FLASHFEED STUDY GUIDE

Fun with Numbers

Study guide by FlashFeed

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flashfeedlearningapp.com

Fun with Numbers: study guide

A playful tour of magnitudes — building heights, mountain elevations, river lengths, populations, cosmic distances, big money, US trivia, and record-setting extremes. Guess first, then find out how close you land.

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Contents	9 lessons · 512 cards in the app · 218 self-test questions · 3 pictures
In the app	flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/world-numbers

How to use this guide

Take one lesson at a time: read the study guide, then go over any key facts. Where a lesson has a self-test, try it from memory before you check the answer key at the back. Follow the Go deeper links when you want more.

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LESSON 1 OF 9

Tall Things

Skyscrapers and towers · Monuments and landmarks · Mountains and peaks

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Rank the world's tallest skyscrapers by height and identify which one stands tallest
- Recall the heights of iconic older towers and the CN Tower's free-standing-structure record
- Recall the heights of famous monuments, dams, bridges, and the record-holding Great Pyramid
- Rank the world's highest mountains and recall several continental and regional high points
- Define elevation and recognize height curiosities such as Mauna Kea measured from the seafloor

Height is the easiest magnitude to feel, because we measure ourselves against it every day. But our everyday sense of "tall" — a house, a flagpole, a city block — breaks down fast once you start stacking skyscrapers and mountains. This lesson builds a ladder of heights, from the tallest things people have built to the tallest things the planet has pushed up on its own. The goal isn't to memorize every figure; it's to develop a gut sense of scale, so you can guess whether something is closer to 500 feet or 5,000.

Skyscrapers and towers

The current king of human construction is the **Burj Khalifa** in Dubai at **2,717 feet** — so tall that the sun sets a few minutes later on its top floors than at its base. Below it, a tight race plays out: Malaysia's **Merdeka 118** at 2,227 feet and the **Shanghai Tower** at 2,073 feet are the next giants. America's tallest, **One World Trade Center**, reaches a deliberately symbolic **1,776 feet** — a number chosen for the year of independence. Toronto's **CN Tower** (1,815 feet) isn't an occupied skyscraper but a free-standing tower, and it held the title of world's tallest free-standing structure for 32 years until the Burj Khalifa arrived. For calibration, the older icons feel almost modest now: the **Empire State Building** tops out around 1,250 feet to its roof, and the **Eiffel Tower** stands at 1,083 feet. A useful mental anchor: anything over about 1,000 feet is a true supertall, and only a handful of buildings clear 2,000.

Monuments and landmarks

Not every famous structure is a skyscraper, and these are the ones whose heights surprise people most because we picture them at human scale. The **Statue of Liberty**, ground to torch, is **305 feet** — taller than it looks in photos, though the copper statue itself is only about 151 feet from its base to the tip of the torch; the rest is pedestal and foundation. The **Washington Monument** rises 555 feet, the **Gateway Arch** in St. Louis is exactly **630 feet** tall (and just as wide at its base), and the **Hoover Dam** on the Colorado River is 726 feet tall. The **Golden Gate Bridge** works on two scales at once: its towers stand 746 feet above the water, while its main span stretches an enormous **4,200 feet** between them. And the **Great Pyramid of Giza**, originally 481 feet, was the tallest structure on Earth for nearly 4,000 years — a record no modern building has come close to matching for longevity.

Mountains and peaks

Here is where human achievement is humbled. The tallest building on Earth would barely reach the foothills of the tallest mountains. **Mount Everest**, the highest mountain above sea level, stands **29,032 feet** — more than ten Burj Khalifas stacked end to end — followed by **K2** at 28,251 feet, the climber's mountain, far deadlier than Everest. Each continent has its high point worth knowing: **Aconcagua** (about 22,838 feet) crowns the Americas, **Denali** (20,310 feet; officially Mount McKinley in federal use again since 2025, after Denali became the federal name in 2015) North America, **Kilimanjaro** (19,341 feet) Africa, and **Mont Blanc** (roughly 15,770 feet; its snow-capped summit varies from survey to survey) the Alps. Closer to home, the highest point in the contiguous United States is **Mount Whitney** at 14,505 feet, while Colorado's **Pikes Peak** reaches 14,115 feet, and Japan's Mount Fuji (12,388 feet) is one of the most-climbed mountains in the world. One curiosity reframes the whole contest. A mountain's **elevation** is its height above sea level, and **Mauna Kea** in Hawai'i has an elevation of only 13,803 feet, but measured from its base on the ocean floor it stands about 33,500 feet — taller than Everest. It just hides most of its height underwater. The lesson of heights is that "tallest" always depends on where you start measuring.

Key terms

Elevation

Elevation is the height of a point above sea level, usually given in meters or feet. Mount Everest's elevation of 8,849 meters makes it the highest point on Earth.

Key concepts

Statue of Liberty

- A famous American landmark that stands taller than photos suggest, 305 feet from the ground to its highest point.
- The copper figure itself is only about 151 feet from its base to the tip of the torch; the rest is pedestal and foundation.
- It lifts a torch high, and that torch marks the very top of its 305-foot total height.

Washington Monument

- A slender stone landmark in the nation's capital that rises 555 feet into the sky.
- This narrow shaft of stone honors an early American leader.
- It stands 555 feet tall and commemorates the first president of the United States.

Gateway Arch

- A gleaming stainless-steel landmark shaped like a giant sweeping curve.
- It stands exactly 630 feet tall, and is just as wide at its base as it is high.
- Rising 630 feet over St. Louis, it symbolizes the nation's westward expansion.

Hoover Dam

- A massive concrete structure that doesn't reach for the sky but instead walls off a great river.
- It rises to a height of 726 feet.
- This barrier on the Colorado River is 726 feet tall.

Golden Gate Bridge

- A landmark that works on two scales at once, soaring towers and an enormous horizontal span.
- Its towers stand 746 feet above the water below.
- Its main span stretches an enormous 4,200 feet between those two towers.

Key facts

> **1,776 feet, on purpose**
> One World Trade Center stands 1,776 feet tall, the tallest building in the US and the Western Hemisphere — a height deliberately chosen to echo 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence.

> **2,717 feet**
> At 2,717 feet, the Burj Khalifa is about 1.5 times the height of One World Trade Center and roughly two-and-a-half times as tall as the Eiffel Tower.

> **How tall is tall?**
> The tallest building, the Burj Khalifa at 2,717 feet, is still dwarfed by the tallest mountain above sea level: Everest rises 29,032 feet, more than ten Burj Khalifas stacked. Human structures are impressive, but nature wins the height contest by an order of magnitude.

> **The Landmark Ladder**
> The landmarks we picture as giants all sit in one narrow band: the Golden Gate Bridge's towers at 746 feet, the Hoover Dam at 726, the Gateway Arch at 630 — exactly as wide at its base as it is tall — the Washington Monument at 555, the Great Pyramid at 481, and the Statue of Liberty, ground to torch, at 305. The Golden Gate's real superlative is sideways: a 4,200-foot main span.

> **555 feet, once tallest**
> The Washington Monument rises 555 feet — a height that made it the tallest structure in the world when it was completed.

> **630 feet, both ways**
> St. Louis's Gateway Arch stands 630 feet tall and also measures 630 feet across its base: exactly as wide as it is high.

After Everest, the drop-off

Aconcagua at about 22,838 feet crowns the Americas and is the highest peak anywhere outside Asia. Below it the ladder drops quickly: Denali reaches 20,310 feet in North America, Kilimanjaro 19,341 in Africa, and Mont Blanc roughly 15,770 in the Alps (its snow-capped summit shifts a few feet from survey to survey). Mount Whitney, the highest in the contiguous United States, manages only 14,505.

K2, shorter than Everest, deadlier

At 28,251 feet, K2 falls just 781 feet short of Everest's 29,032 — but it is the climber's mountain: steeper, stormier and far more lethal. Everest was first climbed in winter in 1980; K2 held out until January 2021, the last of the 8,000-meter peaks to be taken in the cold season.

29,032 feet up

Mount Everest's peak rises to 29,032 feet above sea level, making it the highest point on Earth.

Standing entirely alone

Mount Kilimanjaro, at 19,341 feet, is not only Africa's highest peak but also the world's highest free-standing mountain above sea level, rising alone rather than as part of a range.

By the numbers

Height of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building
2717 feet

Height of the Merdeka 118 skyscraper
2227 feet

Height of the Shanghai Tower
2073 feet

Height of One World Trade Center
1776 feet

Height of the CN Tower
1815 feet

Height of the Empire State Building (to roof)
1250 feet

Height of the Eiffel Tower
1083 feet

Height of the Statue of Liberty, ground to torch
305 feet

Height of the Washington Monument
555 feet

Height of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis
630 feet

Original height of the Great Pyramid of Giza
481 feet

Height of the Hoover Dam
726 feet

Height of the Golden Gate Bridge towers
746 feet

Main span of the Golden Gate Bridge
4200 feet

Height of Mount Everest, the tallest mountain above sea level
29032 feet

Height of K2, the second-highest mountain
28251 feet

Height of Aconcagua, highest peak in the Americas
22838 feet

Height of Denali, highest peak in North America
20310 feet

Height of Mount Kilimanjaro, highest in Africa
19341 feet

Approximate height of Mont Blanc, highest in the Alps
15770 feet

Height of Mauna Kea above sea level
13803 feet

Height of Mount Whitney, highest in the contiguous US
14505 feet

Height of Pikes Peak
14115 feet

Height of Mount Fuji
12388 feet

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. How tall is the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building?

- A 2,073 ft
- B 2,227 ft
- C 1,776 ft
- D 2,717 ft

2. Which of these is the tallest?

- A Burj Khalifa
- B Eiffel Tower
- C One World Trade Center
- D Empire State Building

3. Which skyscraper is the second-tallest building in the world?

- A Shanghai Tower
- B Ping An Finance Center
- C Merdeka 118
- D One World Trade Center

4. How tall is One World Trade Center, the tallest building in the United States?

- A 1,250 ft
- B 1,776 ft
- C 2,073 ft
- D 1,815 ft

5. About how tall is the Shanghai Tower, China's tallest building?

- A 1,450 ft
- B 1,776 ft
- C 2,073 ft
- D 2,227 ft

6. How tall is the CN Tower in Toronto?

- A 1,815 ft
- B 1,776 ft
- C 2,073 ft
- D 1,250 ft

7. The ___ in Toronto stood as the world's tallest free-standing structure for 32 years after topping out in 1975, at 1,815 feet — surpassed only when Dubai's Burj Khalifa rose in 2007.

- A Tokyo Tower
- B CN Tower
- C Ostankino Tower
- D Oriental Pearl Tower

8. How tall is the Empire State Building, measured to its roof?

- A 990 ft
- B 1,083 ft
- C 1,776 ft
- D 1,250 ft

9. How tall is the Eiffel Tower?

- A 1,454 ft
- B 1,250 ft
- C 1,083 ft
- D 906 ft

10. Which of these iconic towers is the tallest?

A Eiffel Tower
B Empire State Building
C Washington Monument
D CN Tower

11. How tall is the Washington Monument?

A 555 ft
B 630 ft
C 481 ft
D 305 ft

12. Which monument was the tallest structure on Earth for nearly 4,000 years?

A The Hoover Dam
B The Great Pyramid of Giza
C The Washington Monument
D The Gateway Arch

13. How tall is the Statue of Liberty, from the ground to the torch?

A 481 ft
B 305 ft
C 151 ft
D 555 ft

14. How tall are the towers of the Golden Gate Bridge?

A 4,200 ft
B 630 ft
C 555 ft
D 746 ft

15. How tall is the Gateway Arch in St. Louis?

A 630 ft
B 726 ft
C 481 ft
D 555 ft

16. How tall is the Hoover Dam on the Colorado River?

A 555 ft
B 630 ft
C 726 ft
D 746 ft

17. How tall is Mount Everest, Earth's highest peak above sea level?

A 27,940 ft
B 28,251 ft
C 29,032 ft
D 26,545 ft

18. Which is the second-highest mountain on Earth?

A Denali
B K2
C Aconcagua
D Kilimanjaro

19. Denali is the highest peak on which continent?

A Africa
B South America
C Asia
D North America

20. Which mountain is the highest peak in Africa?

A Mount Kilimanjaro
B Mount Stanley
C Mount Kenya
D Mount Meru

21. Mont Blanc is the highest peak in which mountain range?

A The Rockies
B The Alps
C The Himalayas
D The Andes

22. What does “elevation” measure?

A The height of a point above sea level
B The distance from the Earth’s center
C The depth below sea level
D The height above the ground directly below

23. Mauna Kea is taller than Everest measured from its seafloor base — but how tall is it above sea level?

A 33,500 ft
B 14,505 ft
C 20,310 ft
D 13,803 ft

24. Measured from its base on the ocean floor rather than from sea level, which mountain is actually taller than Mount Everest?

A Denali
B Kilimanjaro
C Mauna Kea
D K2

25. Which is the highest peak in the contiguous United States?

A Mount Whitney
B Denali
C Pikes Peak
D Mauna Kea

26. By elevation above sea level, which of these is highest?

A K2
B Mauna Kea
C Mount Everest
D Mount Whitney

Go deeper

LISTEN Lesson 1 episode 6:07 · FlashFeed Study Notes podcast

WATCH Highest vs. Tallest 0:33 · YouTube
Dubai's Burj Khalifa stands 2,717 feet, the tallest building on Earth.

WATCH 4,000 Years on Top 0:31
The Great Pyramid of Giza was the tallest structure on Earth for nearly 4,000 years. It originally stood 481 feet.

WATCH The Climber's Mountain 0:30
K2 is shorter than Everest. It stands 28,251 feet. But it's the climber's mountain, far deadlier than Everest.

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LESSON 2 OF 9

Planet Earth

Rivers, falls and ocean depths · Land and extremes · Distances and journeys

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Recall the lengths of the world's longest rivers and the heights of its great waterfalls
- Recall the depths of the ocean and the deepest lake, and identify the Pacific from its area and depth
- Identify famous bodies of water from their defining facts
- Recall the scale of Earth's great land features and its largest country and US state
- Estimate the great distances of travel across the US and around the world

The Earth is bigger and stranger than our daily lives let us feel. We move through it at a few miles an hour, so distances of thousands of miles and depths of tens of thousands of feet stay abstract. This lesson puts numbers on the planet's water, land, and span — the longest rivers, the deepest trenches, the widest deserts, and the distances that separate coasts. Build these intuitions and a map stops being a flat picture and starts having real size.

Rivers, falls and ocean depths

Two rivers compete for "longest," and the answer depends on how you measure. The **Nile** is usually given the title at about **4,130 miles**, with the **Amazon** just behind at roughly 3,980 miles — though the Amazon carries vastly more water. North America's great artery, the **Mississippi–Missouri** system, runs about 3,710 miles by the commonly cited figure, though some measures run longer. Waterfalls play on a different scale: **Angel Falls** in Venezuela drops **3,212 feet**, the tallest in the world and so high that in the dry season the water evaporates into mist before reaching the bottom. By contrast, mighty **Niagara Falls** is only about 187 feet at its tallest, the Horseshoe Falls — its power comes from volume, not height. The ocean's depths dwarf all of this: the **Mariana Trench** plunges to about **35,876 feet** at Challenger Deep, deeper than Everest is tall, while the deepest lake, Siberia's **Lake Baikal**, reaches 5,387 feet and holds a fifth of the world's unfrozen fresh water. Even the *average* depth of the **Pacific Ocean** is about 13,000 feet — and the Pacific is so vast, over 60 million square miles, that its area alone exceeds all of Earth's land combined.

