
DSA Newscast

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SO WHAT'S THE POINT?

IN THIS ISSUE . . .

So What's the Point?

Dozenal News

Discussion on the Humphrey Point
Dozenal Cross-Stitching

Society Business

Volunteers Needed
Our Next *Bulletin*
Annual Meeting

Poetical Diversion

Donations

For Sale

The Dozenal Society of America is a voluntary, nonprofit educational corporation, organized for the conduct of research and education of the public in the use of dozenal (also called duodecimal or base twelve) in calculations, mathematics, weights and measures, and other branches of pure and applied science.

IT'S A QUESTION every dozenalist has encountered at least once, when his admittedly niche interest in dozenal has come out in a social situation: "That's weird. What's the point? Doesn't everybody count in tens?"

And to a certain degree, it's a reasonable question. Yes, everybody *does* count in tens. When you count in tens, you're immediately understood; when you count in dozens, you have to explain yourself in any but the simplest situations. What is the point? How can we best answer this question?

We can answer it two ways: (1) *mathematically*: dozenal has important advantages when doing math; and (2) *pedagogically*, or *educationally*: dozenal has important advantages for teaching.

MATHEMATICALLY

Mathematically, dozenal is superior to decimal in a number of ways. The most important is that it has twice as many factors. This has always been the primary pulling point for dozenal; from the very beginning, one of our founders, Ralph Beard, pointed out that decimal is "un-satis-factor-y" because it has "not-enough-factors".

So we tell them, "Sure, everybody counts in tens. But think about ordering a pizza with a group of friends. Cut it into twelve pieces, and you each get equal numbers of slices if there are two, three, four, or six of you. Cut it into ten, and unless there are two or five of you, you're stuck. (That's why, even though everybody counts in tens, nobody ever cuts pizza into ten slices.) Now

imagine that kind of flexibility with *everything*. That's dozenal."

Or, "Sure, everybody counts in tens. But think about dividing shifts at a factory, or at a fire department, where things need to be going for twenty-four hours a day. Twenty-four is just double twelve, right? You can divide that into two, three, four, six, or eight different shifts with an even number of hours. If we made it ten, twenty, or twenty-five hours a day, we'd have many fewer options. Now imagine that kind of flexibility with *everything*. That's dozenal."

It doesn't take long to multiply this kind of example; the dozen's superior factorability is its greatest strength.

Of course, this factorability also makes it much easier to do mental arithmetic; but this will inevitably draw us to the next objection of the apathetic: "I have a calculator on my phone for all that. Why do I care about doing math in my head? I'm just not a math person." And that leads us to the next point.

PEDAGOGICALLY

Fundamentally, "pedagogy" is just a fancy word for "education"; but because "educationally" isn't really a word, I think we're stuck with it. And I think this is an even stronger point for dozenal than its practical utility,

A stunningly large proportion of our population thinks that it's perfectly normal and acceptable to say things like "I'm just not a math person" to avoid any serious thought about numbers. If I present a person with a book and suggest they read

it, they might say they don't have time, or that they're not interested in that particular topic; but they would *never* say that they're "not a words person" or "not a reading person". Illiteracy is unacceptable in our society; so why is innumeracy so acceptable?

Indeed, innumeracy is not only *acceptable*; it's *prized*. People delightfully claim that they don't get math, that the algebra and trigonometry they learned in school was useless, that they're not nerdy enough

to be interested in numbers. Why is this acceptable?

It's acceptable for two reasons: (1) our educational system treats mathematics as a set of magical and arbitrary rules that, when applied, yield correct but not particularly useful answers; and (2) our number system is opaque, concealing the nature of numbers rather than revealing them. As dozenalists, we can certainly contribute to solving the first problem; but we can con-

tribute to solving that as decimalists, as well. Indeed, many in the denary brigade have made great contributions to this in the past, and doubtlessly will continue to do so in the future. Our real strength, of course, applies to the second.

How does dozenal make the nature of numbers clearer? We'll see a few ways next month.

Happy dozens!

DOZENAL NEWS

DISCUSSION ON THE HUMPHREY POINT

Do you use the Humphrey point (";") as a radix point when you write in dozens? A surprisingly lengthy discussion has occurred online about it:

<https://www.tapatalk.com/groups/dozenonline/periods-commas-semicolons-t2200.html>

Whether the period, the comma, or the semicolon is the best objective symbol for a radix point; whether it's necessary or advisable to propose or use a different radix point; it was quite remarkable how much the Forum was able to discuss the issue.

