

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Understanding Big Numbers

Understanding large numbers is one of the most troubling deficits in the mind of the average adult. Science, not to mention economics, uses large numbers with great regularity, but almost no one in the public eye makes an effort to help the average citizen really understand what they mean.

The late astronomer Carl Sagan popularized the phrase “Billions and billions!” in his science series *Cosmos* in the 1980’s. Although Dr. Sagan said this with great excitement and a very melodious voice – he really failed to help us understand what the difference is between million, billion, and trillion. If our children are to understand science – and national finances! – we must help them gain a more fundamental understanding of large and small numbers.

[8.1: Million, Billion, Trillion- Big Numbers and Money](#)

[8.2: The Thousand-Meter Solar System](#)

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