

Re: Why do so many people hate or have trouble with math? Your input is needed!

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In article <1160085520.507495.269140@xx>, LearningNerd <LearningNerd@xxxxxxxx> wrote:

Why do so many people hate math?

Same reason a lot of people hate spinach or broccoli. They've been forced to have it because, they are told, "it's good for you", but they can neither see nor perceive those benefits, and it is being served by mostly uninspired cooks who don't much care for its taste either.

Note that the same may be said about reading. A ->lot<- of people hate reading; the idea of reading a book for fun, or in order to learn something, is a terrible chore to be avoided if possible. And even those who may enjoy some reading will often recoil at the idea of reading Dickens, Tolstoi, Jane Austen, Cervantes, or Milton; let us not even consider Shakespeare which, granted, was not meant to be read but rather seen performed. And let us not even mention Plutarch or the likes of "Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire".

The difference there, I think, is that while it is considered socially acceptable to acknowledge, nay, brag about, a hate of math, the idea of saying that you think reading book is dumb, that people should not be forced to read quite so much in school, that you "hate books", is not socially acceptable. So there is less talk about it.

Why do they have trouble understanding it?

A vast majority of people are taught mathematics by people who do not like or enjoy mathematics either. That's a very big obstacle to overcome.

Again, the same may be said about reading in general. From what I can see, there is a very large problem with reading comprehension in general; let's not even go to reading Dickens or Shakespeare and

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making sense of the plot (which far more people have trouble with).

What are your experiences with learning math (at school, on your own, etc.)?

No idea where you are going with here. I've been studying nothing but math since 1988, barring one summer course of French in 92, and one semester of introductory japanese in 95. Way too much for me to talk about in usenet.

Do you enjoy math?

If I didn't I wouldn't be a mathematician.

If so, why?

The pleasure of finally solving a problem that once seemed unsurmountable is a very big part of it.

How could teachers and students make math more fun to learn?

Why does it have to be "fun"? I would settle for ensuring more people learn it properly, just as I would settle for more people being able to comprehend basic written English. I mean, I just had an exam with a very big prominent instruction to give exact answers and not approximations, with explicit examples of what to do and what not to do (including, explicitly, "Use pi, no 3.14"), only to have about 1/4-th of the students blithely replace every fraction with a one digit decimal approximation, and e and pi with its decimal approximation to the hundredths.....

But, first and foremost, whoever is teaching it has to understand it, and should probably enjoy it him or herself. When you teach something you don't like, the students pick up on it.

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"It's not denial. I'm just very selective about what I accept as reality."

--- Calvin ("Calvin and Hobbes" by Bill Watterson)
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