

Contrived Math

Tricked-Out Word Problems with Ordinary Numbers

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contrived Invented; devised; planned with ingenuity; concocted; made up.

tricked-out Modified, decorated or embellished in an extravagant way.

Numbers are everywhere. Sometimes they are in the form of a problem needing to be solved. But more often they are in information mode, hanging out, waiting, ready when someone needs them—like the four quarts that can join forces to create a gallon or the twelve months that add up to a year, for instance.

Occasionally people mess around with idle numerical facts and make up tricked-out math problems just for the fun of it, as is the case here.

Solve the following concocted problems and then have some fun of your own. Contrive a few more puzzlers to share with your friends. The numbers are waiting.



Use the figuring space for calculations and then write your final answers in the blanks to the left.

- _____ 1. Subtract four from the number of days in a year. Now add two.

- _____ 2. Begin with the greatest number on a clock and multiply it by two.

- _____ 3. Suppose each of the blind mice who ran up the clock had been one of triplets. If every sibling had been involved, how many mice would have run up the clock?

- _____ 4. Remove six from the number of inches in a foot and reattach four of them. What is the final total number of inches?

- _____ 5. How many sides are there on five triangles?

Contrived Math--continued

_____ 6. Add six to the number of days in the month of July. Subtract a day. How many days are there now?

_____ 7. If the Big Bad Wolf had been faced with ten times as many little pigs as the story tells, how many little pigs would he have been dealing with?



_____ 8. Add the number of golden rings from the *Twelve Days of Christmas* to the number of French hens. What is the total combined number of golden rings and French hens?

_____ 9. How many weeks pass in a period of two years?

_____ 10. Add the number of fingers on both hands and the number of toes on both feet. Subtract seven. What is your final answer?

_____ 11. If a genie rose out of a bottle on a puff of smoke and granted you eight more hours in any day of your choice, how many hours would there be in your chosen day?

_____ 12. How many minutes are there in three half hours?

_____ 13. Add what many people consider to be an unlucky number to the number of eggs in a dozen.

Contrived Math—continued

_____ 14. Start with the number of feet in six yards and then subtract a foot. What's the total number of feet?

_____ 15. If the average person sleeps eight hours a day, then how many hours a day is the average person awake?



_____ 16. Remove the vowels—*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*—from the alphabet. How many letters remain?

_____ 17. Add the calendar date in December that is always Christmas Day to the date in February that is always Groundhog Day. What is the total?

_____ 18. How many puppies are there if they have a total of twenty little feet?

_____ 19. If you walked exactly one mile plus five more feet, how many total feet did you walk?

_____ 20. Most United States schools are in session one hundred and eighty days of the year. How many days have students with perfect attendance been in school when they graduate from eighth grade? Don't forget kindergarten!

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Part Two

Here you are again with twenty more contrived, tricked-out math problems waiting to be solved. On the count of three, do some figuring in the blank spaces after each item and then write your answers in the blanks to the left.

One, two, thr. . . .

You didn't wait, did you?

_____ 1. How many months are there in four years?

_____ 2. Count the number of tires on six cars.
Now remove three tires. How many
are left?

_____ 3. How many seconds does it take to boil a three-minute egg?

_____ 4. If an individual piece of candy weighs one ounce, how many would have to
be put on a scale in order for it to register half a pound?

_____ 5. Start with one hundred pennies. Add fifteen more. Subtract twenty-five.
How many pennies are there now?

_____ 6. Forty-eight hours is how many days?



Contrived Math—Part Two—continued

_____ 7. Add the number of months from January through June to the number of degrees in a right triangle.

_____ 8. If you baked two and one-half dozen cupcakes for a friend's birthday celebration, how many individual cupcakes did you prepare?

_____ 9. How many quarters would you need for a total of twelve dollars and fifty cents?

_____ 10. If one is missing, how many wheels are there on six tricycles?

_____ 11. Add the number of days in two weeks to the number of degrees in a circle.

_____ 12. Combine the number of players on an American football team to the number of players on a baseball team. Subtract the pitcher. What is the total number of players?



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_____ 13. Add the number of sides on six squares to the number of angles in four triangles.

Contrived Math—Part Two—continued

- _____ 14. Suppose you have managed to collect one thousand and fifty-two dimes. How much money do you have?
- _____ 15. What number is ten less than the number of weeks in a year?
- _____ 16. What figure names the total number of keys on a standard piano plus the number of strings on a violin?
- _____ 17. How many singers would be on stage if a quartet, a trio, a duo, and a solo artist decided to perform together?
- _____ 18. Add the number of leaves on six regular clovers to the number of leaves on two four-leafed clovers. Cut the number in half. What is the final number of leaves?
- _____ 19. Add the number of ounces in half a pound to the number of eggs in half a dozen.
- _____ 20. Imagine your teacher announcing that he will be requiring two and one-half hours of daily homework for the next two weeks, Monday through Thursday. Everybody but your teacher faints and falls to the floor. After you and your fellow students have been resuscitated and placed back in your seats, your teacher states that he has reconsidered. He will cut his homework demand by seventy-five percent.
- What was the total number of hours in the teacher's original homework requirement?
 - How many homework hours did you wind up with?



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Contrived Math Answer Keys

1. $365 - 4 = 361 + 2 = 363$
2. $12 \times 2 = 24$
3. $3 \times 3 = 9$ mice
4. $12 - 6 = 6 + 4 = 10$
5. $3 \times 5 = 15$ sides
6. $31 + 6 = 37 - 1 = 36$ days
7. $3 \times 10 = 30$ little pigs
8. $5 + 3 = 8$ total golden rings and French hens
9. $52 + 52 = 104$ weeks (or $52 \times 2 = 104$ weeks)
10. $10 + 10 = 20 - 7 = 13$
11. $24 + 8 = 32$ hours
12. $30 \times 3 = 90$ minutes
13. $13 + 12 = 25$
14. $6 \times 3 = 18 - 1 = 17$ feet
15. $24 - 8 = 16$ hours
16. $26 - 5 = 21$ remaining letters
17. $25 + 2 = 27$
18. $20 \div 4 = 5$ puppies
19. $5,280 + 5 = 5,285$ feet.
20. $180 \times 9 = 1,620$ days

1. $12 \times 4 = 48$ months
2. $6 \times 4 = 24 - 3 = 21$ tires
3. $60 \times 3 = 180$ seconds
4. $16 \div 2 = 8$ paper clips
5. $100 + 15 = 115 - 25 = 90$ pennies
6. $48 \div 24 = 2$ days
7. $6 + 90 = 96$
8. $12 \times 2 = 24 + 6 = 30$ cupcakes
9. $12 \times 4 = 48 + 2 = 50$ quarters
10. $6 \times 3 = 18 - 1 = 17$ wheels
11. $7 \times 2 = 14 + 360 = 374$
12. $11 + 9 = 20 - 1 = 19$ players
13. $6 \times 4 + 3 \times 4 = 24 + 12 = 36$
14. $1,052 \div 10 = \$105.20$
15. $52 - 10 = 42$
16. $88 + 4 = 92$
17. $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10$ people
18. $6 \times 3 + 2 \times 4 = 26 \div \frac{1}{2} = 13$ leaves
19. $8 + 6 = 14$
20. 8 days \times 2½ hours per day = 20 hours of homework.
 $20 \times .75$ (75%) = 15. $20 - 15 = 5$ hours of homework
or $20 \times .25$ (25% of the homework requirement remains) = 5 hours of homework.