

"Geek Logik is a hoot!" —Will Shortz, Crossword Editor, *The New York Times*

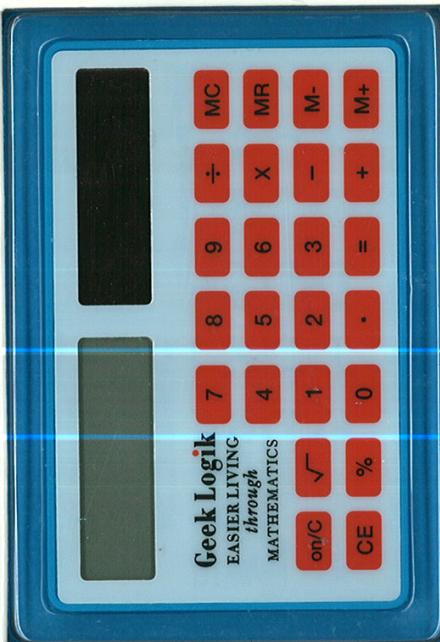
50 Foolproof Equations for Everyday Life

Geek Logik

USE THE PRINCIPLES OF BASIC ALGEBRA AND TAKE THE GUESSWORK OUT OF LIFE

COVERING DATING, ROMANCE, AND RELATIONSHIPS, CAREER AND FINANCE, HEALTH, AND MORE

BY GARTH SUNDEM



EASIER LIVING
through
MATHEMATICS

SAMPLE CALCULATIONS:

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Should you be open to talking about your ex?

The wrong name, dropped at the wrong time, has been the downfall of many a good relationship. But while too much ex-induced paranoia can make a nice girl resort to wiretaps, a willingness to talk about your past—especially if you've achieved the elusive status of "friends" with your ex—can make you seem all the more open and honest. If your current significant other *really doesn't* have anything to fear from your former flame, why dismiss or hide a good friendship?

The main ideas measured by this equation, like any potential crime, are means and motive—is it practical to get back together with your ex and is there a chance that you might? For you to speak freely, either actual time and/or distance from your heart (as shown in the chart) must outweigh the ex's attractiveness, marital status, and proximity (that is, how much should your current girlfriend honestly be worried). Also, if your ex has a sexy accent, is extremely successful, or has an obvious and significant talent, add 5 to H_e .

$$\left[\left(\frac{2T_c + T_s}{T_e} \right) - \frac{H_e}{H_c} \right]^3 + \left(C - \frac{10(H_e)^2}{H_c S_e \sqrt{D}} \right) = T_{alk}$$

T_c= How many months have you been seeing your current girlfriend?

T_s= How many months has it been since you split with your ex?

T_e= How many months did the relationship with your ex last?

H_c= How attractive is your current girlfriend? (1–10 with 10 being "every time I see her I feel lucky")

H_e= How attractive is your ex? (1–10 with 10 being "every time I see her on a billboard I feel nostalgic")

D= How many miles away does your ex live?

S_e= What is the relationship status of your ex? (enter 1 for "swinging single," 5 for "dating," and 10 for "married")

C= Your score on the chart below. Circle a number for each statement in terms of how true or false it is, and then add your answers to get C.

- If T_{alk} is less than zero, you should never speak of your ex.
- If T_{alk} is between zero and 3, you should speak of your ex only to put her down.
- If T_{alk} is between 3 and 10, you may include your ex in relevant anecdotes.
- If T_{alk} is greater than 10, you can talk freely about your ex.

	False	True
I no longer think about my ex.	1	2
Our breakup was for obvious reasons.	1	2
My current girlfriend is secure.	1	2
My ex and I did not remain friends.	1	2
My ex and I only dated once.	1	2
My ex would not get back together with me even if I wanted to.	1	2
My friends/parents like my current girlfriend more.	1	2
	3	4
	4	5

Is this one for fun or for real?

Tonight will be your fifth date on the whirlwind tour of a new romance. You've been to a nightclub, the zoo, a romantic dinner, and even to a lecture on twenty-first-century existentialism, a subject you read up on before going in order to look smart. It's time to make the tough choice: Is this one for real or just for fun?

First, the quality of your time spent together is determined by total time together multiplied by the ratio of how many of those hours are daylight and how many are night—which is also affected by

the number of drinks you have when you get together. If your relationship thus far has been based solely on drinks, dancing, and carousing until the sun comes up, the likelihood of this being more than fun is less.

The equation then combines quality of time spent together with factors that determine compatibility and practical potential. Specifically, are you both ready for a relationship and are your backgrounds compatible? This is, of course, adjusted by how many other people you are currently dating. If she is one of many, there's a smaller chance this one is for real.

H_d= Average hours of daylight you spend together per week

H_n= Average hours per week you spend together after dark

D= Combined average number of drinks that you and she consume when you get together

S= How many other people are you currently seeing?

T_y= How many months do you plan to continue living near subject? (maximum of 24)

T_h= How many months does she plan to live near you? (maximum of 24)

T_r= How many months has it been since the end of your last relationship?

B_c= Your score on the background compatibility chart below. Circle a number for each statement and then add your answers to get a total score.

- If R_{real} is less than 1, enjoy the ride but don't expect it to last.
- If R_{real} is between 1 and 5, test the water before diving into what could be the shallow end.
- If R_{real} is greater than 5, you're ready to get serious.

	False	True
We have near the same level of education.	1	2
Our recreational interests are similar.	1	2
We are close in age.	1	2
Our career goals are compatible.	1	2
Our family/life goals are similar.	1	2
Our personalities are compatible.	1	2
	3	4
	4	5

Should you go to a bachelor party in Vegas against your girlfriend's wishes?

Even the best relationship needs space. There's only so long you can stay cooped up in joined-at-the-hip-land before a taste of your old life beckons. Unfortunately, the need to break free of the constraints of a relationship, if only for a weekend, might not be understood in the benign terms you intend. If your friends are gunning for a real hangover-inducing humdinger and your girlfriend knows it, you might be spending too much political capital for one night out.

Simply put (although this equation is a bit complex), in order for you to go out with the boys, the experience of hitting the town needs to outweigh the experience of staying home and is affected by the possible fallout from each. If this really is a special occasion either in or out, it can make your decision easy. Also, if you are finding yourself highly entertained by activities you once thought were only for the repressed, it might be time to bust out of your current model.

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Are you whipped?

Whapish! Whapish!: the universal sign for "your girlfriend rules your life." There's even a chance your friends already crack this imaginary whip in your direction. But what's the real deal? Are you really whipped or do your friends simply have unreal expectations of you, due of course to their status as desperate geeks incapable of finding a date themselves and jealous of your good thing?

The first step in solving this important question is to get an answer to the previous one ("Should you go to a bachelor party in Vegas against your girlfriend's wishes?"), because you will use the answer (G_o) as a variable in this equation. Contained in the

earlier question are the important algebraic values of whether or not your friends already consider you whipped and whether or not you have been spending too much time with your significant other.

However, by themselves, these values don't necessarily make you whipped—in rare cases, you may be hanging out with your girlfriend simply because you want to, not due to any voodoo mind control. To your boys'-night-out score, this equation also adds your ability and willingness to stick up for yourself and the degree to which you are told what to do versus the degree to which you *decide* what to do (tempered if you actually are a lazy slob and *deserve* to be told what to do).

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$$\frac{P_s}{P_f} (O_f + F_f) (G_c + W) - \frac{P_f F_s}{P_s E} [(O_s)^3 + A_s (A_s + A_f)] = G_o$$

P_s= In the past month, how many nights have you spent with your girlfriend?

P_f= In the past month, how many nights have you spent out with the boys?

O_s= How important is the occasion to your girlfriend? (1–10 with 10 being "extremely")

O_f= How important is the occasion to the guys? (1–10 with 10 being "best friend moving to Sri Lanka tomorrow")

G_c= How strong is your craving for gossip or news of the outside world? (1–10 with 10 being "still waiting to hear about that Watergate thing")

W= How whipped do your friends already consider you? (1–10 with 10 being "friends must apply for tourist visa before stopping by to say hi")

F_s= Level of fun you would have staying home with your significant other (1–10 with 10 being "dating stand-up comic")

F_f= Level of fun you would have going out with your friends (1–10 with 1 being "eh" and 10 being "yay!")

E= On a scale of 1–10, how entertained are you by PBS specials, your pet's antics, chat rooms, and Internet poker? (10 being "very")

A_s= Your odds for intimacy should you stay in this evening (If you have a "3-in-10" chance, enter 3/10.)

A_f= Number of days you foresee your significant other withholding affection should you choose to go out

- If G_o is less than zero, you would be better off staying home and pretending to watch *Sleepless in Seattle*—again.

- If G_o is zero to 5, you should hit the town, but be prepared for the consequences.

- If G_o is greater than 5, you're going to Vegas, baby, Vegas!

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$$\frac{HY_d [10 - (F_y - F_s)] \sqrt{G_o}}{50 + 5 [C_y - (C_s + S)]} = W_{whipped}$$

H= Number of habits you repress when your girlfriend is around

Y_d= Number of times per day you say the equivalent of "yes, dear"

G_o= Plug in your answer to "Should you go to a bachelor party in Vegas against your girlfriend's wishes?"

F_y= Your willingness/ability to fight (1–10 with 10 being "Muhammad Ali")

F_s= Your girlfriend's willingness/ability to fight (1–10 with 10 being "Xena: Warrior Princess")

C_y= When you do a chore around the house how often is it because *you* want it done? (Base answer on ten chores.)