Land and extremes

The planet's solid surface has its own superlatives. The **Grand Canyon** is about a mile deep — **6,000 feet** from rim to river — carved by the Colorado over millions of years. The **Dead Sea** is the lowest land on Earth, its surface sitting about **1,440 feet below sea level** as of 2025 and still falling by more than 3 feet a year, so dense with salt that swimmers float effortlessly. The **Sahara Desert** sprawls across roughly **3.6 million square miles** — nearly the size of the entire United States. The **Great Wall of China**, counting all its branches, runs an astonishing **13,171 miles**, more than half the circumference of the

planet. And for sheer national size, nothing approaches **Russia** at about **6.6 million square miles**, so large it spans eleven time zones; even a single US state, **Alaska**, covers about 663,000 square miles, larger than most countries.

Distances and journeys

Finally, the spans we actually travel. The Earth's **circumference at the equator** is **24,901 miles** — the distance you'd cover going all the way around. Crossing the United States, New York to Los Angeles is about 2,450 miles straight-line, while the drive from New York to San Francisco is roughly **2,900 miles**; the legendary **Route 66**, nicknamed the **Mother Road** after John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, ran 2,448 miles from Chicago to Santa Monica across eight states until it was removed from the US Highway System in 1985. Some distances surprise by being small: the **English Channel** is only about **21 miles** wide at the Strait of Dover, close enough that strong swimmers cross it. Others stretch the limits of technology: as of 2026 the longest scheduled nonstop commercial flight, New York to Singapore, covers about **9,537 miles** in some 18 hours. And the world those journeys cross is divided into about **195 countries** — a number that feels small for a planet of eight billion people.

Key concepts

Amazon River

- This waterway ranks just behind the world's longest, yet it moves more water than any other.
- It runs roughly 3,980 miles, only about 150 miles shy of the record holder.
- Though it narrowly loses the length contest, it carries vastly more water than the longest waterway.

Angel Falls

- The tallest cascade of water on Earth, found in Venezuela.
- This Venezuelan wonder plunges an astonishing 3,212 feet from top to bottom.
- It drops so far that in the dry season the water turns to mist before reaching the ground.

Lake Baikal

- The deepest body of freshwater on the planet, set in Siberia.
- It plunges to about 5,387 feet at its lowest.
- This single Siberian basin holds roughly a fifth of all the world's unfrozen fresh water.

Key facts

> **Nile longer, Amazon mightier**
> The Nile usually takes the longest-river title at about 4,132 miles, with the Amazon barely behind at 3,977, yet the Amazon carries vastly more water than any other river on Earth. North America's longest, the Mississippi–Missouri system, is commonly given as about 3,710 miles (some measures run longer). The deepest lake is a different sort of record: Siberia's Lake Baikal, 5,387 feet down, holds about a fifth of the world's unfrozen fresh water.

North America's longest river

North America's longest river system, the Mississippi–Missouri, stretches about 3,710 miles by the commonly cited figure, shorter than both the Nile (~4,130 mi) and the Amazon (~3,980 mi).

Power without height

Niagara Falls, far shorter than Angel Falls, drops only about 187 feet at its Horseshoe Falls — its power comes instead from its enormous volume of water.

Russia spans eleven time zones

Russia covers about 6.6 million square miles — enough to run through eleven time zones. The Sahara sprawls across roughly 3.6 million, nearly the area of the entire United States. And a single US state, Alaska, at about 663,000 square miles, is larger than most countries on Earth.

Mile down, below sea level

The Grand Canyon is about 6,000 feet from rim to river — over a mile straight down, cut by the Colorado over millions of years. The lowest land on Earth goes further still: the shore of the Dead Sea sits roughly 1,440 feet below sea level and still falling, in water so dense with salt that swimmers float without trying.

663,000 square miles

Alaska covers about 663,000 square miles, making it by far the largest US state — and larger in area than most of the world's countries.

Rim to river

The Grand Canyon plunges about 6,000 feet from rim to river, a chasm carved by the Colorado.

Eighteen hours, nonstop to Singapore

As of 2026, the longest scheduled nonstop flight covers about 9,537 miles from New York to Singapore in some 18 hours — more than a third of the way around a planet whose equator measures 24,901 miles. For scale, crossing the United States by road, New York to San Francisco, is only about 2,900 miles.

21 miles wide, 195 countries

Some of the numbers that matter are surprisingly small. The English Channel narrows to about 21 miles at the Strait of Dover — close enough that swimmers have been crossing it since 1875. And the whole world those journeys cross divides into only about 195 countries, UN members plus observers, for eight billion people.

Once around the planet

The Earth's circumference at the equator is 24,901 miles — the distance you'd travel going all the way around the planet.

Chicago to Santa Monica

Historic Route 66 stretched about 2,448 miles, linking Chicago all the way to Santa Monica.

By the numbers

Length of the Nile, usually ranked the world's longest river
4132 miles

Length of the Amazon River
3977 miles

Length of the Mississippi–Missouri river system
3710 miles

Height of Angel Falls, the world's tallest waterfall
3212 feet

Vertical drop at Niagara Falls
187 feet

Depth of the Mariana Trench (Challenger Deep), the ocean's deepest point
35876 feet

Maximum depth of Lake Baikal, the deepest lake
5387 feet

Average depth of the Pacific Ocean
13000 feet

Maximum depth of the Grand Canyon
6000 feet

How far the Dead Sea sits below sea level
1440 feet below sea level

Area of the Sahara Desert
3600000 square miles

Length of the Great Wall of China
13171 miles

Area of Russia, the largest country
6600000 square miles

Area of Alaska, the largest US state
663000 square miles

Circumference of Earth at the equator
24901 miles

Straight-line distance from New York City to Los Angeles
2450 miles

Driving distance coast to coast, New York to San Francisco
2900 miles

Historic length of US Route 66
2448 miles

Distance of the New York to Singapore nonstop flight
9537 miles

Narrowest width of the English Channel, at the Strait of Dover
21 miles

Number of countries in the world (UN members plus observers)
195 count

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Which river is usually given the title of the world's longest?

A) Amazon
B) Mississippi–Missouri
C) Nile
D) Yangtze

2. About how long is the Nile, usually ranked the world's longest river?

A) 3,980 miles
B) 3,710 miles
C) 2,900 miles
D) 4,130 miles

3. By the commonly cited figure, about how long is the Mississippi–Missouri, North America's longest river system?

A) 2,900 miles
B) 3,710 miles
C) 4,130 miles
D) 3,980 miles

4. How tall is Angel Falls, the world's tallest waterfall?

A) 3,212 feet
B) 5,387 feet
C) 6,000 feet
D) 187 feet

5. Niagara Falls is far shorter than Angel Falls; what gives Niagara its power?

A) Its great height
B) Its steep gradient
C) Its enormous volume of water
D) Its narrow channel

6. The ___ is so vast — over 60 million square miles — that its area alone exceeds all of Earth's land combined, at an average depth of about 13,000 feet.

A Arctic Ocean
B Indian Ocean
C Atlantic Ocean
D Pacific Ocean

7. How deep is the Mariana Trench at Challenger Deep, the ocean's deepest point?

A 5,387 feet
B 35,876 feet
C 13,000 feet
D 24,901 feet

8. Which is the deepest lake, holding a fifth of the world's unfrozen fresh water?

A Lake Baikal
B Lake Tanganyika
C Lake Superior
D Caspian Sea

9. What is the average depth of the Pacific Ocean?

A 13,000 feet
B 35,876 feet
C 6,000 feet
D 5,387 feet

10. The Mariana Trench is so deep it exceeds the height of even Earth's tallest mountain above sea level. Which mountain is that?

A K2
B Denali
C Kilimanjaro
D Mount Everest

11. Which river carries vastly more water than any other, though slightly shorter than the Nile?

A Yangtze River
B Amazon River
C Congo River
D Mississippi River

12. Which waterfall is so tall that in the dry season its water evaporates into mist before reaching the bottom?

A Niagara Falls
B Victoria Falls
C Angel Falls
D Iguazu Falls

13. Which lake holds about a fifth of the world's unfrozen fresh water?

A Lake Victoria
B Caspian Sea
C Lake Superior
D Lake Baikal

14. Angel Falls, the world's tallest waterfall, is located in which country?

A Peru
B Venezuela
C Brazil
D Colombia

15. Lake Baikal, the world's deepest lake, lies in which region?

A Siberia
B Scandinavia
C Central Asia
D Canada

16. Russia, the world's largest country at about 6.6 million square miles, is so vast that it spans how many time zones?

A Eight
B Fifteen
C Eleven
D Five

17. How deep is the Grand Canyon, from rim to river?

A 1,410 feet
B 3,212 feet
C 13,000 feet
D 6,000 feet

18. Counting all its branches, how long is the Great Wall of China?

A 24,901 miles
B 3,600 miles
C 13,171 miles
D 6,600 miles

19. Which is the lowest land on Earth, sitting about 1,440 feet below sea level and still falling?

A The Dead Sea
B The Caspian Depression
C Death Valley
D The Qattara Depression

20. Which US state is the largest, covering about 663,000 square miles and larger than most countries?

A Texas
B Alaska
C Montana
D California

21. What is the Earth's circumference at the equator?

A 24,901 miles
B 13,171 miles
C 9,537 miles
D 2,901 miles

22. About how far is the New York to Singapore nonstop flight, the world's longest?

A 11,280 miles
B 7,450 miles
C 8,320 miles
D 9,537 miles

23. At its narrowest, at the Strait of Dover, how wide is the English Channel?

A 326 miles
B 195 miles
C 21 miles
D 66 miles

24. About how many countries are there in the world (UN members plus observers)?

A 88
B 195
C 150
D 251

25. About how long was historic Route 66, from Chicago to Santa Monica?

A 24,901 miles
B 9,537 miles
C 2,448 miles
D 1,410 miles

Go deeper

LISTEN Lesson 2 episode 6:27 · FlashFeed Study Notes podcast

WATCH Deeper Than Everest 0:33 · YouTube
About 35,876 feet down lies Challenger Deep, in the Mariana Trench.

WATCH Around the World 0:32 · YouTube
Earth measures 24,901 miles all the way around the equator.

WATCH 21 Miles 0:31
The English Channel is only about 21 miles wide at the Strait of Dover. Strong swimmers cross it.

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LESSON 3 OF 9

People and Places

The world's biggest cities · Cities and nations

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Rank the populations of the world's biggest metro areas and identify the largest
- Recall the populations of major Western cities: London, New York, Paris, and Sydney
- Identify major world cities from their population and profile
- Recall the populations of India, China, the US, and the world, and when humanity first reached a billion
- Define population and apply it to compare the populations of India, China, the US, and Europe

There are about eight billion of us, but that number is almost impossible to picture. The way to make population real is to break it into places — the cities we cluster in and the nations we divide into. This lesson builds a sense of how many people fit in the world's great metro areas and its largest countries, and where the surprises hide. A good instinct for population is one of the most useful number senses there is, because so much else — economies, elections, emissions — scales with it.

The world's biggest cities

By the long-standing UN urban-agglomeration estimates, the largest urban area on Earth is **Greater Tokyo**, home to about **37 million people** (the UN's 2025 revision uses a different method and ranks Jakarta first at about 42 million, with Tokyo third at about 33 million, so the title depends on the definition) — more than the entire population of Australia, in a single metropolitan region. After Tokyo, the megacities of the developing world dominate: **Cairo** and **Mumbai** each sit above 20 million, and **São Paulo** (city proper) holds about 12 million — its wider metro area is far larger, near 22 million. The famous cities of the West are smaller than people expect by comparison. **London** has about 9.5 million (its urban area; Greater London proper is nearer 8.9 million), **New York City** proper about 8.3 million, and **Sydney** (Greater Sydney) around 5.3 million. The lesson is a quiet shift in the world's center of gravity: the biggest concentrations of humanity are increasingly in Asia and Africa, not the historical capitals of Europe and North America. When you guess a city's population, the instinct to anchor on Western cities will usually lead you to guess too low for the true giants.

Cities and nations

A place's **population** is the total number of people living in it, whether that place is a city, a country, or the whole world. Zoom out from cities to whole countries and the numbers leap again. Two nations now sit in a league of their own: **India**, the most populous country on Earth at about **1.43 billion** (UN estimate for 2023), and **China**, close behind at about 1.41 billion — having recently traded places, as India's population kept growing while China's began to shrink. To feel how large that is, consider that India alone holds more people than all of Europe (about 745 million) combined, in a land area a fraction of

Europe's size. The **United States**, the third-most populous country, has about **348 million** — a distant third, less than a quarter of either Asian giant. And **Paris**, the city proper, has only about 2 million (its wider metro area holds about 13 million), a reminder that a globally famous place can be modest in headcount. Above it all sits the grand total: a **world population** of roughly **8.3 billion**, a number that took all of human history until around 1804 to reach its first billion, and needed only about a dozen years for its most recent billion (from 7 to 8 billion, reached in 2022). Holding these anchors — Tokyo near 37 million, India and China near 1.4 billion, the world near 8 billion — gives you a scaffold for estimating almost any population question.

Key terms

Population

The total number of people living in a place, whether a city, a country, or the whole world.

Key concepts

Greater Tokyo

- Long ranked as the largest urban area on the planet in UN estimates.
- About 37 million people live in this single metropolitan region.
- This one metro area holds more people than the whole nation of Australia.

São Paulo

- A megacity of the developing world, though smaller than the very largest urban giants.
- About 12 million people live in the city proper.
- At roughly 22 million, it ranks among the world's most populous metro areas, on par with Cairo and Mumbai.

London

- One of the historical capitals of Europe, smaller in population than most people expect.
- Its urban area is home to about 9.5 million people.
- At roughly 9.5 million, this famous Western capital is dwarfed by the megacities of Asia and Africa.

New York City

- A famous American metropolis whose population is smaller than its global fame suggests.
- The urban core proper is home to about 8.3 million people.
- At about 8.3 million, this leading US center ranks well below the world's true megacities.

Sydney

- A well-known Western city, far smaller in headcount than the world's giants.
- Its population is around 5.3 million.
- At roughly 5.3 million across its greater area, it is smaller than London or New York City.

Key facts

Cairo, Mumbai, São Paulo clear 20 million

Tokyo is not the only city on this list past 20 million: Cairo holds about 21.8 million people, Mumbai about 20.4 million, and São Paulo's metro area about 22 million. The famous Western capitals are nowhere near — London, the largest of them, has about 9.5 million, under half the 20-million line.

