Forms of Answers

The following rules explain acceptable forms for answers. Coaches should ensure that Mathletes are familiar with these rules prior to participating at any level of competition. Competition answers will be scored in compliance with these rules for forms of answers.

Units of measurement are not required in answers, but they must be correct if given. When a problem asks for an answer expressed in a specific unit of measure or when a unit of measure is provided in the answer blank, equivalent answers expressed in other units are not acceptable. For example, if a problem asks for the number of ounces and 36 oz is the correct answer, 2 lb 4 oz will not be accepted. If a problem asks for the number of cents and 25 cents is the correct answer, $0.25 will not be accepted.

The plural form of the units will always be provided in the answer blank, even if the answer appears to require the singular form of the units.

Geometric figures may not be drawn to scale and lengths of geometric figures should be assumed to be measured in "units" unless otherwise stated.

All answers must be expressed in simplest form. A "common fraction" is to be considered a fraction in the form $\pm\frac{a}{b}$, where a and b are natural numbers and $GCF(a, b) = 1$. In some cases the term "common fraction" is to be considered a fraction in the form $\frac{A}{B}$, where A and B are algebraic expressions and A and B do not have a common factor. A simplified "mixed number" ("mixed numeral," "mixed fraction") is to be considered a fraction in the form $\pm N\frac{a}{b}$, where N, a and b are natural numbers, $a < b$ and $GCF(a, b) = 1$. Examples:

Problem: What is 8 ÷ 12 expressed as a common fraction? *Answer:* $\frac{2}{3}$ *Unacceptable:* $\frac{4}{6}$

Problem: What is 12 ÷ 8 expressed as a common fraction? *Answer:* $\frac{3}{2}$ *Unacceptable:* $\frac{12}{8}$, $1\frac{1}{2}$

Problem: What is the sum of the lengths of the radius and the circumference of a circle of diameter $\frac{1}{4}$ unit expressed as a common fraction in terms of π? *Answer:* $\frac{1+2\pi}{8}$

Problem: What is 20 ÷ 12 expressed as a mixed number? *Answer:* $1\frac{2}{3}$ *Unacceptable:* $1\frac{8}{12}$, $\frac{5}{3}$

Ratios should be expressed as simplified common fractions unless otherwise specified. Examples:

Acceptable Simplified Forms: $\frac{7}{2}, \frac{3}{\pi}, \frac{4-\pi}{6}$ *Unacceptable:* $3\frac{1}{2}, \frac{\frac{1}{4}}{3}, 3.5, 2:1$

Radicals must be simplified. A simplified radical must satisfy: 1) no radicands have a factor which possesses the root indicated by the index; 2) no radicands contain fractions; and 3) no radicals appear in the denominator of a fraction. Numbers with fractional exponents are *not* in radical form. Examples:

Problem: What is $\sqrt{15} \times \sqrt{5}$ expressed in simplest radical form? *Answer:* $5\sqrt{3}$ *Unacceptable:* $\sqrt{75}$

Answers to problems asking for a response in the form of a dollar amount or an unspecified monetary unit (e.g., "How many dollars...," "How much will it cost...," "What is the amount of interest...") should be expressed in the form ($) *a.bc* or *a.bc* (dollars), where *a* is an integer and *b* and *c* are digits. The *only* exceptions to this rule are when *a* is zero, in which case it may be omitted, or when *b* and *c* are both zero, in which case they both may be omitted. Answers in the form ($) *a.bc* or *a.bc* (dollars) should be rounded to the nearest cent, unless otherwise specified. Examples:

Acceptable Forms: 2.35, 0.38, .38, 5.00, 5 *Unacceptable:* 4.9, 8.0

Do not make approximations for numbers (e.g., π, $\frac{2}{3}$, $5\sqrt{3}$) in the data given or in solutions unless the problem says to do so.

Do not do any intermediate rounding (other than the "rounding" a calculator performs) when calculating solutions. All rounding should be done at the end of the calculation process.

Scientific notation should be expressed in the form $a \times 10^n$ where *a* is a decimal, $1 \le |a| < 10$, and *n* is an integer. Examples:

Problem: What is 6895 expressed in scientific notation? *Answer:* 6.895×10^3

Problem: What is 40,000 expressed in scientific notation? *Answer:* 4×10^4 *or* 4.0×10^4

An answer expressed to a greater or lesser degree of accuracy than called for in the problem will not be accepted. Whole-number answers should be expressed in their whole-number form. Thus, 25.0 will not be accepted for 25, and 25 will not be accepted for 25.0.