

sci.math: Re: 64 – is this the only number that is both a sq and a cube?

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*From:* Stan Brown ([the\\_stan\\_brown\\_at\\_fastmail.fm](mailto:the_stan_brown_at_fastmail.fm))

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"Bob Silverman" <[anonymous@mathforum.org](mailto:anonymous@mathforum.org)> wrote in sci.math:

>Does "complete layman" = "complete moron"??? [no flame intended  
>toward original poster]

>

>The question asked is a simple one that should be able to be

>answered by anyone who has taken/passed a year of algebra. The last

>time I looked, the minimum requirement for graduating high school in the U.S. [any high school] was two  
>years of math...

>

>Answering this question only requires simple arithmetic. If a high

>school graduate can not answer it, it speaks very poorly of the

>high school math teachers.....

I teach math at Tompkins Cortland Community College.

Last night I tutored a student — a bright, motivated student — in his precalculus homework. He had to multiply out  $(x-3)^2(x+2)^3$ . All he knew was to multiply  $(x-3)(x-3)(x+2)(x+2)(x+2)$ ; the cube and even the square of a binomial were unknown to him.

He's the norm, not the exception. Hardly any of the students I see, even the better ones, know  $(x+y)^2 = x^2+2xy+y^2$  without multiplying out the factors by "FOIL". These are all students who have been through two years of high-school algebra, or more.

I don't think it's fair to blame the HS math teachers, though. I believe the basic problem is that students don't get enough homework. The only way I know to learn math (through calculus, anyway) is like the old joke about Carnegie Hall: practice, practice, practice. Teachers aren't allowed to assign enough homework, and when they do the students don't do it and principals back down under parental pressure.

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Stan Brown, Oak Road Systems, Tompkins County, New York, USA  
<http://OakRoadSystems.com>

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sci.math: Re: 64 – is this the only number that is both a sq and a cube?

A: Maybe because some people are too annoyed by top-posting.

Q: Why do I not get an answer to my question(s)?

A: Because it messes up the order in which people normally read text.

Q: Why is top-posting such a bad thing?