry shrub is always a more mauvy shade of pinky russet." ("The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy")
- "Oh freddled gruntbuggly thy micturations are to me -- As plurdled gabbleblotchits on a lurgid bee. -- Groop I implore thee my foonting turlingdromes. -- And hooptiously drangle me with crinkly bindlewurdles, -- Or I will rend thee in the gobberwarts with my blurglecruncheon, -- see if I don't!" (Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz's poetry, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy")
- "It's unpleasantly like being drunk." -- "What's so unpleasant about being drunk?" -- "You ask a glass of water." (Ford Prefect and Arthur Dent (Douglas Adams, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy")

Did you notice the beautiful *double-entendre* between the first "drunk" and the second "drunk" ? These books are choke-full with such things and some you can translate accurately, some you can translate approximately and many you can't translate at all, just pathetically adapt them and hope the magic is preserved, which alas, it usually doesn't.

Thanks for your kind post and best regards from V.

### LOL! Thanks! (I think I got it...) (N.T.)

Message #16 Posted by [Vieira, Luiz C. \(Brazil\)](#) on 25 May 2004, 3:55 p.m.,  
in response to message #15 by Valentin Albillo

.

### Re: Hello, Valentin!

Message #17 Posted by [Andrés C. Rodríguez \(Argentina\)](#) on 25 May 2004, 6:03 p.m.,  
in response to message #15 by Valentin Albillo

Hi Valentin! I also missed you. Also I was very busy to post anything for quite a time, but I managed to find a little time everyday to read at least some of the topics.

I noticed that the two "drunk" examples you give could be translated acceptably well into Spanish (even into our Buenos Aires variation), as "estar bebido" o "estar tomado" are close enough for the two meanings.

Regards,

A

### Drunk

Message #18 Posted by [Veli-Pekka Nousiainen](#) on 25 May 2004, 11:38 p.m.,  
in response to message #17 by Andrés C. Rodríguez (Argentina)

I still don't get it (some lack of Spanish skills)?!

Drunk is being intoxicated by alcohol beverage.

What else could it be?

{Vertical Polish Notation}

### Re: Drunk

Message #19 Posted by [Cameron](#) on 25 May 2004, 11:59 p.m.,  
in response to message #18 by Veli-Pekka Nousiainen

Drunk is both noun (intoxication) and verb (past participle of drink) en anglais.

If an idiom for intoxication was "kicked", the conversation would have been something like:

Arthur: it feels something like being kicked. Ford: what's wrong with being kicked? Arthur: have you ever asked a football? [what it thinks about being kicked].

In context, the "drunk" dialogue is slightly more powerful because we know that Ford is fond of a tippie and Arthur had just said that "bits of me keep passing out".

Maybe you knew that... if so, sorry to labour the point.

Cameron

xyzy

### Re: Drunk

Message #20 Posted by [Veli-Pekka Nousiainen](#) on 26 May 2004, 11:10 a.m.,  
in response to message #19 by Cameron

I finally got it!

He was not feeling intoxicated, but like someone was drinking him!

{VPN}

### Re: Drunk

Message #21 Posted by [Valentin Albillo](#) on 26 May 2004, 12:48 p.m.,  
in response to message #20 by Veli-Pekka Nousiainen

See ? Now translate \*that\* sentence to finnish, while preserving the brilliant double-meaning of "drunk" ! ... (let alone the other three examples I gave !!)

... no way, this author really must be read in English, else you're losing far far far too much, no matter how good the translator.

Best regards from V.

### But wait, there's (a lot) more...

Message #22 Posted by [Cameron](#) on 26 May 2004, 12:52 p.m.,  
in response to message #20 by Veli-Pekka Nousiainen

Quote:

He was not feeling intoxicated, but like someone was drinking him!

You've almost got it. Your statement tells me that you've grasped the ingredients of the meaning. I'll paraphrase the exchange.

Background: Arthur and Ford have just had an unpleasant physical experience. Ford is a "man of the world" who likes the good times; he likes to party. Arthur is quite sub-urban, pedestrian, (a bit of a lamer in net parlance). He's led a quiet life until just before this conversation takes place.

Ford asks what Arthur thought of the experience.

Arthur replies: "It's unpleasantly like being drunk."

The key word is "unpleasantly"--not pleasant; not something you like to do. However Ford likes to party and we can assume that he likes to get intoxicated--drunk. So he takes mild offense at Arthur's use of intoxication as a simile for the unpleasant experience. He then poses what he (Ford) considers to be a rhetorical question:

"What's so unpleasant about being drunk?"

This structure is often found in English idiom. The poser of the rhetorical question is both chiding the other person for suggesting that the subject (intoxication in this case) has negative connotations (unpleasant) while at the same time asserting that they have no negative feelings towards the subject. The rhetorical question, of course, requires no response.

Arthur is familiar with the idiom and the "rules" of the exchange but his character is quite good at what we might call the "witty rejoinder". He's also disinclined to accept the subtle rebuke implied by the use of the idiom. So he responds:

"You ask a glass of water."

As you observed, he's proposing that Ford ask a glass of water what it feels like to have someone drinking it.

This is a neat, witty riposte for which Ford has no come-back. It's also the reason that some of us derive great pleasure from the writing of the late Douglas Adams. His work is full of this style of interchange. It leaves the reader feeling: "I wish I could have said that".

