

Penguin Post Office

These days the postal service can send your mail just about anywhere — including Antarctica. There's actually a post office on a small island off the coast there, and the workers there not only help mail 70,000 letters every year, but also have to run a museum and take care of 2,000 penguins. Right now the post office needs to hire 4 people for this and they tell us what those people have to be good at: be able to carry big boxes over slippery rocks, give speeches at the museum to groups of 200 visitors, and "be happy not to shower for up to a month" and "live near 2,000 smelly penguins for five months." The crazy thing is, over 1,500 people want the job! If you think you'd be good at that job, feel free to send them your name.



Wee ones: If you're counting smelly penguins and you've counted 4, then 5, then 6...what number comes next?

Little kids: If you live with the penguins for 5 full months and the first month is February, what's your last month? **Bonus:** If you want to be there in December for their longest day of the year (sunny all day and night!), what's the earliest month you could start?

Big kids: If you're watching 2,000 penguins and every day you throw 5 fish to each, how many fish are you feeding them every day? **Bonus:** If your coworker loves feeding them and takes over 1,300 penguins himself, how many penguins are left for the rest of you to feed?

The sky's the limit: If the post office hires only 3 of the 1,500 people who want the job, what fraction of applicants do they take?

What other questions could you ask using the information in this story? For example...

- If you each feed $\frac{1}{4}$ of the penguins, how many penguins do you feed?
- You look out the window and count 25 penguins. 9 jump into the ocean looking for fish. How many are left outside your window?

Bedtime Math: <http://bedtimemath.org>

Read more about the Penguin Post Office: <http://tinyurl.com/penguinpost>