The Famous Western Cities, Ranked

Line up the Western cities everyone can name and the headline numbers depend on where you draw the line: London's urban area holds about 9.5 million, New York City proper about 8.3 million, Greater Sydney around 5.3 million, and Paris, the city itself, only about 2 million (its metro area about 13 million). Each is far smaller than Greater Tokyo, home to about 37 million.

Even megacities look small

Greater Tokyo's roughly 37 million residents are still about 1.7 times São Paulo's metro population of around 22 million, showing how far Tokyo outstrips even a major megacity.

The First Billion Took Until 1804

All of human history up to about 1804 was needed to reach the first billion people. The world now holds roughly 8.3 billion, and the most recent billion took only about a dozen years, a milestone that once took millennia.

India passed China

India is now the most populous country on Earth at about 1.43 billion, having recently overtaken China's 1.41 billion — India kept growing while China's population has begun to decline. The United States comes third at about 348 million, less than a quarter of either Asian giant.

Paris city proper, surprisingly small

Paris city proper is home to about 2 million people, fewer than Greater Sydney (~5.3 million), New York City proper (~8.3 million) or London's urban area (~9.5 million). Its metro area holds about 13 million.

Adding a billion, fast

The global population has climbed to roughly 8.3 billion as of 2026. Going from 7 to 8 billion, reached in 2022, took only about a dozen years.

By the numbers

Population of the Tokyo metro area

37340000 people

Population of the Mumbai metro area

20411000 people

Population of the Cairo metro area
21750000 people

Population of the São Paulo metro area
22000000 people

Population of London
9540000 people

Population of New York City
8336000 people

Population of Paris (city proper)
2161000 people

Population of Sydney
5312000 people

World population (as of 2026)
8300000000 people

United States population (as of 2026)
348000000 people

Population of India, the most populous country
1430000000 people

Population of China
1410000000 people

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Which metro area has the most people?

A Mumbai
B Tokyo
C Cairo
D São Paulo

2. About how many people live in the Greater Tokyo metro area?

A 37 million
B 12 million
C 9.5 million
D 20 million

3. Greater Tokyo holds about 37 million people. That is roughly how many times the size of São Paulo's ~22 million metro population?

A About the same
B About 6 times
C About 4 times
D About 2 times

4. Which of these metro areas does NOT hold more than 20 million people?

A Mumbai
B Cairo
C London
D Tokyo

5. Which of these four metro areas has the most people?

A São Paulo
B Cairo
C Mumbai
D Tokyo

6. About how many people live in London?

A 37 million
B 9.5 million
C 20 million
D 2.2 million

7. Sydney's population is closest to which figure?

A 5.3 million
B 2.2 million
C 12 million
D 9.5 million

8. Using this lesson's figures, which of these has the largest population?

A New York City proper
B Paris city proper
C London's urban area
D Greater Sydney

9. Using this lesson's figures, which of these has the fewest people?

A Greater Sydney
B Paris city proper
C New York City proper
D London's urban area

10. London's urban area is about 9.5 million; Greater Tokyo about 37 million. Tokyo is roughly how many times larger?

A About 10 times
B About 2 times
C About 4 times
D About the same

11. Which city, long ranked as the world's largest metro area in UN estimates, is home to about 37 million — more than all of Australia?

A Tokyo
B Cairo
C New York City
D Mumbai

12. Which South American city (city proper) is home to about 12 million people?

A Bogotá
B Buenos Aires
C Lima
D São Paulo

13. Which European city has about 9.5 million people?

A Paris
B London
C Madrid
D Berlin

14. Which US city proper is home to about 8.3 million people?

A Los Angeles
B Houston
C Chicago
D New York City

15. Which Australian city has a population of about 5.3 million?

A Sydney
B Adelaide
C Brisbane
D Perth

16. Human population took all of prior history to reach its first billion around what year?

A 1927
B 1900
C 1804
D 1650

17. Which is the most populous country on Earth?

A United States
B Indonesia
C China
D India

18. Which country is the third-most populous, a distant third behind the two Asian giants?

A Brazil
B Russia
C United States
D Indonesia

19. What is the approximate world population as of 2026?

A 8.3 billion
B 9.2 billion
C 7.4 billion
D 6.5 billion

20. India's population is closest to which figure?

A 960 million
B 1.43 billion
C 1.1 billion
D 1.7 billion

21. What does the term 'population' mean?

A The number of households in a place
B The total number of people living in a place
C The number of cities in a country
D The land area of a place

22. India recently overtook which country to become the most populous?

A Russia
B United States
C China
D Indonesia

23. India and China each have a population closest to which figure?

A 2.4 billion
B 950 million
C 1.9 billion
D 1.4 billion

24. The US population (~348M) is about what share of India's (~1.43B)?

A Less than a quarter
B About three-quarters
C Roughly equal
D About half

25. India's ~1.43 billion people compared with all of Europe's ~745 million is roughly:

A About equal
B Ten times as many
C Nearly double
D About half

Go deeper

LISTEN Lesson 3 episode 5:49 · FlashFeed Study Notes podcast

WATCH One City, One Country 0:30 · YouTube
Greater Tokyo is home to about 37 million people, the largest urban area on Earth.

WATCH India, China and the Rest 0:31 · YouTube
India is the most populous country, at about 1.43 billion. China is close behind, at about 1.41 billion.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/world-numbers/people-and-places

STUDY Fun with Numbers in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/world-numbers

LESSON 4 OF 9

Space and Astronomy

Cosmic distances · Sizes, speeds and counts

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Recall the distances to the Moon, Sun, and Mars and the near-Earth reference scales
- Define the light-year and identify the Moon and Mars
- Recall the extreme sizes and speeds of the Sun, Jupiter, and light, the age of the universe, and the number of planets in our solar system
- Recall how fast the International Space Station circles the Earth
- Define magnitude and identify the solar system's largest bodies

Astronomy is where number sense breaks down completely, because the distances are so far beyond human experience that the units themselves have to change — from miles to astronomical units to light-years. This lesson works outward from the familiar (the Moon) to the unimaginable (the age of the universe), with a few sizes and speeds along the way. You won't be able to truly picture these magnitudes — nobody can — but you can learn the anchor numbers that let you reason about them.

Cosmic distances

Start close to home. The **Moon** is about **238,855 miles** away — far enough that the Apollo astronauts took three days to get there, but close enough that its light reaches us in just over a second. The **Sun** is vastly farther, about **93 million miles**, a distance astronomers call one *astronomical unit* (AU) and use as a yardstick for the whole solar system. **Mars**, at its closest approach, is still about **34 million miles** from Earth — which is why a round-trip crewed mission is measured in years. Beyond the solar system the numbers explode, and miles become useless: light itself, the fastest thing there is, travels about **5.88 trillion miles in a single year** — one **light-year** — and the nearest star beyond the Sun is over four light-years away. For grounding, remember that the Earth itself is only about **7,918 miles** in diameter, and the International Space Station (ISS) orbits a mere **250 miles** up — closer to the ground than New York is to Chicago.

Sizes, speeds and counts

The objects out there are as extreme as the distances. Light moves at about **186,000 miles per second** — fast enough to circle the Earth seven times in one second — the cosmic speed limit that nothing with mass can reach. The **Sun** is about **864,000 miles** across, so large that more than a million Earths would fit inside it, while **Jupiter**, the largest planet, spans about 86,900 miles. Speeds in orbit are staggering by earthly standards: the **ISS** races around the planet at about **17,500 miles per hour**, completing a full orbit roughly every 90 minutes, which means its astronauts witness a sunrise or sunset about every 45 minutes, or about 16 sunrises and 16 sunsets in a single day. Above all these sits the grandest number of all — the **age of the universe**, about **13.8 billion years**, since the Big Bang. And against that cosmic

backdrop, our own solar system is almost cozy: just **8 planets** circling one ordinary star, a tidy little system in a galaxy of hundreds of billions.

One word runs through all of these comparisons: **magnitude**, which means size or brightness. Astronomers rate how bright stars look on the stellar magnitude scale, and it runs backwards: a lower number means a brighter star. The brightest stars in the night sky were traditionally called first magnitude and the faintest visible ones sixth magnitude. A gap of five magnitudes is a hundredfold difference in brightness, so each step multiplies brightness by about 2.5 rather than adding a fixed amount, which makes it a **logarithmic** scale.

Key terms

Light-year

A light-year is the distance light travels in one year, about 9.46 trillion kilometers. Proxima Centauri, the nearest star beyond the Sun, lies roughly four light-years away.

Magnitude

Magnitude is a measure of size or brightness, often on a logarithmic scale. On the stellar magnitude scale a lower number means a brighter star, so a first-magnitude star outshines a sixth-magnitude one.

Key concepts

Moon

- The closest large object to us in space, and the destination of the Apollo missions.
- It lies about 238,855 miles away, a three-day trip for the Apollo crews.
- It is so near that its reflected light reaches Earth in just over a single second.

Mars

- A neighboring planet whose distance makes any crewed mission a multi-year undertaking.
- Even at its closest approach it lies about 34 million miles from Earth.
- A round-trip crewed journey to this world is measured in years, not days.

Sun

- The single ordinary star at the heart of our solar system.
- It measures about 864,000 miles across.
- It is so enormous that more than a million Earths could fit inside it.

Jupiter

- The largest planet in the solar system.
- It spans about 86,900 miles across.
- As the biggest of the eight planets, it dwarfs Earth yet is far smaller than the star at the center.

Key facts

The Solar System's Yardstick

The Earth–Sun distance, about 93 million miles, is defined as one astronomical unit (AU) — the ruler astronomers use for the whole solar system. It puts the neighbors in scale: Mars, even at its closest approach, is still about 34 million miles off, roughly a third of an AU, which is why a crewed round trip is measured in years rather than days.

A Light-Year Measures Distance, Not Time

Miles work fine close to home — Earth is about 7,918 miles across, and the International Space Station (ISS) orbits a mere 250 miles up. Past the solar system they stop being useful, so astronomers switch to the light-year: the distance light covers in one year, about 5.88 trillion miles (9.46 trillion km). Proxima Centauri, the nearest star beyond the Sun, lies a bit over four of them away.

Mars, never truly close

Even at its closest approach to Earth, Mars sits about 34 million miles away — far enough that a crewed round-trip would take years.

How high the International Space Station orbits

The International Space Station orbits about 250 miles above Earth — closer to the ground than New York is to Chicago, and nowhere near the Moon's 238,855 miles.

Light Laps the Earth Seven Times a Second

Light travels about 186,000 miles per second: fast enough to circle the Earth roughly seven times in one second, and the cosmic speed limit nothing with mass can reach. For contrast, the International Space Station (ISS) races around Earth at 17,500 miles per hour: light covers in about a tenth of a second the distance the ISS needs a full hour to cross.

Jupiter, dwarfing Earth

Jupiter, the largest planet, measures roughly 86,900 miles across — vastly smaller than the Sun's 864,000-mile span, but still dwarfing Earth's 7,918 miles.

The universe's head start

Since the Big Bang, the universe is estimated to be about 13.8 billion years old — far older than Earth, whose age is closer to 4.5 billion years.

By the numbers

Distance from the Earth to the Moon

238855 miles

Distance from the Earth to the Sun (one astronomical unit)

93000000 miles

Distance light travels in one year
5880000000000 miles

Closest approach distance from Earth to Mars
34000000 miles

Typical altitude of the International Space Station
250 miles

Diameter of the Earth
7918 miles

Speed of light in a vacuum
186000 miles per second

Diameter of the Sun
864000 miles

Diameter of Jupiter, the largest planet
86900 miles

Orbital speed of the International Space Station
17500 miles per hour

Age of the universe
13800000000 years

Number of planets in the Solar System
8 count

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. About how long did the Apollo astronauts take to travel to the Moon, some 238,855 miles away?

A. Three days
B. Three weeks
C. Three hours
D. Three months

2. About how far is the Moon from Earth?

A. 7,918 miles
B. 34 million miles
C. 238,855 miles
D. 93 million miles

3. The Sun is about 93 million miles from Earth. What is this distance also called?

A. One parsec
B. One astronomical unit (AU)
C. One light-second
D. One light-year

4. At its closest approach, roughly how far is Mars from Earth?

A) 238,855 miles
B) 93 million miles
C) 5.88 trillion miles
D) 34 million miles

5. Which near-Earth reference figure is stated INCORRECTLY?

A) The Moon is about 238,855 miles away
B) The space station is 250 miles up
C) The space station is 2,500 miles up
D) Earth is about 7,918 miles in diameter

6. What does a light-year measure?

A) One year as measured on a distant star
B) The distance light travels in one year
C) The brightness of a star over a year
D) The time light takes to cross the solar system

7. Roughly how far does light travel in one year (one light-year)?

A) About 5.88 trillion miles
B) About 186,000 miles
C) About 5.88 billion miles
D) About 93 million miles

8. Proxima Centauri, the nearest star beyond the Sun, lies roughly how far away?

A) About four astronomical units
B) About one light-year
C) About forty light-years
D) About four light-years

9. Which body is about 238,855 miles away and took Apollo astronauts three days to reach?

A) The Sun
B) Mars
C) The Moon
D) The space station

10. Which planet's closest approach to Earth is about 34 million miles, so a crewed round-trip is measured in years?

A) Saturn
B) Jupiter
C) Venus
D) Mars

11. About how large across is the Sun?

A) 86,900 miles
B) 864,000 miles
C) 186,000 miles
D) 7,918 miles

12. Jupiter, the largest planet, is about how many miles across?

A) 86,900 miles
B) 864,000 miles
C) 7,918 miles
D) 238,855 miles

13. About how fast does light travel?

A) 93 million miles per second
B) 17,500 miles per hour
C) 186,000 miles per second
D) 5.88 trillion miles per hour

14. About how old is the universe, since the Big Bang?

A) 4.5 billion years
B) 138 billion years
C) 1.38 billion years
D) 13.8 billion years

15. How many planets circle the Sun in our solar system?

A) 12
B) 8
C) 9
D) 7

16. Which of these has the largest diameter?

A) Sun
B) Earth
C) Mars
D) Jupiter

17. Light is fast enough to circle the Earth how many times in one second?

A) Hundreds of times
B) A dozen times
C) Seven times
D) Fifty times

18. Orbiting about 250 miles up at 17,500 mph, the crewed ___ now in orbit circles Earth roughly every 90 minutes — so its astronauts see a sunrise or sunset about every 45 minutes, around 16 of each per day.

