

What is the definition of constant in math

Decoding the Constant: Unveiling the Mathematical Enigma

In the vast landscape of mathematics, constants stand as unwavering sentinels, anchoring equations and defining relationships. These seemingly simple entities play crucial roles in diverse mathematical fields, from basic arithmetic to complex calculus. Understanding the definition of a constant in math is fundamental to deciphering the language of numbers and grasping their profound implications. This delves deep into the concept, exploring its various facets and practical applications.

Defining the Constant: A Mathematical Perspective

A constant, in mathematics, is a value that does *not* change. It retains the same numerical value throughout a given problem or equation. Unlike variables, which can assume various values, constants remain fixed. This immutability makes them essential building blocks for establishing mathematical relationships and formulating rules. Think of them as fixed points in the ever-shifting landscape of mathematical expressions.

Types of Constants

While the core definition remains consistent, constants manifest in various forms:

- **Numerical Constants:** These are the most straightforward type, representing fixed numerical values, like 2, π (pi), e (Euler's number), or $\sqrt{2}$. These constants often possess inherent meaning within specific mathematical contexts.
- **Physical Constants:** Constants arising from physical phenomena, such as the speed of light (c) or the gravitational constant (G). These are crucial in physics and engineering, relating different physical quantities to each other.
- **Mathematical Constants:** This encompasses the previous two categories, focusing on mathematical principles and relationships within mathematics itself. For instance, the golden ratio (ϕ) is a mathematical constant crucial in geometry and art.

The Role of Constants in Equations

Constants play a pivotal role in equations, defining the scale, proportion, and relationship between variables. Consider the equation for a straight line: $y = mx + c$. In this equation:

- y and x are variables.
- m is a constant representing the slope of the line.
- c is a constant representing the y-intercept.

Without these constants, the equation wouldn't define a specific line. Different values for 'm' and 'c' produce different lines with distinct slopes and intercepts.

Constants and Variables: A Comparative Analysis

Understanding the distinction between constants and variables is crucial. A table summarizes the key

differences: | Feature | Constant | Variable | |||| | Value | Fixed | Can change | | Representation |
Usually numerical | Often represented by letters (x, y, z) | | Role in an equation | Defines relationships,
proportions, scale | Represents a quantity that can vary | | Example | π , 10, 2.718 | x, y, n |

Case Study: The Significance of π (Pi)

π (pi), the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, is a quintessential constant in mathematics. Its numerical value is approximately 3.14159. Its significance extends across numerous fields, including geometry, trigonometry, and calculus. Without π , calculations involving circles, cylinders, and other geometric shapes would be significantly more complex.

The Benefits of Understanding Constants

Understanding constants offers significant benefits:

- **Simplified Calculations:** Constants simplify complex calculations by reducing the number of variables to be considered.
- *Precise Results:* They ensure consistency and accuracy in mathematical operations.
- Predictive Modeling: Constants form the foundation for building predictive models in various fields, from physics to economics.
- Scientific Discovery: Physical constants are fundamental to scientific discovery and understanding the universe.

Exploring Related Concepts

Understanding Variables

Variables, as mentioned previously, are the opposite of constants. They represent quantities that can change and are crucial for modelling diverse phenomena. Comprehending variables is as critical as understanding constants.

The Evolution of Mathematical Constants

Throughout history, mathematical constants have been discovered and defined as our understanding of mathematics evolved. From ancient Greek geometry to modern calculus, these constants have played a significant role in shaping our mathematical world.

Applications of Constants in Real-World Scenarios

Constants are integral parts of numerous real-world applications, from engineering designs to financial modeling. They provide the baseline to understand and predict various phenomena.

Expert FAQs

1. Q: Can a constant change its value within a single equation? **A:** No. A constant maintains the same value throughout a given equation or problem. 2. **Q: Are all mathematical constants numerical?** **A:** Not necessarily. Some mathematical constants, like the golden ratio, are ratios representing specific geometric proportions. 3. Q: How are constants important in scientific modeling? **A:** Constants provide a baseline for understanding and predicting various physical phenomena. 4. Q: What is the significance of Euler's number (e)? **A:** Euler's number (e) is a crucial constant in calculus and other mathematical fields, exhibiting exponential growth and decay patterns. 5. Q: How do constants differ from coefficients? **A:** Coefficients are numbers that multiply variables within an equation, whereas constants stand alone without being multiplied by any variable.

