

+ **MATHS**
+ **4**
+ **US**

It makes you think...

House prices are falling....

so **my** house has decreased in value.

True?

Here's an extract from a recent Guardian report.

LONDON, Sept 4 (Reuters) - British house prices fell for the seven month running in August to stand a record 12.7 percent lower than a year earlier, a survey showed on Thursday, in a sign the property downturn has already turned into a crash.....

More than 25,000 pounds has been wiped off the value of the average British home in the last year as a decade-long boom turned into a bust that helped bring the economy to a standstill in the second quarter of 2008

But what I want to know is.....

1. Are all house prices falling at around the figure quoted in the article? Are some kinds of houses (maybe houses in pretty rural villages?) still selling at high prices whilst the bottom is dropping out of the market in cities?
2. Or maybe prices for houses at the top end of the market are holding up very nicely thank you (millionaires still have a few bucks to spend) whilst more ordinary houses are dropping in value because Jo ordinary is feeling the pinch and has decided not to buy? If so, if most of the drop in prices is happening at the bottom end of the market, maybe my ordinary house has dropped by more than the average.....

I don't know the answers to these questions, but **it makes you think**, doesn't it....

Chances are....

A friend of mine went for one of those scans that tell you whether your baby might have various problems.

She got a result saying that there was a 1 in 30 chance that her baby had a problem. Which upset her quite a lot until somebody else said "1 in 30? That means there's about a 97% chance that the baby is fine". Both figures are right, but they felt very different to her.

It makes you think, doesn't it?

It's only a 2% increase...?

The government has set a new adult numeracy target in England.

At the moment roughly 79 per cent of the working age population has numeracy skills at Entry level 3 or above. The government wants that to increase to 81 per cent by 2011. That sounds like a 2 per cent increase; which would mean providers only need to increase their provision by 2 per cent. Surely not a huge ask; so what's all the fuss about?

The trouble is in the way we use the word "percent". There's a subtle but deadly difference between "a two percent increase" and "a two percentage points increase". What the government is looking for by 2011 is a **"two percentage points increase"**, which isn't the same as a **"two percent increase"**; it's a lot more in fact. Look at it this way. If 6 out of the 100 top jobs in this country last year were held by women, and this year there are 12 women in the top 100, that's a jump of 6 percentage points, but put it another way it's a 100 percent increase. **Percentage points** increase isn't the same as **percent increase**.

By the way, the figures about women at the top are just pretend....

And what the government is aiming for works out at an extra 130 thousand "achievements" each year between now and 2011. Divvy that up roughly among 9 English regions, and you're looking for something like 14 thousand extra numeracy achievements in each region each year.

Tricky; but it makes you think, doesn't it?

Fair play across the board?

If we all get a 1% pay increase, it's not a lot, but at least it's fair, isn't it? We're all getting better off by the same margin.

Well, maybe not.

If you earn £20,000 a year, the 1% increase will get you an extra £200 a year.

But if you're on £50,000, the 1% increase will get you an extra £500 a year.

So your 1% and somebody else's 1% aren't the same thing....in your pocket.

It makes you think, doesn't it?

"Food prices shooting up by 20%!"

"Food price rises held at 5%!"

These can't both be true.... can they?

It's perfectly possible that food prices overall are only going up by 5%, whilst your shopping bill might be going up by nearer 20%. Lobster and champagne might not be going up at all, whilst bread and dripping might be shooting up at a fierce rate. And if your diet is more bread-and-dripping than lobster-and-champagne, you may be looking at far more than a 5% increase, even though the overall increase taking into account all kinds of foods, might be just 5%.

It makes you think, doesn't it?