

Only a genius can solve this equation that is causing a 'storm' online, how about you?

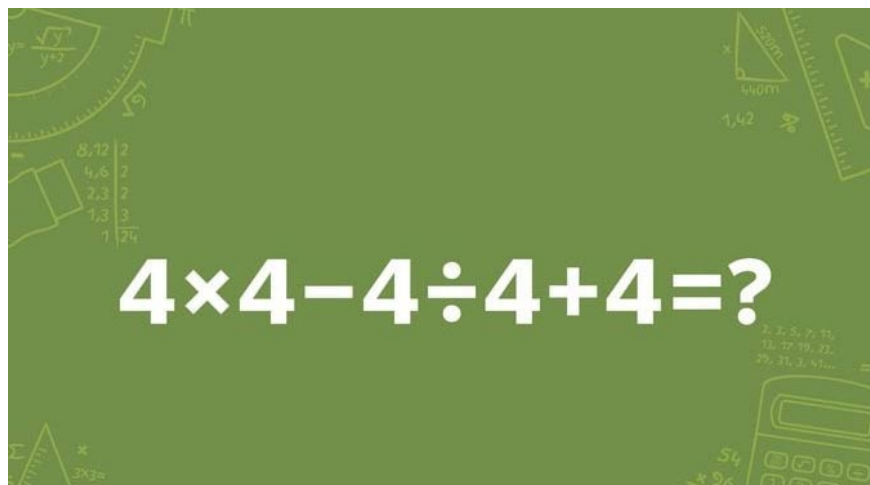
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This is one of those math problems that went viral on social media and instantly left many people stumped (especially after reading all the conflicting answers in the comments). If you're a math whiz, see if you can pass this elementary math test below.

What is the mathematical equation that went "viral" on social networks?

You've probably seen this problem (or a similar one) circulating on Facebook: $4 \times 4 - 4 \div 4 + 4$. The equation seems so simple. But math puzzles like this go viral because they're designed to fool people—and that's exactly why they're so appealing.



How to solve math equation $4 \times 4 - 4 \div 4 + 4$

To solve the equation $4 \times 4 - 4 \div 4 + 4$ (or any other equation), you need to follow the correct order of operations, a set of rules that dictate the sequence in which mathematical operations need to be performed. The acronym PEMDAS is a good way to remember the order: parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition,

subtraction. And a good mnemonic to remember it exactly is 'Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally.' Some people even say 'Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally and Let her Rest,' as a reminder to do those operations from left to right. (Fun fact: In the UK and some other countries, they use a different acronym, BODMAS—parentheses, order, division, multiplication, addition, subtraction—but it's the same concept.)

The solution below is courtesy of Alvaro Lozano-Robledo, PhD, a mathematics professor at the University of Connecticut, who is known for posting math tutorials on YouTube & TikTok. Here are the steps to solve the "hot" equation $4 \times 4 - 4 \div 4 + 4$:

1. Since this expression doesn't have parentheses or exponents, let's start with multiplication and division, working from left to right. So, we do the multiplication first: $4 \times 4 = 16$.
2. Next, we solve the division part of the equation: $4 \div 4 = 1$.
3. Then we move on to addition and subtraction, also working from left to right: $16 - 1 = 15$.
4. Finally, we add the last 4 numbers: $15 + 4 = 19$.

Why do so many people get math wrong?

'The maths is very clear,' says Lozano-Robledo. 'But I can imagine people who have been away from maths for a long time might not remember the rules for doing the calculations.'

A common mistake is that people solve problems from left to right, ignoring PEMDAS.

Another common mistake is when people treat multiplication and division as if they must be done strictly from left to right, instead of realizing that they have the same precedence. The same goes for addition and subtraction—these operations should also be processed from left to right, regardless of which comes first.

But the main reason people get this and other viral maths puzzles wrong on social media is because these puzzles are deliberately confusing. *'If you write the maths properly, it's all clear,'* he said.

For example, in this equation, if 4×4 were in parentheses, it would be obvious that we need to solve that part first. But without those group symbols, people would misunderstand the structure. *'Writing parentheses means "free,"'* Lozano-Robledo jokes. *'This is not a telegram we send out to charge per character.'*

And it's not just the structure that adds to the confusion. Lozano-Robledo points to the use of symbols \div in equations as opposed to a slash ($/$) **for the division term.** *"We don't even use that symbol unless you're trying to be confusing,"* he says.

What do mathematicians think about controversial equations?

"It's incredibly frustrating to see those equations presented like that," Lozano-Robledo shared, *"because students or people will think, If I'm confused about a problem about multiplying and adding 4, how am I going to be able to solve any math problem, especially at a higher level?"*

The bottom line, says Lozano-Robledo, if you're having trouble solving a math equation that's gone viral online, don't blame yourself! *"The people who are wrong aren't the ones who come up with different and wrong*

answers," he adds. *"The people who are wrong are the ones who propose and write the problem in a confusing way, when you can always communicate the math in a direct way ."*

So next time you come across one of these viral math equations, remember to carefully follow the order of operations. But also remember that these puzzles aren't meant to teach math lessons; they're designed to grab attention and spark conversation.

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