



MATHEMATICS

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Mathematicians Conclude there are Only 137 Numbers

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Abstract: This article reports the findings of the International Mathematical and Symbolic Interchange of Mathematicians and Philosophers (IMaSIMP), which met in Zürich earlier this month to finalise the list of approved numbers.

Claiming “physics is just a branch of maths, and maths is just philosophy with numbers” is all very well, but it won’t get you funded in this day and age. That’s why IMaSIMP meets annually to hash out the really important questions. Questions like “how many numbers are there?” and “How many is seven?”. This year, the high council of numerologists, digit-smiths and numberfondlers have unanimously decided that there are 137 numbers. We spoke to Carl Tweedwick Goose, Professor of mathematical logic at the London University of Science and Technology, Kansas City, to find out which numbers made the cut:

“Not surprisingly, the numbers 137, 1, 3, and 7 are on the list. Interestingly though, other combinations of these digits like 13 and 17 did not make the cut. We’re not sure what to call them yet, but they sure aren’t numbers.”

Thirteen and seventeen weren’t particularly nice or useful numbers, so most people probably won’t notice that they’re gone. With so many former numbers to be discontinued, primary school maths is about to become significantly easier, which will ease the burden for thinly stretched teaching resources. For example, the solution to $1 + 1 = ?$ is now redundant, because 2 was found to not be a number (it’s just 1 twice).

The number 10 scraped in (just barely), so the decimal system is safe for now, but 12 is out. This means that one of the months has to go, and it’s probably going to be April, because April has 5 letters and 5 isn’t a number anymore.

There was a lot of debate surrounding the transcendental numbers, like π , e , and Φ . Ultimately, the delegates decided that they would “wait until we get to the end of these things before we try to classify them. After all, we don’t even know how big they are yet, so we can’t yet classify them as numbers. Once we figure out what’s at the end of them, we will reevaluate their status.”

Another hot topic of debate was zero. Ultimately, it was decided that zero wasn’t a number. Many were distraught at this decision, but some—like Professor Eric Dumbledore from the Hogwarts School of Economics—were relieved:

“Good riddance, honestly. Zero has created a lot of problems for mathematicians. For instance, what does 0^0 equal? If you put \$0 in a bank and it’s compounded at 0% interest, how much money will you have after one year? You see how stupid that is? Exactly. Zero is dumb.”

This decision will have dramatic implications for computer science. When 2 and 0 ceased to be numbers, binary code

became monary code, which is a series of 1’s and spaces between 1’s.

IMaSIMP’s activities have been met with strong resistance from the public. Many have complained about the arbitrary classification of counting-related items as “numbers” or “not numbers” and compare it to the controversial de-planetization of Pluto. Astronomer and lawn-care provider Neil “The Grass” Tyson defended the committee’s findings:

“Science is all about precision. And in order to be precise you have to define terms. Anytime you create a definition, it’s going to create arbitrary boundaries and classifications—but as long as we agree on those boundaries, definitions, and classifications, we can do science. Also, it’s kinda funny that Pluto isn’t a planet AND it has 5 letters, but 5 is no longer a number. Suck it, Pluto.”

You can listen to his full rant about numbers and planets spread across sixteen separate appearance on the Joe Rogan podcast.

Not all the remaining numbers are easily expressible integers. Some are so large that they are better suited to scientific notation, such as 6.9×10^{420} (the number of times you’ve been rejected by a girl), 1.1×10^{1337} (the mass of yo mama in kilograms) and 1.12×10^{15} (the number of people Trump claimed attended his inauguration). Others are more esoteric:

- The exact diameter of the observable universe, in nanometers.
- The number of minutes in a while
- Some

Some is a number because you can ask for “three pies” or “some pies”, but not for “zero pies”. We asked if that meant that “cream” was a number, but we are yet to receive a response.

Table 1 contains a list of the top 10 approved numbers, as ranked by Watchmojo.com (number 7 will SHOCK you). For a full list, see the electronic supporting information.

Entry	Number
1	1
3	7
4	26
6	5.5
7	7.0
8	January 20 th *
9	The size of the set of all sets of things that are not numbers or sets of numbers.
10	137

Table 1: The top ten numbers, according to Watchmojo.com. There are only eight entries, because 2 and 5 aren’t numbers. * This was supposed to be 1/20 or 0.05, but Excel got confused.

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As is tradition, the meeting concluded with the announcement of next-year's topic. In 2025, IMaSIMP will be determining how many shapes there are. This was spurred by the discovery of the heptatriacontahedron, a 137-dimensional hypercube (Figure 1). This shape is expected to replace circles in most day-to-day applications in the coming years, casting serious doubt as to whether circles will survive the 2025 meeting.

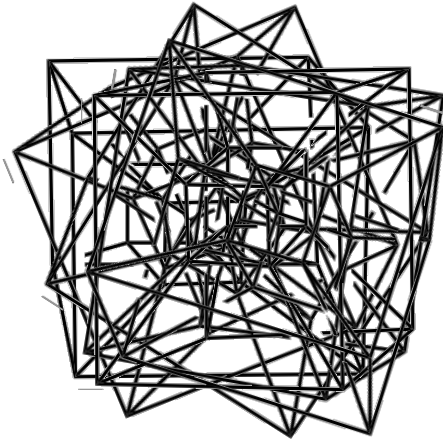


Figure 1: A 2D-representation of a heptatriacontahedron.

Concussion

Seriously, this article is only a page long and you want us to write a conclusion paragraph? You can't read one single page? You're really going to just read the abstract and skip to the conclusion? How's this for a conclusion: you're the laziest person I've ever met!

Apology

We would like to apologize for that last bit; we let our intern write the conclusion and he's not terribly emotionally stable, but he's pretty fun at the work barbecues so we keep him around.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge all the now non-number mathematical entities for their years of service. We're sorry it had to be this way, but all good things must come to an end.

Notes and references

You think we did research for this shit?? Please..