



Hard Math for Middle School: IMLEM Plus Edition

By Glenn Ellison

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The IMLEM Plus edition of Hard Math is designed for students participating in both the Intermediate Math League of Eastern Massachusetts and Mathcounts(r). The topics align with modern middle school curricula: fractions, decimals, percents, prime factorization, plane and spatial geometry, probability, statistics, combinatorics, algebra, modular arithmetic, etc. But Hard Math challenges students to develop a deeper understanding: it asks much harder questions than standard texts and teaches the material and problem solving strategies students need to attack them. For example, rather than asking students to write $2/5$ as a decimal, it might ask students to use the fact that $99999 = 9 \times 41 \times 271$ to find the tenth digit in the decimal expansion for $1/271$. (It might ask this, but never actually does.) The organization is designed to serve IMLEM students' needs: the first five chapters cover exactly what students should learn for each of IMLEM's monthly contests. But the text can also serve students preparing for other math contests or as general enrichment.

Hard Math for Middle School: Workbook, sold separately, contains over 100 worksheets. The worksheets have problems at different difficulty levels that students can use to solidify their understanding of the material in each section of the textbook.

The IMLEM Plus edition of Hard Math can be used interchangeably with the IMLEM edition. The only difference is that the IMLEM Plus edition contains an extra chapter covering topics that do not appear on IMLEM contests, but which the author feels are useful to know if a student wants to do very well on Mathcounts(r).

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Glenn Ellison is the Gregory K. Palm Professor of Economics at MIT and a parent volunteer at Bigelow Middle School. He didn't have the opportunity to participate in math contests in junior high, but was a member of the Harvard math team which won the national championship on the 1985 Putnam exam.

His most recent book, *Hard Math for Elementary School*, offers similarly challenging (and fun!) material for younger students.

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