C_s= When you do a chore around the house how often is it because your girlfriend suggests you do it? (Base answer on ten chores.)

S= Are you a slob? (1–10 with 10 being "bottom layers of bedroom studied by archaeologists")

- If $W_{whipped}$ is greater than 1, you had better put this book down and get back to work scrubbing the toilet, Cinderella.

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Should you become a monk?

This is a complex equation, and rightfully so—the decision to condemn yourself to a life of hair shirts and Latin is a weighty one. However, sometimes enough is enough and at least joining the cloth will get you out of explaining to your parents why you haven't yet produced grandbabies.

This equation weighs time, effort, and romantic success, rewarding the middle ground in each. For example, if you have dated no one in the past year, you are all but cloistered already. However, the flip side is also true—if you have dated more than 12 people this year (more than 1 per month), you might need a stint in a lonely cell to let your mind and body recover.

Obviously your result is affected by the ratio of good dates to bad and by how fresh in your mind those bad dates are.

Your monk chances also increase in direct proportion to the time since your last serious relationship, with a significantly low chance if it's been less than a year (your judgment is still clouded by angst and you are in no frame of mind to make decisions concerning your future celibacy) and a significantly high chance if it's been more than five years (it's time to adopt a neighborhood cat).

Though it's possible to be in a *relationship* that makes you want to become a monk, this equation only works for those currently single.

$$\frac{TOPD_b (D_p^2 - 12D_p + 37)}{4(D_g + W) \left(\frac{-M^3}{2250} + \frac{M^2}{20} - 1.8M + 100 \right)} = M_{\text{onastery}}$$

W= Weeks since your last bad date

M= Months since you have been in a "serious" relationship

D_g= Number of good dates you've been on in the past year

D_b= Number of bad dates you've been on in the past year

D_p= Total number of people you have dated in the past year

T= How hard have you been trying to date? (1–10 with 10 being "listed on more than 10 Internet dating sites")

O= How jaded are you concerning the dating scene? (1–10 with 10 being "If someone offers you a drink, she first has to fill out an initial-screening questionnaire")

P= The level of pity you receive from family and friends (1–10 with 10 being "friends stage regular interventions, thinking you're a shut-in")

- If M_{onastery} is greater than 1, you should just call your spreading bald spot a tonsure.

Should you apologize?

Though short on variables, this little equation is deceptively complex. If the issue in question is a big deal, the first variable (D) immediately raises the stakes. However, raising the stakes can lead you to apologize with more sincerity or to absolutely refuse to make amends (conversely, if the issue is not such a big deal, your entrenched stance on apologizing or not will be reduced). Later in the equation we see that if your girlfriend accuses you unjustly, you will be highly unlikely to apologize. For example, if she blames you for running over her mother with the new SUV and you did not

in fact run over her mother with said SUV, you will likely be righteous in your defense. However, if the issue is not a big deal, even if you are not actually at fault you might as well apologize if your girlfriend demands it (that is, holds you at fault and is pissed about it). Of course, as these variables interact with each other, you will find a delicate balance. Raising the level of perceived responsibility will make you increasingly likely to apologize until it reaches the point of persecution at which time any further increase in perceived responsibility past your actual responsibility makes you *less* likely to apologize.

$$D[R_p(R_a + P) + D(R_a - R_p)] = A$$

D= How big of a deal was the issue? (1–10 with 1 being "forgot to take out trash before work" and 10 being "forgot to turn off the gas before leaving for vacation")

R_a= Actual responsibility (On a scale of 1–10, how responsible are you in reality for this blunder?)

R_p= Perceived responsibility (On a scale of 1–10, how responsible does your girlfriend perceive you to be in this matter?)

P= How pissed off is your girlfriend? (1–10 with 10 being "mail-order thumb screws have already arrived")

• If A is less than 1, you do not need to apologize.

• If A is between 1 and 5, you should at least offer a perfunctory "Sorry."

• If A is between 5 and 10, you should prepare a few remarks and deliver them with sincerity.

• If A is greater than 10, contact the nearest florist immediately.

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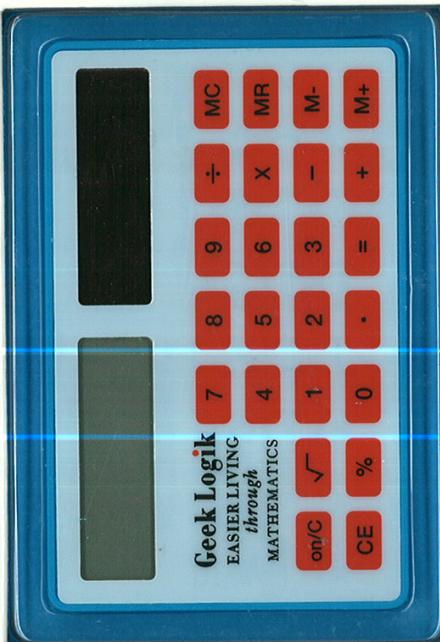
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Do you have the right to be pissed?

Borrowing the flavor of some of the previous equation's variables, this question is the flip side of "Should you apologize?" You can look at this equation as simply a way to decide if you will make *her* sleep on the couch, and for how long. Also notice that once you have quantified your anger, the revolutionary Pissed-o-Meter offers useful suggestions for venting and/or vengeance.

This equation is fairly straightforward except when measuring the *actual* transgression (physical) in comparison with the damage done *to you* (mental).

While you have the right to be increasingly pissed as either of these terms increase, you will be exponentially more pissed as the actual damage done gets into the value range of 7 and above. For example, if this issue involves selling your Joe Namath football on eBay, you will be *way* more pissed than if this issue is only big in your mind. However, this equation also asks you to evaluate your level of anger if your significant other has already recognized the mistake and has tried to make amends—staying pissed can easily escalate into an unnecessary and spiteful grudge match.

Should you let her see where you live?

Before throwing open your door to the eyes (and nose) of the light of your life, make sure the shock of your putrid bathroom will not snuff the flame of passion.

Your place may be an indifferently decorated pigsty, but what's really important—and what this question gauges—is how it compares to hers. For example, if you are an artist living in a tenement studio on the Lower East Side, you might want to meet at her penthouse overlooking Central Park; however, if she is rooming with eight degenerates in the

Bronx, your studio will look mighty sweet indeed. Note that roommates can hinder romance unless you can ensure they won't be home. Note too that parents are the worst kind of roommates especially as you get older—if you are still living with them, hide this the same way you would hide your pet vampire bat and *Star Trek* addiction.

Also included in this equation are factors that determine girlfriend revulsion levels, as well as variables that increase your need to let her see your place as the relationship gets more serious.

$$\frac{HD_y \left(D_a + \frac{D_a^6}{100,000} \right) (T+5S)}{2AB(11-F)} = P_{\text{issed}}$$

D_a= How big a deal is this *actually*? (1–10 with 10 being "she put a hit on my mother")

D_y= How big a deal is this *to you*? (1–10 with 1 being "she put out a hit on *her* mother")

F= How much is she actually at fault? (1–10 with 10 being "flooded upstairs bathroom, claw-foot tub now sitting atop what was once my plasma TV")

H= How many times has something similar happened before?

T= Level of thoughtlessness/carelessness (1–10 with 10 being "forgot to tape the episode of *Jeopardy* in which you were a contestant")

S= Level of intended spite (1–10 with 10 being "left note on your pillow detailing the hit she put on your mom")

B= How bad does she already feel about this? (1–10 with 10 being "will now be your slave for life")

A= How strongly has she tried to make amends? (1–10 with 10 being "replaced the Joe Namath football she sold on eBay with a signed Barry Bonds edition home blood test kit")

- If P_{issed} is less than 1, you should not be pissed—get over it!
- If P_{issed} is greater than 500, you should encourage your friends and family to help brainstorm and enact revenge.

Evaluate your answer on the Pissed-o-Meter:	
Score	Result
500	Potentially fatal to relationship
100	Demand groveling and/or season tickets
50	Demand apology and/or sex
10	Sleep on couch (for a week)
1	Sleep on couch (for a day)

$$\frac{R_y}{P^3 \left(\frac{A-19}{2} + 1 \right)^2 + R_h} \left[\frac{(T+1)^2 (H+1)^3}{(2B+L+S+1)^2} \right] - \frac{R(D_r + C_r)}{T+H+1} = Y_{\text{es}}$$

P= Do you live with your parents? (enter 0 for "no" and 2 for "yes")

A= How old are you?

R_y= What is your monthly rent in dollars? (Add money for any work-for-rent or other rent-reducing situations.)

R_h= What is your girlfriend's monthly rent?

T= How many weeks have you been dating her?

H= How many times have you seen her place?

L= How many days since you've done your laundry?

S= How many unwashed dishes are there in the sink (not counting silverware)?

B= How many days since you've cleaned the bathroom?

R= How many roommates do you have (parents and family count!)?

D_r= Depravity of your roommates (1–10 with 10 being "ongoing toga-party")

C_r= Likelihood of your roommates being around (1–10 with 10 being "roommates are agoraphobic hermits")

- If Y_{es} is less than 1, your living situation will scare her off.

- If Y_{es} is between 1 and 3, you should kick out the roommates and/or do some serious scrubbing before inviting her over.

- If Y_{es} is greater than 3, you can bring her home with confidence.

Can you stop doing sit-ups or trimming nose hair?

