

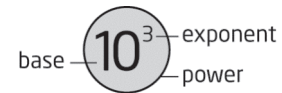
Goal • Develop your understanding of scientific notation.

What to Do

- Read about scientific notation and answer the questions that follow.

Powers

You can write repeated multiplication as a power. Powers are named after their bases, so 10^3 is called a power of 10. $10^3 = 10 \times 10 \times 10$.



Writing Scientific Notation

Scientific notation is a way of writing very large or very small numbers so they are easier to work with. A number written in scientific notation is the product of a number between 1 and 9, and a power of 10. Large numbers have a power of 10 with a positive exponent. Small numbers have a power of 10 with a negative exponent.

Example 1

Mercury is about 58 000 000 km from the Sun. Write 58 000 000 in scientific notation.

Solution

The number will have two parts: a number between 1 and 10, including 1, and a power of 10. The first number will be 5.8. What do you need to multiply 5.8 by to get 58 000 000?

$$\begin{aligned} 58\,000\,000 &= 5.8 \times 10\,000\,000 \\ &= 5.8 \times 10^7 \end{aligned}$$

Write 10 000 000 as a power of 10.

Check: Move the decimal in 5.8 seven places to the right and you get 58 000 000.

Example 2

The diameter of a helium atom is about 0.000 000 000 256 m. Write 0.000 000 000 256 in scientific notation.

Solution

The number will have two parts: a number between 1 and 10, including 1, and a power of 10. The first number will be 2.56. What do you need to multiply 2.56 by to get 0.000 000 000 256?

$$\begin{aligned} 0.000\,000\,000\,256 &= 2.56 \times 0.000\,000\,000\,1 \\ &= 2.56 \times 10^{-10} \end{aligned}$$

Write 0.000 000 000 1 as a power of 10.

Check: Move the decimal in 2.56 ten places to the left and you get 0.000 000 000 256.



Using Scientific Notation

Write each of the following in scientific notation.

1. The approximate diameter of an electron is 0.000 000 000 000 005 6 cm.
2. The approximate diameter of Saturn is 120 500 km.
3. Neptune is about 4 500 000 000 km from the Sun.
4. The mass of a dust particle is 0.000 000 001 023 kg.

Calculating with Scientific Notation

You can multiply and divide with numbers in scientific notation without writing them in standard form.

Example 1

Convert 9.7×10^7 AU to light years. (1 AU = 1.58×10^{-5} light years)

Solution

If you are multiplying powers with the same base, you can add the exponents. $a^m \times a^n = a^{m+n}$

$$\begin{aligned} 9.7 \times 10^7 \times 1.58 \times 10^{-5} &= 9.7 \times 1.58 \times 10^7 \times 10^{-5} \\ &= 15.326 \times 10^{7+(-5)} \\ &= 15.326 \times 10^2 \end{aligned}$$

Check: The first number is not between 1 and 10. Change the number to proper scientific notation.

$$15.326 \times 10^2 = 1.5326 \times 10^3 \text{ light years}$$

Example 2

Convert 2.1×10^8 light years to astronomical units. $\left(1 \text{ ly} = \frac{1}{1.58 \times 10^{-5}} \text{ AU}\right)$

Solution

If you are dividing powers with the same base, subtract the exponents. $a^m \div a^n = a^{m-n}$

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{2.1 \times 10^8}{1.58 \times 10^{-5}} &= 1.329 \times 10^{8-(-5)} \\ &= 1.329 \times 10^{13} \text{ AU} \end{aligned}$$

Check: The first number is between 1 and 10 and the second number is a power of 10, so the number is written in proper scientific notation.

Solve the following. Express your answers in proper scientific notation.

1. $(5.75 \times 10^9) \times (1.4 \times 10^2)$
2. $(2.6 \times 10^4) \times (3.5 \times 10^3)$
3. $\frac{9.3 \times 10^7}{4.8 \times 10^8}$
4. $\frac{7.3 \times 10^2}{1.3 \times 10^{-6}}$

