

## "m of h", "x for y" (Re: A Simplified Number System)

*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2004-11/0300.html>

---

*From:* Tak To ([takto\\_at\\_alum.mit.edu](mailto:takto_at_alum.mit.edu).-)

*Date:* 11/02/04

Date: Tue, 02 Nov 2004 18:03:55 -0500

Arnold Victor <[arvimide@earthlink.net](mailto:arvimide@earthlink.net)> wrote:

AV.0> Such usages are arbitrary but internally consistent. In  
AV.0> German "halb zehn" does not mean 'half past...anything'  
AV.0> but 'half of ten,'

LEE Sau Dan <[danlee@informatik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:danlee@informatik.uni-freiburg.de)> wrote:

LSD.1> You mean "half TO ten", don't you?

Sean O'Leathlobhair wrote:

SOL.2> In modern English of my dialect, certainly "five to ten", "quarter to  
SOL.2> ten" etc so by analogy "half to ten" but I have never heard that used  
SOL.2> seriously.

SOL.2>

SOL.2> But "quarter of ten" seems faintly familiar as an archaic or dialect  
SOL.2> usage.

Here in the left pond, "quarter of ten" sounds right and "quarter to ten"  
sounds overly precise.

When I first heard the "m of h" construction here I did a double take.  
To me, the usage of "of" here deviates from how "of" is usually used ---  
to show a part-of relationships.

On a different note, the usage of "5 for 10" in U.S. sports lingo to mean  
"5 success out of 10 attempts" sounds counter intuitive to me. I suspect  
that might be related to the general practice of reading "x / y" as "x for  
y", as seen in supermarket prices marked as something like 2/\$1 and read  
as "2 for a dollar". I have always thought that \$1/2 would make a lot  
more sense.

Preposition, you can't be rational about them.

Tak

--

-----+-----  
Tak To

[takto@alum.mit.edu](mailto:takto@alum.mit.edu)

sci.lang: "m of h", "x for y" (Re: A Simplified Number System)

-----^^  
[taode takto ~{LU5B~}] NB: trim the xx to get my real email addr