If your Prince Charming image is based on mood lighting and a little help from José Cuervo, it might be best to abscond before the cold light of the morning after reveals you as a toad. However, there comes a point in a relationship when you no longer need to suck in your gut to the point that it cuts off circulation to your brain and can feel free to use your belly for its intended purpose—as nature's beer coaster. Usually you will reach this point after much time spent in a relationship, specifically after many nights spent coming to terms with each other's body hair, smelly feet, and voluminous earwax. One evening you will decide you're just too tired to shave or will throw on your sagging tights instead of the form-fitting boxer briefs she got you for your birthday (which tend to

seek crevices you wish they would not). But don't make the mistake of dropping the facade too soon! Until she is fully addicted, one moment of clarity can blow her concept of you as the perfect man to bits. In addition to judging your need to keep up appearances based on length of the relationship, this equation takes into account how much you can get away with due to your attractiveness (in relation to your partner's), how loose your girlfriend has chosen to be in her grooming, and the security of your relationship. In general, spending many nights together is a sign that you can revert to your slovenly self; however, if the relationship is still insecure then the more nights you're together, the more consistent you need to be with your attention to grooming and clean undergarments.

Should you let your girlfriend meet your embarrassing family?

This is one of the most complex equations, given the influence of booze. In general, it's good if everybody gets sloshed for the occasion, unless your parents are lulus and your date is a teetotaler. If the reverse is true, you might be embarrassed about your date, but that's for another equation.

Also, quantity of parental quirks may negatively influence your desire to unleash them on your girlfriend, unless of course she has the same quirks. Shared idiosyncrasies are actually a bonus.

The variable that most affects the outcome is the similarity between you and

your parents. Even if your parents are kooky drunks and have little in common with your girlfriend, if you are a kooky drunk as well, she should be able to get along with them just fine. This assumes you get along with your date, and if not, then meeting the parents might be just the kick in the pants you both need in order to get on with your lives.

Math note: Simplify exponents first. Also, the straight lines around A_p and A_h on the bottom of the equation and the P_p and P_h on top are absolute value signs—just take away any negative sign you get using these values.

$$\frac{A_y T(B_f + N + R_s)}{A_h S^4 (3N - 2R_s)^2} = S_{top}$$

T= Months you have been in this relationship

N= Nights per week you spend together

A_y= How attractive are you? (1-10 with 10 being "stronger than gravity squared")

A_h= How attractive is your significant other? (1-10 with 10 being "animal magnetism")

B_f= Number of times per day you hear her burp or fart

S= Do you still sleep touching each other? (Enter 1 for "no" and 2 for "yes.")

R_s= Relationship security—choose from the following:

- 1 = Hooking up
- 2 = Seeing each other
- 3 = Dating
- 4 = Dating with a toothbrush at her place
- 5 = Living together
- 6 = Living together with pets
- 7 = Married
- 8 = Married with children

- If S_{top} is greater than 1, you should feel free to clip your toenails while wearing her tattered muu-muu.

$$\frac{IK_d |P_p - P_h| (3^{A_p - 2A_h} + 1)}{(K_s + 2)^s [(A_p + A_h)^{3 - |A_p - 1.5A_h|} + 1]} = E_{embarrassed}$$

I= Similarity between meeting your parents and a police interrogation (1-10 with 10 being "white room; one naked lightbulb")

K_s & K_d= In one minute list as many "weird" quirks of your parents as you can. Now cross off every quirk that your girlfriend also has. The number of items you crossed off is K_s ; the number of items remaining is K_d .

P_p= Your parents' political views (on a scale of -10 to 10 with -10 being Ralph Nader and 10 being Rush Limbaugh)

P_h= Your date's political views using the above scale

S= How similar are you to your parents? (1-10 with 10 being "cloned")

A_p= In an average social evening, the combined number of drinks that your parents consume

A_h= In an average social evening, the total drinks your date consumes

- If $E_{embarrassed}$ is greater than 2, call talent agency and hire parental stand-ins.

Whose turn is it?

s filling the dog bowl really worse than sleeping in the doghouse? Even though it may not be your turn to do a chore, the consequences of standing up for yourself might be more disagreeable than the original task. In this deceptively complex equation, being right is only one piece of the puzzle.

Within the parentheses, the equation looks candidly at whose turn it is, how much each of you cares, and exactly how

long you can expect to be in the doghouse should you go to bat on this issue. If your girlfriend's wrath outweighs both how much you care and the fact that it isn't actually your turn, you will have to buckle in order to avoid relationship discord. On the other hand, if her grudge isn't too great (and especially if the job really sucks), you may still be willing to fight for your rights, even if you are, in truth, wrong.

$$\frac{UM}{100} \left(\frac{P_y}{P_{so}} \right) \left(2 + \frac{C_y}{C_{so}} - G \frac{C_{so}}{2S} \right) = T$$

U= Unpleasantness of task (1–10 with 10 being “would rather be trapped in elevator with in-laws after eating four-star eggplant curry”)

M= Minutes needed to complete task

P_y= Out of last 10 times, how many times have *you* done this task?

P_{so}= Out of last 10 times, how many times has *she* done it?

C_y= How much do you care? (1–10 with 10 being “willing to move into garage over issue”)

C_{so}= How much does your significant other care? (1–10 with 10 being “willing to make you move into garage over issue”)

G= In days, the longest your significant other has ever withheld affection while holding a grudge

S= Severity of the offense for which your significant other held grudge **G** (1–10 with 10 being “lost her dog; tried to find identical replacement at pound”)

- If **T** is greater than 1, it is your significant other's turn. Getting her to believe this, however, is up to you.

Whose family should you visit over the holidays?

t's that time of year again. No, not July 4th when you have the inalienable right to drink bad beer while playing with fire. And not Memorial Day, which you'd usually spend communing with nature in the KOA campground next to the interstate. Instead it's the most complex of breaks, one which without a concrete excuse, such as being lost at sea or battling a case of the avian flu, you'll need to spend with *family*. But whose family—yours or hers?

Two equally weighted sections make up this equation, one representing your

family and the other representing hers. Thus the equation works like a balance scale, with weights added to either side. However, on each side, these weights are a bit complex. Using variables that measure how well people get along, strong feelings in either direction have the potential to tip the scale. There is also the practical issue of distance versus time—if you only have the weekend and your family lives in Antarctica, it's just not practical. But if your break reaches five or more days, distance becomes almost negligible, as at that point it becomes worth flying.

$$\frac{2 \left[T_y + \left(\frac{F_y^2}{10} - \frac{10}{F_y^2} \right) + \left(\frac{L_y^2}{10} - \frac{10}{L_y^2} \right) \right]}{D_y + \frac{M_y}{10R^3}} - \frac{2 \left[T_h + \left(\frac{F_h^2}{10} - \frac{10}{F_h^2} \right) + \left(\frac{L_h^2}{10} - \frac{10}{L_h^2} \right) \right]}{D_h + \frac{M_h}{10R^3}} = V$$

T_y= In months, how long has it been since you last saw your family?

T_h= In months, how long has it been since she last saw her family?

F_y= How much do the two of you, combined, like your family? (1–10 with 10 being “Partridge Family”)

F_h= How much do the two of you, combined, like her family? (1–10 with 1 being “Manson Family”)

L_y= How much does your family like her? (1–10 with 10 being “send *you* trickle-down gifts of bath soaps and scented creams, knowing she'll like them”)

“your Norwegian mother serves pickled fish ‘delicacies’”)

D_h= How disturbed are her family's holiday traditions? (1–10 with 10 being “you're forced to sleep on basement sofa bed despite six years of marriage”)

M_y= In miles, how far away does your family live?

M_h= In miles, how far away does her family live?

R= How many days do you have off for holidays?

- If **V_{visit}** is less than −1, you should spend holidays with her family.

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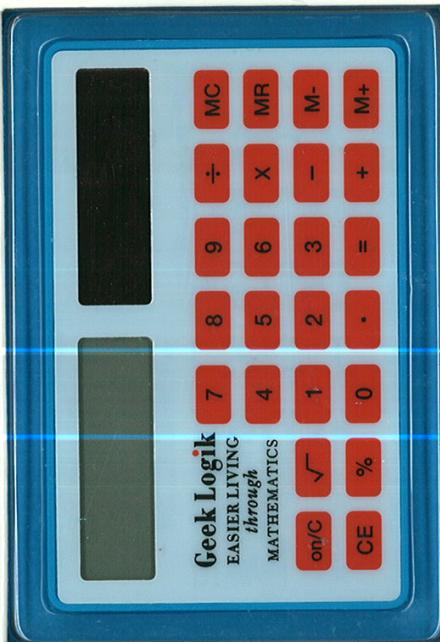
50 Foolproof Equations for Everyday Life

Geek Logik

USE THE PRINCIPLES OF BASIC ALGEBRA AND TAKE THE GUESSWORK OUT OF LIFE

COVERING DATING, ROMANCE, AND RELATIONSHIPS, CAREER AND FINANCE, HEALTH, AND MORE

BY GARTH SUNDEM



EASIER LIVING
through
MATHEMATICS

SAMPLE CALCULATIONS:

Should I call in sick? page 48



Do I have a snowball's chance in hell with her? page 12

Is it time to see a therapist? page 108



Should I join a gym? page 100



How many beers should I have at the company picnic? page 78

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Should I get a tattoo? page 82

Do you two have the potential to become soccer parents?

You listen to loud music, stay out late on Saturday nights, and take pride in your four speeding tickets in the past three years. But recently you caught yourself commenting on a new minivan that it "really isn't that bad." And then last week you had an earnest conversation with a neighbor about lawn care. How long will it be before you find yourself screaming on the sidelines of a soccer field as little Bobby dribbles madly toward the goal?