Conclusion

In essence, constants are the bedrock of mathematical relationships. They provide the structure and consistency required for precise calculations, predictive modeling, and the overall understanding of the world around us. From simple arithmetic to complex scientific calculations, their role remains indispensable. Mastering the definition of a constant in math is a key step towards unlocking the rich and diverse applications of mathematics in various fields.

Ever found yourself staring at a math problem, scribbling down numbers and symbols, and then you hit one that just... stays the same? No matter what you do, it's always that specific value. That, my friends, is the essence of a constant in mathematics. It's a bedrock of certainty in a world that can often feel like a swirling vortex of variables.

What is the Definition of Constant in Math? A Deep Dive

At its core, the definition of a constant in math is beautifully simple: **a constant is a value that does not change.** Think of it as a fixed point, an unyielding number that remains the same throughout a given mathematical expression, equation, or function. Unlike variables, which are placeholders for numbers that *can* change, constants are the steady Eddies, the dependable anchors of our mathematical landscapes.

We encounter constants everywhere in mathematics, from basic arithmetic to advanced calculus and beyond. They are fundamental building blocks that allow us to describe relationships, solve problems, and model the world around us. Let's break down what this really means and why it's so important.

Constants in Arithmetic: The Familiar Faces

In the realm of arithmetic, constants are the numbers themselves. The number 5 is always 5. The number -17.3 is always -17.3. There's no mystery here. These are the integers, fractions, decimals, and even irrational numbers like pi (π) or Euler's number (e) that we use for counting, measuring, and calculating.

For instance, in the expression $2 + 3 = 5$, both 2 and 3 are constants. The result, 5, is also a constant. They don't fluctuate; they represent definite quantities. This straightforward understanding is the foundation upon which all other mathematical concepts are built.

Constants in Algebra: The Unchanging Elements

As we move into algebra, the concept of a constant becomes even more crucial, especially when contrasted with variables. An algebraic expression often contains both variables (like x or y) and constants. A constant term is a term in an expression that contains no variables. For example, in the expression $3x + 7$, the number 7 is a constant. The number 3 is also a constant coefficient, multiplying the variable x .

The beauty of this is that we can manipulate expressions containing constants. For example, if we have the equation $y = 2x + 5$, here, 2 is the constant coefficient and 5 is the constant term. If we were to substitute different values for x (making x a variable), the value of y would change. However, the 2 and the 5 remain fixed. They dictate the specific relationship between x and y . Without these constants, the equation wouldn't define a unique line or curve.

Types of Constants in Algebra:

1. **Absolute Constants:** These are numbers with a fixed, universally agreed-upon value. Think of integers (1, 2, 3), rational numbers ($\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$), and irrational numbers (π , $\sqrt{2}$). Their value is absolute and unchanging in any mathematical context.
2. **Coefficients:** As mentioned, these are constants that multiply a variable. In $5a$, 5 is the coefficient and a is the variable. The coefficient impacts the magnitude of the variable's contribution to the expression.
3. **Constant Terms:** These are standalone constant values within an expression that are not multiplying any variable. In $2x + 9$, 9 is the constant term. It represents a baseline value that is added or subtracted, regardless of the variable's value.

Constants in Functions: The Fixed Parameters

Functions are essentially rules that assign an output value to each input value. Constants play a vital role in defining these rules. Consider the function $f(x) = mx + c$. Here, m and c are constants. m represents the slope of a line, and c represents the y-intercept. These constants determine the specific characteristics of the line being represented by the function. If you change m or c , you get a different line.

For example, $f(x) = 2x + 1$ defines a different line than $g(x) = 3x + 1$. The constant 1 in both functions indicates that they both cross the y-axis at the same point, but the constant 2 and 3 dictate their different rates of steepness.

The Significance of Constants in Function Definition:

Constants allow us to generalize and categorize functions. Instead of defining every single line individually, we can use the general form $y = mx + c$ and then specify the constants m and c to represent any linear function. This is a powerful concept in mathematics and science, allowing for the creation of models and the understanding of relationships without needing to know every specific numerical value beforehand.

