BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson



Man sues New York City for \$2,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000

21st May, 2014



There is a phrase in English when someone gets a big salary that they earn "telephone numbers". A man in New York is suing the city (and others) for so much that it is almost impossible to think of a

comparison. Anton Purisima, 62, is suing for two undecillion. Over 99.99 per cent of English speakers would not know or have heard of the word for this amount. That astronomical figure is two undecillion dollars – a two followed by 36 zeros. The only people who are likely to need this word are probably astrophysicists and astronomers. Two undecillion dollars is, in fact, more than all the money in the whole world. Even more than all the wealth created throughout humankind's entire history.

So what did New York City do so wrong to be sued for such a mind-bogglingly gargantuan sum? Quite a lot, it seems. The New York Post reports that Mr Purisima is suing the city (as well as two local hospitals, LaGuardia Airport, the transportation system, a bakery and even a dog owner) for "civilrights violations, personal injury, discrimination in national origin, retaliation, harassment, fraud, attempted murder, intentional infliction emotional distress, and conspiracy to defraud". Why? Well, it's because last month a "rabiesinfected" dog bit his finger on a city bus; then, a "Chinese couple" took photos of him without asking; and to add insult to injury, he is routinely overcharged for coffee at LaGuardia Airport.

Sources: IB Times / Independent / TIME.com

Writing

There should be a limit on the amount of compensation paid in lawsuits. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

phrase / big salary / impossible / comparison / amount / astronomical / wealth / hospitals / transportation / civil rights / harassment / emotional distress / overcharged

True / False

- a) If someone earns "telephone numbers" they get a low salary. T / F
- b) Most English speakers know what an undecillion is. T / F
- c) An undecillion is a 1 followed by 36 zeros. T / F
- d) All of the wealth in the world amounts to around \$3 undecillion. T / F
- e) The article said it appears New York did a lot of wrong things. T / F
- f) A man is suing an airport, a bakery and two hospitals. T / F
- g) The man suing New York was bitten by a rat. T / F
- h) The man is also suing because coffee at an airport is too expensive. T / F

Synonym Match

1.	phrase	a.	appears
2	comparison	b.	number
3.	astronomical	c.	whole
4.	figure	d.	offense
5.	entire	e.	similarity
6.	sum	f.	expression
7.	seems	g.	regularly
8.	retaliation	h.	amount
9.	insult	i.	revenge
10.	routinely	j.	huge

Discussion - Student A

- a) What do you think of this story?
- b) What do you think of people suing each other?
- c) Have you ever been involved in a lawsuit?
- d) Why do you think the man is suing for such a large amount?
- e) What are his chances of winning this case?
- f) Have you ever wanted compensation for something?
- g) If he won, how could the city pay him?
- h) How would life be different if you earnt "telephone numbers"?

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Phrase Match

- 1. impossible to think
- 2 the word for
- 3. a two followed
- 4. more than all the money
- 5. the wealth created throughout humankind's
- 6. mind-bogglingly
- 7. two local
- 8. attempted
- 9. a rabies-infected
- 10. add insult

Discussion - Student B

- a) What do you think the city's lawyers will say in court?
- b) What do you think of the list of things the man is suing for?
- c) What advice would you give to Mr Purisima?
- d) What advice would you give to New York City's lawyers?
- e) Should people be able to sue for being photographed without permission?
- f) What three adjectives best describe this article, and why?
- g) Is it becoming too easy to sue other people?
- h) What questions would you like to ask Mr Purisima?

Spelling

- 1. a ahsper in English
- 2. think of a crnispooma
- 3. the word for this omaunt
- 4. astrophysicists and tmnoseaorsr
- 5. more than all the talehw
- 6. throughout humankind's <u>eenitr</u> history
- 7. a mind-bogglingly autrnaggna sum
- 8. civil-rights synoioilat
- 9. eeatpmttd murder
- 10. infliction of emotional isdsrest
- 11. noyrsiacpc to defraud
- 12. he is lonruytie overcharged for coffee

Answers - Synonym Match

1. f	2. e	3. j	4. b	5. c
6. h	7. a	8. i	9. d	10. g

- a. hospitals
- b. by 36 zeros
- c. entire history
- d. gargantuan sum
- e. to injury
- f. this amount
- g. murder
- h. in the whole world
- i. of a comparison
- j. dog bit his finger

Big Numbers

Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners often and share what you wrote.

	How many zeros?	When is this word used?
Hundred		
Thousand		
Million		
Billion		
Trillion		
Gazillion		

Speaking - Numbers

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- your bank account
- your salary
- your age
- your test scores
- your weight
- your waist size
- your phone number
- other _____

Answers – True False

a F b F c T d F e T f T g F h T

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.