Soccer parenthood can sneak up on you, and like colon cancer or wild mushroom poisoning, your only hope in successfully managing the disease is

recognizing the symptoms early and treating them aggressively. If the soccer parent tendencies have already metastasized, however, you may need to take drastic measures . . . www.harley-davidson.com offers treatment options and support groups.

Note that soccer parenthood is not always fatal, and for some, may not even negatively affect quality of life. Indeed, many learn to live with the symptoms for years. Your chances of enjoying a full life as a soccer parent are higher if you had sporty tendencies in school or if you like to relive old glory days. Solve the equation for a definite diagnosis.

$$\left(\frac{S_y^2}{64} + \frac{S_s^2}{64} + 1 \right)^2 (W + M + U + K) = G_{\text{oal}}$$

AFC

S_y= Year of school through which you played team sports

S_s= Year of school through which your significant other played team sports

M= How appealing is the convenience of a minivan? (1–10 with 10 being "Wow, I could fit, like, ten kids in there!")

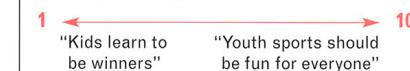
U= In your parents' houses, combined number of photos currently hanging that feature you or your girlfriend wearing a uniform

W= Combined hours per week you and your girlfriend spend watching sporting events

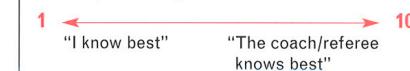
K= Do you currently own any of the following (add all "yes" responses): shade umbrella, Igloo cooler, whistle, folding camp/lawn chair, rain poncho, witty bumper sticker, bleacher cushion, oversized foam fan hand, picnic blanket, dog?

A= Highest rate of aversion to any one of the following movies: *Miracle*, *Bad News Bears*, *Remember the Titans*, *The Mighty Ducks*, *Field of Dreams*, *The Natural*, *Angels in the Outfield*, *Rudy* (1–10 with 10 being "should not be shown to POWs under the Geneva Convention")

F= Choose the number on the scale that best represents your views:



C= Choose the number on the scale that best represents your views:



- If G_{oal} is greater than 1, you will need to learn how to drive wearing cleats.

$$\frac{DS}{(M+1)R} \left(\frac{F_h}{F_i} - C \right) - \frac{\$N}{250} = H_{\text{ooky}}$$

D= Do you have a doctor's note? (Enter 1 for "no," 10 for "yes," and 5 for "yes, but it's a forgery.")

S= How sick are you? (1–10 with 10 being "quarantined")

M= How many days have you missed in the last month?

R= Degree of responsibility in your job (1–10 with 10 being "lives are in my hands")

F_h= How much fun will you have if you stay home? (1–10 with 10 being *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*)

F= How much fun will you have at work? (1–10 with 10 being "I am a personal trainer for underwear models")

\$= Your daily wage in dollars

N= How much do you need the money? (1–10 with 10 being "I owe the mob")

C= Chance of getting fired (If you think you have, say, a "3-in-10 chance" of getting fired if you skip work, enter 3/10.)

- If H_{ooky} is greater than 1, you should call in sick.

Should you call in sick?

On a cold, rainy Tuesday morning, the line between pre-coffee lethargy and Ebola can be disturbingly blurry. Besides, they just opened a new waffle joint around the corner and today is the second round of the PGA championship—a righteous holiday for any compassionate employer. It's probably best just to stay home. However, you do want a new Viking Ultra Premium Gas Grill and you did skip two days last week to go skiing. It's a classic question of responsibility versus desire. Lucky for you, this equation makes your decision easy.

The terms that drive this equation are the fun you could have at home compared to the fun you could have at your job, minus your chance of getting fired. If it's not going to be more fun at home and you might get fired for skipping work, why play hooky? This equation assumes that if you are too sick to think about going to work no matter the consequences, then you should probably call a doctor rather than sitting around reading this book (see also "Should you go to the doctor?" on page 88).

Should you let your boss win?

Bowing that nine-inch putt could be the difference between your rapid ascent to partner and a lifetime membership in the purgatory of middle management. However, it's not always the intentional miss that punches your ticket on the fast track. If you are obviously better, then throwing the game is meaningless, and by doing so you will be marked immediately as a yes-man, good for little more than stroking your boss's corporate ego (though this might be a good way to get a couple more free golf dates at the boss's club).

In addition, your playing history can influence your decision whether or not to take that sly dive—if your boss wins every time, he should be able to handle one little loss. However, if your boss is unusually competitive and there are many witnesses, you might still need to let him save face by demonstrating his unfailing ability to triumph over peons such as yourself. If your boss is actually better than you, you should not throw the game. Take a rare win where you can get it.

$$\frac{W(C_b^2 + H^3)}{C_y(G_y - G_b + \frac{\$}{100})} = B_{\text{win}}$$

G_y= How good are you at this game? (1–10 with 10 being Tiger Woods)

G_b= How good is your boss? (1–10 with 1 being “putts like Grandma”)

W= Number of witnesses

C_y= How competitive are you? (1–10 with 10 being “failure is not an option”)

C_b= How competitive is your boss? (1–10 with 10 being “last employee to win ended up repairing radio towers in Siberia”)

H= Playing history: your past wins divided by your boss's wins

\$= How much money is riding on this game? (Translate bragging rights or other bets into equivalent dollar amount, with \$100 being a strong bet.)

- If B_{win} is greater than 1, you should put profession before pride and let the boss win.

Should you bring the laptop on vacation?

Cancun is calling and with it the promise of mai tais on the beach, parasailing over crystal blue water, and the veritable duty to spend three days baking yourself lobster-red just so you can rub it in your coworkers' faces when you get back. Speaking of getting back, don't you have that big presentation on Tuesday? And wouldn't it be great if you could check your e-mail just to make sure last week's big client is still happy? Technically, it wouldn't be that hard to stash your laptop in your carry-on next to your flip-flops and Bermuda shorts (you already called to make sure the hotel has a

couple hours. However, you are painfully aware that if your girlfriend even catches a glimpse of a computer on this trip, you are quickly going to be reviewing the equations at the beginning of this book that deal with dating and the single life.

This equation weighs the importance of bringing the laptop (top of the equation) against the psychological and relationship damage wrought by doing work on vacation (bottom of the equation). Even if you have work that needs doing and you can bring the laptop without creating undue strife in your life, if you know yourself well enough to admit you are

$$\frac{WI\left(\frac{H_n}{H_a} + 0.1\right)^2}{F + S_p + T} = B_{\text{ring}}$$

H_n= Hours needed to complete necessary work

H_a= Hours of non-vacation time available to do this work

I= Importance of this work (1–10 with 10 being “finding new keynote speaker for Monday's conference”)

F= Number of people going with you on vacation

T= Number of weeks since you have gone a full 24 hours without doing *any* work (includes checking work e-mail and/or voice messages)

S_p= Level of anger of your travel companion(s) if you bring the laptop (1–10 with 10 being “laptop lands in clear, blue Caribbean sea”; add 5 if one of these angry people is your girlfriend.)

W= Likelihood that if you bring the laptop you will actually do work on vacation instead of blowing it off (If you'll definitely do work, that's a 10/10 chance; if you might do work, that's 5/10; if you probably won't do work anyway, that's a 1/10 chance.)

- If B_{ring} is greater than 1, you should bring your laptop on vacation.

Should you become a golf pro?

How many times have you wished that you could throw off the worries in your life and spend your days driving around under the sun in a circus cart, wearing funny hats and teaching people to more accurately smack a small ball toward a gopher hole? Note that in this equation, a lack of actual golf ability is nicely balanced by your fondness for wing tips and number of plaid garments currently in your wardrobe. Similarly, your need to shed stress can balance a lack of golf knowledge.

The foil of the golf-pro lifestyle is, unfortunately, practicality. If you have

committed heavily to the trappings of daily life and currently have the salary to pull it off, you might have problems making the transition to the freewheeling life of the golf pro—specifically, if your salary doesn't outweigh your monthly bills, you might need to stick with your current profession. However, built into the exponent of this practicality is a pressure-release valve—if these commitments are just too stressful for your fragile psyche, it might be time to focus on coaching middle-age lawyers on their short games.

$$\frac{\frac{5}{H+1}(F+W) + \frac{N}{5}(B+P) + C^3}{\left[\frac{(K+1)\frac{S+M}{S-M}}{30}\right]^{\frac{45-(B+P)}{30}}} = T_{\text{iger}}$$

F= Your fondness for wing tips and funny hats (1–10 with 10 being “The clothes make the man, and Jimmy Stewart is *the man*”)

W= In your current wardrobe, how many items feature plaid?

H= Your current handicap or best estimate (If you have never actually played golf, enter 30.)

N= In one minute, how many professional golfers (past or present) can you name?

B= In the past year, how many times have you been near to mental collapse (Add 10 if one of these actually *was* mental collapse.)

P= In the past month, how many times have you reacted to a situation with disproportionate anger?

C= How many “club” memberships do you currently have? (Include gyms, Elks, country clubs, etc.)

S= Your current monthly salary

M= Your current total monthly bills

K= Do you have any of the following (add to get total score): spouse, kids (1 point for each), kids in/near college, house, boat, timeshare?

- If T_{iger} is greater than 1, you would definitely lead a more fulfilled life as a golf pro.

$$(H+S_t)^2 - \frac{MJ}{5}(C+F)^2 = G_{\text{etiton}}$$

Should you become intimate with a coworker?

Official Disclaimer: Hooking up with a coworker leads to nothing but trouble. At best you can hope for an awkward truce; at worst, one or both of you will soon be taking a renewed interest in the Sunday classifieds.

