

## 对于数字的恐惧 The fear of numbers

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Sam.

大家好。这里是 BBC 学习英语栏目的六分钟英语。我是萨姆。

And I'm Neil.

我是内尔。

Neil, would you describe yourself as 'a numbers person'?

内尔，你会把自己描述成一个“数字人”吗？

If you mean, am I someone who understands numbers and is good at using them and interpreting data, then no!

如果你指的是我是否是很了解数字并且很擅长使用它们并解读数据的人，那么我不是！

OK. So, maybe like me, you weren't good at maths at school?

好的。所以也许跟我一样，你上学的时候不擅长数学？

No, I wasn't.

是的，我不擅长。

Algebra, geometry, times tables - it was all very confusing.

代数、几何、乘法口诀表 —— 这些都令人困惑。

We're not alone, Neil.

我们并不孤单，内尔。

But the fear of numbers might just be in our heads and we might have enough number knowledge to get by with.

但是对于数字的恐惧可能就只是在我们的脑海里，而且我们也许拥有足够的数字知识来应付。

That's what we'll be exploring in this programme while looking at some relevant vocabulary.

这就是我们今天在节目中要探索的内容，同时还要学习一些相关词汇。

But, sorry, Neil, I'm going to start with a maths question!

但是，对不起，内尔，我要先从一个数学题开始！

It's thought the largest number in the world is called a googol.

人们认为是世界上最大的数字叫做大数。

It's written with a 1 and how many zeros?

它被写作一个 1 和几个零呢？

Is it a) A hundred zeros, b) A thousand zeros, or c) Ten thousand zeros?

是 A. 100 个零，B. 1000 个零，还是 C. 10000 个零？

I'll guess ten thousand zeros.

我要猜 10000 个零。

OK.

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好的。

I'll reveal the answer later on.

我稍后揭晓答案。

But let's talk more about the fear of numbers now.

但是我们现在再来谈一谈对于数字的恐惧。

Of course, numbers are important in our lives but one bad experience at school can put us off them for life.

当然，数字在我们的生活中很重要，但是在学校的一次糟糕经历可能会让我们一生都厌恶。

'Put off' means make someone dislike something.

厌恶的意思是让某人讨厌某事。

What put me off maths was it was not only complicated but very theoretical - and not very practical - useful for real-life situations.

数学让我厌恶的地方是它不仅复杂而且很理论性 —— 而且很不实用 —— 对于真实生活场景来说很有用。

And the problem now is, it's easy to be fooled by fancy figures that we get told about.

而现在的问题是，很容易被别人告诉我们的异常复杂的数据愚弄。

This is something The Why Factor programme on BBC World Service has been exploring.

这是 BBC 世界服务节目《The Why Factor》一直在探索的内容。

They spoke to Charles Seife, who's an author and professor at New York University, who explained why we are at the mercy of people who throw numbers at us.

他们对话了 Charles Seife，他是一位作家兼纽约大学的教授，她解释了我们任由那些把数字扔给我们的人摆布的原因。

Because we are primed not to question numbers, certain people have learned that numbers are perhaps the most powerful tools for deception...advertisers, marketers, politicians, who try to convince the public through spurious oratory - have learned that the one thing they can't get challenged on is numbers or that challenge is ineffective.

因为我们被事先指点不要质疑数字，某些人已经学到了数字也许是最有利的骗人工具.....广告商、行销者、政客，他们想要通过虚假的讲演术使公众信服 —— 他们已经学会了他们说出的数字不会被质疑，或者质疑是无效的。

Interesting words from Charles Seife there.

Charles Seife 说了一些有趣的话。

He explains that numbers might be a powerful tool for deceiving people.

他解释说数字可能是骗子的有力工具。

Many of us are primed - so, told to behave in a certain situation and in a certain way - not to question numbers, accept them as fact.

我们很多人都被事先指点 —— 也就是说被告知在某种场景中以某种方式行事 —— 不要质疑数字，把它们当做事实接受。

Yes, and this is dangerous.

是的，而且这很危险。

So, when politicians, for example, do good and effective public speaking, known as oratory, the information they give could be spurious - that means false, not correct or inaccurate.

所以例如当政客们进行有效的公众演讲时，即所谓的讲演术，他们给出的信息可能是虚假的——这意味着是假的，不正确或不准确的。

But numbers are more persuasive - they make you believe something is true.

但是数字更具有说服力——它们让你相信某事是真的。

So, unless you're confident with numbers, you're unlikely to challenge the facts and figures that you are given.

