Tenths and Hundredths: Comparing Decimals

Math · Grade 4 · Lesson 6

What you will learn

- What tenths and hundredths are.
- How to read a decimal number.
- How to tell which of two decimals is bigger.

Tenths

Imagine a chocolate bar cut into 10 equal pieces. Each piece is one **tenth** of the bar. We can write one tenth as a fraction, 1/10, or as a decimal, **0.1**.

If you eat 3 pieces, you have eaten three tenths of the bar: 3/10, or **0.3**.

Hundredths

Now imagine a big square cut into 100 small equal squares. Each small square is one **hundredth**: 1/100, or **0.01**.

Money is a good way to think about hundredths. A dollar has 100 cents, so one cent is one hundredth of a dollar. That is why 25 cents is written $0.25.

Reading a decimal

The dot in a decimal is called the **decimal point**. Digits to the left of the point are whole numbers. The first digit to the right is the **tenths** place, and the second digit is the **hundredths** place.

Number	Ones	Tenths	Hundredths	We say
0.4	0	4		four tenths
0.45	0	4	5	forty-five hundredths
2.07	2	0	7	two and seven hundredths

Comparing decimals

To find out which decimal is bigger, follow these steps:

1. **Line up the decimal points,** one number above the other.
2. **Give both numbers the same number of digits** after the point by adding a zero. 0.5 is the same as 0.50, because 5 tenths is the same as 50 hundredths.
3. **Compare from left to right.** Look at the ones, then the tenths, then the hundredths. The first place where the digits are different tells you which number is bigger.

> **Example:** Which is bigger, 0.5 or 0.38?
>
> Write 0.5 as 0.50. Line them up: 0.50 and 0.38. The ones are both 0. In the tenths place, 5 is bigger than 3. So **0.5 is bigger than 0.38**, even though 38 looks like a bigger number than 5.

A common mistake

Some people think a decimal with more digits is always bigger. It isn't! 0.9 is bigger than 0.85, because 9 tenths is more than 8 tenths. Think of money: 90 cents is more than 85 cents.

Try it yourself

1. Write seven tenths as a decimal.
2. Which is bigger: 0.6 or 0.59?
3. Put these in order from smallest to biggest: 0.3, 0.25, 0.4.

Answers: 0.7 · 0.6 · 0.25, 0.3, 0.4

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