

# Why we must rewrite the history of numbers

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Why do we speak of “Hindu-Arabic numerals,” “Roman numerals” and “Egyptian multiplication”? I argue that expressions of this kind stem from a way of writing the history of numbers that needs to be rethought. In my view, such an approach to numbers conceals the actual diversity of numerals used in the ancient and medieval worlds, as well as the diversity of their uses. The presentation will shed light on aspects of this diversity and will show why, seen from this angle, some numerals can in fact be considered as the first mathematical formulas ever used.