MATHEMATICS · GRADES 7-9

Comparing integers

Difficulty level: Intermediate

Mathematics: Grades 7-9

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Overview of the concept

This is how you decide which temperature is colder, which bank balance is lower, or who is further below zero in a game. Ordering signed numbers — numbers with a plus or minus sign — means knowing that -10 is colder than -2, even though 10 is a bigger number than 2. It is the number sense behind weather, money, and any score that can go below zero.



Rule

On a number line, the number further to the right is greater.

A positive number is always greater than a negative number, and zero sits between them. For two negative numbers, the one closer to zero is greater.

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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Compare –6 and –2

Picture it



SOLUTION

Draw both numbers on a number line.

The number further right is greater: –2 sits right of –6.

So –6 < –2

EXAMPLE 2

Q Compare 4 and –1

Picture it



SOLUTION

Draw both numbers on a number line.

Any positive number sits right of any negative number.

So 4 > –1

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Practice questions

1 Write < or > between -5 and 3.

- A <
- B >
- C =

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2 Write < or > between -9 and -4.

- A <
- B >
- C =

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3

Write < or > between 0 and -7.

A <

B >

C =

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4

Write <, > or = between -1 and -1.

A <

B >

C =

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5

Write < or > between 6 and -6.

A <

B >

C =

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6

Write < or > between -12 and -20.

A <

B >

C =

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7 **Which is greater: -3 or -8?**

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8 **Which is smaller: 2 or -5?**

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9

-4

1

-1

Put the floors in order from smallest to largest.

A -1, -4, 1

B -4, -1, 1

C 1, -1, -4

D -4, 1, -1

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10

3 dollars

-2 dollars

0 dollars

Put them in order from largest to smallest.

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ANSWER KEY

1. <

2. <

3. >

4. =

5. >

6. >

7. -3

8. -5

9. -4, -1, 1

10. 3, 0, -2

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