Understanding Positive and Negative Numbers

Name: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____ / 24

Quick Review

Positive numbers are greater than 0 and **negative numbers** are less than 0. They describe *opposite directions* from zero: above or below, gain or loss, ahead or behind. On a number line, positives sit to the *right* of 0 and negatives to the *left*. The number 0 is neither positive nor negative — it is the starting point. Real situations often pair up: a deposit of \$5 is $+5$ while a withdrawal of \$5 is -5; 10 feet above sea level is $+10$ while 10 feet below is -10.

◇ **Example:** A diver is 15 feet below the surface of the water. Write this as an integer.

⇒ First, decide which direction is positive. The surface of the water is our zero point. Going *up* above the surface counts as positive, so going *down* below it counts as negative. The diver is 15 feet *below* the surface, which is the negative direction. So we write the depth as -15. The number 15 tells us how far, and the minus sign tells us the direction is down.

Answer: -15

PRACTICE

Write an integer to represent each situation.

1. A gain of 7 points _____
2. A loss of 4 points _____
3. A deposit of $\$20$ _____
4. A withdrawal of $\$15$ _____
5. 12 feet above sea level _____
6. 30 feet below sea level _____
7. A temperature of $8°$ above zero _____
8. A temperature of $5°$ below zero _____
9. Walking 6 steps forward _____
10. Walking 9 steps backward _____
11. An elevator going up 3 floors _____
12. An elevator going down 4 floors _____
13. Earning $\$25$ _____
14. Spending $\$18$ _____
15. A score 10 above par _____
16. A score 2 below par _____
17. A submarine 200 feet underwater _____
18. A plane 500 feet in the air _____
19. The number exactly at sea level _____
20. A debt of $\$40$ _____

Word Problems

21. In a card game, Sam first gains 6 points, then loses 6 points. Write an integer for the loss, and explain how it relates to the gain. _____

22. A hiker climbs to 250 feet above the trailhead, then descends into a canyon 80 feet below the trailhead. Write an integer for the canyon position. _____

23. On Monday the temperature was 4 degrees below zero. Write this as an integer and describe its position relative to 0. _____

24. A bank account starts at \$0. After a deposit of \$50 and then a withdrawal of \$50, write integers for the deposit and the withdrawal. _____

Answer Keys

1. $+7$
2. -4
3. $+20$
4. -15
5. $+12$
6. -30
7. $+8$
8. -5
9. $+6$
10. -9
11. $+3$
12. -4
13. $+25$
14. -18
15. $+10$
16. -2
17. -200
18. $+500$
19. 0
20. -40
21. -6
22. -80
23. -4
24. deposit $+50$, withdrawal -50

Step-by-Step Explanations

1. A gain is in the positive direction, so it is $+7$.
2. A loss is in the negative direction, so it is -4.
3. Money going into an account is positive: $+20$.
4. Money taken out of an account is negative: -15.
5. Above sea level is the positive direction, so $+12$.
6. Below sea level is the negative direction, so -30.
7. Above zero on a thermometer is positive: $+8$.
8. Below zero on a thermometer is negative: -5.
9. Forward is the positive direction here, so $+6$.
10. Backward is the negative direction, so -9.
11. Going up is positive, so $+3$.
12. Going down is negative, so -4.
13. Earning money is a gain, the positive direction: $+25$.
14. Spending money is the negative direction: -18.
15. Above par counts as positive here, so $+10$.
16. Below par counts as negative, so -2.
17. Underwater is below the surface, the negative direction: -200.
18. In the air is above the ground, the positive direction: $+500$.
19. Sea level is the zero point — neither positive nor negative.
20. A debt means money owed, the negative direction: -40.
21. The loss of 6 points is -6. It is the *opposite* of the gain of $+6$, so together they cancel back to where Sam started.
22. The trailhead is the zero point. Below it is the negative direction, so 80 feet below is -80.
23. Below zero means the negative direction, so the temperature is -4, sitting 4 units to the left of 0 on a number line.
24. A deposit adds money, so it is $+50$; a withdrawal removes money, so it is -50. They are opposites and return the account to \$0.

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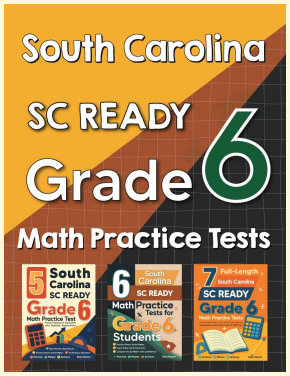

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