Mathematical Constants: The Universal Truths

Beyond the general definition, there are specific **mathematical constants** that hold profound significance in various fields of study. These are numbers whose values are fixed and derived from mathematical principles. They are not arbitrary; their existence and value are fundamental to the structure of mathematics.

Famous Mathematical Constants and Their Importance:

1. **Pi (π):** Perhaps the most famous constant, π is the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. It's an irrational number, meaning its decimal representation goes on forever without repeating (approximately 3.14159). π is crucial in geometry, trigonometry, calculus, and many areas of physics and engineering, especially those involving circular or wave-like phenomena.
2. **Euler's Number (e):** Also known as the base of the natural logarithm, e is approximately 2.71828. It's a cornerstone of calculus, appearing in formulas for growth and decay, compound interest, and probability. Its unique property is that the derivative of e^x is e^x itself, a remarkable simplification in differential equations.
3. **The Golden Ratio (ϕ):** Approximately 1.61803, the golden ratio appears in geometry, art,

architecture, and even nature. It's derived from a specific proportion where the ratio of the sum of the two quantities to the larger quantity is equal to the ratio of the larger quantity to the smaller one.

4. **Imaginary Unit (i):** While not a "constant" in the same numerical sense as π or e , the imaginary unit i is defined as the square root of -1 ($i^2 = -1$). It's a fundamental constant in the field of complex numbers, which are essential for solving many algebraic equations and have vast applications in electrical engineering, quantum mechanics, and signal processing.

These universal constants are not just numbers; they are expressions of fundamental relationships within the mathematical universe. Their unchanging nature allows us to build theories and make predictions with certainty.

Constants vs. Variables: The Crucial Distinction

Understanding the definition of a constant in math is incomplete without a clear understanding of its counterpart: the variable. The key difference lies in their mutability:

1. **Constants:** Fixed, unchanging values.
2. **Variables:** Symbols that represent values that *can* change or are unknown.

In an equation like $2x + 5 = 11$, x is the variable. We can solve for x to find its value (in this case, $x=3$). Once we solve for x , we have found a specific value that satisfies the equation. However, in the expression $2x + 5$, the 2 and the 5 are constants. They don't change their numerical value, even as x might represent different numbers in different contexts.

This distinction is crucial for formulating and solving equations, defining relationships, and building mathematical models. Variables allow for flexibility and generality, while constants provide the specific structure and parameters within those flexible frameworks.

The Role of Constants in Mathematical Expressions and Equations

Constants are the backbone of mathematical expressions and equations. They provide the concrete numerical values that interact with variables, define the magnitude of operations, and establish the boundaries of relationships.

In Expressions:

In an expression like $\frac{3x^2 - 5}{7}$, the numbers 3, 5, and 7 are constants. They are fixed values that are part of the calculation. The variable here is x . No matter what value x takes, the numbers 3, 5, and 7 retain their inherent numerical identity.

In Equations:

Equations are statements of equality. Constants are essential for defining the specific equality. In the equation $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ (Pythagorean theorem), if we are considering a specific right-angled triangle with legs of length 3 and 4, then 3 and 4 become specific constants for that instance, and c^2 would equal $3^2 + 4^2 = 9 + 16 = 25$. Here, 3, 4, and 25 are constants for that particular problem. In the general form of the theorem, a , b , and c are often treated as variables representing the lengths of the sides of *any* right-angled triangle, but within a specific instance of the theorem, they take on constant values.

Why are Constants So Important in Math?

The concept of a constant might seem simple, but its implications are vast:

1. **Predictability and Stability:** Constants provide a sense of stability and predictability in mathematics. They offer fixed reference points from which we can measure and compare.
2. **Building Blocks:** They are the fundamental building blocks for constructing more complex mathematical structures, from simple equations to intricate theorems.
3. **Modeling the Real World:** Many real-world phenomena are described using mathematical models that rely heavily on constants. For example, the acceleration due to gravity (approximately 9.8 m/s^2) is a constant that physicists use in projectile motion calculations.
4. **Defining Relationships:** Constants, especially coefficients and constant terms in functions, are crucial for defining the specific nature of relationships between variables.
5. **Universality:** Mathematical constants like π and e are universal truths that govern various aspects of mathematics and the natural world.

