

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

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- *From:* "The poster formerly known as Colleyville Alan" <nospam@xxxxxxxxxx>
  - *Date:* Sun, 08 Oct 2006 05:02:46 GMT
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"Arturo Magidin" <magidin@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message

Many adults who hated math as kids still possess basic arithmetic skills but not basic algebra skills. Would it not be worthwhile to try and find ways of teaching algebra so that they had basic algebra skills years later?

Certainly. I just don't think that this is possible so long as algebra is being viewed the way Latin and Greek were once upon a time, a sign of education or a part of what "any educated person should know." If they knew what algebra is for (if the people teaching it knew what algebra was for) and used it on a regular basis, their algebraic skills would no doubt be about the same as their arithmetic ones. Then perhaps they could figure out what the gas mileage on their car actually is, how many gallons they can buy if they only have 20%, how much to leave for a tip when the service was good and you'd like to leave 18% instead of the usual 15%, and the like.

I am certainly not saying math is being taught →well← now. But I think part of the problem is an erroneous view of →why← math is being taught in the first place, and what the objective of that instruction should be.

I think we are tripping over each other in the use of "is" vs. "should be". I think algebra "is" being taught as part of a general education "this is what an educated person should know" philosophy. If you say that is should not be taught because of that, then you have one argument, but you have a very different argument if you are saying that it *\*is\** not being taught for that reason. I think, for the most part, that algebra *\*is\** taught for "educational" rather than practical reasons.

I agree that basic probability and stats would serve most people well. In my intro stats book some 30 years ago, I read that "...the average person

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uses statistics like a drunk uses a lamppost, for support rather than illumination".