For those of you still reading—the answer is yes, if you can. Especially if you

are both actively repressing your desire and have a fail-safe plan to avoid detection, you might suggest that this person drop a little extra food in the fish bowl and plan to get home late some evening. Remember, you should not *both* call in sick the next day. Note that if either of you is married, the variable *M* effectively decides the equation.

H= How hot is your coworker? (1–10 with 10 being “can fry bacon on backside”)

S_t= Level of sexual tension between you (1–10 with 10 being “c’mon already!”)

M= Are either of you married? (Enter 1 for no, and 5 for yes.)

C= Chance that the rest of the office will discover your liaison (1–10 with 10 being “neglected to disable security camera; stumbled across incriminating footage on adult Web site”)

F= Chance of getting fired if caught (1–10 with 10 being “coworker is boss’ debutante daughter”).

J= How much do you like/need your (1–10 with 10 being “would rather go work than sit next to Swedish supern at 50-yard line of Super Bowl”)

- If G_{etiton} is greater than zero, reprob yourself no longer.

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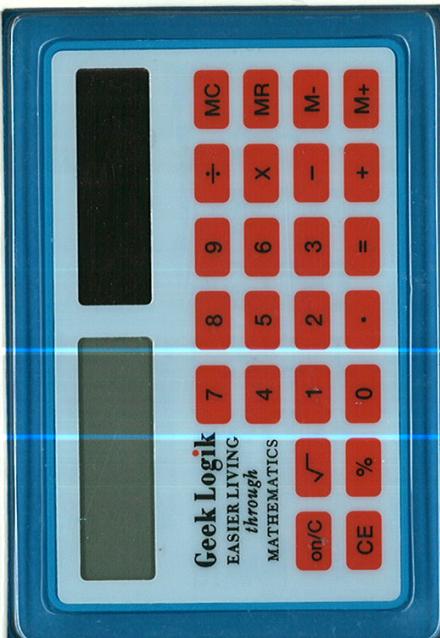
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Should you admit incompetence (or just fake control)?

On your resumé it states “expert in protein-structure analysis,” a phrase you heard once on the Discovery Channel. Originally you thought it did a good job of filling the white space under “other skills” and never thought your knowledge of crystallography would be tested while you were working at Blockbuster. But now your manager wants you to categorize this month’s new movies based on their homologous superfamily and/or CATH designation and you’re thinking “online gaming” would have been a better choice as resumé filler. However, you’re pretty sure your manager can’t tell an orthogonal prism from an alpha solenoid, so you might get away with faking it. On the other hand, someone

likely had this same thought just before the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

In this equation, if there is little difference between your expected proficiency and your actual proficiency, then you can admit your incompetence without actually admitting stupidity. Likewise, if there’s a large difference between the level of proficiency needed to complete the task and your actual level of proficiency, you should probably admit it now before you get in any deeper (because in the long run, you won’t be able to fake it). But if there’s a chance you can pull it off and if failure is, in fact, an option, then you might as well fake it and pray for a miracle.

$$\frac{I_d(P_n - P_a)[9(P_e - P_a) - (P_e - P_a)^2]}{2(B + D)^2} = A_{\text{dmit}}$$

I_d= Level of impending doom should this task fail (1–10 with 10 being “the patient is prepped and the scalpel is in my hand”)

P_e= Level of proficiency your boss/coworkers expect of you (1–10 with 10 being “claim to have pioneered new surgical procedure called the Bilateral Invasive Colonic Hitch [BICH] and the surgical team believes this has something to do with the patient’s chronic back pain”)

P_n= Level of proficiency needed to complete the task (1–10 with 10 being “required expertise in anatomical organization of the lumbar sympathetic nervous system”)

P_a= Your actual level of proficiency (1–10 with 1 being “that’s the lower back, right?”)

B= Your ability to bluff (1–10 with 10 being “known as Iceman on World Poker Tour”)

D= How deep into your bluff are you already? (1–10 with 10 being “remembering the game Operation and have successfully removed things without setting off the buzzer”)

- If A_{dmit} is greater than 1, you should suck it up now before it gets any worse.

Should you quit your job?

Meditation guru Louise Hay said the following about overcoming job frustration:

Learn to think in positive affirmations.... Saying, I hate my job, will get you nowhere. Declaring, I now accept a wonderful new job, will open the channels in your consciousness to create that.

A friend, whose name I cannot disclose, said the following in a resignation letter:

I would rather be trapped in a gunnysack with ravenous, rabid ocelots than remain in the employment of reptilian tyrants such as yourselves for more than the next two weeks.

Between these two thoughts lies a bit of gray area. This equation, like a few others in this book, follows the model of desire versus practicality. If you really hate your job and you have a good chance of finding another just as good, why not quit? However, if the practicalities of your life leave you with little financial flexibility and you can get by now without outspending your salary on therapy, you might consider sticking around. The first set of terms (before the “+” sign) describes your desire to quit versus its practicality, while the second, longer set of terms takes into account the likelihood and desirability of a hypothetical new job.

$$\frac{6H^3}{AG(K+1)^2} + \frac{20P}{AG(K+1)} \left[(F+1)^2 + 20 \left(\frac{FS_n}{S_c} - F \right) \right] = Q$$

H= Hours per day the song “Take This Job and Shove It” plays in your head

A= Your age

G= How good is your current job? (1–10 with 10 being “ambassador to Italy”)

K= How many kids do you have?

P= Your chances of quickly finding another job (1–10 with 10 being “already signed a new contract”)

F= Your level of financial commitment (1–10 with 10 being “mortgaged into next millennium”)

S_n= Monthly salary you could expect to receive at a new job

S_c= Monthly salary at current job

- If Q is greater than 1, buh-bye.

Are you prepared (to give a presentation, take a test, etc.)?

You look out on hundreds of upraised faces, all waiting for you to lead them to new realms of knowledge and understanding. In the front row sits your boss with her patented flinty glare. You clear your throat, which suddenly seems unusually dry, take a sip of water, and find there's a goldfish gasping in your glass. You realize you have forgotten your notes. In fact, you never had any notes—what were you speaking about again? Also, you're naked. From somewhere in the back row, your middle school gym teacher starts laughing.

While we all know this exact cold sweat situation usually occurs only in a bad night's sleep, it is nevertheless important to be prepared before undertaking any major

performance, be it a test, presentation, lecture, or speech. However, being prepared doesn't necessarily mean *preparing*. If the subject matter is easy, you go in with a positive attitude, and if you have slept well the night before, you might be all right (clothing recommended, fish not). Luckily, it is possible to compensate for the variable that measures lack of sleep, since modern medicine has devised an alternative, marketed under the generic name "coffee." Prescription-strength versions include the German-engineered Afri-Cola (with 100 mg of caffeine per 11.5-oz bottle) and the potent South American maté (caution: do not operate a motor vehicle after consuming).

Do you dare run for public office?

Your first consideration in choosing whether or not to run for public office should have nothing to do with your chances of actually winning. Of greater concern are the skeletons in your closet, which now may only occasionally rattle their chains but were you to run for office would burst forth to wander the night in search of human gray matter while moaning something about an "angry fix."

Along with your debauched exploits as an undergrad, other negative factors that should make the would-be candidate turn tail and run include: romantic

partners that contradict your marital status; "creative" solutions to common financial burdens (e.g., taxes); drugs (oops!—I mean *medications*); and, time spent as a roadie for the Monsters of Rock tour.

As we have all learned, despite a combination of such detracting factors it is still possible to hold even the country's highest office. As long as your vices are balanced by charisma and connections, you too can tour the world reading teleprompters and vomiting on world leaders.

I= Importance of event (1–10 with 10 being "singing national anthem at Super Bowl")

S= Hours of sleep you had last night

C= Shots of espresso or other stimulants consumed

P_n = Hours of preparation needed to excel

P_a = Hours you actually spent preparing

D = Difficulty of the subject matter (1–10 with 10 being "particle physics")

N = Level of nervousness (1–10 with 10 being "tightrope across Grand Canyon")

- If P_{prepared} is greater than 1, you'll be just fine.

$$\frac{SN - [(S-2)(G-1)]^2}{CD\left(\frac{\$}{100} + B + R + 1\right)} = R_{un}$$

C= Number of (surviving) people that knew you *well* in college

D= Have you ever toured with a rock band? (Enter 1 for "no," 5 for "yes," and 10 for "yes, and it was Phish.")

G= Current number of romantic partners

S= Marital status (Enter 1 for "single," 2 for "in relationship," and 10 for "married.")

\$= Dollar amount of frivolous IRS deductions per year

B= Number of offshore or Swiss bank accounts

R= Number of times an immediate family member has been to rehab

N= Rank the following in their order of importance to you (10 = highest):

Religion	Vacation time
Family	Personal appearance
Sex	Speaking your mind
Golf	Your name on a library
Honesty	The good of the proletariat

Now add together your rankings for Religion, Vacation time, Golf, Personal appearance, and Your name on a library to get the value for N.

- If R_{un} is greater than 1, you are ready to court donations from lobbyists, put underlings to work deciding what you believe, and kick off your campaign this week.

Are you too good for your job?

Are you and your Cornell Ph.D. feeling a wee bit overqualified to be delivering entertainment brochures to local hotels? Do you deserve to switch roles with your troglodyte boss? Or are you just a whiner?

In addition to weighing your intelligence and marketability against your current work situation (including a look at where you are in the company in comparison with where you deserve to be), this equation measures your current job against salary.