A) Mir space station
B) Skylab
C) Hubble Space Telescope
D) International Space Station

19. About how fast does the International Space Station (ISS) travel in orbit?

A) 186,000 miles per second
B) 17,500 miles per hour
C) 250 miles per hour
D) 1,750 miles per hour

20. About how long does the International Space Station (ISS) take to complete one full orbit of Earth?

A) About 90 minutes
B) About 3 hours
C) About 24 hours
D) About 45 minutes

21. About how often do International Space Station (ISS) astronauts witness a sunrise or a sunset?

A) Once a day
B) Every 90 minutes
C) Every 45 minutes
D) Every 12 hours

22. About how many sunrises do International Space Station (ISS) astronauts see in a single day?

A) About 16
B) About 8
C) About 1
D) About 24

23. About how many Earths could fit inside the Sun?

A) About ten
B) About a thousand
C) About a hundred thousand
D) More than a million

24. Which lists Earth, Jupiter and the Sun from SMALLEST to LARGEST?

A Jupiter, Sun, Earth
B Earth, Jupiter, Sun
C Earth, Sun, Jupiter
D Sun, Jupiter, Earth

25. Which statement about the solar system is FALSE?

A The Sun is far larger than Jupiter
B Earth is larger than Jupiter
C Jupiter is the largest planet
D The Sun is the largest body in the solar system

26. What is the largest body in the solar system, at about 864,000 miles across?

A The Sun
B Earth
C Jupiter
D The Moon

27. Which is the largest planet in the solar system, spanning about 86,900 miles?

A Neptune
B Saturn
C Jupiter
D Earth

Go deeper

LISTEN Lesson 4 episode 5:34 · FlashFeed Study Notes podcast

WATCH Life on the ISS 0:28 · YouTube
The International Space Station orbits a mere 250 miles up. That is closer to the ground than New York is to Chicago.

WATCH The Speed of Light 0:29 · YouTube
Light is the fastest thing there is. It travels about 186,000 miles every second.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/world-numbers/space-and-astronomy

STUDY Fun with Numbers in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/world-numbers

LESSON 5 OF 9

Money and the Economy

Big money

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Recall and rank US debt, US GDP, the federal budget, and world GDP, and when the debt reached $38.9 trillion
- Define GDP and recognize what it measures
- Recall Nvidia's market value, Elon Musk's net worth, the median US home price, and a Ford-class carrier's cost
- Identify the major economic aggregates and distinguish national debt from annual output

Money is where big numbers do the most damage to intuition, because the words run out. A million, a billion, a trillion — they sound similar but differ by factors of a thousand each time, and that gap is almost impossible to feel. One way to anchor it: a million seconds is about 12 days, a billion seconds is about 32 years, and a trillion seconds is about 32,000 years. This lesson puts numbers on the biggest figures in the economy, with a running reminder of just how far apart "billion" and "trillion" really are. Note that these are the most time-sensitive figures in the pack — they're current as of 2026 and will keep climbing.

Big money

The headline number in American finance is the **US national debt**, which by mid-2026 had reached roughly **38.9 trillion** — and it has been growing by more than 2 trillion a year. To grasp the scale, set it against the whole economy: total **US gross domestic product (GDP)**, the value of everything the country produces in a year, is about **30.8 trillion**. The debt now exceeds a full year of national output. Step up to the planet and the **world GDP** is about **110 trillion**, with the US making up more than a quarter of it. The annual **US federal budget** runs about **$7.0 trillion** in spending — itself a number larger than the entire economy of all but a handful of countries.

Corporate and personal wealth have reached scales that once seemed impossible. The most valuable public company on Earth is **Nvidia**, worth about **5.2 trillion** — a value built on the demand for the chips that power artificial intelligence, making it the first company ever to cross 5 trillion. The world's richest person, **Elon Musk**, has a net worth around **800 billion**, more than the GDP of most nations. Against those astronomical figures, the numbers that touch ordinary life feel almost quaint: the median existing **US home** sold for about **407,600** in 2024, and even a **Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier**, one of the most expensive machines ever built, costs about **$13 billion** — which, set beside the national debt, is less than two and a half days' worth of new borrowing. The whole lesson of money's magnitudes is that the jump from billions to trillions is the jump that matters: a billionaire is rich beyond imagining, yet it would take 1,000 of them to equal a single trillion.

Key terms

GDP

GDP, or gross domestic product, is the total value of the goods and services a country produces in a year. The United States has the world's largest GDP, about $30.8 trillion.

Key concepts

US national debt

- The single biggest headline figure in American finance, and it keeps climbing.
- By mid-2026 it had reached roughly $38.9 trillion, growing by more than $2 trillion a year.
- This total the government owes now exceeds a full year of everything the country produces.

US GDP

- A yearly figure capturing the value of everything a single country produces.
- For the United States, it stands at about $30.8 trillion.
- At roughly $30.8 trillion a year, this national output is now smaller than what the government owes.

World GDP

- The grandest economic figure of all, the yearly output of the entire planet.
- It totals about $110 trillion.
- Of this $110 trillion global total, the United States alone makes up more than a quarter.

US federal budget

- The amount the US government plans to spend over a single year.
- It runs about $7.0 trillion in annual spending.
- At roughly $7.0 trillion, this yearly spending plan tops the entire economy of all but a handful of countries.

Key facts

> **Billion: 32 years. Trillion: 32,000**
>
> The words sound alike but the gap is enormous: a million seconds is about 12 days, a billion about 32 years, a trillion about 32,000 years. The same gap runs through the money. In 2026 the world's richest person, Elon Musk, is worth roughly 800 billion — yet his fortune would have to grow more than sixfold to match Nvidia, valued at about 5.2 trillion, the first company ever to cross $5 trillion on the strength of AI-chip demand.



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The Whole Planet Earns $110 Trillion a Year

World gross domestic product (GDP), the value of everything the planet produces in a year, is about 110 trillion, and the United States alone accounts for more than a quarter of it at roughly 30.8 trillion, the largest of any country. The US federal government spends about 7.0 trillion a year, a budget bigger than the entire economy of all but a handful of nations. Next to those figures ordinary prices look quaint: the median existing US home sold for about 407,600 in 2024, and a Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier costs about $13 billion.



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The federal price tag

US federal budget outlays run about 7.0 trillion annually — well below total US gross domestic product (GDP, ~~30.8 trillion) or world GDP~~ ~~(~~$110 trillion).

> **What gross domestic product (GDP) actually measures**
>
> Gross domestic product is the total value of all goods and services a country produces in a year — a measure of output, not of debt or wealth.

By the numbers

US national debt (as of mid-2026)
38900000000000 dollars

US annual gross domestic product (GDP), 2025
30800000000000 dollars

World gross domestic product (GDP), 2025
110000000000000 dollars

US federal budget outlays (2025)
7000000000000 dollars

Market value of Nvidia, the most valuable public company (2026)
5200000000000 dollars

Net worth of the world's richest person, Elon Musk (2026)
800000000000 dollars

Median price of an existing US home (2026)
407600 dollars

Cost of a Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier
13000000000 dollars

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. By mid-___ the US national debt had climbed to roughly $39 trillion — larger than the entire annual US economy, whose gross domestic product is about $31 trillion. The debt grew by more than $2 trillion in a single year.

A 2021
B 2026
C 2002
D 2019

2. About how large was the US national debt by mid-2026?

A $7.0 trillion
B $30.8 trillion
C $110 trillion
D $38.9 trillion

3. Roughly how large is total world gross domestic product (GDP)?

A $110 trillion
B $38.9 trillion
C $30.8 trillion
D $5.2 trillion

4. About how much does the US federal government spend in a single year?

A $30.8 trillion
B $110 trillion
C $7.0 trillion
D $800 billion

5. Which of these figures is the LARGEST?

A World GDP
B US national debt
C US federal budget
D US gross domestic product (GDP)

6. What does the acronym GDP stand for?

A Gross domestic profit
B General debt product
C Global domestic production
D Gross domestic product

7. What does GDP measure?

A The total debt a country owes
B A government's accumulated spending over decades
C The total value of goods and services a country produces in a year
D The net worth of a country's richest person

8. Over what time period is a country's GDP measured?

A) A single day
B) One year
C) One decade
D) One month

9. Which of the following is NOT something GDP measures?

A) A country's yearly economic output
B) A country's accumulated national debt
C) The value of goods a country produces
D) The value of services a country produces

10. A country's GDP rises from one year to the next. What has grown?

A) How many people live there
B) The land area it controls
C) The total it has ever borrowed
D) The value of its yearly output

11. As of 2026, what is the most valuable public company on Earth?

A) Microsoft
B) Saudi Aramco
C) Nvidia
D) Apple

12. About how much is Nvidia, the most valuable public company, worth in 2026?

A) $5.2 trillion
B) $13 billion
C) $30.8 trillion
D) $800 billion

13. Roughly what is the net worth of the world's richest person, Elon Musk (2026)?

A) $800 billion
B) $5.2 trillion
C) $38.9 trillion
D) $13 billion

14. What is the approximate median price of an existing US home?

A) $650,000
B) $250,000
C) $550,000
D) $400,000

15. About how much does a Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier cost?

A) $25 billion
B) $4 billion
C) $13 billion
D) $7 billion

16. About how much is Nvidia worth, making it the world's most valuable public company (2026)?

A) $3.8 trillion
B) $5.2 trillion
C) $12 trillion
D) $800 billion

17. Nvidia became the first company ever to cross what market-value milestone?

A) $1 trillion
B) $5 trillion
C) $3 trillion
D) $10 trillion

18. About how much is Elon Musk's net worth, making him the world's richest person (2026)?

A $250 billion
B $400 billion
C $800 billion
D $1.5 trillion

19. Elon Musk's roughly $800 billion fortune is often noted to exceed what?

A the US federal budget
B the US national debt
C Nvidia's market value
D the GDP of most nations

20. Which figure measures a country's economic output in a single year?

A GDP
B National debt
C Market capitalization
D Net worth

21. How does the US national debt compare with a full year of US economic output (GDP)?

A It is about half of one year's output
B It equals exactly one year of output
C It is far smaller than one year's output
D It exceeds a full year of output

22. The US federal budget of about $7.0 trillion represents what?

A The value of all goods the country produces
B The government's annual spending
C The total accumulated national debt
D The government's total net worth

23. Which statement best describes the national debt, unlike GDP?

A The value produced in a single year
B A monthly spending figure
C An accumulated total built up over many years
D A company's market value

24. Which of these is NOT one of the major national economic aggregates discussed?

A The median price of a home
B US gross domestic product (GDP)
C The US federal budget
D The US national debt

25. How does the US national debt differ in kind from US GDP?

A GDP accumulates over time; debt is one year's output
B Debt and GDP measure the exact same thing
C Debt accumulates over time; GDP is one year's output
D Both measure one year of federal spending

26. By mid-2026, how did the US national debt compare to US gross domestic product (GDP)?

A Debt was about half of GDP
B Debt was about 1.3 times GDP
C Debt was about twice GDP
D Debt was about a tenth of GDP

Go deeper

LISTEN Lesson 5 episode 5:23 · FlashFeed Study Notes podcast

WATCH Million, Billion, Trillion 0:33 · YouTube
A million seconds is about 12 days. A million, a billion and a trillion sound alike, but each is a thousand times bigger than the last.

WATCH Bigger Than the Economy 0:30 · YouTube
The US national debt reached roughly $38.9 trillion by mid-2026.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/world-numbers/money-and-the-economy

STUDY Fun with Numbers in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/world-numbers

LESSON 6 OF 9

USA by the Numbers

Government and the Constitution · States, symbols and rules

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Recall the fixed sizes of Congress, the electoral votes needed to win the presidency, and the year a law capped the House at 435
- Recall the key figures of the presidency and the US Constitution
- Identify the core institutions of the US government
- Recall the counts on the flag and the number of states and national parks, and what the stripes represent
- Recall the constitutional age thresholds for voting and for becoming president

Every country runs on a set of structural numbers — how many leaders, how many lawmakers, how many rules — and the United States has a particularly memorable set, baked into its founding documents and its flag. This lesson collects the civic figures worth knowing cold: the counts that define how the government is built and how it works. They're the kind of numbers that come up constantly and that surprisingly many people get wrong.

Government and the Constitution

One figure that keeps changing is the count of **US presidencies**: as of 2026 it stands at **47**, though only 45 people have held the office, with Donald Trump holding both the 45th and 47th slots because his terms were non-consecutive (a quirk shared only with Grover Cleveland). The legislature splits into two fixed numbers: **100 senators** (two from each state) and **435 voting members** of the House of Representatives. That House figure is worth a second look — it has been permanently capped at 435 by the Reapportionment Act of 1929, even though the population has nearly tripled since, so each representative now speaks for far more people than the founders intended. Presidential elections turn on the Electoral College, where a candidate needs **270 electoral votes** to win out of 538 total. Each presidential **term** is **4 years**. And the framework behind all of it, the **US Constitution**, was ratified in 1788 — when New Hampshire became the ninth state to approve it — and took effect in 1789; counting from that 1788 ratification, it is **238 years old** in 2026 and the oldest written national constitution still in use. It has been formally changed only **27 times**, the count of its amendments, the first ten of which are the Bill of Rights.

States, symbols and rules

The rest of the American numbers live on the flag and in the rulebook. There are **50 states**, a number reached in 1959 when Alaska and Hawai'i joined — and the flag records the country's growth in two layers: **50 stars**, one per current state, and **13 stripes**, one for each of the original colonies that declared independence. Apart from the 15-stripe flag of 1795 to 1818, those thirteen stripes have stayed fixed

while the stars have multiplied. The country protects its grandest landscapes through the National Park System, which, as of 2026, includes **64 national parks** — the crown jewels like Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon — among hundreds of other protected sites. A few age thresholds shape civic life: you can vote at **18** (lowered from 21 by the 26th Amendment), but you must be at least **35** to be president, one of just three constitutional qualifications for the office. Together these numbers form a kind of civic vocabulary — 50 states, 100 senators, 435 representatives, 270 to win, 27 amendments — that anchors how the whole system fits together.

Key concepts

US Constitution

- The founding legal framework the entire US federal government is built on.
- At 238 years old in 2026, it is the oldest written national charter still in use.
- Ratified in 1788, it has been formally amended only 27 times.

Electoral College

- The mechanism that actually decides who becomes US president, not a direct popular vote.
- Its 538 votes come from the states, plus 3 for Washington, District of Columbia (DC).
- A candidate must capture 270 of its votes to win the presidency.

Senate

- The smaller of the two chambers of the US Congress.
- Every state sends exactly two members to it, regardless of size.
- It seats 100 lawmakers in all, evenly split across the 50 states.

House of Representatives

- The larger of the two chambers of the US Congress.
- The Reapportionment Act of 1929 permanently capped its size even as the US population nearly tripled.
- It seats 435 voting members, so each now speaks for far more people than the founders intended.

National Park System

- The federal program that safeguards America's grandest landscapes.
- It includes 64 of the country's most celebrated preserves among hundreds of other protected sites.
- Its crown jewels include Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon.

Key facts

> **435 seats, fixed since 1929**
>
> The US House of Representatives has had 435 voting members since the Reapportionment Act of 1929 permanently capped the number — even though the country's population has nearly tripled since then, so each member now represents far more people.

47 Presidencies, But Only 45 People

Count the US presidents through 2026 and the answer is 47 — but only 45 men have held the job. Donald Trump fills both the 45th and 47th slots because his terms were not consecutive, a quirk shared with exactly one predecessor: Grover Cleveland, the 22nd and 24th president. Each term, then as now, runs 4 years.

Where 538 votes come from

A candidate needs 270 electoral votes to win the presidency — a bare majority of 538. That total is not arbitrary: it is the 435 members of the House, plus the 100 senators, plus 3 votes granted to Washington, District of Columbia (DC) by the 23rd Amendment — one of only 27 changes made to the Constitution since it was ratified in 1788.

