

Numerals and proportions

Reading

Read the dialogue below, paying attention to the words and expressions that refer to part, but not all, of something.

A Well, how did the meeting go?

B The meeting?

A Yes, the voting meeting.

B Oh, that meeting!

A **Mm. Full attendance**, was there?

B Yes, there was. **100 per cent turnout and not one empty seat.**

A Good. **What proportion** of them voted for me? **All of them?**

B No.

A Oh, a few went over to the other side, did they? Yes, you always get these **little splinter groups, exceptions to the rule**, people who want to be different from the masses. Still, an **overwhelming majority** for me, I suppose?

B Not really, no.

A Oh dear. Still, no doubt I got **the bulk of** the votes. What did they call the majority? **Large?**

B No.

A **Substantial?**

B No.

A It was closer than I expected. Only a **small majority** for me, then?

B Actually, no.

A Good Heavens! **Half and half**, was it? **Equally divided? Equal shares** of the votes? **50 – 50 split?** Incredible!

B No.

A You mean I didn't get elected? That's amazing! Oh well, I suppose I got a **very large minority? A reasonable percentage** of the votes?

B Not exactly that, no.

A Only a **small number, eh? A small but loyal section. A fraction** of the total but a **significant** fraction. It's a **partial success**, isn't it?

B They were **in complete agreement**.

A Complete agreement?

B They were **unanimous**.

A **The entire group?**

B **Every single one.**

A **The total population** of the school?

B **Each and every one.**

A But I got **the odd one or two** votes, surely?

B No.

A **A fair number** of abstentions, though. **Several** protest votes registered.

B **Not one.**

A **None?**

B **Zero.**

A You mean **nobody ... ?**

B **No-one.**

A **Not anybody?**

B **Not a soul.**

A Funny. I thought **everybody** liked me.

Practice

- 1 Which word or phrase is missing in each of the sequences below? Complete and continue each sequence.

- 1 one two three four five six seven nine ten
- 2 first second third fourth sixth
- 3 once three times four times five times
- 4 one a half a third a fifth
- 5 solo trio quartet quintet
- 6 a baby twins quad(ruplet)s quin(tuplet)s
- 7 think of a number double it quadruple it
- 8 a double whisky a triple (or treble) whisky

Now see how quickly you can find the answer to this rather long sum. The answer is at the back of the book.

Four **add two**, **divide by three**, **subtract one**, **multiply by eight**, **take away four**, times three, **plus two**, **minus four**, **halved**, **equals** what?

Of all these numbers, 0 presents the most linguistic problems.

Try to read out loud the following expressions including various words for the figure 0. Then work out the answer to questions 9 and 10. Look up the answers in the answer Key if you find this exercise difficult.

Manchester City 0, Manchester United 0
5,4,3,2,1,0!
0.1% of the air
Tel. 01 906 3002

4 + 2 - 6 = 0
6 - 0, 6 - 1, 6 - 0

8 the temperature is below 0°

9 What's left from £40 if you deduct four amounts of £5 and five sums of £4?

10 How many fingers have you got on your feet?

- 4 Now think about the number 2. Read the text. How much of the language would change if Daniel found himself a third girlfriend?

Well, take my friend, Daniel. He has two girlfriends. He likes **both** of them and they both like him. He plays tennis - mixed **doubles** - with **one of them**, and goes pairs-skating with **the other one**. They look very much like **each other**; **the one** could be **the other's double**. Obviously, he can't marry **both** of them but he could, he thinks, be happy with **either** of them. Unfortunately, **neither** of them knows about the other girl in his life. So far he hasn't proposed to **either** of them. I don't think he wants to be part of a married **couple** yet, anyway. Almost as a protest, he hasn't even got a matching **pair** of socks.

For further practice of expressions describing numbers, give an example of each item below.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 an odd number | 5 an even number |
| 2 a three-figure sum | 6 a fraction |
| 3 three consecutive numbers | 7 a number with 5 digits after the decimal point |
| 4 a multiple of 49 | 8 an equation |

There are several prefixes which indicate number in English. Try to find a word in the right-hand column which matches each definition 1—21.

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1 being able to speak two languages very well | unification |
| 2 a period of ten years | monologue |
| 3 a creature with about a hundred legs | soliloquy |
| 4 a child's three-wheeled vehicle | binary |
| 5 half a pair of glasses | biannual |
| 6 to copy a document | octet |
| 7 one thousand watts | dioxide |
| 8 a tenth of a centimetre | duodecimal |
| 9 the process of making a country completely one | unilateral |
| 10 describing a decision that had 100% support | unanimous |
| 11 a very large number of people as a crowd | polygamy |
| 12 the state of having rather a lot of husbands or wives at once | dual |
| 13 a system in which the only digits used are 1 and 0 | carriageway |
| 14 describing a system like: 12 inches in 1 foot | tricycle |
| 15 the 0 in $\frac{1}{10}$ in $\frac{1}{100}$ | millimetre |
| 16 a road consisting of two parts with traffic going in one direction only | kilowatt |
| 17 half yearly | multitude |
| 18 a group of eight musicians | monocle |
| 19 one-sided , the sort of nuclear disarmament that pacifists would be happy with | duplicate |
| 20 a longish passage spoken by one person | bilingual |
| 21 a more romantic speech | decade |
| | centipede |

There has been a survey of 300 people of both sexes and all ages in your town, in which they were asked the following questions. How do you think they responded? Remember how many ways you know of expressing proportions! If you are working in a group, then conduct a survey of your own and report your findings back to the group.

- What do you usually do in the evenings?
- What would you do with £100,000?
- Who is your favourite show business personality?
- Do you like Shakespeare?
- Which country would you emigrate to if you had to leave this one?
- Do you wish you had been born the other sex?

Have numbers any special associations for you? Have you got a lucky one? An unlucky one? What are some of the beliefs and superstitions about numbers in your country? Write a short paragraph answering these questions.

Add here any other words or expressions about numbers that you may come across.