Conclusion: The Unchanging Pillars of Mathematics

So, what is the definition of a constant in math? It's a value that remains fixed and unchanging. Whether it's a simple integer in arithmetic, a coefficient in an algebraic expression, a parameter in a function, or a universally recognized mathematical constant like π , its essence is its steadfastness. Constants are the anchors in the dynamic sea of variables, providing structure, predictability, and the foundation upon which we build our understanding of the mathematical universe.

Without constants, math would be a shapeless, undefined entity. They are the unchanging pillars that support the entire edifice of mathematics, allowing us to explore, solve, and understand the world with a remarkable degree of precision. So, the next time you see a number that doesn't seem to be going anywhere in a problem, you're looking at a constant – a vital, unwavering component of the mathematical language.

The Definition of a Constant in Mathematics In the realm of mathematics, a constant is a fundamental concept that represents a fixed, unchanging value throughout the scope of a problem, equation, or function. Unlike variables, which can take on different values depending on context, constants remain stable and immutable, serving as anchors that provide stability and clarity in mathematical reasoning. At its core, a constant embodies a specific quantity that does not vary—whether it's a number like π , e , or the speed of light in certain physical equations, or a symbolic representation such as a parameter in a formula. Constants may appear explicitly in equations, implicitly defined by definitions, or even fixed by external conditions in applied models. Their presence allows mathematicians and scientists to build precise, reproducible frameworks that model reality or explore abstract ideas. One of the key insights into constants is their role in simplifying complex relationships. By fixing a value, constants transform dynamic or variable-rich expressions into manageable forms that enable clearer analysis and problem-solving. For example, in the equation $E = mc^2$, the speed of light (c) is a constant that anchors the relationship between energy (E) and mass (m), making it possible to calculate energy outputs from mass with unerring accuracy. Similarly, in algebra, constants help define coefficients in linear equations, shaping the slope and intercept of lines and guiding predictions in regression models. Constants also play a pivotal role across diverse mathematical disciplines. In calculus, constants appear in integrals, derivatives, and differential equations, often representing initial conditions or physical parameters that ground theoretical solutions in observable phenomena. In

number theory, constants like Euler's number e or the golden ratio ϕ emerge as universal constants with deep structural significance, influencing patterns and distributions across mathematics and beyond. The benefits of clearly defining constants are profound. They reduce ambiguity, enhance model reliability, and support consistent comparisons across calculations. In applied fields such as physics, engineering, and economics, constants enable precise simulations and forecasts, ensuring that theoretical models align closely with real-world behavior. Moreover, their stability supports innovation—by isolating fixed values, researchers can explore variations around constants to uncover new insights or optimize systems. Looking to the future, constants continue to underpin emerging research and technology. In machine learning, fixed hyperparameters act as constants that guide model training and generalization. In theoretical physics, ongoing exploration of fundamental constants—such as Planck's constant or the gravitational constant—may unlock deeper understandings of the universe's structure. As mathematics evolves, the concept of a constant remains a steadfast pillar, bridging abstract thought with tangible application, and continuing to shape how we interpret and interact with the world through numbers. Ultimately, the definition of a constant in mathematics is more than a mere technicality—it is a foundational tool that brings order, precision, and meaning to both theoretical inquiry and practical problem-solving.

Unpacking the Unchanging: A Deep Dive into the Definition of a Constant in Mathematics

In the vast and intricate landscape of mathematics, certain elements possess a peculiar and fundamental characteristic: they remain steadfast, immutable, and predictable. These are the constants. Far from being mere placeholders, constants are the bedrock upon which many mathematical concepts are built, the anchors that stabilize equations, and the very essence of unchanging truth within a given context. But what precisely constitutes a "constant" in mathematics? This article delves deep into the definition, exploring its various facets, applications, and the profound implications it holds for our understanding of the mathematical universe.

The Core Definition: A Value That Does Not Vary

At its most fundamental level, a **constant** in mathematics is a quantity or a value that is fixed and does not change throughout a particular problem, equation, or discussion. Think of it as a number with a permanent identity. Unlike variables, which are symbols representing quantities that can take on different values, constants are assigned a single, unwavering numerical value. For instance, in the equation $(2x + 5 = 11)$, the numbers (2) , (5) , and (11) are all constants. Their values are fixed, regardless of what value (x) might represent. (x) here is a variable; it could potentially be 3, or it could be something else in a different equation. But the (2) , the (5) , and the (11) will always be themselves.

