PERCENTAGES · PART 7 OF 8 · AGES 11–16

Percentages in Everyday Life

From the shops to the news, percentages are everywhere. Here is the maths behind eight of them.

Sale discounts

25% off trainers priced 64 means you pay the other 75%:
64 × 0.75 = 48. You save
64 − 48 = 16.

VAT, GST and sales tax

Many countries add a value added tax (VAT), a goods and services tax (GST) or a sales tax. With an 8% tax, an item priced 35 costs 35 × 1.08 = 37.80.

Tips

Where tipping is expected, find 10% and halve it to get 5%. A 15% tip on a bill of 42 is
4.20 + 2.10 = 6.30.

Interest on savings and loans

At 3% a year, 500 earns 15 in the first year. Leave it in and the next 3% is of 515, so it earns 15.45. Loans charge interest the same way.

Food labels

US labels give a % Daily Value: 5% or less is low and 20% or more is high. UK and EU labels may show a % of the Reference Intake.

Statistics in the news

'Cases up 50%' could mean 2 cases rising to 3. A percentage hides the size of the numbers, so look for the real counts too.

Phone battery

At 20% charge, a phone that lasts about 15 hours on a full charge has roughly 0.2 × 15 = 3 hours left, if you keep using it the same way.

Test and exam scores

54 marks out of 60 is
54 ÷ 60 × 100 = 90%.
Percentages let you compare tests that have different totals.

Quick maths at the till

Find 10% by dividing by 10, then build what you need: double it for 20%, halve it for 5%. 10% of 64 is 6.40, so 25% is
6.40 + 6.40 + 3.20 = 16.

NEXT IN THE SERIES
8. Percentages Quiz: Test Yourself

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