The magic number to win

Winning the US presidency requires 270 electoral votes — a simple majority of the Electoral College's 538 total votes.



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Different jobs, different terms

Each US presidential term runs 4 years, compared with 2 years for a House term and 6 years for a Senate term; the 22nd Amendment limits a president to being elected twice.

18 to Vote, 35 to Run

The voting age was 21 until the 26th Amendment lowered it to 18 in 1971, leaving a 17-year gap to the age the Constitution requires of a president: 35. That minimum is one of only three qualifications for the office, alongside being a natural-born citizen and having lived in the United States for 14 years.

The last two states

The US grew to its current 50 states in 1959, when Alaska and Hawai'i both joined the union.

When voting age dropped

The US voting age used to be 21 until the 26th Amendment brought it down to 18, the threshold still in place today.

By the numbers

Number of US presidents through 2026

47 count

Number of US senators

100 count

Number of voting members in the US House
435 count

Electoral votes needed to win the presidency
270 count

Years in a single US presidential term
4 years

Age of the US Constitution in 2026 (ratified 1788)
238 years

Number of amendments to the US Constitution
27 count

Number of US states
50 count

Number of US national parks (as of 2026)
64 count

Number of stars on the US flag
50 count

Number of stripes on the US flag
13 count

Voting age in the United States
18 years

Minimum age to be US president
35 years

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. The US House of Representatives has had 435 voting members since a ___ law permanently capped the number — even though the country's population has nearly tripled since then, so each member now represents far more people.

A 1920
B 1941
C 1929
D 1911

2. How many senators serve in the US Senate?

A 538
B 100
C 50
D 435

3. Which US governing body has 435 voting members?

A The Electoral College
B The Senate
C The Supreme Court
D The House of Representatives

4. How many electoral votes does a candidate need to win the US presidency?

A 270
B 218
C 538
D 435

5. The 270 votes needed to win come out of how many total electoral votes?

A 538
B 545
C 500
D 435

6. Through 2026, how many numbered US presidencies have there been, counting non-consecutive terms separately?

A 44
B 46
C 47
D 45

7. How many years is a single US presidential term?

A 8
B 4
C 6
D 2

8. In what year was the US Constitution ratified?

A 1776
B 1789
C 1787
D 1788

9. How many times has the US Constitution been formally amended?

A 10
B 12
C 25
D 27

10. As of 2026, which president holds both the 45th and 47th slots because his terms were non-consecutive?

A Barack Obama
B Grover Cleveland
C Donald Trump
D Joe Biden

11. Which US institution decides presidential elections through a total of 538 votes?

A The Senate
B The Electoral College
C The Supreme Court
D The House of Representatives

12. Which body of Congress gives two members to each state regardless of population?

A The Senate
B The Electoral College
C The House of Representatives
D The Cabinet

13. What is the oldest written national constitution still in use, forming the framework of US government?

- A The Bill of Rights
- B The Declaration of Independence
- C The Articles of Confederation
- D The US Constitution

14. Which chamber of Congress has 435 voting members apportioned by population?

- A The House of Lords
- B The House of Representatives
- C The Electoral College
- D The Senate

15. Which of these is NOT a governing institution of the US federal government?

- A The Senate
- B The House of Representatives
- C The National Park System
- D The Supreme Court

16. What do the 13 stripes on the US flag represent?

- A The original thirteen colonies
- B The thirteen westernmost states
- C The thirteen signers of the Declaration of Independence
- D The thirteen amendments of the Bill of Rights

17. How many states make up the United States?

- A 52
- B 48
- C 13
- D 50

18. How many stars appear on the US flag?

- A 64
- B 48
- C 50
- D 13

19. How many stripes are on the US flag?

- A 13
- B 10
- C 12
- D 16

20. How many national parks does the US National Park System include as of 2026?

- A 433
- B 64
- C 50
- D 58

21. How many states make up the United States?

- A 48
- B 52
- C 13
- D 50

22. Which event brought the US to its current count of 50 states?

- A The Louisiana Purchase
- B Alaska and Hawai'i joining in 1959
- C The original colonies uniting
- D Texas annexation

23. What does each of the 13 stripes on the US flag represent?

A One of the original thirteen colonies
B A branch of the US armed forces
C One of the amendments in the Bill of Rights
D A member of the Continental Congress

24. On the US flag, what do the stripes track that differs from what the stars track?

A Signers of the Declaration, while stars track current states
B The current states, while stars track the founding colonies
C The founding colonies, while stars track current states
D Bill of Rights amendments, while stars track current states

25. What is the voting age in the United States?

A 18
B 21
C 25
D 16

26. What is the minimum age to become US president?

A 30
B 25
C 40
D 35

27. Which amendment lowered the US voting age to 18?

A The 27th Amendment
B The 19th Amendment
C The 26th Amendment
D The 24th Amendment

28. Before the 26th Amendment, what was the US voting age?

A 18
B 21
C 25
D 19

29. How many years older must a person be to run for president than to be eligible to vote?

A 17
B 14
C 20
D 23

Go deeper

LISTEN Lesson 6 episode 5:59 · FlashFeed Study Notes podcast

WATCH The Civic Numbers 0:32 · YouTube
The US flag carries 50 stars, one for each state, and 13 stripes, one for each of the original colonies.

WATCH Vote at 18 0:31
The U.S. voting age was 21 until the 26th Amendment. The amendment lowered it to 18.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/world-numbers/usa-by-the-numbers

STUDY Fun with Numbers in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/world-numbers

LESSON 7 OF 9

Records and the Human Body

Records and curiosities

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Recall the astonishing numbers of the human body: its bones and daily heartbeats
- Recall the record extremes of the animal kingdom and identify the record-holders
- Recall the limits of human performance in diving and sprint speed, plus Earth's highest recorded air temperature
- Define wingspan as the distance between a bird's outstretched wingtips

The last category is pure delight — the extremes, the record-holders, and the astonishing numbers hiding inside our own bodies. These are the facts that make good trivia precisely because they sit just outside everyday knowledge: fast enough, deep, hot, or strange enough to surprise. This lesson collects a handful of the best, the kind of numbers that reward a confident guess.

Records and curiosities

Begin with the machine you're reading this with. An adult human body has **206 bones** (a baby is born with roughly 270 to 300 bones, depending on how the still-fusing pieces are counted, which fuse over time), and the heart at its center beats about **100,000 times a day** — close to **3 billion beats** over an 80-year life, with no scheduled maintenance break. Out in the animal kingdom, the **cheetah** is the fastest land animal, hitting roughly **60 to 65 miles per hour** in short bursts, while the largest animal that has ever lived, the **blue whale**, can weigh up to **200 tons** — heavier than the biggest dinosaurs, with the heaviest heart measured weighing roughly 400 pounds.

Humans chase extremes too. The deepest anyone has descended on **scuba** gear is about **1,090 feet**, a dive so dangerous it took years of planning and hours of slow ascent to survive. Free-divers, holding a single breath, have reached about **702 feet** straight down on a weighted sled. On land, the highest air temperature officially recognized by the World Meteorological Organization is **134°F**, measured in Death Valley, California in 1913 — hot enough to cook an egg on the ground, though some climatologists have questioned the reading, arguing it may be several degrees too high. And at the peak of human speed, **Usain Bolt** reached about **27.8 miles per hour** during his 100-meter world record — for a few strides, the fastest a human being has ever run under their own power. Records aren't only about speed and depth — some are about reach. A bird's **wingspan** is the distance from one outstretched wingtip to the other, and the largest wingspan of any living bird belongs to the **wandering albatross**, stretching beyond **three meters**. What ties these together is that each one lives at the edge of what's possible, which is exactly why they're worth knowing: they mark the boundaries of the world, the far ends of every scale this pack has explored.

Key terms

Wingspan

Wingspan is the distance from one wingtip to the other. The wandering albatross has the largest wingspan of any living bird, stretching beyond three meters.

Key concepts

Cheetah

- The fastest animal on land.
- It hits roughly 60 to 65 miles per hour, but only in short bursts.

Blue Whale

- The largest animal that has ever lived, bigger even than the biggest dinosaurs.
- It can weigh up to 200 tons, and the heaviest heart measured weighed roughly 400 pounds.

Key facts

> **Three billion beats a lifetime**
> At about 100,000 beats per day, a typical human heart beats close to 3 billion times over an 80-year life — without a single scheduled maintenance break.

> **Two-thirds as deep, single breath**
> The deepest scuba dive on record reached 1,090 feet, a descent that took years of planning and hours of slow ascent to survive. Free-divers riding a weighted sled, holding one breath, have gone 702 feet down: roughly two-thirds as deep, with no air at all. The land-side extreme is heat: 134°F in Death Valley, California, the temperature officially recognized as Earth's highest, though some climatologists have questioned the 1913 reading, arguing it may be several degrees too high.

> **Never taking a break**
> The average human heart beats roughly 100,000 times every day, keeping a steady rhythm with no scheduled breaks.

> **Nature's fastest sprinter**
> In short bursts, a cheetah can run at roughly 60 to 65 miles per hour, making it the fastest land animal alive.

By the numbers

Number of bones in an average adult human body

206 count

Average human heartbeats per day
100000 beats

Commonly cited top running speed of a cheetah, the fastest land animal
65 miles per hour

Maximum weight of a blue whale, the largest animal
200 tons

Deepest scuba dive on record
1090 feet

Deepest no-limits free dive on record
702 feet

Highest air temperature officially recognized on Earth
134 degrees Fahrenheit

Usain Bolt's peak speed during his 100 m world record
27.8 miles per hour

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. A human baby is born with roughly how many bones, which fuse over time down to the 206 of an adult?

A. About 350
B. About 300
C. About 400
D. About 220

2. How many bones are in an average adult human body?

A. 220
B. 198
C. 212
D. 206

3. About how many times does an average human heart beat in a single day?

A. 50,000
B. 10,000
C. 100,000
D. 1,000,000

4. Beating about 100,000 times a day, roughly how many times does a heart beat over an 80-year life?

A. 3 billion
B. 30 billion
C. 300 million
D. 1 billion

5. A newborn has about 300 bones and an adult 206. Roughly how many fuse away during growth?

A About 150
B About 44
C About 200
D About 94

6. In short bursts, roughly how fast can a cheetah run?

A 90 miles per hour
B 65 miles per hour
C 120 miles per hour
D 50 miles per hour

7. Which animal holds the record as the fastest thing on land?

A Greyhound
B Lion
C Cheetah
D Pronghorn

8. The blue whale, the largest animal ever, can weigh up to about how much?

A 200 tons
B 50 tons
C 500 tons
D 100 tons

9. Which is the largest animal that has ever lived, heavier even than the biggest dinosaurs?

A African bush elephant
B Blue whale
C Argentinosaurus
D Colossal squid

10. A measured blue whale heart weighed about how much?

A About 400 pounds
B About 45 pounds
C About 2,000 pounds
D About 9,000 pounds

11. About how deep is the deepest scuba dive ever recorded?

A 2,000 feet
B 500 feet
C 702 feet
D 1,090 feet

12. Holding a single breath on a weighted sled, free-divers have reached about how deep?

A 1,090 feet
B 900 feet
C 702 feet
D 350 feet

13. What is the highest air temperature officially recognized on Earth?

A 108°F
B 120°F
C 150°F
D 134°F

14. Where was the officially recognized record air temperature of 134°F measured?

A Lut Desert, Iran
B The Sahara Desert
C Death Valley, California
D Dubai, United Arab Emirates

15. About how fast was Usain Bolt going at his peak during his 100 m world record?

A) 31.2 miles per hour
B) 27.8 miles per hour
C) 19.9 miles per hour
D) 23.5 miles per hour

16. What does the term wingspan measure?

A) The distance from one wingtip to the other
B) The length from beak to tail
C) The bird's height when standing
D) The total number of flight feathers

17. A bird's wingspan is the distance between which two points?

A) The tip of its beak and the tip of its tail
B) The top of its head and the bottom of its feet
C) The tips of its two fully outstretched wings
D) The width of its body at the shoulders

18. To measure a bird's wingspan, how would you position a tape measure?

A) Wrap it around the thickest part of the body
B) Run it from the beak tip to the tail tip
C) Hold it vertically from head to talons
D) From one wingtip to the other, wings spread

19. Which of these is NOT true about how a wingspan is measured?

A) It includes the bird's total body weight
B) It runs from one wingtip to the other
C) It is a straight-line distance measurement
D) It is measured with wings fully outstretched

20. A bird's outstretched wings measure 3.5 meters from tip to tip. That measurement is its what?

A) Height
B) Wingspan
C) Tail span
D) Body length

Go deeper

LISTEN Lesson 7 episode 5:39 · FlashFeed Study Notes podcast

WATCH Your Body by the Numbers 0:29 · YouTube
Start with the heart. It beats about 100,000 times a day, every day.

WATCH Faster and Deeper 0:30 · YouTube
The cheetah is the fastest thing on land, hitting about 70 miles per hour in short bursts.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/world-numbers/records-and-the-human-body

STUDY Fun with Numbers in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/world-numbers

LESSON 8 OF 9

Quick Recall

Superlatives

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Match Earth's physical extremes (tallest mountain above sea level, deepest point in the ocean, longest river, tallest building) to their record-holders
- Match the largest country, the most populous country, and the US president count to their answers
- Match the closest star, the fastest land animal, and the most valuable company to their record-holders

This final lesson is a fast drill on the superlatives — the single "most" facts that the whole pack circles around. Once these come without hesitation, you have a set of anchor points to reason from: if you know the tallest mountain and the deepest point in the ocean, you can sanity-check almost any height or depth you're asked to guess. These are the records worth carrying in your head.

Superlatives

Start with the planet's physical extremes. The **tallest mountain** above sea level is **Mount Everest** at 29,032 feet; the **deepest point in the ocean** is the **Mariana Trench** at about 35,900 feet — meaning the ocean's deepest point is actually deeper than the highest mountain is tall. The **longest river** — by the traditional measure — is the **Nile** at roughly 4,130 miles (a few studies argue the Amazon is longer), and the **tallest building** is the **Burj Khalifa** at 2,717 feet. For the human and political world: the **largest country by area** is **Russia**, about 6.6 million square miles, while the **most populous country** is now **India**, with about 1.43 billion people (UN estimate, 2023). And the United States numbers **47 presidencies** through 2026; Grover Cleveland (22nd and 24th) and Trump (45th and 47th) are each counted twice for non-consecutive terms, so 45 different people have served.

Then the records that stretch into other domains. The **closest star** to Earth is our own **Sun**, about 93 million miles away — a reminder that the nearest star is one we see every day. The **fastest land animal** is the **cheetah** at roughly 60 to 65 miles per hour. And as of 2026, the **most valuable public company** in the world is **Nvidia**, worth about $5.2 trillion, on the strength of the chips powering the AI boom.