And if you're not on the Forum: please join us!

DOZENAL CROSS-STITCHING

People continually find new areas for dozenal advocacy that your humble author

had not considered. Susan Silver has sent us a dozenal pattern to her cross-stitching:

<https://beautyofmathematics.com/15-mathematical-cross-stitch-patterns/#8-dozenal-or-base-12>

Many people find activities like cross-stitching to be very calming; and it would certainly serve as a great conversation-starter, should anyone see it.

SOCIETY BUSINESS

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

As mentioned earlier, the DSA is an all-volunteer organization, and we pay no salaries. As a result, everything that we do comes out of the spare time of our members, time that they have to take away from their families, jobs, or other obligations.

We all love dozenals and enjoy assisting the Society in educating people about them; however, as the Society expands and does more, we find ourselves in need of more help.

Fortunately, the Society has a large membership with a very broad range of pro-

fessions and experience. If you think you can spare any time or effort for the cause of educating the world about dozenals, please let us know:

contact@dozenal.org

You can help as much or as little as you'd like. Thank you.

OUR NEXT BULLETIN

Ideas for the Bulletin? An article? A letter containing a question (common or uncommon) you'd like answered? An interesting math problem or puzzle? Send them in!

editor@dozenal.org

Remember that our *Bulletin* is designed to cover all aspects of mathematics, from the most basic to the most advanced, from a dozenal perspective, so no question or topic is too easy or too complex. Don't be shy!

ANNUAL MEETING

It is likely, given the disruption to public life that has occurred this year, that our annual meeting will be an all-digital affair. More information will be made available as we hammer out the details.

POETICAL DIVERSION

And the smoothness of the fraction gave the dozen so much traction,
thrilled me—filled me with numeric thrills that I'd not felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
“Thirds are not my mind defeating; they are even! and e'en more,
halves and thirds and quarters; sixths and eighths and nineths and even more;
How could any this ignore?

So my mind grew ever stronger; hesitating then no longer,
“Dozen,” said I, “Dozen, truly your forgiveness I implore;
For so many years I stumbled, with that silly decimal bumbled,
thirds and other fractions fumbled while you stood right by my door,
while I might have turned at any moment to you at my door,
key to all math's deepest lore.

To be continued . . .

DONATIONS

Members, please remember that while dues are no longer required for membership, we still rely on the generosity of members to keep the DSA going. Donations of any amount, large or small, are welcome and needed.

A donation of \$16; (\$18.) will procure Subscription membership, and entitles the payer to receive both a digital and a paper copy of the *Bulletin* if requested. Other members will receive only a digital copy. To invoke this privilege, please notify the Editor of the Bulletin, John Volan, at

editor@dozenal.org

As members know, we are a volunteer organization which pays no salaries. As such, every penny you donate goes toward furthering the DSA's goals.

It may be worth considering a monthly donation; say, \$3, or \$6, or whatever seems reasonable to you. This can be set up quite

easily with Paypal, which is available at our web site.

Of course, if you prefer to donate by check, you may send them to our worthy Treasurer, Jay Schiffman, payable to the Dozenal Society of America, at:

Jay Schiffman
604-36 South Washington Square, #815
Philadelphia, PA 19106-4115

Remember, too, that the DSA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization; as such, your contributions may be tax deductible under applicable law.

Thanks again for your assistance; it's your donations that keep the DSA going. We can't keep doing it without you.

FOR SALE

The DSA is pleased to offer the following for sale. These are all either at cost, or the proceeds go to the Society. The exception is *Basic Dozenal Arithmetic*, which is a private production.

Item	Price (\$)
Dozenal Wall Calendar, 1204	9.05
Dozenal Planning Calendar, 1204	8.32
TGM: A Coherent Dozenal Metrology	8.00
Manual of the Dozenal System	3.46
A Dozenal Primer	4.50
Basic Dozenal Arithmetic	15.00

Prices are, unfortunately but by necessity, in decimal. If for some reason the links above do not work, simply go to: <http://www.lulu.com/shop/shop.ep>

and enter the appropriate terms. E.g., searching for “TGM dozenal” will turn up the TGM book.

We hope to offer other titles, and even some other items (such as dozenal clocks and the like), in the future.

EACH ONE, TEACH ONE