

# Scary or not

## Teaching notes and background



I have found that many numeracy students get scared when you mention terms like percentages or fractions. I therefore developed this introductory activity for my new level 1 numeracy students. They are mostly young parents who were disengaged at school and have no mathematics qualifications.

They are usually nervous when they attend the first session so I try to boost their confidence and reassure them that the course will not be like school.

The words in bold lettering are written on flash cards (provided on pages 5-12). I show each one to the group and they tell me whether they find it daunting or not. As they do this I sort the flashcards into two piles: "scary" or "not scary now" (see page 14).

Note: there is no need to go through them in alphabetical order. Arrange them to suit or shuffle and use randomly.

Some of the "demystifiers" that I use are listed on pages 2-4. I use these to unravel the meaning of each word and reassure students that we will be covering the topic in the course (or that they can already do it in their everyday lives). You will probably find other definitions that are suitable for different groups of learners. Various flashcards can be omitted (or added) as needed to suit the level of your group.

I then go on to do initial assessment with the learners: it is surprising how much better they then perform. It's all down to confidence.

I hope other tutors will find this useful.

Linda Hoole

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## "Demystifiers"

<b>addition</b>	Can you check your shopping bill?
<b>area</b>	Think about carpeting or tiling a floor.
<b>average</b>	Statistics. How the government can give a false representation by using different types of average. I usually use the example of average wage.
<b>centimetre</b>	Cent = 100 (see percentage). 100 in a metre. Children's clothes often come in centimetre heights.
<b>circle</b>	No explanation usually needed.
<b>cube</b>	Think of an Oxo cube ( the old ones).
<b>cuboid</b>	A brick.
<b>cylinder</b>	Tins of baked beans or cans of beer.
<b>decimal</b>	Just think money!
<b>digit</b>	A figure that is part of a number
<b>estimation</b>	You have 10 items in your shopping trolley. Some cost around £1, some 50p. Do you work it out roughly to make sure that you have enough money to pay?
<b>factor</b>	I write a simple multiplication sum on the board and explain the term.
<b>fraction</b>	Would you prefer to have half of a chocolate cake or a quarter?

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## “Demystifiers”

<b>gram</b>	1 gram. Very small weight (think bags of crisps). A pound coin weighs about 10g.
<b>graph</b>	Think about a record of growth for a child or a temperature chart.
<b>imperial</b>	Our ridiculous mixed systems today. I buy my milk in pints from my milkman but in litres in a shop. I buy my petrol in litres but I boast that my car does 40 miles to the gallon. Builders still ask for 2x4 wood then buy it in metre lengths.
<b>kilogram</b>	Big thousand
<b>kilometre</b>	Big one. Kilogram/ milligram comparison.
<b>litre</b>	Think about buying milk or 2 litre bottles of pop.
<b>metre</b>	A bit more than a yard. A door is about 2 metres.
<b>metric</b>	So easy to calculate. It is all about tens.
<b>milligram</b>	Small thousand (see millimetre).
<b>millilitre</b>	Do you think this is a big thousand or a little one? More or less than a litre?
<b>millimetre</b>	milli means 1000, but it is a little measurement. Think of a millipede, a small insect.
<b>multiple</b>	I write a simple multiplication sum on the board and explain the term.
<b>multiplication</b>	Did you learn your times tables at school? I then demonstrate the 'fingers' method. (See <a href="http://www.skillsworkshop.org">www.skillsworkshop.org</a> for links).

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## "Demystifiers"

<b>negative numbers</b>	Think about the weather or a bank balance.
<b>percentage</b>	'Per', means for each. 'Cent', think of century – 100 years. So percentage means 'out of every 100
<b>perimeter</b>	Think about the perimeter fence in a prison. "The prisoners escaped by climbing over the perimeter fence."
<b>pie chart</b>	Local government statistics. How much of the pie is spent on education, for example.
<b>place value</b>	Each digit has its own value. Would you like £550 or £505, or £055?
<b>probability</b>	Tossing a coin, rolling a dice.
<b>proportion</b>	Do you change recipes for more or less people that the recipe will feed?
<b>pyramid</b>	Egypt
<b>ratio</b>	Have you ever made up a baby's bottle or antifreeze to put in your car?
<b>rectangle</b>	Also known as an oblong. <i>*There are technical differences.</i>
<b>rounding</b>	Did you really want to know that 20451 went to the football game last Saturday? How about roughly 20,000?
<b>scale</b>	Think about a map or a kitchen design.
<b>square</b>	No explanation usually needed.



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**litre**

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**multiple**

**multiplication**

**negative numbers**

**percentage**

**perimeter**

**pie chart**

**place value**

**probability**

**proportion**

**pyramid**

**ratio**

**rectangle**

**rounding**

**scale**

**square**

**subtraction**

**triangle**

**unit**

**volume**

**whole number**

**zero**

# Scary or not

Headings for sorted cards

Scary

Not so  
scary