

How to count using your fingers

Roy Lisker August 27, 2012

(Most of this article is written in a simple phonetic alphabet of the author's invention. Like the counting method itself, one quickly gets the hang of it.)

How too kownt' , yooz'yng yor fyn'gerz

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Dispait' ev'rythyng thaet you haav learnd' aat hom, in skool, frum ka'mik boukz, newz'payperz, djern'ilz, relid'jgis aend sai'enti'fik uthar'ityz, aend studies uv the ayt'shent teksts:

It iz aksh'wely mutsh y'zyÿer too kownt up too 1000 (aend byÿand') awn wun'z fyngerz ,bai mai' me'thid, thaen it iz too kownt too ten bai thy staen'derd me'thids.

I shoud'int ry'ly say thaet it iz *mai* me'thid : it iz thy meth'id thaet Nayt'sher bistowd' upan' us frum thy begin'ingz uv ower spy'shyz. Pan'gloss telz uz in "Candide" that this iz thy best

uv awl pa'sibil werlds ; too witsch Dar'win aa'dz thy kar'ilery, thaet thayr ar no bai'olod'jikel ba'dily aat'ribyootz withowt ay ryz'in for egzis'tens! Aend so it iz with ower fingerz!

Muth'er Naytsher wunt'ed too mayk it yz'yjir for us too mayk muzik!

Imaad'jin thy pry-ha'minid ayps uv sev'ril mil'yin yyerz ego', swing'yng frum thy try-taps , aend mon'yng: "Wut Ai woud giv to be ay'bil too play ay myooz'ikil ins'triment!"

Mu'ther Nayt'sher wuz dyply moovd' bai this kumplaynt, aend set to werk fiks'yng up the munky's me'tikar'pilz , so thaet thy nekst spy'shyz uv prai'mayts, naym'ly us, koud play flootz' , harpz', vai'olinz , ky'bordz and uther melo'dyus gad'jetz with yz! Aend thyz saym me'takar'pilz kaen by yooz'd too kownt num'berz!

Myoozik aend Maeth, thy awld kunun'drum!

How duz it werk?

Okay':

Eray'ndj both haendz awn ay harizan'til lain. Let them huver klos too, yet ebu'v' thy le'vel surf'is uv ay tay'bil. Thu hayndz' shoud by so klos too thu taybil, thaet it iz pas'ibil too lo'wer ytsh finger too tutsh the ser'fis, withowt dister'byng the utherz.

Now : For ytsh uv thu fin'gerz , thy "up" pozi'shin iz "0" ; thy "down" pozi'shin (tutsh'yng thu tay'bil) iz "1". Ytsh fin'ger reprzyents' thy eks'ponint uv ay pow'er uv 2. Frum left too rait, thy fingerz ar "playz'holderz" for 1, 2, 4, 8, 16 (Left Haend) 32, 64, 128, 256, 512 (Rait Haend).

That's rait: this is *kownting in bai'nary erith'mitik*, aend it goz very kwik'ly:

Left li'dil finger *down* (awl uth'ers rayzd) iz "1"

Nekst edjay'sint finger *down* (awl uth'ers rayzd) is "2"

Left li'dil aend adjay'sent fingers *down* (awl uth'ers rayzd) iz "3"

Left mi'dil finger *down* (awl uth'ers rayzd) is "4"

Left mi'dil and left li'dil fingerz *down* iz "5"

Left mi'dil aend 4th finger (bytwyn' mi'dil aend li'dil) *down*
 iz "6"

Awl 3 left-most fingerz *down* iz "7", (aend so awn. Tayk ay
 rest aet 32!)

Let thy leterz "D" and "U" staend for "up" and "down",
 respek'tivly. With awl the fyn'gerz *up* , thy erayndj'mint louks laik
 this:

UUUUU UUUUU

Thy ferst duz'in num'berz ar:

DUUUU UUUUU "1"

UDUUU UUUUU "2"

DDUUU UUUUU "3"

UUDUU UUUUU "4"

DUDUU UUUUU "5"

UDDUU UUUUU "6"

DDDUU UUUUU "7"

UUUDU UUUUU "8"

DUUDU UUUUU "9"

UDUDU UUUUU "10"

DDUDU UUUUU "11"

UUDDU UUUUU "12"

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Traanzish'in Roolz:

"If ,for the num'ber N, thy left'most finger is *up* (N even),
then it kumz *down* for N+1"

"If , for the num'ber N, thy ferst k fingerz ar *down* , then for
N+1, lift awl k fingerz *up*, and lower the k+1st finger to *down* ".

Egzaem'pilz:

(a) "31" traenz'layts aaz DDDDD UUUUU

(b) "32" bykomz UUUUU DUUUU (thum awn rait haend
down)

(c) (Traenz'ishun rool 1) : "24" trans'laytz in'too

UUUDD UUUUU . Too get too "25", djust lo'wer thy ferst
finger: DUUDD UUUUU

(d)(Traenz'ishun rool 2): "23" traenz'laytz into :

DDDUD UUUUU .(k = 3, N = 23) . Too get too "24", lower
the ferst 3 fingerz aend lift thy forth: UUUDD UUUUU

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Eny'wun hoo duz'int no wut'z go'wyg awn' bai now, iz
saad'ly kers'd with laif-lawng inoo'merisy!!

With a little practice one is soon clipping along all the way to
512 without being tired or bored. Determined souls can go all the
way to 1023: this takes about 5 minutes without rushing or
dawdling . Despite 5000 years of civilization, the world continues
to await the exposure of the obvious. It makes some of us feel a
little better, given the proliferation of prophets of doom in our own
times.