Cameron

**But wait, there's (a lot) more...**

Message #23 Posted by [Veli-Pekka Nousiainen](#) on 26 May 2004, 2:10 p.m.,  
in response to message #22 by Cameron

"You ask that from a glass of water."  
And I would have understood it an instance  
It was the short form of the answer that got me.  
I was unable to see the connection. [VPN]

**Re: But wait, there's (a lot) more...**

Message #24 Posted by [Wayne Brown](#) on 27 May 2004, 7:41 a.m.,  
in response to message #22 by Cameron

That's a good analysis, but you have something backwards: It was *Ford* who was warning *Arthur* before making their first "Jump" that traveling in hyperspace was "unpleasantly like being drunk." This was Arthur's first time on a spaceship and he had no idea what to expect, so Ford was trying to give him a familiar example of what it felt like, while at the same time setting up a chance to make a witty remark. He knew quite well that Arthur, with his limited experience, would assume the wrong meaning of "drunk" and that would give Ford an opportunity to be both clever and enlightening at the same time.

**Re: But wait, there's (a lot) more...**

Message #25 Posted by [Paul Brogger](#) on 27 May 2004, 2:39 p.m.,  
in response to message #24 by Wayne Brown

. . . I think I'll have to pick that one up & give it another try!

My thanks to those of you who've taken time to contribute.

**Re: Hello, Valentin!**

Message #26 Posted by [Valentin Albillo](#) on 26 May 2004, 4:43 a.m.,  
in response to message #17 by [Andrés C. Rodríguez \(Argentina\)](#)

Hi Andres:

Andres posted:

*"Hi Valentin! I also missed you."*

Thank you very much, same here. I also read postings from time to time and noticed yours were sadly absent.

*"I noticed that the two "drunk" examples you give could be translated acceptably well into Spanish (even into our Buenos Aires variation), as "estar bebido" o "estar tomado" are close enough for the two meanings."*

Yes, because "bebido" in Spanish is related both to a person being drunk ("bebido") and a glass of water being drunk by somebody. But in this case the problem is \*not\* with "drunk" but with "being"!

Because "being drunk" (a person) translates perfectly as "estar bebido". But "being drunk" (a glass of water, by a person) \*cannot\* be translated as "estar bebido" but must be translated as "ser bebido" ("ser", not "estar"). And that completely ruins the subtle word play, i.e. the magic.

Close but no cigar. :-) Thanks again for your kind words and

Best regards from V.



**No cigar..**

Message #27 Posted by **Andrés C. Rodríguez (Argentina)** on 28 May 2004, 5:33 p.m.,  
in response to message #26 by Valentin Albillo

Valentín:

As you said,

Close, but no cigar!

As I never inhale any kind of gaseous emissions from burning leaves of tobacco or other plants, whatever the size or format, I think I would say:

"It's unpleasantly like being smoked." -- "What's so unpleasant about being smoked?" -- "You ask a salmon."

:-)

Best regards!!

Just for those who may like an explanation: In Argentina, we use "fumado" (smoked) for someone with unreal ideas or dreams, presumably like coming from a drug session. A spent cigar or cigarette would also be "fumado", as the second "drunk"; but for smoked meat we use "ahumado".

**[OT] Re: No cigar..**

Message #28 Posted by **Valentin Albillo** on 1 June 2004, 5:05 a.m.,  
in response to message #27 by Andrés C. Rodríguez (Argentina)

Hi Andres,

Here in Spain, the colloquial term for the exact meaning of your first "fumado" (estar fumado) is "colgado" (estar colgado, to be hung) which regrettably has nothing to do with smoking, though I'm sure we would be able to concoct some word play around this term, such as:

"Es desagradablemente similar a estar colgado" -- "¿ Y que tiene de malo estar colgado ?" -- etc, etc,

Best regards from V.

**Re: Offopic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (not short)**

Message #29 Posted by **Tom (UK)** on 25 May 2004, 7:26 a.m.,  
in response to message #1 by Ben Salinas

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series come in 3 flavours (soon to be a fourth), they are (in order of first appearing and perhaps descending order of merit):

Radio play (12 parts) Books (5 1/2 books) TV series (6 episodes) Film?

The radio play is by far the best rendition and is more of a complete and contained story - highly recommended. I think it is available as a 2 CD set from the BBC. If you can get hold of it do. The first 6 episodes are very close to the earlier books, the second series of 6 episodes tell a slightly different story (in my opinion a bit better).

The books are the 'definitive' story but lose some of the twists and turns and spontaneity of the radio play.

The TV series copies the first few books quite closely but loses more of the flavour of the original. IMHO this is quite weak and not recommended as the story seems to drag unlike the radio play and books - the pictures in your head are always better than those on a screen, especially when it's done on a budget as it was with this series.

I'm not sure how the film will turn out, Douglas Adams is sadly now dead. Looking at the cast list at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0371724/> tells me some characters are new or have been deleted - time will tell if this rendition will be any good. Don't assume a big budget will improve the original - the backers will want bums on seats.

As far as translation goes how do you translate Slartibartfast??? You will just have to find yourself a babel fish.

**Re: Offopic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (not short)**

Message #30 Posted by **Ben Salinas** on 25 May 2004, 5:31 p.m.,  
in response to message #29 by Tom (UK)

Actually, I read on the official site that most of the changes from the book were made by Adams himself (He had most of the script completed when he died). I too was worried about the new characters, but if Adams put them in then I will trust him to do what is right.

-Ben

---

[ [Return to Index](#) | [Top of Index](#) ]



[Go back to the main exhibit hall](#)