Drill these ten until each pairing is instant — Everest and tallest mountain above sea level, the Mariana Trench and the deepest point in the ocean, the Nile and longest river, the Burj Khalifa and tallest building, Russia and largest country, India and most populous, the Sun and closest star, the cheetah and fastest land animal, Nvidia and most valuable company, and 47 United States presidencies held by 45 people. They're the headline facts of the whole pack, and together they give you a map of the extremes: the biggest, tallest, deepest, fastest, and most of the world we live in.

Key concepts

Mariana Trench

- This ocean feature marks the lowest reach of any sea on Earth.
- It bottoms out around 35,900 feet down.
- Its floor sits deeper than Mount Everest is tall.

Nile River

- This river is traditionally considered the longest on Earth, though a few studies have argued a rival (the Amazon) is longer.
- It winds for roughly 4,130 miles.

Russia

- No nation covers more of the Earth's surface than this one.
- It sprawls across about 6.6 million square miles, the largest country by area.

India

- No country is now home to more people than this one.
- About 1.43 billion people make it the most populous nation on Earth.

Key facts

> **Deepest point beats tallest peak**
> Everest tops out at 29,032 feet, but the Mariana Trench bottoms out near 35,900 — sink the mountain into the trench and its summit would still sit more than a mile underwater. The rest of the physical podium: the Nile, traditionally the longest river at about 4,130 miles, and the Burj Khalifa, tallest building at 2,717 feet.

> **Biggest Country, Biggest Crowd, 47 Presidencies**
> Russia is the largest country by area at about 6.6 million square miles, while India is now the most populous, with roughly 1.43 billion people in 2023 (United Nations estimate) after passing China. The United States counts 47 presidencies through 2026, held by 45 people: Trump is counted twice, as both the 45th and the 47th, because his terms were not consecutive. Grover Cleveland is numbered the same way.

> **Two Records That Trip People Up**
> The closest star to Earth is the one you see every day: the Sun, about 93 million miles away — the next-nearest, Proxima Centauri, is over four light-years off. And as of 2026, the most valuable public company is not Apple or Microsoft but Nvidia, worth about $5.2 trillion on the strength of the chips powering the AI boom.

> **Traditionally the longest**
> At roughly 4,130 miles long, the Nile is traditionally credited as the longest river in the world — longer than the Amazon, the Yangtze, or the Mississippi — though a few studies have argued the Amazon is slightly longer.

> **The common mix-up**
> The world's tallest building is the Burj Khalifa at 2,717 feet — not the Eiffel Tower, which people sometimes name by mistake.

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

Tallest mountain above sea level → Mount Everest — 29,032 ft

Longest river → the Nile — about 4,130 miles

Tallest building → the Burj Khalifa — 2,717 ft

Deepest point in the ocean → the Mariana Trench — about 35,900 ft

Largest country by area → Russia — about 6.6 million sq mi

Most populous country → India — about 1.43 billion people

Closest star to Earth → the Sun — about 93 million miles away

Fastest land animal → the cheetah: about 60 to 65 mph

Most valuable public company → Nvidia — about $5.2 trillion

US presidencies through 2026 → 47 — Trump is the 47th

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Comparing Earth's tallest mountain above sea level (Mount Everest) with the deepest ocean point (the Mariana Trench), which statement is true?

A. The two are almost exactly equal in magnitude
B. Mount Everest is more than twice as tall as the trench is deep
C. The Mariana Trench is deeper than Mount Everest is tall
D. Mount Everest is taller than the Mariana Trench is deep

2. Which peak is Earth's highest mountain above sea level, at about 29,032 feet (2020 remeasurement)?

A. Mount Kilimanjaro
B. Mount Everest
C. Denali
D. K2

3. What is the deepest point in the ocean, reaching about 35,900 feet down?

A The Puerto Rico Trench
B The Tonga Trench
C The Java Trench
D The Mariana Trench

4. By the traditional measure, which river is the longest, at roughly 4,130 miles?

A The Nile
B The Mississippi
C The Yangtze
D The Amazon

5. Which record-holder pairing is NOT correct?

A Deepest ocean point — the Mariana Trench
B Tallest building — the Burj Khalifa
C Longest river, traditionally the Nile
D Tallest building — the Eiffel Tower

6. Which mountain is Earth's tallest above sea level, rising about 29,032 feet?

A K2
B Denali
C Mount Everest
D Kangchenjunga

7. About how tall is Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain above sea level?

A 35,900 ft
B 29,032 ft
C 20,310 ft
D 22,837 ft

8. What is the deepest known point in the ocean?

A Mariana Trench
B Java Trench
C Puerto Rico Trench
D Tonga Trench

9. About how deep is the Mariana Trench, the ocean's deepest point?

A 8,000 ft
B 35,900 ft
C 29,032 ft
D 12,000 ft

10. Which structure is the world's tallest building?

A Shanghai Tower
B Petronas Towers
C One World Trade Center
D Burj Khalifa

11. Which nation is the largest country by area, about 6.6 million square miles?

A Russia
B Canada
C China
D The United States

12. Which country has been the most populous since 2023, with about 1.43 billion people (UN estimate)?

A The United States
B Indonesia
C India
D China

13. By official numbering, how many US presidencies have there been through 2026?

A 46
B 48
C 47
D 45

14. Why does the US presidential count reach 47 by 2026?

A The count skips a number for an acting president
B Presidents who served non-consecutive terms are counted twice
C Two presidents served at the same time
D One president was never officially numbered

15. Which geopolitical record pairing is NOT correct?

A Most populous country: China
B US presidents by 2026: 45 people
C US presidencies through 2026: 47
D Largest country by area: Russia

16. What is the closest star to Earth, about 93 million miles away?

A Alpha Centauri
B Proxima Centauri
C Sirius
D The Sun

17. Which animal is the fastest on land, reaching roughly 60 to 65 mph?

A The cheetah
B The lion
C The greyhound
D The pronghorn

18. As of 2026, which is the most valuable public company, worth about $5.2 trillion on the AI boom?

A Apple
B Microsoft
C Saudi Aramco
D Nvidia

19. Nvidia's roughly $5.2 trillion valuation rests largely on demand for what?

A Cryptocurrency-mining hardware
B Chips powering the AI boom
C Home internet routers
D Smartphone processors

20. Which record pairing is NOT correct?

A Fastest land animal — the cheetah
B Most valuable company — Nvidia
C Most valuable company — Apple
D Closest star — the Sun

Go deeper

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WATCH The Extremes 0:31 · YouTube
Mount Everest, at 29,032 feet, is the tallest mountain.

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LESSON 9 OF 9

Key Concepts

Key Places · Key Things

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Identify the world's highest mountains from their descriptions
- Identify Denali and Kilimanjaro as continental high points, and Mont Blanc as the Alps' highest
- Identify the world's tallest buildings from their descriptions
- Identify iconic towers and the structure once tallest among free-standing structures

A quick-recognition gallery of the key people, places, and things from Fun with Numbers.

Key Places

Mount Everest — This peak is the tallest mountain above sea level. Located in the Himalayas, it attracts climbers from around the world. Its height is approximately 29,032 feet above sea level.

K2 — Known as the second-highest mountain in the world. This peak is part of the Karakoram range in Pakistan and China. It stands at about 28,251 feet tall.

Aconcagua — This is the highest peak in South America. Located in the Andes mountain range, it is a popular climbing destination. Its height reaches approximately 22,838 feet.

Denali — This mountain is the highest in North America. It is located in Alaska and has two names, Denali and Mount McKinley; Mount McKinley has been its official federal name again since 2025. Its elevation is about 20,310 feet.

Mount Kilimanjaro — This is the highest mountain in Africa. Located in Tanzania, it is a popular trekking destination. It stands at approximately 19,341 feet tall.

Mont Blanc — This peak is the highest in the Alps. It is located on the border between France and Italy. Its elevation is roughly 15,770 feet.

Key Things

Burj Khalifa — This structure is known as the tallest building in the world. It reaches a height of 2,717 feet. Located in Dubai, it was completed in 2010.

Shanghai Tower — This building is one of the tallest skyscrapers globally. It has a height of 2,073 feet. Located in China, it features a unique twisting design.

One World Trade Center — This building is a prominent feature of the New York City skyline. It stands at 1,776 feet tall. It was built as a symbol of resilience after the September 11 attacks.

CN Tower — This structure was once the tallest free-standing structure in the world. It reaches a height of 1,815 feet. Located in Toronto, it features a revolving restaurant.

Empire State Building — This iconic skyscraper is located in New York City. It has a height of 1,250 feet to its roof. It was completed in 1931 and is a symbol of American architecture.

Eiffel Tower — This iron lattice tower is a global cultural icon of France. It stands at a height of 1,083 feet. Located in Paris, it was completed in 1889 for the World's Fair.

Key concepts

Mount Everest

- This peak is the tallest mountain above sea level.
- Located in the Himalayas, it attracts climbers from around the world.
- Its height is approximately 29,032 feet above sea level.

K2

- Known as the second-highest mountain in the world.
- This peak is part of the Karakoram range in Pakistan and China.
- It stands at about 28,251 feet tall.

Aconcagua

- This is the highest peak in South America.
- Located in the Andes mountain range, it is a popular climbing destination.
- Its height reaches approximately 22,838 feet.

Denali

- This mountain is the highest in North America.
- It is located in Alaska and goes by two names; its official federal name is Mount McKinley.
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Eiffel Tower

- This iron lattice tower is a global cultural icon of France.
- It stands at a height of 1,083 feet.
- Located in Paris, it was completed in 1889 for the World's Fair.

Key facts

> **The Alps' highest, half Everest**
> At roughly 15,770 feet, Mont Blanc is just over half the height of Everest's 29,032, and still the highest point in the Alps, straddling the border between France and Italy. Climbers reach its summit in a couple of days; Everest takes weeks of acclimatization first.

> **Kilimanjaro's exact height**
> Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania rises about 19,341 feet, making it the highest mountain in Africa.

> **Bigger than Denali**
> Rising about 22,838 feet in the Andes, Aconcagua is the highest mountain in South America, taller than Denali, North America's highest peak.

A height chosen for 1776

One World Trade Center rises exactly 1,776 feet — the year of the Declaration of Independence, written into the New York skyline as the symbol rebuilt after the September 11 attacks. It is not the tallest thing on the continent, though: Toronto's CN Tower, with its revolving restaurant, edges it out at 1,815 feet and held the world's free-standing height record for 32 years.

Two towers, 40 years each

The Eiffel Tower — 984 feet of iron lattice when it was completed for the 1889 World's Fair (antennas added later brought it to today's 1,083 feet) — stood as the tallest structure on Earth for four decades, until New York's skyscraper race overtook it. The Empire State Building, finished in 1931 at 1,250 feet to its roof, then held the tallest-building title for nearly forty years of its own.

Toronto's revolving restaurant

Toronto's CN Tower, which rises 1,815 feet and features a revolving restaurant, once held the record as the world's tallest free-standing structure.

China's skyscraper giant

The Shanghai Tower in China stands about 2,073 feet tall, making it one of the world's tallest skyscrapers.

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Which peak is the tallest mountain above sea level?

- A Mount Everest
- B K2
- C Aconcagua
- D Denali

2. K2 is part of which mountain range?

- A The Alps
- B The Karakoram
- C The Himalayas
- D The Andes

3. Approximately how tall is Mount Everest above sea level?

- A 20,310 feet
- B 22,838 feet
- C 29,032 feet
- D 28,251 feet

4. A peak in the Andes and the highest mountain in South America — which is it?

- A Denali
- B Mont Blanc
- C K2
- D Aconcagua

5. Which mountain is known as the second-highest in the world?

- A K2
- B Mount Everest
- C Mount Kilimanjaro
- D Aconcagua

6. Which peak is the highest mountain in Africa?

A Denali
B Mount Kilimanjaro
C Mont Blanc
D Aconcagua

7. Denali, the highest peak in North America, is located in which US state?

A Colorado
B Washington
C Alaska
D California

8. Which of these mountains is NOT the highest peak of its continent?

A Aconcagua
B Denali
C Mount Kilimanjaro
D K2

9. Mont Blanc, on the France-Italy border, is the highest peak in which range?

A The Karakoram
B The Himalayas
C The Andes
D The Alps

10. In which country would you climb Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain?

A Pakistan
B Kenya
C Tanzania
D Nepal

11. Which structure is known as the tallest building in the world?

A Shanghai Tower
B Burj Khalifa
C CN Tower
D Empire State Building

12. The Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, is located in which city?

A Dubai
B Shanghai
C New York
D Toronto

13. How tall is One World Trade Center in New York City?

A 2,717 feet
B 1,776 feet
C 2,073 feet
D 1,815 feet

14. Which skyscraper is known for its unique twisting design?

A Shanghai Tower
B Eiffel Tower
C Burj Khalifa
D One World Trade Center

15. Which skyscraper stands at 2,073 feet tall?

A CN Tower
B One World Trade Center
C Shanghai Tower
D Burj Khalifa

16. Which structure was once the tallest free-standing structure in the world?

A Tokyo Tower
B Oriental Pearl Tower
C Space Needle
D CN Tower

17. Which iconic structure is an iron lattice tower and a cultural symbol of France?

A Shanghai Tower
B CN Tower
C Empire State Building
D Eiffel Tower

18. In what year was the Empire State Building completed?

A 1889
B 1931
C 2010
D 1976

19. Which iconic tower features a revolving restaurant?

A Empire State Building
B Eiffel Tower
C CN Tower
D Shanghai Tower

20. What is the height of the Empire State Building to its roof?

A 1,250 feet
B 1,815 feet
C 1,776 feet
D 1,083 feet

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WATCH The Highest Peaks 0:33 · YouTube
Everest, about 29,032 feet, is the tallest mountain on Earth.

WATCH The Tall Buildings 0:32 · YouTube
Dubai's Burj Khalifa, 2,717 feet, is the world's tallest building.

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Answer key

Lesson 1: Tall Things

1. D 2,717 ft

The Burj Khalifa in Dubai reaches 2,717 feet — the tallest building on Earth since 2010.

2. A Burj Khalifa

The Burj Khalifa (2,717 ft) is about 1.5 times the height of One World Trade Center and roughly two-and-a-half times the Eiffel Tower.

3. C Merdeka 118

Kuala Lumpur's Merdeka 118 (2,227 ft) is second only to the Burj Khalifa.

4. B 1,776 ft

One World Trade Center stands 1,776 feet — the tallest building in the U.S. and the Western Hemisphere. Its height was deliberately chosen to echo 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence.

5. C 2,073 ft

The Shanghai Tower rises 2,073 feet — the third-tallest building in the world.

6. A 1,815 ft

The CN Tower stands 1,815 feet — the world's tallest free-standing structure for 32 years.

7. B CN Tower

8. D 1,250 ft

Measured to its roof, the Empire State Building is 1,250 feet tall.

9. C 1,083 ft

The Eiffel Tower in Paris stands 1,083 feet tall.

10. D CN Tower

At 1,815 ft the CN Tower tops the Empire State Building (1,250), Eiffel Tower (1,083), and Washington Monument (555).

11. A 555 ft

The Washington Monument rises 555 feet — once the tallest structure in the world.

