

## Maths

Building Your Article · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

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You've goofed on maths.\* Journalists are notoriously bad on mathematics. I know journalists who not only don't use a calculator, they refuse to own one. Bob Hawke as prime minister made a stirring speech promising to plant 1 billion trees within five years. Days passed before journalists woke up to the impossibility of such a task. One journalist blamed the fact that 1 billion has 10 digits (1,000,000,000) and most calculators have only eight digits . . . duh. You work it out: how many trees must be planted every day to reach 1 billion within five years? Send me the answer please. (You'll be the first: no student ever answers this question.)

By the way, in every daily paper, on every radio and TV bulletin, we are informed of today's price for a barrel of oil. Ninety-nine out of 100 people and 50% of financial journalists do not know what a barrel of oil is. Do you?

It's an actual barrel, that is, it's a container. It contains exactly 42 gallons, just under 159 litres of oil.

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