





*an alternate way  
to read decimals*

Reading a decimal like 972.28936 following the rules above gets a bit tedious. Thus, it is often read as *nine hundred seventy-two point two, eight, nine, three, six*. That is, say ‘point’ to represent the decimal point, and then just read each digit, separately, that follows the decimal point.

**EXERCISES**

5. Read each of the following decimals aloud in the ‘alternate’ way:
- a. 453.57129
  - b. 247.09213
  - c. 0.08714
  - d. 2000.032

*renaming decimals  
as fractions*

The number 0.237 can be viewed as

$$2 \cdot \frac{1}{10} + 3 \cdot \frac{1}{100} + 7 \cdot \frac{1}{1000}$$

or can alternately be viewed as

$$237 \cdot \frac{1}{1000} = \frac{237}{1000}.$$

*fractions  $\frac{N}{D}$  ;  
N is the numerator;  
D is the denominator  
going from  
a decimal  
to a fraction*

Recall that in a fraction  $\frac{N}{D}$ , the top is called the *numerator* and the bottom is called the *denominator*. For example, in the fraction  $\frac{23}{100}$ , the numerator is 23 and the denominator is 100.

Thus, to go from a decimal to a fraction, you use the right-most place value to determine the correct denominator; the entire number (without the decimal point) becomes the numerator. In particular, the number of zeros in the denominator is the same as the number of places to the right of the decimal point. Here are some more examples:

$0.0013 = \frac{13}{10000}$  (four places to the right of the decimal point; four zeros in the denominator)

$23.107 = \frac{23107}{1000}$  (three places to the right of the decimal point; three zeros in the denominator)

$0.72 = \frac{72}{100}$  (two places to the right of the decimal point; two zeros in the denominator)

If you’re rusty on fractions, don’t worry—they will be reviewed in a future section. Also, don’t worry about simplifying fractions at this point: you can leave 0.4 as  $\frac{4}{10}$ , instead of reducing it to  $\frac{2}{5}$ .

*factors*

In any multiplication problem, the numbers being multiplied are called the *factors*. For example, in the multiplication problem  $23.1 \cdot 10$ , the factors are 23.1 and 10.

*multiplying by  
powers of ten*

To multiply a decimal by powers of ten, you just move the decimal point one place to the right for each factor of ten. Here are some examples. The  $\times$  symbol is used for multiplication in these problems, because the centered dot is too easily confused with the decimal point.

$23.19 \times 10 = 231.9$ : move the decimal point one place to the right

$7.001 \times 10^3 = 7001$ : move the decimal point three places to the right

$0.03 \times 10^4 = 300$ : move the decimal point four places to the right, inserting zeros as needed

*dividing by  
powers of ten*

To divide a decimal by powers of ten, you just move the decimal point one place to the left for each factor of ten. Here are some examples. Remember that division can be denoted using either the  $\div$  symbol, or a horizontal fraction bar.

$23.1 \div 10 = 2.31$ ; move the decimal point one place to the left

$\frac{7.001}{1000} = 0.007001$ ; move the decimal point three places to the left, inserting zeros as needed

$37.2 \cdot \frac{1}{1000} = \frac{37.2}{1000} = 0.0372$ : multiplying by  $\frac{1}{1000}$  is the same as dividing by 1000.

Make sure you understand why this works! For example, when 2.37 is divided by 10, the 2 *ones* should turn into 2 *tenths*. Moving the decimal point one place to the left accomplishes this.

*MR. DILL*

You may want to come up with a memory device to help you remember:

- **M**ultiply by powers of ten, move the decimal point to the **R**ight;
- **D**ivide by powers of ten, move the decimal point to the **L**eft.

A key phrase like **MR. DooLittle** may help you remember until the process gets into long-term memory.

**EXERCISES**

6. Do the following calculations without a calculator:

a.  $4.372 \cdot 10^2$

b.  $0.037 \cdot 10,000$

c.  $243 \div 100$

d.  $\frac{243.5}{1000}$

e.  $\frac{0.03}{10^2}$

f.  $347.2 \div 10^4$

g.  $27.9 \cdot \frac{1}{1000}$

h.  $3 \cdot \frac{1}{10^2}$

*percents*

One use for decimals is in working with *percents*, which are commonplace in everyday life:

- the dress was on sale for 40% off the original price;
- housing costs rose 5% last year;
- there was a 150% increase in telephone activity after the newspaper advertisement.

Whenever computations need to be done with percents, the percents are first renamed as decimals. This section concludes with an introduction to percents; they will be studied in more detail in a future section.