Types of Constants: More Than Just Numbers

While the most common form of a mathematical constant is a numerical value, the concept extends beyond simple integers and fractions. We can categorize constants into several key types:

Numerical Constants: The Familiar Faces

These are the most recognizable constants, representing specific numerical values. They can be:

1. **Integers:** $\{1, -7, 100\}$
2. **Rational Numbers:** $\{\frac{1}{2}, -3.14\}$ (which can be expressed as a fraction)
3. **Irrational Numbers:** $\{\pi\}$ (π), $\{e\}$ (Euler's number), $\{\sqrt{2}\}$ (the square root of 2). These are numbers that cannot be expressed as a simple fraction and have non-repeating, non-terminating decimal expansions.

The number $\{0\}$ is a crucial additive identity and a constant. The number $\{1\}$ is the multiplicative identity and another fundamental constant.

Algebraic Constants: Symbols with Fixed Values

In algebra, we often use letters to represent constants. When a letter is used to denote a fixed, but unspecified, value throughout a particular set of equations or a theorem, it acts as an algebraic constant. For example, in the general quadratic equation $\{ax^2 + bx + c = 0\}$, the letters $\{a\}$, $\{b\}$, and $\{c\}$ are typically treated as constants. Their values are assumed to be fixed for a given quadratic equation, even though they might differ from one quadratic equation to another. The variable in this context is $\{x\}$. The distinction between algebraic constants and variables can sometimes be context-dependent. However, in a given mathematical statement or problem, once a symbol is designated as a constant, its value must remain unchanged within that context.

Physical Constants: Bridging Math and the Real World

Mathematics is not confined to abstract thought; it is a powerful tool for describing and understanding the physical universe. **Physical constants** are numerical values that represent fundamental properties of nature and are believed to be unchanging throughout space and time. These are some of the most important and intriguing constants in science. Examples include:

1. **The speed of light in a vacuum (c):** Approximately $\{299,792,458\}$ meters per second.
2. **Planck's constant (h):** A fundamental constant in quantum mechanics, relating to the energy of a photon.
3. **The gravitational constant (G):** Appears in Newton's law of universal gravitation, determining the strength of gravitational attraction between objects.
4. **Avogadro's number:** The number of constituent particles (usually atoms or molecules) that are contained in one mole of a substance.

These constants are not arbitrarily assigned; they are determined through rigorous scientific experimentation and observation. Their unchanging nature is a cornerstone of our current understanding of physics.

Mathematical Constants: The Pillars of Abstract Systems

Beyond numerical and physical constants, there are also deeply embedded **mathematical constants** that arise organically from the structure and definitions of mathematics itself. These constants often have profound and far-reaching implications.

1. **$\{\pi\}$ (Pi):** The ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. Its ubiquity in geometry, trigonometry, calculus, and even probability theory underscores its fundamental nature.
2. **$\{e\}$ (Euler's number):** The base of the natural logarithm. It is intrinsically linked to growth and decay processes, appearing in exponential functions, compound interest calculations, and many areas of calculus and differential equations.
3. **The golden ratio ($\{\phi\}$):** Approximately $\{1.618\}$. Found in geometry, art, architecture, and

even nature, this ratio has fascinated mathematicians and artists for centuries.

These constants are not discovered through measurement but are derived from definitions and theorems. They represent inherent mathematical relationships.

The Role and Significance of Constants

The presence of constants is not merely a matter of mathematical nomenclature; it imbues mathematical expressions and theories with crucial properties:

Stabilizing Equations and Formulas

Constants provide a fixed reference point within an equation. They allow us to establish relationships between variables and predict outcomes. For example, in the formula for the area of a circle, $A = \pi r^2$, π is a constant. This constant ensures that the relationship between the area and the radius is consistent, regardless of the circle's size. Without π , the formula would be fundamentally incomplete.

Defining Mathematical Structures

Many fundamental mathematical structures are defined by constants. For instance, the concept of a unit circle in trigonometry is defined by a radius of 1. The number system itself relies on fundamental constants like 0 and 1.

Simplifying Complexities

By representing unchanging values, constants can simplify complex mathematical expressions. Instead of writing out a lengthy decimal for π every time, we use the symbol π , which encapsulates that precise, unending value. This not only makes notation cleaner but also highlights the conceptual importance of that specific value.

