

The times tables – the techniques that shrink them

Upcoming episode

How do you learn the times tables without memorising a hundred facts? A walk through a technique for every table from 1 to 10 – doubling, the five rule, the digit rule for nines and the square numbers – and the few facts that genuinely have to be practised.

MAIN TOPICS

- How many facts the times tables actually contain
- Commutativity – why half of them disappear on their own
- A technique for every table from 1 to 10
- The doubling chain that covers 2, 4 and 8
- The nine times table, with the finger trick and the digit rule
- The square numbers as anchor points
- One off a square – the trick that takes the hardest ones
- The few facts left over, and how to practise them
- Why the techniques work

QUESTIONS THIS EPISODE ANSWERS

- How many multiplication facts do you actually have to learn?
- Why do the times tables halve themselves?
- What is the simplest technique for each table from 1 to 10?
- Why is the seven times table the hardest?
- How does the finger trick for the nine times table work?
- What does it mean for a product to sit one off a square?
- Which facts do you genuinely have to memorise?
- How do you practise the last ones that will not stick?
- Is it better to understand the techniques than to memorise?

KEY POINTS

- The times tables look like a hundred facts. In practice they are a handful.
- Order does not matter, and that alone removes nearly half of them.
- The 1, 2, 5 and 10 tables are rules, not memory work – they take most of the rest.
- 2, 4 and 8 are the same technique repeated: double once, twice or three times.
- The nine times table has several checks that catch an error immediately.
- The square numbers are anchors you can step out from.
- A few facts remain at the end. Those are worth practising deliberately.

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