

## Calculator Chaos

Hello. I am a nine from your calculator. You are probably freaking out because a digit on your calculator is talking to you. Don't panic. I am here to tell you that the calculator won't work today because there was a big disaster yesterday and nobody can go to work. Sit down and I will explain what happened.

The calculator is much bigger than it looks. There is a portal hidden somewhere behind the screen that leads to a massive world. It's where we live and where we go when we are not at work, on display. We are split into four teams: Decimal, Hexadecimal, Octal and Binary. Different teams are displayed depending on what you want to do with the calculator. I'm in Decimal, which recruits all the normal digits. Hexadecimal recruits all the normal digits and the letters A to F. Octal recruits the digits zero to seven and Binary only recruits zeroes and ones. Within these teams, we are put into groups based on our digit.

Yesterday, all the numbers on the calculator had a big meeting. We meet once per month to discuss what is going on, share news and trade between teams. The Octal leader, a seven, spoke first.

"Life is going well for the Octals," he said, "all Octal houses now have central heating and extra-soft beds."

"That's nothing!" Yelled the Hexadecimal leader, an E, "all Hexadecimal citizens get a free Hexapod, a very expensive car! Plus, we have more than twice as many digits as you! Ha ha!"

"Hey, that's not very nice," said Seven.

"Shut up Seven," said the Binary leader, a zero, "I have seen Decimal and Hexadecimal on screen and I have certainly been there with Binary myself, but I have never seen Octal up there in my whole life. You don't do any work at all!"

There was a lot of muttering and a few shouts. The Decimal leader, an eight, cleared her throat.

"I think you are being a bit mean to Octal," she said, "I am sure they do work too. All numbers are equal and we shouldn't look down on them."

"But have you seen them work?" Asked E. There was a long silence.

"Ha ha! I knew it! You haven't!" Zero shouted, "the Octals are fat and lazy! They lie in their extra-soft beds all day, warmed up by their central heating while we do all the work! They are useless and a waste of space! They must be destroyed!"

The Binary and Hexadecimal numbers cheered.

"If you want to kill the Octals, you'll have to get past us first!" Eight cried.

"Octal and Decimal must be destroyed!" E said, "numbers of Binary and Hexadecimal, attack!"

Different numbers fight in different ways. As I watched, ones, fours, fives, sevens, nines and As headbutted other numbers. Twos, eights, Bs and Ds jumped on them. Threes, Cs, Es and Fs bit them. Sixes kicked them. A dead B lay on the ground with an unconscious, bleeding four next to her. It was hard to tell who was on my side and who wasn't. A C bit my leg so I turned around

and headbutted it. It bit my head and wouldn't let go. Luckily, a six arrived and kicked him until he let go. Then he ran away, the C chasing him. I stood where I was, still recovering from the encounter. Suddenly, a one charged at me. We headbutted each other over and over again until the one's head started bleeding.

"You're bleeding," I said, "surrender now and we'll take you to hospital."

"Never!" He exclaimed. He kept fighting. Eventually, his head split in half and he fell backwards, dead. I still remember that moment. It was a horrible sight. I felt terrible. I had killed another number.

*Get over it, I told myself, he would have done the same to me.*

Eventually, the battle ended. E was dead and Zero surrendered.

"I surrender," he said, "I realise that what I did was wrong. Octal are just as good as any other team."

He surveyed the battlefield. Many numbers were dead or wounded. He looked at Eight.

"You were very brave," he said, "you knew it was wrong for us to attack Octal and you did something about it. Not everyone is brave enough to do that."

"I would like to thank Team Decimal too," said Seven, "if they hadn't helped us, Team Octal would be dead forever."

"Thank you," said Eight, "you are very kind. Now we must get all the wounded

numbers to hospital."

"What's going to happen to us?" Zero asked.

"We're going to forgive you for this," said Seven, "everyone makes mistakes sometimes. Make sure it doesn't happen again."

"Okay," Zero said, "let's get to work."

A few hours later, all the dead numbers were buried and all the wounded ones were in hospital. Hexadecimal were electing a new leader. I was walking back to my house when a bell rang.

"We need thirty Decimal digits on the screen," a voice said, "Three of each digit."

Eight ran over to me. "Mr Nine," he said, "We're in trouble. We don't have enough digits that aren't wounded to meet the requirements. Could you please go to the screen and explain to the human using the calculator that he won't be able to use it today?"

I was very excited to have a mission from the Decimal leader, but I wasn't sure about talking to humans.

"Are you sure it's a good idea, sir?" I asked, "we've never talked to humans before."

"Now is a good time to start," Eight said, "if we don't talk to them, we might get thrown in the bin and taken to the dump. Because that's where most humans put calculators that don't work."

I gasped. The dump! It was every number's worst nightmare. The calculator would get pulled apart and destroyed. If the calculator is destroyed, our world will explode and the portal will wither into dust. All the numbers would die!

"I'll go, sir," I said, running towards the portal.

Eventually, I got here and saw you. As you can see, the calculator is in no state to operate properly. You will just have to use pen and paper today while we sort things out. Please don't throw the calculator away. Goodbye.

**The End**