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"When all other contingencies fail, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."—*Sherlock Holmes*  
Science is the belief in the ignorance of experts."—*Richard Feynman*

## When You Can Divide by Zero

by *Stanley Eigen*

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The set I got is called "Flash Kids." The manufacturer describes it this way:

A Barnes and Noble Publication

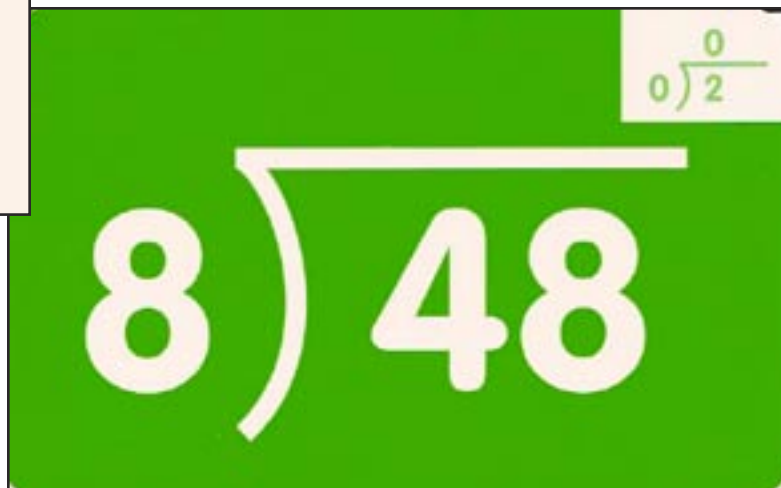
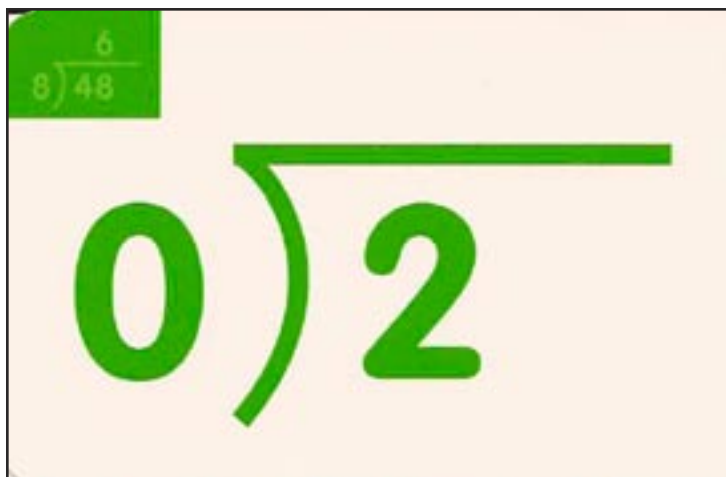
Ages 8 and Up

Each side of a card has a math problem, and each side also has (in smaller print) the answer to the problem that's on the other side.

One card (reproduced here) is especially interesting. On one side, the problem is: 2 divided by 0.

Turn the card over and you see that the answer is: 0. This was news to me.

So, pending further investigation, here is the corrected rule: Except for the number 2, you cannot divide any number by zero.



We have long had a rule in mathematics about dividing by zero. The rule is: You cannot divide any number by zero. I have just seen evidence that the rule has an exception.

My nine-year-old daughter is learning division in school, so I bought some flash cards to help her.