所以，除非你对数字很自信，你不可能会挑战别人给你的事实和数据。

So, Sam, if I said to you ten per cent of the ten million people who eat meat have a twenty per cent chance of being five per cent overweight - would you challenge that?

所以，萨姆，如果我跟你说一千万吃肉的人中间有 10% 的人有 20% 的概率超重 5%——你会质疑这个说法吗？

I'd have to go away and wipe that out!

我得走开然后让它消失。

As I said, Neil, I'm not a numbers person.

如我所说，内尔，我不是一个精通数字的人。

Even talking about numbers makes me anxious.

甚至连谈论数字都会让我焦虑。

Well, interestingly, The Why Factor programme explained that girls are more anxious about learning maths, but even if they feel more nervous about maths, they aren't any worse with numbers than their more confident classmates.

嗯，有趣的是，《The Why Factor》这个节目解释说女孩对于学习数学更焦虑，但是即使她们对数学感到紧张，她们也不会比她们更自信的同学更不精通数字。

It's just the fear that's stopping you!

只是恐惧阻止了你！

Well, maybe, but one bad experience can knock our confidence and ability to use maths.

嗯，也许吧，但是一次糟糕的经历可能会打击你的信心以及使用数学的能力。

Take comfort from Paula Miles, who teaches statistics to psychology students at St. Andrews University.

让 Paula Miles 安慰一下你，她在圣安德鲁大学教心理专业的学生统计学。

She told The Why Factor that she thinks there's no such thing as 'a numbers person'.

她告诉《The Why Factor》节目组说她认为不存在所谓的“精通数字的人”。

There is no such thing as someone who is a 'number person' or not.

不存在所谓的精通或不精通数字的人。

If we're taught in the right way, then I think we all have the potential to be a numbers person.

如果别人教我们的方式是对的，那么我认为我们都有潜力成为一个精通数字的人。

I'm not saying we're all going to grow up to be mathematicians but we're all going to get to a point where we have the basic numeracy skills that we need to be able to cope in our environment...

我不是说我们所有人都会成长为数学家，但是我们都能够达到具备基础计算技巧的程度，我们需要这样的技巧来应对我们所处的环境.....

I feel a little better now!

我现在感觉好点了！

We all have the possibility within us, or potential, to be a numbers person.

我们都有可能，或者说潜力，能成为一个精通数字的人。

Yes, I think it's about survival.

是的，我认为这关乎生存。

We want to develop numeracy - basic mathematical skills - to use numbers in a particular situation that we are in.

我们都想培养计算能力 —— 基本的数学技巧 —— 来在我们所处的某个特定场景里使用数字。

We might, we might not be a genius like Einstein, but we know enough to work things out.

我们也许不会是像爱因斯坦那样的天才，但是我们有足够的知识来解决问题。

I wonder if you worked out the answer to my question correctly, Neil?

我想知道你是否正确解决了我的问题，内尔？

Earlier, I asked about what's thought to be the largest number in the world - called a googol.

之前我问了一个关于被人们认为是世界上最大的数字的问题 —— 这个数字叫做大数。

How many zeros does it have?

它有多少个零？

A hundred zeros, a thousand zeros, or ten thousand zeros?

一百个零，一千个零，还是一万个零？

I said ten thousand zeros.

我说的是一万个零。

Sorry, Neil.

不好意思，内尔。

A googol is ten to the 100 th power - so a mere 100 zeros.

大数是 10 的100次方 —— 所以只有 100 个零。

I don't think I'll be using that number anytime soon.

我认为我最近不会使用这个数。

But I might be using some of the vocabulary we've discussed today, including a numbers person.

但是也许我会使用我们今天谈论到的一些词汇，包括一个精通数字的人。

That's someone who understands numbers and is good at using them and interpreting data - not like us!

也就是很理解数字并且擅长使用它们并解读数据的人 —— 不像我们！

If you are put off by something, it means you are made to dislike something.

如果你厌恶某事，这意味着某事让你讨厌。

And to be primed means told to behave in a certain situation.

而被事先指点的意思是被告知在某个场景中行事。

The skill of effective public speaking is known as oratory.

有效的公众演讲技巧被叫做讲演术。

And spurious means false, inaccurate, or not correct.

而虚假的意味着假的，不准确的或不正确的。

And when we have the possibility within us to do something, we describe it as our potential.

而且如果我们有做某事的可能性，那么我们把这描述为我们的潜力。

And having numeracy means having basic mathematical skills.

而具有计算能力意味着具备基本的数学技巧。

But now we've reached the number six - six minutes of English.

但是我们现在已经到达了数字六 —— 六分钟的英语。

Thanks very much for listening and goodbye.

非常感谢收听，再见。

Bye.

再见。