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googol and googolplex

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A googol is 10 to the 100th power (which is 1 followed by 100 zeros). The term was invented by Milton Sirotta, the 9-year nephew of mathematician Edward Kasner, who had asked his nephew what he thought such a large number should be called. Such a number, Milton apparently replied after a short thought, could only be called something as silly as...a *googol*! A googol is larger than the number of elementary particles in the universe, which amount to only 10 to the 80th power.

Later, another mathematician devised the term *googolplex* for 10 to the power of googol - that is, 1 followed by 10 to the power of 100 zeros. Frank Pilhofer has determined that, given [Moore's Law](#) (which is that computer processor power doubles about every 1 to 2 years), it would make no sense to try to print out a googolplex for another 524 years - since all earlier attempts to print a googolplex out would be overtaken by the faster processor.

Read more about it at:

- > [Frank Pilhofer's brief but engaging paper on Googolplex is called just that.](#)
- > [Google , the popular search engine, derived its name from googol.](#)

This word suggested by: Lawrence Lea


Last updated on: Apr 22, 2003


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