However, salary isn't always a direct measure of the job you can expect to find with your talents. For example, an educated director of a nonprofit might make only a fraction the amount of a high school-dropout pop music star. Thus, if you majored in English, music, fine arts, or environmental science, add \$20,000 to your value of \$. If you majored in business, pre-med, pre-law, or engineering, subtract \$20,000.

$$\frac{10,000}{\$} \left[S_y T_y - S_s T_s + F \left(\frac{G}{3} \right)^3 \left(\frac{I_q}{100} \right)^3 \right] = T_{\text{TooGood}}$$

S_y= Your schooling in number of years

S_s= Your supervisor/boss's schooling in years

T_y= Your years with the company

T_s= Your supervisor/boss's years with the company

F= Hours per workday you are able to spend checking e-mail, surfing Monster.com, slacking off with coworkers, or otherwise wasting time

I_q= Your estimated IQ (100 is average; more than 130 is Einstein, Newton, and Galileo; 70 is the Three Stooges.)

G= Your grade point average in school

\$= Your annual salary

- If T_{TooGood} is greater than 1, then you are too good for your job.

$$T_u \left(\frac{D_b}{T_b} \right) \left[\frac{\left(\frac{5-A}{2} \right)^2 + \frac{S}{8}}{J+X} \right] = C_{\text{heers!}}$$

T_u= Your tolerance level. How many drinks does it take to push you over the edge?

T_b= Your boss's tolerance level. How many drinks does it take to push him or her over the edge?

D_b= Number of drinks your boss is likely to consume tonight

J= How much do you like your job?
(1–10 with 1 being "McJob" and 10 being "dream job")

A=Your current standing in the company
(1–10 with 10 being "I unloaded overstock

S= Innings of softball played (Convert other painful recreation, such as number of karaoke songs sung or minutes of retirement speeches listened to, to equivalent "innings.")

X= How alert do you need to be tomorrow to troubleshoot the fallout from today?
(1–10, with 1 being "tomorrow is a holiday," and 10 being "tomorrow I arbitrate Middle East peace talks")

- $C_{\text{heers!}}$ is the maximum number of beers

Leaning against the keg in center field as the sun beats down and you wait for Brenda from accounting to find her lost contact lens in the dust near home plate, it's easy to accidentally have one too many. In normal circumstances "one too many" dishes out its own consequences in the form of the I'll-never-drink-again hangover, but at the office picnic the stakes are higher. In one second of alcohol-skewed judgment you could have the boss's toupee tucked into your shirt like chest hair and in the next second your tenure with the company

The most important factor is how many drinks the boss has—if he is doing tequila shooters, this releases many of the constraints you might otherwise feel. Additionally, if you don't have to be alert tomorrow or if you don't like the job much anyway, you might consider tying one on. The complex variable in this equation is your current standing in the company—to exceed your recommended daily drink allowance, you need either very strong standing (because your reputation can handle it) or very low standing (because at that point, who cares?), with those in

How many beers should you have at the company picnic?

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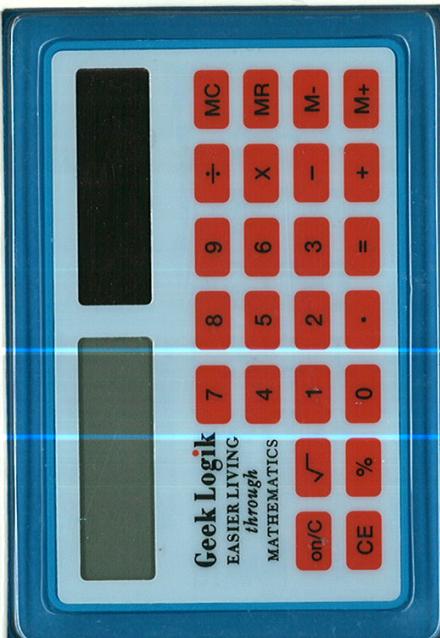
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Should you get a tattoo (or otherwise drastically alter your appearance)?

While the clichés shout that “beauty is only skin deep” and “image is not everything,” try telling that to your boss at Lehman Brothers when you show up looking like the motorcycle guy from the Village People.

In this complex equation, ultra-conservatism in your surroundings makes you less likely to drastically alter your appearance—unless, of course, your desire for shock value outweighs your desire to advance in your job. In which case the more conservative your environment, the higher your likelihood of going with the pink mohawk and multiple nose rings.

At age twenty (post-parental influence and pre-corporate shill), you are most likely to get a tattoo (the odds falling away for those older or younger). However, once you reach sixty-five and collect those guaranteed five figures you have safely socked away in Social Security, the image you project in the workplace no longer matters. If you want a tattoo there’s nothing stopping you. Also, if you plan to get a Harley (or two) during your middle-age years, you have already decided to court the bad-boy image, so you might as well get a tattoo to go along with it.

$$\sqrt{\frac{(A-20)^3}{1500} - \frac{(A-20)^2}{27} + 10H + 20} - 2(C_j + C_f)\left(J - \frac{S^2}{6}\right) = T_{\text{attoo}}$$

A= Your age

C_j= How conservative is your job?
(1–10 with 10 being “investment banker”)

C_f= How conservative are your friends and family? (1–10 with 10 being “make the religious right look like a bunch of VW-driving hippies”)

J= How much do you want to advance in your job? (1–10 with 10 being “climbing over others two rungs at a time”)

H= How many Harleys do you (honestly . . .) plan to have in your garage during your midlife years?

S= How much of your decision to get a tattoo (or other) is motivated by a desire for significant shock value? (1–10 with 10 being “fork in toaster”)

V= Your level of irrational attachment to the idea of getting a tattoo (1–10 with 10 being “believe to be called by greater power to emblazon arrow-pierced heart on bicep as sign of evolved consciousness”)

- If T_{attoo} is greater than zero, feel free to emulate the fashion sense of your favorite heavy-metal rock star.

$$\frac{HI_s |50A - A^2|}{WI_q (C + 1)} = E_{\text{xtreme!}}$$

I_q= Your estimated IQ (100 is average, 130 means you should know better, 70 means you should consider pursuing motorcycle jumping.)

I_s= Your appreciation of intentional stupidity (1–10 with 10 being “just rewatched Mel Brook’s *Spaceballs* and found it a pithy reflection of today’s society”)

C= Number of children you have below the age of 18

H= Your height in inches

W= Your weight in pounds

A= Your age

- If $E_{\text{xtreme!}}$ is greater than 1, throw caution to the wind!

Should you pursue an interest in extreme sports?

Extreme sport (n.)—Any activity that requires hurtling through the air while acting cool and which may result in dismemberment and/or demise.

The vertical lines around $50A - A^2$ in this equation mean to take this quantity’s *absolute value*. If $50A - A^2$ comes out negative, just take away the minus sign. This creates a zero chance of pursuing an extreme sport if you are exactly fifty years old. Your chances increase in both directions from this point, however, assuming that if you are younger than fifty your bones will knit more quickly

and if you are older than fifty, you have already lived a full life. If you are an especially feisty fifty-year-old, you can add 5 to the terms between the absolute value lines, making this section of the equation $50A - A^2 + 5$.

Also taken into account is your IQ, which in general detracts from your ability to participate in extreme sports unless you are able to achieve a reasonable level of *intentional stupidity*. Intentionally stupid people are able to do things like, say, leap into Jackson Hole’s Corbett’s Couloir going 50 mph on two sticks of fiberglass.

Should you follow the advice of a self-help book?

Lose 5 pounds a week with Crisco! Make supermodels want your bod by accentuating your natural musk! Understand life's secrets by interpreting the mystical patterns of streetlights! In no time you can become a slim, clairvoyant, emotionally centered, financially secure, multitalented, sexual dynamo just like the millions of others who buy self-help books.

This equation balances the likely quality of advice with the degree to which the advice matches your current needs. If the word *Geek* appears in the book's title, you will of course want to think twice before actually following any of the advice contained therein.

$$\frac{SRE}{8(|D_r - D_n| + 1)(11-H)(T+1)^4} = D_{\text{haramsala}}$$

S= Number of years the author of self-help book attended an accredited school (Kauai Surfing Academy does not count)

R= Number of people you know who recommended the book

E= What printing is the book? (Check the copyright page for a series of numbers such as 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3; the smallest number in this series is the printing.)

D_r= How drastic is the change this book recommends? (1–10 with 10 being “move to Dharamsala and meditate while staring at cliff, surviving on one grain of rice per day”)

D_n= How drastic a change is needed in your life? (1–10 with 10 being “complete about-face”)

H= Reliability of the source that recommended this book (1–10 with 1 being *National Enquirer* and 10 being “Surgeon General”)

T= How many times does the word *Geek* appear in the title?

- If $D_{\text{haramsala}}$ is greater than 1, you should follow the book's advice.

Should you get a dog, cat, or goldfish (or should you stick with houseplants for now)?

Do you coo over St. Bernard puppies with tenderness unmatched even by your feelings for your own children?

Does the anticipation of a slobbery greeting make the end of the workday a little more bearable? On the other hand, how do you feel about teeth marks in your 1790s-era mahogany desk? And are you willing to be the primary caregiver to an animal without the ability to make its own macaroni and cheese?

