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## **Level 5**

**Written zero 500 years older than scientists thought**

**17th September, 2017**

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1709/170917-zero-5.html>

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**Please try Levels 4 and 6. They are (a little) harder.**

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# THE READING

From <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1709/170917-zero-5.html>

Scientists from Oxford University have found that the written use of the zero is 500 years older than we thought. The scientists carbon dated the symbol's origins to an ancient Indian scroll called the Bakhshali Manuscript. Scientists found the scroll dates back to the third century. Before the dating of the scroll, scientists believed the manuscript was from the eighth century. It was found in the village of Bakhshali in 1881. The zero that we use today started from a round dot that was often used in India. This symbol can be seen several times on the manuscript.

A professor at Oxford University explained the importance of the zero. He told a British newspaper that we take the zero for granted and that it is "a key building block of the digital world". He said the zero, "evolved from the placeholder dot symbol found in the Bakhshali manuscript" and "was one of the greatest breakthroughs in the history of mathematics". Zero has many names in English, including nought, nil (in football) and love (in tennis). It is often said as "oh" for telephone numbers. Slang terms for zero include nowt, nada, zilch and zip.

Sources: <http://metro.co.uk/2017/09/15/earliest-use-of-zero-ever-discovered-on-ancient-manuscript-6929859/>  
<https://phys.org/news/2017-09-video-earliest-centuries-older-thought.html>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/sep/14/much-ado-about-nothing-ancient-indian-text-contains-earliest-zero-symbol>

# PHRASE MATCHING

From <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1709/170917-zero-5.html>

## PARAGRAPH ONE:

- |                                       |                         |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. 500 years older                    | a. to the third century |
| 2. The scientists carbon dated        | b. Indian scroll        |
| 3. an ancient                         | c. several times        |
| 4. Scientists found                   | d. the symbol's origins |
| 5. dates back                         | e. from a round dot     |
| 6. the manuscript was from            | f. the scroll           |
| 7. The zero that we use today started | g. than we thought      |
| 8. This symbol can be seen            | h. the eighth century   |

## PARAGRAPH TWO:

- |                                    |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. explained the importance        | a. of the digital world  |
| 2. we take the zero                | b. nada, zilch and zip   |
| 3. a key building block            | c. including nought      |
| 4. found in the Bakhshali          | d. of the zero           |
| 5. one of the greatest             | e. for telephone numbers |
| 6. Zero has many names in English, | f. for granted           |
| 7. It is often said as "oh"        | g. manuscript            |
| 8. Slang terms for zero include    | h. breakthroughs         |

# LISTEN AND FILL IN THE GAPS

From <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1709/170917-zero-5.html>

Scientists from Oxford University (1) \_\_\_\_\_ the written use of the zero is 500 years older (2) \_\_\_\_\_. The scientists carbon dated the symbol's (3) \_\_\_\_\_ ancient Indian scroll called the Bakhshali Manuscript. Scientists found the scroll dates back to the third century. Before (4) \_\_\_\_\_ scroll, scientists believed the manuscript was from (5) \_\_\_\_\_. It was found in the village of Bakhshali in 1881. The zero that we use today started from a round dot that (6) \_\_\_\_\_ in India. This symbol can be seen several times on the manuscript.

A professor at Oxford University explained (7) \_\_\_\_\_ the zero. He told a British newspaper that we take the (8) \_\_\_\_\_ and that it is "a key building block of the digital world". He said the (9) \_\_\_\_\_ from the placeholder dot symbol found in the Bakhshali manuscript" and "was one of the greatest (10) \_\_\_\_\_ the history of mathematics". Zero has many names in English, (11) \_\_\_\_\_ (in football) and love (in tennis). It is often said as "oh" for telephone numbers. Slang terms for zero include nowt, (12) \_\_\_\_\_.

# PUT A SLASH ( / ) WHERE THE SPACES ARE

From <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1709/170917-zero-5.html>

Scientists from Oxford University have found that the written use of the zero is 500 years older than we thought. The scientists carbon dated the symbol's origin to an ancient Indian scroll called the Bakhshali Manuscript. Scientists found the scroll dates back to the third century. Before the dating of the scroll, scientists believed the manuscript was from the eighth century. It was found in the village of Bakhshali in 1881. The zero that we use today started from a round dot that was often used in India. This symbol can be seen several times on the manuscript. A professor at Oxford University explained the importance of the zero. He told a British newspaper that we take the zero for granted and that it is "a key building block of the digital world". He said the zero, "evolved from the placeholder dots symbol found in the Bakhshali manuscript" and "was one of the greatest breakthroughs in the history of mathematics". Zero has many names in English, including nought, nil (in football) and love (in tennis). It is often said as "oh" for telephone numbers. Slang terms for zero include nowt, nada, zilch and zip.

# THE NUMBER ZERO SURVEY

From <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1709/170917-zero-4.html>

Write five GOOD questions about the number zero in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

## WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student A: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

d) \_\_\_\_\_

e) \_\_\_\_\_

f) \_\_\_\_\_

*Written zero 500 years older than scientists thought – 17th September, 2017*  
More free lessons at [www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com](http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com)

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## WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student B: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

d) \_\_\_\_\_

e) \_\_\_\_\_

f) \_\_\_\_\_