12. B The Great Pyramid of Giza

The Great Pyramid of Giza, originally 481 feet, held the record as Earth's tallest structure for nearly 4,000 years — a longevity no modern building has come close to matching.

13. B 305 ft

Ground to torch, the Statue of Liberty measures 305 feet (the statue alone is 151 ft).

14. D 746 ft

The Golden Gate's towers stand 746 feet; 4,200 ft is the length of the main span, not its height.

15. A 630 ft

The Gateway Arch is 630 feet tall — and 630 feet wide at its base.

16. C 726 ft

The Hoover Dam is 726 feet tall. 746 ft is the Golden Gate Bridge's towers, 630 ft the Gateway Arch and 555 ft the Washington Monument.

17. C 29,032 ft

Everest's summit is 29,032 feet above sea level — the highest point on Earth.

18. B K2

K2 (28,251 ft) is the world's second-highest peak, just behind Everest.

19. D North America

Denali (20,310 ft) in Alaska is North America's highest peak.

20. A Mount Kilimanjaro

Kilimanjaro (19,341 ft) in Tanzania is Africa's highest peak and the highest free-standing mountain above sea level. Mount Kenya, Mount Stanley and Mount Meru are lower African peaks.

21. B The Alps

Mont Blanc (roughly 15,770 ft) is the highest summit in the Alps.

22. A The height of a point above sea level

Elevation is height above sea level — which is why a mountain's elevation differs from its base-to-peak height.

23. D 13,803 ft

Above sea level Mauna Kea is only 13,803 ft, but from its ocean-floor base it rises about 33,500 ft — taller than Everest.

24. C Mauna Kea

Mauna Kea rises only 13,803 feet above sea level, but from its base on the ocean floor it stands about 33,500 feet — taller than Everest. It simply hides most of its height underwater.

25. A Mount Whitney

Mount Whitney (14,505 ft) is the highest in the lower 48; Denali is higher but sits in Alaska.

26. C Mount Everest

By elevation Everest (29,032 ft) is highest, ahead of K2 (28,251 ft); Mauna Kea only exceeds it when measured from its ocean-floor base.

Lesson 2: Planet Earth

1. C Nile

The Nile, at about 4,130 miles, usually takes the title. The Amazon is slightly shorter but carries far more water.

2. D 4,130 miles

The Nile runs about 4,130 miles. The Amazon (~3,980 mi) and Mississippi–Missouri (~3,710 mi) are shorter.

3. B 3,710 miles

By the commonly cited figure, the Mississippi–Missouri system runs about 3,710 miles, shorter than the Nile (~4,130 mi) and the Amazon (~3,980 mi).

4. A 3,212 feet

Angel Falls drops 3,212 feet — so high the water mists away in the dry season. 187 feet is Niagara's Horseshoe Falls.

5. C Its enormous volume of water

Niagara's Horseshoe Falls drops only about 187 feet — its power comes from the huge volume of water, not its height.

6. D Pacific Ocean

7. B 35,876 feet

Challenger Deep reaches about 35,876 feet — deeper than Everest is tall. 13,000 ft is the Pacific's average depth.

8. A Lake Baikal

Siberia's Lake Baikal reaches 5,387 feet and holds about a fifth of Earth's unfrozen fresh water.

9. A 13,000 feet

The Pacific averages about 13,000 feet deep. 35,876 ft is the Mariana Trench's deepest point, not the average.

10. D Mount Everest

At about 35,876 feet, Challenger Deep is deeper than Mount Everest (~29,032 ft) is tall.

11. B Amazon River

The Amazon is just behind the Nile in length but carries vastly more water than any other river.

12. C Angel Falls

Angel Falls in Venezuela drops 3,212 feet — so high the water mists away in the dry season.

13. D Lake Baikal

Lake Baikal, the deepest lake, holds roughly a fifth of the world's unfrozen fresh water.

14. B Venezuela

Angel Falls, the tallest waterfall on Earth at 3,212 feet, is in Venezuela.

15. A Siberia

Lake Baikal is in Siberia, reaching 5,387 feet — the deepest lake on Earth.

16. C Eleven

Russia's roughly 6.6 million square miles stretch across eleven time zones. For scale, even one US state — Alaska, at about 663,000 square miles — is larger than most countries.

17. D 6,000 feet

The Grand Canyon is about 6,000 feet — roughly a mile — from rim to river, carved by the Colorado.

18. C 13,171 miles

The Great Wall runs about 13,171 miles — more than half the planet's circumference (24,901 mi).

19. A The Dead Sea

The Dead Sea's surface is about 1,440 feet below sea level — the lowest land on Earth. The Mariana Trench is ocean, not land.

20. B Alaska

Alaska covers about 663,000 square miles, the largest US state and bigger than most countries.

21. A 24,901 miles

The equatorial circumference is 24,901 miles — the distance to go all the way around the planet.

22. D 9,537 miles

The New York–Singapore nonstop covers about 9,537 miles in some 18 hours — the longest commercial flight.

23. C 21 miles

The English Channel is only about 21 miles wide at Dover — close enough that strong swimmers cross it.

24. B 195

There are about 195 countries — a number that feels small for a planet of eight billion people.

25. C 2,448 miles

Route 66 stretched about 2,448 miles from Chicago to Santa Monica across eight states.

Lesson 3: People and Places

1. B Tokyo

Greater Tokyo, at about 37 million, is the largest of these metro areas — well ahead of Cairo, Mumbai and São Paulo.

2. A 37 million

Greater Tokyo holds about 37 million people on the long-standing UN estimate — more than the entire population of Australia.

3. D About 2 times

37M ÷ 22M ≈ 1.7, roughly double São Paulo's metro population — Tokyo still leads by a wide margin.

4. C London

London's urban area holds about 9.5 million, comfortably under the line, and even its wider metro region is below 20 million. Tokyo (~37M), Cairo (~21.8M) and Mumbai (~20.4M) all top 20 million.

5. D Tokyo

Greater Tokyo, at about 37 million people, is the largest of these four, well ahead of Cairo, Mumbai and São Paulo.

6. B 9.5 million

London has about 9.5 million — large for the West, but far below true giants like Tokyo (~37M).

7. A 5.3 million

Sydney has around 5.3 million people, smaller than London and New York City.

8. C London's urban area

London's urban area (~9.5M) leads New York City proper (~8.3M), Greater Sydney (~5.3M) and Paris city proper (~2M). Greater London (~8.9M) still edges New York City proper, but on metro-area measures New York is far bigger.

9. B Paris city proper

Paris city proper has only about 2 million, below Greater Sydney (~5.3M), New York City proper (~8.3M) and London's urban area (~9.5M). Measured like-for-like, Paris is not small: its metro area holds about 13 million.

10. C About 4 times

37M ÷ 9.5M ≈ 4, showing how Western capitals trail Asia's true giants.

11. A Tokyo

Greater Tokyo has about 37 million people on the long-standing UN estimates (the UN's 2025 method puts it nearer 33 million, behind Jakarta and Dhaka).

12. D São Paulo

São Paulo's city proper is home to about 12 million people — more than the city-proper populations of Buenos Aires, Bogotá, or Lima.

13. B London

London has about 9.5 million. Paris proper (about 2 million), Madrid and Berlin are each well below that.

14. D New York City

New York City proper has about 8.3 million residents — the largest US city. Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston are each smaller.

15. A Sydney

Sydney has around 5.3 million people — Australia's largest city. Brisbane, Perth, and Adelaide are each much smaller.

16. C 1804

World population reached its first billion around 1804 after all of prior human history; going from 7 to 8 billion, reached in 2022, took only about a dozen years, and it stands near 8.3 billion as of 2026.

17. D India

India, at about 1.43 billion, recently overtook China (~1.41B) as the most populous country.

18. C United States

The US is third at ~348 million — less than a quarter of either India or China.

19. A 8.3 billion

World population stands at roughly 8.3 billion as of 2026; going from 7 to 8 billion, reached in 2022, took about a dozen years.

20. B 1.43 billion

India has about 1.43 billion people, just ahead of China's ~1.41 billion.

21. B The total number of people living in a place

Population is the total number of people living in a place — not its area, cities, or households.

22. C China

India passed China as its population kept growing while China's began to shrink; each is above 1.4 billion.

23. D 1.4 billion

India (~1.43B) and China (~1.41B) are both close to 1.4 billion people.

24. A Less than a quarter

At ~348M versus ~1.43B, the US is less than a quarter of India — a distant third.

25. C Nearly double

India alone (~1.43B) nearly doubles Europe's ~745 million, in a fraction of the land area.

Lesson 4: Space and Astronomy

1. A Three days

The Moon is about 238,855 miles away — far enough that Apollo astronauts needed three days to reach it, yet close enough that its reflected light returns to Earth in just over a second.

2. C 238,855 miles

The Moon sits about 238,855 miles away. 93 million miles is the distance to the Sun and 34 million is Mars at closest approach; 7,918 miles is Earth's diameter.

3. B One astronomical unit (AU)

The Earth-Sun distance of about 93 million miles is defined as one astronomical unit (AU), the solar system's yardstick. A light-year is far larger (5.88 trillion miles).

4. D 34 million miles

Mars at closest approach is about 34 million miles away — still far enough that a crewed round-trip takes years. 93 million is the Sun; 238,855 the Moon; 5.88 trillion miles is roughly a light-year, vastly farther still.

5. C The space station is 2,500 miles up

The International Space Station (ISS) orbits only about 250 miles up, not 2,500. Earth's diameter (7,918 miles) and the Moon's distance (238,855 miles) are stated correctly.

6. B The distance light travels in one year

Despite the word 'year,' a light-year is a distance — how far light travels in one year, about 5.88 trillion miles. It is not a unit of time or brightness.

7. A About 5.88 trillion miles

Light covers about 5.88 trillion miles (9.46 trillion km) in a year. 93 million miles is one astronomical unit (AU) and 186,000 miles is how far light goes in a single second.

8. D About four light-years

The nearest star beyond the Sun is a bit over four light-years away — trillions of miles. An astronomical unit (Earth-Sun distance) would be far too small a yardstick.

9. C The Moon

The Moon is about 238,855 miles away, a three-day Apollo journey. Mars and the Sun are millions of miles off, while the International Space Station (ISS) orbits just 250 miles up.

10. D Mars

Mars comes within about 34 million miles at closest approach, making a round-trip mission take years. This closest-approach distance belongs to Mars, not Jupiter, Saturn, or Venus.

11. B 864,000 miles

The Sun spans about 864,000 miles — big enough to hold over a million Earths. 86,900 miles is Jupiter's diameter and 7,918 miles is Earth's.

12. A 86,900 miles

Jupiter spans about 86,900 miles. 864,000 miles is the far larger Sun, 7,918 miles is Earth, and 238,855 miles is the Earth-Moon distance.

13. C 186,000 miles per second

Light moves about 186,000 miles per second — fast enough to circle Earth seven times in a second. 17,500 mph is the orbital speed of the International Space Station (ISS), far slower.

14. D 13.8 billion years

The universe is about 13.8 billion years old. 4.5 billion is closer to Earth's age; 1.38 billion and 138 billion misplace the decimal by a factor of ten.

15. B 8

The solar system has 8 planets orbiting one ordinary star. The count was 9 before Pluto was reclassified as a dwarf planet in 2006.

16. A Sun

The Sun spans about 864,000 miles across, roughly ten times the diameter of Jupiter (about 86,900 miles), the largest planet. Earth (7,918 miles) and Mars are far smaller still.

17. C Seven times

Light travels about 186,000 miles per second, fast enough to circle the Earth seven times in a single second.

18. D International Space Station

19. B 17,500 miles per hour

The ISS races around Earth at about 17,500 mph. 250 is its altitude in miles, not its speed, and 186,000 miles per second is the speed of light.

20. A About 90 minutes

The ISS circles Earth roughly every 90 minutes. The 45-minute figure is the gap between sunrises and sunsets — half an orbit — not a full loop.

21. C Every 45 minutes

Because a full orbit takes about 90 minutes, astronauts see a sunrise or sunset about every 45 minutes — roughly 16 of each per day.

22. A About 16

Orbiting every 90 minutes, the ISS crew sees about 16 sunrises (and 16 sunsets) each day — one roughly every 45 minutes.

23. D More than a million

The Sun spans about 864,000 miles across — big enough that more than a million Earths would fit inside it.

24. B Earth, Jupiter, Sun

Earth is about 7,918 miles across, Jupiter about 86,900, and the Sun about 864,000 — each roughly ten times the last.

25. B Earth is larger than Jupiter

Jupiter spans about 86,900 miles across, dwarfing Earth's 7,918 miles -- Earth is far smaller than Jupiter, not larger.

26. A The Sun

The Sun, about 864,000 miles across, dwarfs everything else — over a million Earths would fit inside. Jupiter is the largest planet but far smaller than the Sun.

27. C Jupiter

Jupiter is the largest planet at about 86,900 miles across. Saturn, Neptune, and Earth are all smaller; the Sun is larger still but is a star, not a planet.

Lesson 5: Money and the Economy

1. B 2026

2. D $38.9 trillion

The US national debt reached roughly $38.9 trillion. $30.8T is US gross domestic product (GDP), $7.0T is the federal budget, and $110T is world GDP.

3. A $110 trillion

World GDP is about $110 trillion, with the US (about $30.8T) making up more than a quarter of it.

4. C $7.0 trillion

US federal budget outlays run about $7.0 trillion a year. $30.8T is total US gross domestic product (GDP) and $110T is world GDP.

5. A World GDP

World GDP (~$110T) dwarfs the others: US debt ~$38.9T, US GDP ~$30.8T, and the federal budget ~$7.0T.

6. D Gross domestic product

GDP stands for gross domestic product — the total value of goods and services a country produces in a year.

7. C The total value of goods and services a country produces in a year

GDP is the total value of goods and services a country produces in a year — a measure of output, not debt or wealth.

8. B One year

GDP measures the value of goods and services produced in a year — an annual figure.

9. B A country's accumulated national debt

GDP measures a year's output of goods and services. Accumulated national debt is a separate figure that builds up over many years.

10. D The value of its yearly output

GDP is the total value of the goods and services a country produces in a year, so a rising GDP means more output. Debt, population and land area are separate measures.

11. C Nvidia

Nvidia is the most valuable public company, the first ever to cross $5 trillion, driven by demand for AI chips.

12. A $5.2 trillion

Nvidia is worth about $5.2 trillion — the first company ever to cross $5 trillion. $800B is Elon Musk's net worth.

13. A $800 billion

Elon Musk's net worth is around $800 billion. $5.2T is Nvidia's value; it would take over 1,000 billionaires to equal a trillion.

14. D $400,000

The median existing US home sold for about $407,600 in 2024, a figure that feels almost quaint next to trillion-dollar economic numbers.

15. C $13 billion

A Ford-class carrier costs about $13 billion — one of the most expensive machines ever built, yet less than two and a half days of new national borrowing.

16. B $5.2 trillion

Nvidia's market value hit about $5.2 trillion in 2026, the first company ever to cross $5 trillion.

17. B $5 trillion

Nvidia's roughly $5.2 trillion valuation made it the first company to pass the $5 trillion mark.

