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Quiz: Are You a Real Math Geek?

A highly scientific assessment of your math geekitude

By Evelyn Lamb on July 25, 2016



Can you hang with the mathletes of the University of Houston CHAMP program? *Credit: Mark Tomforde*

The other day Patrick Vennebush of the blog Math Jokes 4 Mathy Folks shared a three-question quiz he wrote to determine whether someone is a real math geek. Here are his questions:

What's the eight digit (after the decimal point) of π ?

What's the punch line to, "Why do programmers confuse Halloween and Christmas?"

Name seven mathematical puzzles that have entered popular culture.

I don't think there are many factoids that every *real* math geek knows (I know π to only a few digits because continued fractions are way better than decimals), and I bristle at the "fake geek" undertones. To be fair, Vennebush's post acknowledges the silliness of a quiz of this form—his inspiration comes

from some “are you a real man” quizzes he heard about recently. (The implication of those quizzes, which Vennebush notes is absurd, is that if you don't know much about boxing or Hemingway or whatever the author cares about, you're not a *real man*.)

With that in mind, I'm going to one-up, or maybe two-up, Vennebush with a one-question quiz so you can determine, once and for all, whether you are a *real* math geek.

Do you like math?

No

Yes



Just like manliness, math isn't about the facts you know. You'll pick up some of those along the way as you study math, but knowing the answer to a goofy joke about base 8 and base 10 or having an

encyclopedic knowledge of math puzzles doesn't make you a more authentic math geek. If you love thinking about math, congratulations, you already know everything you need to to be a math geek! Math is big enough for people who love memorizing digits (or continued fraction convergents) of popular constants and for people who want to figure out how to create a sculpture with quaternion symmetry and for people who love both or neither.

If you're not a math geek yet, watch out! I was a late math bloomer, but one day it sunk its teeth in, and I was hooked. It could happen to you.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)



Evelyn Lamb

Evelyn Lamb is a postdoc at the University of Utah. She writes about mathematics and other cool stuff.

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