

Calculating the mode

The **mode** is the name of another type of average. It is the most **common** item in a set of data. It's the number or thing that appears **most often**.

For example, in a list of peoples' favourite films the mode would be the most popular choice - the one with most votes.

Working with the mode is **Level 2** in the Basic Skills Curriculum, but you may find it interesting to know what it is.

Example 1

Find the mode of 6, 4, 6, 5, 3, 7, 6.

First put the numbers in order. This makes it easier to find the mode.

3, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6, 7

You can see that 6 is the most common number in the list. There are three of them.

So 6 is the mode of this set of data.

Example 2

Find the mode of the shoe sizes for a group of students. Their shoe sizes are:

5, 6, 7, 4, 3, 9, 7, 6, 7, 8, 9

It's easier to see what's going on if you put the numbers in order.

3, 4, 5, 6, 6, 7, 7, 7, 8, 9, 9

Now it's easier to see which number appears most often in the list.

The number that appears most often is 7.

So the mode of these shoe sizes is 7.

Example 3

Find the mode of the sick days taken by employees from the company Acme Ltd.

Sick days for each employee: 0, 0, 1, 3, 2, 0, 0, 2, 14, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 2, 0, 0, 3, 1.

First put them into order.

0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 3, 3, 14

There are eight people with no sick days, that's eight 0s. There are five 1s, three 2s, two 3s and one person who took 14 days off sick. So the most common number is 0.

So 0 is the mode of this data.