MATHEMATICS · GRADES 7-9

Positive and negative numbers

Difficulty level: Intermediate

Mathematics: Grades 7-9

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Overview of the concept

This is how you describe temperatures below freezing, money you owe on a credit card, or a basement floor below ground level. A winter day at -10 is ten degrees below zero, and a credit card balance of -2 hundred means you owe two hundred dollars. A basement is below ground level, and a golf score under par is below the standard. Positive and negative numbers are how we talk about anything that can sit on either side of zero.



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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q On a number line, where do -4 and 3 go?

Picture it



SOLUTION

Draw a number line with zero in the middle and equal steps on both sides.

Count 4 steps left of zero and mark −4; count 3 steps right and mark 3.

Numbers left of zero are negative, numbers right of zero are positive.

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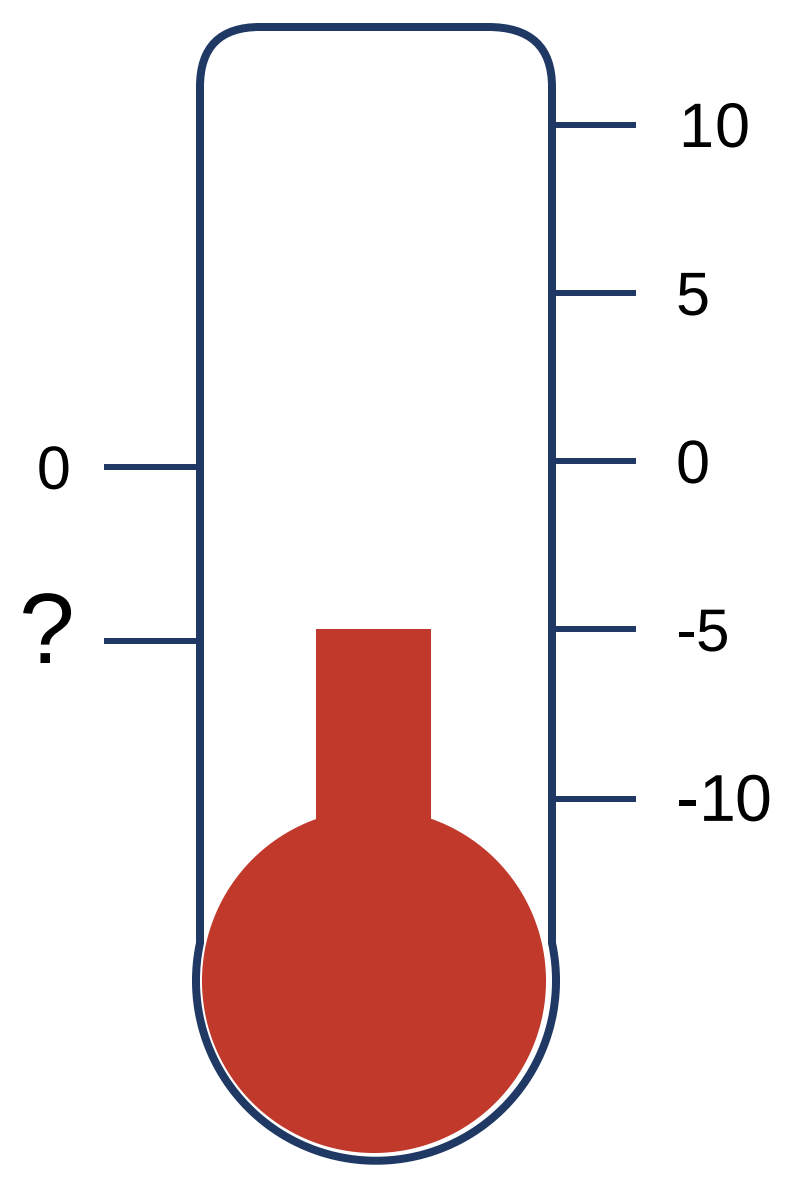
EXAMPLE 2

Q Write the temperature 5 degrees below zero



SOLUTION

Picture it

Write the temperature 5 degrees below zero

Work it one step at a time, top to bottom.

Below zero means the number is negative, so use a minus sign.

Write the size of the drop, 5, after the minus sign: –5.

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Read it as negative five degrees.

Practice questions

1 **Place -5 and 4 on a number line. Which number is further left?**

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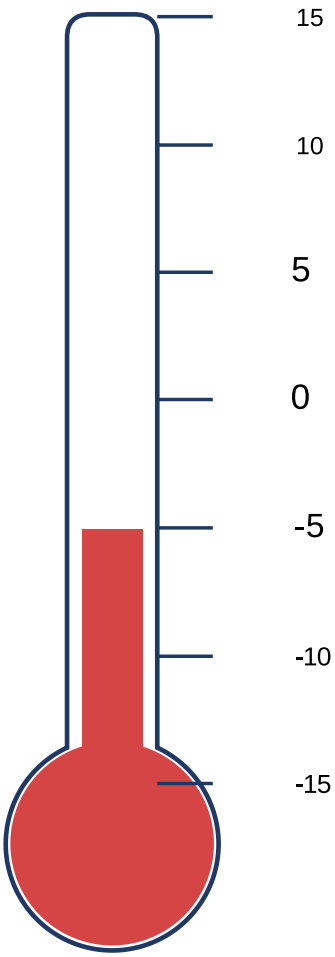
2 **Read the thermometer. Write the temperature as a signed number.**



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3 Which list is in order from smallest to largest?

- **A** -1, 0, 3
- **B** 3, 0, -1
- **C** 0, -1, 3
- **D** -1, 3, 0

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4 A diver is 8 m below sea level. Write this as a signed number.

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5 The dot is 9 places to the left of 0. Write the number.

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6 The temperature rises from -4 degrees to 3 degrees. How many degrees did it rise?

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7 How many places is -6 from 0 on a number line?

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8 The dot sits to the left of 0. Is it a negative number? Answer yes or no.

A yes

B no

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9 Start at -2 and move 4 places to the left. What number do you reach?

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10 Which number lies between -4 and -1?

A -5

B -3

C 0

D -4

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ANSWER KEY

1. -5

2. -5

3. -1, 0, 3

4. -8

5. -9

6. 7

7. 6

8. yes

9. -6

10. -3

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