18. C $800 billion

Musk's net worth reached around $800 billion in 2026, the largest personal fortune on Earth.

19. D the GDP of most nations

Musk's net worth exceeds the annual GDP of most countries in the world.

20. A GDP

GDP measures a year's output. National debt is a cumulative total, while net worth and market cap apply to people or companies.

21. D It exceeds a full year of output

US debt (~$38.9T) now exceeds a full year of US GDP (~$30.8T).

22. B The government's annual spending

The federal budget (~$7.0T) is annual spending — distinct from the accumulated national debt (~$38.9T) and from gross domestic product (GDP, ~$30.8T).

23. C An accumulated total built up over many years

National debt is a cumulative total that has built up over many years, whereas GDP measures output in a single year.

24. A The median price of a home

GDP, the federal budget, and national debt are national economic aggregates. A median home price is an everyday cost, not an aggregate.

25. C Debt accumulates over time; GDP is one year's output

National debt is money owed built up over years, while GDP measures the value produced in a single year.

26. B Debt was about 1.3 times GDP

By mid-2026 the roughly $38.9 trillion debt had grown larger than the $30.8 trillion annual GDP.

Lesson 6: USA by the Numbers

1. C 1929

2. B 100

The Senate has 100 members — two from each of the 50 states. 435 is the House, and 538 is the total Electoral College.

3. D The House of Representatives

The House of Representatives has 435 voting members, permanently capped by the Reapportionment Act of 1929. The Senate has 100, and the Electoral College has 538.

4. A 270

A candidate needs 270 electoral votes — a majority of the 538 total. 538 is the total, not the threshold to win.

5. A 538

There are 538 total electoral votes, so 270 is a bare majority. 435 is the size of the House, not the Electoral College.

6. C 47

As of 2026 the count of numbered presidencies is 47, though only 45 people have held the office, because Grover Cleveland and Donald Trump each served non-consecutive terms.

7. B 4

A presidential term is 4 years. 2 is a House term, 6 is a Senate term, and 8 is two full terms, the most a president can be elected to.

8. D 1788

The Constitution was ratified in 1788, when New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify it (June 21, 1788), meeting Article VII's nine-state threshold. Government under it began in 1789; 1787 is when it was drafted and signed; 1776 is the Declaration of Independence.

9. D 27

There are 27 amendments; the first ten are the Bill of Rights. 10 counts only the Bill of Rights, not the total.

10. C Donald Trump

Donald Trump holds the 45th and 47th slots — a quirk of non-consecutive terms shared only with Grover Cleveland, who did it earlier.

11. B The Electoral College

The Electoral College casts 538 votes, with 270 needed to win. The Senate and House are legislative bodies, not the election-deciding institution.

12. A The Senate

The Senate seats two per state (100 total). The House is apportioned by population, not equally by state.

13. D The US Constitution

The US Constitution, ratified 1788, is the oldest written national constitution still in use. The Bill of Rights is its first ten amendments, not the whole document.

14. B The House of Representatives

The House of Representatives has 435 population-apportioned seats. The Senate has 100 seated equally by state; the House of Lords is British.

15. C The National Park System

The House and Senate make federal laws and the Supreme Court heads the judicial branch, so all three govern. The National Park System is the collection of protected sites managed by the National Park Service, not a governing body.

16. A The original thirteen colonies

The flag records the nation's growth in two layers: 50 stars for the current states, and 13 stripes, one for each original colony that declared independence. Apart from the 15-stripe flag of 1795 to 1818, the stripes stayed fixed while the stars multiplied.

17. D 50

There are 50 states, reached in 1959 when Alaska and Hawai'i joined. 13 is the number of original colonies, shown by the stripes.

18. C 50

There are 50 stars, one per current state. The 13 stripes represent the original colonies, and 64 is the number of national parks.

19. A 13

There are 13 stripes, one per original colony. Apart from the 15-stripe flag of 1795 to 1818, they have stayed fixed while the stars grew to 50, one per state.

20. B 64

There are 64 national parks — crown jewels like Yellowstone and Yosemite — among hundreds of other protected sites. 433 counts all National Park Service (NPS) units, not just parks.

21. D 50

The US has 50 states, a number reached in 1959 when Alaska and Hawai'i joined.

22. B Alaska and Hawai'i joining in 1959

Alaska and Hawai'i became states in 1959, bringing the total to the current 50.

23. A One of the original thirteen colonies

Each of the 13 stripes stands for one of the original colonies that declared independence.

24. C The founding colonies, while stars track current states

Apart from the 15-stripe flag of 1795 to 1818, the 13 stripes have stayed fixed for the original colonies, while the stars have grown with each new state to 50.

25. A 18

You can vote at 18, lowered from 21 by the 26th Amendment. 21 was the old threshold before that amendment.

26. D 35

You must be at least 35 to be president — one of just three constitutional qualifications for the office.

27. C The 26th Amendment

The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18. The 19th Amendment gave women the vote — a different reform.

28. B 21

The voting age was 21 before the 26th Amendment lowered it to 18. 18 is the current age, not the former one.

29. A 17

The presidential minimum age is 35 and the voting age is 18, a gap of 17 years. Both are constitutional age thresholds.

Lesson 7: Records and the Human Body

1. B About 300

The commonly cited trivia figure is about 300 bones at birth (some anatomical references instead cite roughly 270); either way, many separate bones — especially in the skull — fuse together as the body grows, leaving the average adult with 206.

2. D 206

An adult body has 206 bones. A baby is born with around 300, many of which fuse together as the body grows, leaving 206 in adulthood.

3. C 100,000

The heart beats roughly 100,000 times a day with no scheduled maintenance break. 10,000 would be far too slow and 1,000,000 far too fast for a human pulse.

4. A 3 billion

At ~100,000 beats a day across 80 years, the total is close to 3 billion beats. 300 million would cover only a few years, not a lifetime.

5. D About 94

Using the commonly cited newborn count of about 300, 300 minus 206 leaves about 94 bones that fuse away over time (some anatomical references instead put the newborn count closer to 270). The other options misjudge the difference between the two counts.

6. B 65 miles per hour

The cheetah reaches roughly 60 to 65 mph in short bursts, making it the fastest land animal. 50 undershoots and 90-120 exceed any land animal's real speed.

7. C Cheetah

The cheetah is the fastest land animal at roughly 60 to 65 mph. Pronghorns, lions, and greyhounds are quick but none reach the cheetah's peak speed.

8. A 200 tons

A blue whale can weigh up to about 200 tons, heavier than the biggest dinosaurs. 50 or 100 tons undershoots and 500 tons is unrealistically high.

9. B Blue whale

The blue whale is the largest animal ever, outweighing the biggest dinosaurs like Argentinosaurus. Elephants and squid are far smaller.

10. A About 400 pounds

The heaviest blue whale heart measured came to roughly 400 pounds, the largest known in any animal, yet far smaller than the often-repeated claim that it is the size of a small car.

11. D 1,090 feet

The deepest scuba dive reached about 1,090 feet, requiring years of planning and hours of ascent. 702 feet is the free-dive record, not the scuba record.

12. C 702 feet

The no-limits free-dive record is about 702 feet on a weighted sled. 1,090 feet is the deepest scuba dive, which uses a breathing apparatus.

13. D 134°F

The World Meteorological Organization's official record is 134°F, measured in Death Valley, California, in 1913, though some meteorologists dispute that reading. 108°F and 120°F are too low, and 150°F is too high.

14. C Death Valley, California

The 134°F record was measured in Death Valley, California, in 1913. The World Meteorological Organization still recognizes it, though some meteorologists dispute it. The Sahara, Dubai and the Lut Desert did not set this record.

15. B 27.8 miles per hour

Bolt hit about 27.8 mph for a few strides, the fastest a human has run under their own power. The other values under- or over-state his peak sprint speed.

16. A The distance from one wingtip to the other

Wingspan is the distance from one wingtip to the other. It measures side-to-side reach across the outstretched wings, not body length, height, or feather count.

17. C The tips of its two fully outstretched wings

Wingspan is defined as the distance from one wingtip to the other with the wings fully outstretched, not body length, height, or width.

18. D From one wingtip to the other, wings spread

Wingspan is measured in a straight line from one wingtip to the other with the wings fully outstretched, not along the body or height.

19. A It includes the bird's total body weight

A wingspan is a straight-line, wingtip-to-wingtip measurement of the fully outstretched wings; body weight plays no part in that definition.

20. B Wingspan

Tip-to-tip distance across the wings is the wingspan. Body length runs beak to tail, height is a standing measure, and tail span refers only to the tail.

Lesson 8: Quick Recall

1. C The Mariana Trench is deeper than Mount Everest is tall

Everest rises about 29,032 ft, but the Mariana Trench plunges to roughly 35,900 ft. So the ocean's deepest point is actually deeper than the highest mountain is tall.

2. B Mount Everest

Mount Everest is the tallest mountain above sea level at 29,032 ft. K2, Denali, and Kilimanjaro are all famous peaks but none reaches Everest's height.

3. D The Mariana Trench

The Mariana Trench plunges to roughly 35,900 ft, the deepest point in any ocean. The Tonga Trench is the runner-up at about 35,400 ft; the Puerto Rico and Java trenches are much shallower.

4. A The Nile

The Nile, about 4,130 miles, is traditionally regarded as the longest river. The Amazon, Yangtze, and Mississippi are major rivers but shorter by this measure.

5. D Tallest building — the Eiffel Tower

The tallest building is the Burj Khalifa at 2,717 ft, not the Eiffel Tower. The other three pairings are all correct.

6. C Mount Everest

Mount Everest, at 29,032 feet, is the tallest mountain above sea level.

7. B 29,032 ft

Everest stands about 29,032 feet tall, the highest point on Earth's surface.

8. A Mariana Trench

The Mariana Trench is the ocean's deepest known point, at about 35,900 feet.

9. B 35,900 ft

The Mariana Trench plunges to roughly 35,900 feet, deeper than Everest is tall.

10. D Burj Khalifa

The Burj Khalifa, at 2,717 feet, is the tallest building in the world.

11. A Russia

Russia is the largest country by area at roughly 6.6 million sq mi. Canada, China, and the US are large but all smaller.

12. C India

India is now the most populous country at about 1.43 billion people, having passed China. The US and Indonesia are far behind.

13. C 47

Official numbering reaches 47 because Grover Cleveland (22nd and 24th) and Donald Trump (45th and 47th) are each counted twice for non-consecutive terms; only 45 different people have served.

14. B Presidents who served non-consecutive terms are counted twice

Presidents with non-consecutive terms are numbered twice: Grover Cleveland (22nd and 24th) and Donald Trump (45th and 47th). That is why the numbering reaches 47 while only 45 people have served.

15. A Most populous country: China

By the United Nations' 2023 estimate, India, not China, is the most populous country, with about 1.43 billion people. The other three pairings are correct. Grover Cleveland and Donald Trump are each counted twice, so 45 people have held 47 presidencies through 2026.

16. D The Sun

The Sun is the closest star to Earth, about 93 million miles away. Proxima Centauri is the next-nearest but light-years off.

17. A The cheetah

The cheetah is the fastest land animal at roughly 60 to 65 mph. The pronghorn, lion, and greyhound are fast but slower.

18. D Nvidia

Nvidia is the most valuable public company at about $5.2 trillion, driven by chips powering the AI boom. Apple and Microsoft trail it.

19. B Chips powering the AI boom

Nvidia became the most valuable public company on the strength of the chips powering the AI boom, not crypto-mining hardware, smartphone processors or routers.

20. C Most valuable company — Apple

The most valuable public company is Nvidia at about $5.2 trillion, not Apple. The Sun and cheetah pairings are both correct.

Lesson 9: Key Concepts

1. A Mount Everest

Mount Everest in the Himalayas is the tallest mountain above sea level, at about 29,032 ft. K2 is second-highest, and Aconcagua and Denali are far shorter.

2. B The Karakoram

K2 (about 28,251 ft) is in the Karakoram range on the Pakistan-China border. Everest is in the Himalayas, Aconcagua in the Andes, and Mont Blanc in the Alps.

3. C 29,032 feet

Everest stands at about 29,032 ft. 28,251 ft is K2, 22,838 ft is Aconcagua, and 20,310 ft is Denali.

4. D Aconcagua

Aconcagua (about 22,838 ft) in the Andes is South America's highest peak. Denali is highest in North America, K2 is in the Karakoram, and Mont Blanc is in the Alps.

5. A K2

K2, in the Karakoram range, is the world's second-highest mountain at about 28,251 ft, just behind Everest.

6. B Mount Kilimanjaro

Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania (about 19,341 ft) is Africa's highest mountain. Denali is highest in North America, Aconcagua in South America, and Mont Blanc in the Alps.

7. C Alaska

Denali (about 20,310 ft) is in Alaska and is North America's highest peak. Its official federal name has been Mount McKinley again since 2025, after Denali became the federal name in 2015.

8. D K2

Denali (North America), Aconcagua (South America), and Kilimanjaro (Africa) are each their continent's highest peak. K2 is the world's second-highest mountain but not a continental high point — Everest is Asia's highest.

9. D The Alps

Mont Blanc (roughly 15,770 ft) is the highest peak in the Alps. The Andes, Himalayas, and Karakoram host other record peaks.

10. C Tanzania

Kilimanjaro (about 19,341 ft) is in Tanzania and is Africa's highest mountain, a popular trekking destination.

11. B Burj Khalifa

The Burj Khalifa in Dubai (2,717 ft) is the world's tallest building. Shanghai Tower is 2,073 ft, and the others are shorter.

12. A Dubai

The Burj Khalifa is in Dubai and was completed in 2010. Shanghai, New York, and Toronto host other notable towers.

13. B 1,776 feet

One World Trade Center stands at 1,776 ft — a symbolic nod to 1776. 2,717 ft is the Burj Khalifa, 2,073 ft the Shanghai Tower, 1,815 ft the CN Tower.

14. A Shanghai Tower

The Shanghai Tower (2,073 ft) in China features a distinctive twisting design. The others have different signature forms.

15. C Shanghai Tower

The Shanghai Tower reaches 2,073 ft. The Burj Khalifa is 2,717 ft, One World Trade Center is 1,776 ft, and the CN Tower is 1,815 ft.

16. D CN Tower

Toronto's CN Tower (1,815 ft, with a revolving restaurant) once held the record as the world's tallest free-standing structure. The Burj Khalifa is now the tallest building overall.

17. D Eiffel Tower

The Eiffel Tower (1,083 ft) in Paris is an iron lattice tower and global icon of France, completed in 1889 for the World's Fair.

18. B 1931

The Empire State Building was completed in 1931. 1889 is the Eiffel Tower and 2010 is the Burj Khalifa.

19. C CN Tower

Toronto's CN Tower (1,815 ft) features a revolving restaurant and once was the world's tallest free-standing structure.

20. A 1,250 feet

The Empire State Building rises 1,250 ft to its roof. 1,083 ft is the Eiffel Tower, 1,815 ft the CN Tower, and 1,776 ft One World Trade Center.

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