

Re: Positive random number

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- *From:* jameskuyper@xxxxxxxxxxxx
 - *Date:* Wed, 19 Dec 2007 11:44:58 -0800 (PST)
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Johannes Bauer wrote:

James Kuyper schrieb:

...

There might be obscure discussions among mathematicians in which such a definition is used, but I believe that in almost all contexts, the overwhelming majority of the mathematically literate population consider 0 to be neither positive nor negative. I don't think it's excessively dogmatic to insist on interpreting it that way in this context.

They are not obscure. Consider the work of Peano (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Peano) which in his older works state that the positive Integers start at 1, while at a later release (Peano.G.: Formulaire de mathématiques 5 Bde. Turin, Bocca 1895-1908) he states they start at zero.

I think that counts as obscure, as far as non-mathematicians are concerned.

It is **not** something that "almost all mathematicians" agree about, it is primarily a question of usefulness. Both variants are common, it even

Again, I don't believe that both are common outside of mathematics departments. Among users of mathematics, rather than producers, the idea that 0 might count as positive is pretty much unheard of.

depends which university you're attending. Dogmatism are stupid, there are good reasons why zero should be considered a positive integer and there are also good reasons why it shouldn't. It's important to base your decision on reason, not on "that's what I think everybody is doing".

Re: Positive random number

My reason says that if the definition of positive is changed to " ≥ 0 ", I will still need a term for " > 0 ", and it will have to be a new term distinguishable from "positive". If you want to have a new name for what I've always heard referred to as "non-negative", why not give it a name that has no prior contradictory associations? I personally have never use "positive" in a context where the new proposed definition would be an acceptable replacement, and I don't think I've ever seen it used in such a context either.

Then again – in a trueley mathematic sense – almost all mathematicians consider zero to be nonpositive. Almost all of them agree that zero is a positive number, too. This is because "almost" in a mathematic sense means "except for a finite number of exceptions" :-)

I'm familiar with this meaning for "almost all", and I think you've misapplied it. I don't remember the precise definition, but I believe that the entire set has to be infinitely bigger than the set of exceptions. For instance, a function that is 0 for all real values, except that it is 1 for all integers, then that function is 0 "almost everywhere". I don't believe that the set of mathematicians is infinitely larger than the subset who hold those opinions.