The most important term of this equation is the amount of increased love and companionship you are looking for

in your life, especially if your personality supports large-pet ownership. It also doesn't hurt if you have some extra time to donate to parks, long walks, and Frisbees, and you have reached a level of responsibility that ensures your hypothetical pet won't have to take itself to the vet and slurp water from the mud puddle in your backyard. Finally, if your free-footed lifestyle keeps you globe-hopping more than home-bodying, you might want to forgo the large pet until you're a bit more settled.

$$\frac{(M+N)^{\sqrt{D}} + HR}{8T^2} = F_{\text{idol}}$$

D= Need for more love in your life (1–10 with 10 being “day job as prison warden; moonlight for the IRS”)

R= Your general level of responsibility (1–10 with 1 being “confident that taxes, kids, and calendar will sort themselves out if just left alone”)

T= In any one of the past six months, what is the largest number of days you spent traveling?

H= In hours, your extra time per day

M= Your tolerance for another creature's mischief (1–10 with 1 being *Cruella De Vil* and 10 being Dr. Doolittle)

N= How nurturing are you? (1–10 with 1 being “my cactus died”)

- If F_{idol} is less than 1, sea monkeys would be too ambitious.
- If F_{idol} is between 1 and 2, you should get a goldfish.
- If F_{idol} is between 2 and 3, you should get a cat.
- If F_{idol} is greater than 3, you should get a dog.

Is your personal grooming adequate?

As you tiptoe through the tulips, do the blossoms wilt in your wake? Do you find yourself turning heads for all the wrong reasons?

Smelling a bit grizzly might be permissible, if not downright beneficial, if you've planned to hole up alone with your infrared goggles in some northern Washington State compound for a couple of months. On the other hand, if you've just been posted to a diplomatic position in Washington, D.C., you need impeccable grooming. Thus this equation looks not only at your actual grooming, but also at the level of grooming required for your situation. If those around you (and to

whom you will be compared) are themselves dust-mite breeding grounds, they will be less likely to take you to task about the dog hair on your black suit jacket. Likewise, if there is little chance of being intimate with anyone this evening, why worry about that underarm odor?

This equation is fairly straightforward, with the only complexity coming in allowing additional grooming leeway to people below age 21 or above age 65, while holding those between these ages to higher standards. Also, if you are off the low end of the sandpaper grain scale, you have officially either grown a beard or become a hippie.

$$\frac{G \left(\frac{A^2}{4225} + 21^{21-a} \right) (25 - E)}{25P(F+1)(S+1)R} = A_{\text{adequate}}$$

R= Radius at which strangers are offended by your body odor (in feet)

F= Number of fingernails that have dirt under at least one-quarter of their arc

A= Your age

P= Your potential for intimacy this evening (1–10 with 10 being “returning home after overseas deployment”)

G= Grain of sandpaper that most closely describes your face (240–500 is fine grain used for finishing; 100–240 is mid-grain used for smoothing; 20–100 is rough grain

used for sanding off the face of your significant other.)

S= Number of stains currently showing on your clothing

E= Estimated average grooming score of those around you (-10 to 10 with 10 being “English royalty” and -10 being “English setter”)

- If A_{adequate} is greater than 1, you will be welcome in polite company.

$$\frac{FS}{TM} + \frac{FS - C(D+1)}{10} = G$$

F= Pounds of metabolized fettuccini Alfredo and Old Milwaukee Ice to lose in order to reach ideal weight

S= Marital status (Insert 1 for married and repressed; 5 for dating and optimistic; or 10 for swingin' single.)

T= How tired are you? (1–10 with 10 being “kindergarten teacher the day after Halloween”)

M= Minutes to the gym

C= How much do you need to do other things? (1–10 with 10 being “presently coaching wife in labor”)

D= How many days have you worked out in the last week? (C'mon, be honest....)

- If G is greater than 1, you should join a gym.

Should you join a gym?

If you have to ask, the answer is probably *yes*. Watching *10-Minute Abs* while eating Ben and Jerry's isn't the same as working out, though in this equation, if you're safely removed from the dating pool you might be able to get away with it. On the other hand, if you're single, and your toes are but a fading memory, it's time to pump some iron.

This equation measures how important it is for you to go to the gym versus how inconvenient it is to drag your degenerating physique through a blizzard in order to ride the elliptical like a manic hamster.

Of course, everyone has his own fitness comfort level. If you're hoping to make the cover of *Iron Bods and Hotrods* delete the +1 from inside the parentheses, making it almost imperative that you go to the gym if you haven't been within the last week (in this case, it won't matter if you have a conflict). If you're comfortable relying on the buoyancy of salt water to facilitate your breathing or have recurring nightmares of being chased by a fanged treadmill, you could make the +1 into a +10 and trick the equation into recommending a relaxing night spent watching *Buns of Steel* whilst munching on some double-fudge brownies.

"Geek Logik is a hoot!" —Will Shortz, Crossword Editor, *The New York Times*

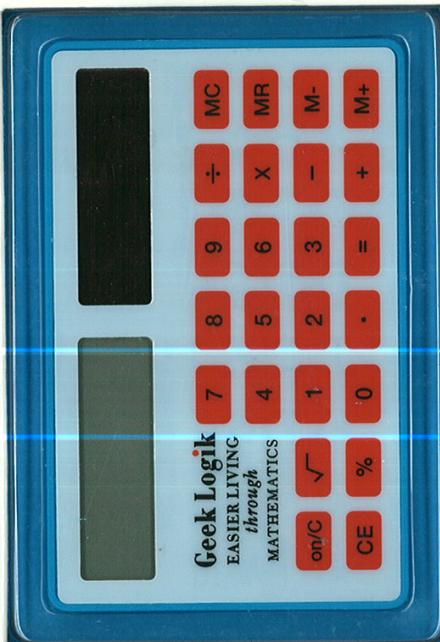
50 Foolproof Equations for Everyday Life

Geek Logik

USE THE PRINCIPLES OF BASIC ALGEBRA AND TAKE THE GUESSWORK OUT OF LIFE

COVERING DATING, ROMANCE, AND RELATIONSHIPS, CAREER AND FINANCE, HEALTH, AND MORE

BY GARTH SUNDEM



EASIER LIVING
through
MATHEMATICS

SAMPLE CALCULATIONS:

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Do I have a snowball's chance in hell with her? page 12

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How many beers should I have at the company picnic? page 78

Do I deserve a personal assistant? page 52



Should I get a tattoo? page 82

Should you stop to put gas in the car?

Every time we get into a car we are embracing the tradition of our pioneering forefathers who forged their way west along the Oregon Trail into history. Yes, auto travel helps us reconnect with individuality, freedom, and the invigorating risk of ending up stranded in the snow and having to eat our loved ones. This feeling is only heightened the longer you drive with your gas gauge pointing red. Will you make it? You flick the dial to see if the needle still moves. Should you turn around for that Conoco at the last exit? You turn off the air conditioning to improve gas mileage. Coasting into your dinner party on time is almost as good as coaxing your covered wagon across the last river crossing before

hitting the rich farmland in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Unfortunately, with this last push you have completely spent the reserves of your trusty oxen and will need to barter with the natives for the resources needed to power your wagon back to the corner trading post.

This equation compares time and feasibility with importance and risk. If there really is no chance you will make the 100 miles to your destination on your current eyeglass of petrol, you should (obviously) stop, especially if it is more important to simply show up than to arrive on time. However, if the nearest gas station is significantly out of the way, and your gas tank is at or near the needed level—and you're a bit cocky—you might just press on.

Is it time to see a therapist?

Lately you've found a couple gaps in your usual quick-witted competence, but you're sure it's simply a product of your recent alien abduction and that being both president of the United States and quarterback of the Super Bowl-winning Houston Oilers makes for an unusually stressful life. However, recently some of your friends have been suggesting getting professional help, citing your pairing of Houston Oilers and Super Bowl as a sure sign of dementia.

According to this equation, factors that might influence you to unload some of your

troubles on a therapist are being uptight about little things, or the existence of one or more big things (i.e., you find yourself distraught over Barbie's romance with surfer doll Blaine and have repeatedly called Mattel to offer Ken your support).

In evaluating the term L , give yourself half a point for every person listed from whom you receive explicit instructions, and then depend upon your therapist to evaluate whether or not these people are "real." Beware: If your therapist is named Jung or Freud, he may be a figment as well.



$$\frac{S}{A} \left[\frac{5T_a}{I_{ot}(T_d + T_g)} \left(\frac{M_d + I_{gt}}{M_t} \right)^2 \right] = G$$

S= How bad or dangerous would it be to get stranded? (1–10 with 10 being "Alaskan highway as winter closes in")

A= Your level of coast-in-on-fumes arrogance (1–10 with 10 being "damn the torpedoes")

T_a= In minutes, how long until you are due to arrive?

T_d= In minutes, the time needed to drive where you are going

T_g= In minutes, the extra time you add by stopping for gas

I_{ot}= Importance of arriving on time (1–10 with 10 being "late for my shuttle launch")

I_{gt}= Importance of getting there at all (1–10 with 10 being "picking up girlfriend at wilderness trailhead")

M_d= Miles to your destination

M_t= Estimated miles in your gas tank

- If G is greater than 1, find a gas station now.



$$\frac{K(L+1)^5(D+1)^2(V+1)}{10C} = L_{\text{loony}}$$

L= Do you now, or have you ever asked people to refer to you as any of the following (check the appropriate spaces and add number of marks to get a total score for L):

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| — Napoleon | — Queen Mother |
| — Marilyn Monroe | — Joan of Arc |
| — God | — Pavarotti |
| — The President | — Elvis |

D= At this time, how many people are "out to get you"?

C= How good are you at dealing with change? (1–10 with 10 being "5 professions in 4 years and loving it")

V= How many violent fantasies have you had in the past week?