*'per cent' means  
'per one hundred'*

There are 100 **cents** in a dollar. A **century** is 100 years. The word 'percent' means 'per one hundred'.

The symbol % is used for percent. Whenever you see the symbol '%', you can trade it in for a factor of  $\frac{1}{100}$ . Whenever you see a factor of  $\frac{1}{100}$ , it can be traded in for a % symbol. This simple idea is the key to success with percents:

$$\% = \frac{1}{100}$$

Indeed, the symbol % even looks like the fraction  $\frac{1}{100}$ ; it has the two zeros and the division bar!

*changing percents  
to decimals*

Here are examples of changing percents to decimals. The % symbol is replaced with a factor of  $\frac{1}{100}$  :

$$3.5\% = 3.5 \cdot \frac{1}{100} = 0.035$$

$$25\% = 25 \cdot \frac{1}{100} = 0.25$$

$$50\% = 50 \cdot \frac{1}{100} = 0.5$$

$$100\% = 100 \cdot \frac{1}{100} = 1$$

$$250\% = 250 \cdot \frac{1}{100} = 2.5$$

As these examples illustrate, the percent symbol instructs division by 100, which is accomplished by moving the decimal point two places to the left. Remember that if you don't see a decimal point, it gets inserted just to the right of the ones place.

Now, you can go from percents to decimals in one easy step:

$$3\% = 0.03$$

$$2.37\% = 0.0237$$

$$0.01\% = 0.0001$$

$$5032\% = 50.32$$

*changing decimals  
to percents*

To change from a decimal to a percent, move the decimal point two places to the right and insert the percent symbol:

$$0.03 = 3\%$$

$$2.5 = 250\%$$

$$1.008 = 100.8\%$$

Here's the idea that makes this work:

$$0.03 = 3 \cdot \frac{1}{100} = 3\%$$

$$2.5 = 2.50 = 250 \cdot \frac{1}{100} = 250\%$$

Notice that the  $\frac{1}{100}$  gets traded in for the percent symbol.

**PuDdLe DipPeR**

Memory devices are helpful until procedures get into long-term memory. You might want to remember these rules with the phrase **PuDdLe DipPeR**:

- **P**ercent to **D**ecimal, move decimal point two places to the **L**;
- **D**ecimal to **P**ercent, move decimal point two places to the **R**.

(A 'puddle dipper' is a little kid who dips her toes in puddles!)

**EXERCISES**

7. Convert each percent to a decimal:

- 5%
- 75%
- 0.3%
- 340%

8. Convert each decimal to a percent:

- 0.07
- 2.1
- 0.358
- 0.8

**EXERCISES***web practice*

Go to my homepage <http://onemathematicalcat.org> and navigate to my Algebra I course, which has about 170 sequenced lessons. It can be used as a complete year-long high school course, or one semester in college. You're currently looking at the pdf version—you'll see that the HTML version has unlimited, randomly-generated, online and offline practice in every section. It's all totally free. Enjoy!

## SOLUTIONS TO EXERCISES: DECIMALS

- $\frac{1}{10^5}$ ; the hundred-thousandths place
- $\frac{1}{10^{100}}$
- one to the right of  $\frac{1}{10^9}$  is  $\frac{1}{10^{10}}$ ; one to the left of  $\frac{1}{10^9}$  is  $\frac{1}{10^8}$ .
- three and fifty-seven hundredths
  - two hundred forty-seven and nine hundred twenty-one ten-thousandths
  - five billionths
  - two thousand and three hundredths
- 453.57129: four hundred fifty-three point five, seven, one, two, nine
  - 247.09213: two hundred forty-seven point zero, nine, two, one, three
  - 0.08714: zero point zero, eight, seven, one, four
  - 2000.032: two thousand point zero, three, two
- $4.372 \cdot 10^2 = 437.2$
  - $0.037 \cdot 10,000 = 370$
  - $243 \div 100 = 2.43$
  - $\frac{243.5}{1000} = 0.2435$  Remember to put the zero before the decimal point!
  - $\frac{0.03}{10^2} = 0.0003$
  - $347.2 \div 10^4 = 0.03472$
  - $27.9 \cdot \frac{1}{1000} = 0.0279$
  - $3 \cdot \frac{1}{10^2} = 0.03$
- $5\% = 0.05$
  - $75\% = 0.75$
  - $0.3\% = 0.003$
  - $340\% = 3.4$
- $0.07 = 7\%$
  - $2.1 = 210\%$
  - $0.358 = 35.8\%$
  - $0.8 = 80\%$