

# **It All Adds Up**

## **Applying Math Lessons to Life**

by

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**Some Highly Subjective Reflections On what Makes This Web site  
Different From All Other Math Web sites**

### **Work Versus Play**

**My son disliked (maybe “hated” would be a better description) mowing the grass during the “dog days” of August. Yet he had no complaints about reporting for double session football practices during those same days, even though playing football for 4 hours during those sweltering days was far more exhausting than the 30 minutes it took to mow our small lawn.**

**It was then that I came to realize that the difference between work and play was not the degree of difficulty but rather the degree of enjoyment. He enjoyed playing football. He didn't enjoy mowing the grass.**

**In this context, too often youngsters are “working” Little League baseball rather than playing Little League Baseball. They anticipate being scolded by their coaches if they make a bad play in the field or take a bad swing at a pitch. They are worried about what their parents will think if they do not play well. In short, the stress they are experiencing overrides any chance they have for enjoying their playing the game,**

**If we were to view mathematics as a game, we would find that too many students are working at the game rather than playing it. They often dread coming to a math class. They fear being called upon to recite. They fear having to take tests and do whatever they can to avoid having to come to grips with the subject that instills them with so much dread.**

**So in spirit of what the British historian Arnold Toynbee once said our aim in this course is to blur the line that distinguishes work from play. We have developed many different avenues to accommodate the learning styles of our various “players”. There are chatty and informal video lectures where we explain mathematical concepts in an easy-to-understand, non-threatening manner. The video lectures are supplemented by animated power point presentations that explain things and work out illustrative problems in a step-by-step manner. There are problems sets where you can practice, knowing that each problem set is accompanied by an in depth solution set. And for those who learn best by reading there is a user-friendly textbook.**

**Of equal importance, all of the material is available online, which means you can learn at your own pace. Too often students “fail” not because they can't understand the material but rather because they cannot adapt to the rigid time schedule of the lock-step traditional classroom.**

**Some of the material may seem challenging and/or difficult to you. That's okay. Football practice is also difficult and often challenging but the players know that in the long run it will help them play the game better. Our hope is that you will feel comfortable enough to look at these challenges as ways to improve your reasoning skills; skills that are so important to us in our everyday lives.**

**In this spirit, we invite you to work hard while you enjoy and learn more about mathematics**