K= On a scale of 1–10 with 10 being "VERY," describe your level of adverse reaction to the following situations and

then add these numbers together to get a total score for K:

1. ___ Living room chair is moved from its proper position.
2. ___ Your pet goldfish of one month died.
3. ___ The toilet seat is left up.
4. ___ A friend does not return your call.
5. ___ The drain in your bathtub is clogged with hair.
6. ___ You are rudely cut off when merging onto the freeway.
7. ___ Your Internet browser crashes.
8. ___ You grab the milk carton out of the fridge and find it is empty.
9. ___ You left your headlights on and now your car battery is dead.
10. ___ It is raining.

- If L_{loony} is greater than 1, you should see a therapist.

Should you walk, bike, or drive?

With every revolution of your Hummer's tires, you see a drum of oil vaporize into the atmosphere, another year of dependence on foreign oil, and another pound of pudding pops congealing in your thighs. But with six nets of soccer balls in the back of the car and 15 miles to go, there's not much choice.

This equation weights heavily both the distance you need to travel and the amount of stuff you need to carry, but only after you reach a certain threshold. For example, if your destination is less than a mile away, the term D , which gauges distance, is nearly meaningless; if it's more than 10, there's little chance you will even consider biking. Likewise, if you have less than 10 pounds of stuff to transport, carrying it is of little concern,

but as the weight you need to carry increases past 30 pounds (and especially once you reach 50 lbs.!) this stuff will *really* make you want to drive.

Also, in order to walk, you need to have enough time to do so. Assuming you walk at about 3 mph (a brisk pace) you will need 20 minutes per mile. If you have more time than distance, you will be likely to walk; if your time is tight, you might need to drive (unless finding parking is going to be a nightmare). If the distance is farther than you could walk at a 15-minute-per-mile pace ($15D/T$ is greater than 1), you will be especially likely to bike or drive. Finally, the weather and your fitness play obvious roles in determining whether or not you go bravely into that great outdoors.

$$\frac{150D^2W\left(\frac{D}{100}+1\right)\left(\frac{S}{100}+1\right)}{F^2T(T+P)} = M_{ode}$$

D= In miles, how far is your destination?

F= What is your fitness level? (1–10 with 10 being "Olympic cross-country skier")

W= How bad is the weather? (1–10 with 10 being "typhoon")

S= How many pounds of stuff do you need to bring with you?

T= How many minutes until you need to be there?

P= How many minutes would it take you to find parking?

- If M_{ode} is less than 1, you should walk.

- If M_{ode} is between 1 and 2, you should bike.

- If M_{ode} is greater than 2, you should drive.

Should you do it yourself (or call a professional)?

Relax, I've done plumbing like this a million times. Yeah, I know it leaks at first—the solder hasn't had time to set up yet. I'm sure if we just leave it alone overnight, it will be fine. Besides, we always wanted a pool. If this sounds familiar, read on—this equation could just save your castle (not to mention your marriage).

Each term on the top of the equation balances the one below it. For example, the first terms on the top and bottom compare the money you have to spend versus the money it would cost to hire an expert. If the cost of a professional outweighs the money you have available, then you will be more likely to do it yourself.

The next terms measure the difference between the time you have available, the

time the repair is likely to take you, and how much time you could save by hiring a professional. However, if you've thumped your chest in front of family and friends, or touted your unmatched skill with a nail gun, you might be forced to give it a try.

The urgency of the project plays a complex role—if the project is very urgent or not urgent at all, you should probably have a go at it, especially if it's not that daunting. By "squaring" the urgency term, the chance of doing it yourself increases in both directions from a low point found at urgency level 7—the level at which a project is quite urgent, but you still have time to wait for the expert to show up. If it's a horrible job but not urgent, at least you can take your time. If it's horrible *and* urgent, you'll have to take a crack at it.

$$\frac{\$_e T_e + T_y S_a S_c + [(U-7)^2 + 1] + S_a^2}{\$_y + 50T_e + H + D^2} = B_{obVila}$$

S_a= Your current actual skill level in this area (1–10 with 10 being "earned a Ph.D. in caulking")

S_c= Skill level you have claimed to family and friends (1–10 with 10 being "get sweatshirts as gifts from extended family that read 'World's Greatest Plumber'")

T_y= In hours, time you have available to devote to this project

T_e= In hours, time this project should take a professional

\$_y= In dollars, total funds you have available to spend on this project

\$_e= In dollars, hourly rate a professional would charge

H= How horrible do you find this project? (1–10 with 10 being "involves handling raw sewage")

D= What is the potential for later disaster should you apply your "expertise"? (1–10 with 10 being "there's no roofing problem that can't be fixed with bubble gum and duct tape")

U= Urgency of this project (1–10 with 10 being "water level rising; basement vermin building ark")

- If B_{obVila} is greater than 1, you should do it yourself.

Should you wake up five minutes earlier?

In an idyllic summer, with birds chirping and the sun peeking through your curtains, it's easy to leap out of bed ready for the day; in the middle of winter, on the other hand, you want to hit the snooze button with a baseball bat. You know those five extra minutes can make or break your day, but it's a fine line between having more time to be productive and needing to stash your sleep-deprived self in the copier cabinet for a midafternoon power nap. Likewise, if you know you're honestly just going to hit the snooze

button until only a police escort would get you to work on time, there's no reason to set an unrealistic wake-up time (unless you're really into the snooze-button thing, in which case you could change the 2 under S_{snooze} to a 10).

And what sort of masochist even considers waking up earlier than absolutely necessary when exposed flesh will be frozen solid instantly in the dark igloo that is your room? This equation says that if you can see your breath or if it's too dark to tell, you should stay in bed as long as possible.

$$\frac{S_a}{S_u} \left(\frac{IT}{100L} - \frac{S_{\text{snooze}}}{2} \right) = W$$

S_a= Hours of sleep you'll get tonight

S_u= Hours of sleep you need regularly in order to remain civil with telemarketers

I= How important is the extra five minutes of awake time? (1–10 with 10 being "in these five minutes I will solve the unified theory of everything")

L= How much light is in your bedroom when you wake up? (1–10 with 10 being "I live next to Bob's Neon Signs and Spotlight Emporium")

T= Temperature of your bedroom in degrees Fahrenheit

S_{snooze}= Of the last five times you meant to get up early, how many times did you hit the snooze button until reaching your normal wake-up time?

- If W is greater than 1, you should wake up earlier.

Should you eat something scary from the back of the fridge, or just order Chinese again?

With no outside influences, we would order Chinese food every night, because Chinese food is good—especially Chinese food that is either fried or covered in enough sweet sticky sauce to technically make this sauce the entrée and the food part the garnish. However, your monthly food budget might not support a nightly \$12.95, and eventually your clogged arteries will rebel against a lipid-rich Maoist cuisine.

This equation balances your stress level and the likelihood of the National

Science Institute studying your fridge for clues to the origin of life against your budget and current cholesterol level. Also, if the Wok and Talk down the street has started recognizing your number on caller ID and now answers your phone call with a personal greeting, this intrusive intimacy may lead you to explore other cuisine options (or at least pick a new Chinese place where the busboys don't consider you a shut-in).

$$\left(\frac{D}{30} - \frac{\$s}{\$m} \right) + \frac{10S^2\sqrt{R}}{C(F_t - F_f + 1)} = K_{\text{ungPao}}$$

R= How many seconds of phone time does it take for the restaurant to recognize your voice? (maximum of 30 seconds)

\\$_m= Your monthly food budget (in dollars)

\\$_s= How much money have you already spent this month on food?

D= Number of today's date

C= Your current blood cholesterol level (140–200 is the normal range; 300 is *very* high.)

F_t= Total number of substantial food items currently in your fridge (Mustard and baking soda don't count.)

F_f= Number of those food items that have at least a 20 percent chance of being either furry or living

S= How stressed out are you? (1–10 with 10 being "tight as a banjo string")

- If K_{ungPao} is greater than 1, you should order Chinese.

Should you keep your New Year's resolution?

Last night you promised to stop watching TV. Now it's the morning after and football has just started. **L** What were you *thinking*?

It's time for damage control. You remember standing on the table and shouting, but how many people were in the room? Were you sufficiently liquored up to blame the booze?

The defining term in this equation is your marital status. If you are married and made a drunken ass of yourself, it's likely that you're going to have to suck it up and live with the consequences. If you're single, your oh-so-helpful friends may

actually have encouraged your bizarre and debauched behavior on New Year's Eve, making it easier to weasel out of your resolution once everyone sobers up. (In fact, the more people who clapped and cheered while you spouted your manifesto, the easier it will be to blame them and thus recant.) However, if the resolution will improve your life and it's not hard to keep, there's a good chance you should stick to it anyway.

If you have an especially iron-willed spouse, change the 8 to a 4; if you have especially rowdy and/or depraved friends, change the 8 to a 10.

$$\frac{I}{H} + \frac{P(S - 8)}{100(A + 0.01)} = R$$

I= How much would this resolution improve your life? (1-10 with 10 being "I would go from Mussolini to Gandhi")

H= How hard is the resolution to keep? (1-10 with 10 being "I will weave my own clothing, hunger-strike for peace, and drink my own urine")

P= Number of people who egged you on last night

A= Your estimated blood alcohol level at the time you made the resolution (At 0.1

you start chatting up the coat rack; at 0.5 you become an honorary member of the band Crosby, Stills & Nash.)

S= Marital status (Enter 5 for "Hey baby, what's your sign?" and 10 for "Honey, can you read that sign for me?")

- If R is greater than 1, you should keep your New Year's resolution.