Foundation for Proofs and Theorems

Mathematical proofs and theorems often rely on the properties of constants. For example, when proving a theorem about geometric shapes, properties of π or other geometric constants are frequently utilized. The unchanging nature of these constants lends robustness to the logical structure of mathematical arguments.

Applications Across Disciplines

The influence of constants extends far beyond pure mathematics. In physics, as mentioned, physical constants are the bedrock of our understanding of the universe. In engineering, constants are used in design formulas. In economics, constants appear in models of supply and demand. In computer science, constants are used for fixed values within algorithms.

Distinguishing Constants from Variables and Parameters

It is crucial to differentiate constants from related mathematical concepts:

Constants vs. Variables

The primary distinction lies in their mutability. **Variables** are symbols that represent quantities that

can change or take on different values. They are the unknowns we often solve for in equations.

Constants, on the other hand, are fixed and unchanging within a given context.

Constants vs. Parameters

The term **parameter** can sometimes be confusingly similar to a constant. A parameter is a quantity that is constant within a specific instance of a problem or a family of functions, but it can vary across different instances or families. Consider the equation of a line: $y = mx + c$.

1. If we are analyzing a single specific line, m (the slope) and c (the y-intercept) are considered constants for that line.
2. However, if we are considering a *family* of parallel lines, m would be a parameter that is constant for all lines in that family, but could take on different values for different families of lines. c would then be the variable parameter that shifts the lines up or down.

In essence, parameters often act as constants within a certain scope but can be varied to generate different scenarios. The definition of a constant is more absolute within its defined mathematical space.

The Infinite Nature of Some Constants

It is important to note that not all constants are "finite" in the sense of having a calculable, terminating decimal representation. Irrational numbers like π and e are constants, but their decimal expansions are infinite and non-repeating. The "constancy" here refers to their exact, unchanging value, not the ease with which we can write it down.

Conclusion: The Enduring Power of the Unchanging

In conclusion, the definition of a constant in mathematics is elegantly simple yet profoundly powerful. It signifies a value that remains fixed and unaltered within a given mathematical context. From the fundamental numerical constants that populate our equations to the universal physical constants that govern the cosmos, and the abstract mathematical constants that underpin theoretical frameworks, these unchanging entities are indispensable. They provide stability, define structures, simplify complexities, and serve as the bedrock for countless mathematical and scientific endeavors. Understanding the true nature of constants is not just about memorizing symbols; it's about appreciating the enduring power of the unchanging in the ever-evolving realm of mathematics. The quest to understand and utilize these constants continues to drive innovation and deepen our comprehension of the world around us.

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Questions & Answers About what is the definition of constant in math

No	Question	Answer
1	What's the simplest way to define a 'constant' in math?	A constant in math is a value that doesn't change. Think of it as a fixed number that always stays the same in a particular context.
2	Can you give me a real-world example of a mathematical constant?	Sure! The number of days in a week (7) is a constant. It's always 7, no matter what day you start counting from.
3	How are constants different from variables in math?	Variables represent values that <i>can</i> change, like 'x' in an equation. Constants, on the other hand, have a fixed, unchanging value.
4	When we talk about 'mathematical constants' like pi (π) or 'e', what makes them special?	These are 'universal constants' because they appear in many different mathematical and scientific formulas and their values are fundamental and unchanging across all contexts.
5	Are there different <i>types</i> of constants in mathematics?	Yes! We often distinguish between numerical constants (like 5 or -10) and symbolic constants (like π or 'e' which represent specific, fixed values).
6	Why are constants so important in algebra and calculus?	Constants help define relationships between variables. In calculus, they're crucial for understanding rates of change and accumulation.
7	If a number is used in an equation, does that automatically make it a constant?	Not necessarily. If the number is part of the fixed structure of the problem and doesn't represent an unknown or changing quantity, then yes, it's a constant. If it represents something that could be different, it might be a variable.
8	Can a constant be negative or zero?	Absolutely! Constants can be any real number, including negative numbers and zero. For example, in the equation $y = -3x + 2$, both -3 and 2 are constants.
9	How do you recognize a constant in a mathematical expression?	Look for numbers that are written out explicitly and don't have any letters or symbols attached to them that suggest they can change. For example, in $2x + 5$, the '5' is a constant.

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