BOOKING A TRAIN TICKET

M1: Next!

M2: Yes, I’ve got to go to Sunderland next Tuesday, and I’m wondering what the best and cheapest way of getting there is.

M1: Is that single or return?

M2: Return. I’d want to go reasonably early on the Tuesday and come back early evening on the Friday.

M1: I see. Er, well, there’s the East Coast Express. That goes to Sunderland every hour, quarter hour, or half hour. But you have to go to Newcastle first and then change to the metro – that’s the local rail service – to get back to Sunderland.

M2: Uh huh.

M1: The cost of a return on those dates would be ... (typing) ah, £301 – not including the metro fare. That’s for a regular off-peak return.

M2: Three hundred pounds! For one ticket?

M1: For one person. Yes, sir. Standard class.

M2: Good lord! Is there nothing cheaper?

M1: Well, er, there’s a separate Eastern Arrow service. That’s run by a different company. That also goes from London King’s Cross but the trains are not so frequent. It does go direct to Sunderland, though, and that costs, er, ... (typing) let’s see, er, ... oh, £117 for a super off-peak return. That means you have to travel before 7am, or after 7 in the evening. Or you could go for an anytime off-peak train returning within one month, and that would cost you ... (typing) er, ... ah – £129.

M2: But that means I can go direct to Sunderland for £129, or go via Newcastle, which I don’t want to do, and pay £300 for the extra inconvenience!

M1: That’s about right, sir. Confusing, isn’t it?

M2: You’re telling me! So, what restrictions are there on this anytime off-peak return ticket? Do I have to leave after 10 in the evening or something?

M1: Er ... (typing) er ... no, sir! On the Tuesday, you can leave at 8:15, 9:25, 10:05, ...

M2: Nine twenty-five sounds perfect.

M1: And the open return is for any time at all within the next calendar month.
M2: For £129?
M1: Yep.
M2: I see! How long does it take?
M1: They’re all around 3 hours 45 or 4 hours, sir, give or take a quarter of an hour.