Mean, Median and Mode Explained Simply

KS4 MATHEMATICS Ages 11-14 ⏰ 3 min read

What's the Difference?

When we talk about finding an 'average', there are actually **three different ways** to do it. They're called the **mean**, **median**, and **mode**. Each one tells us something different about a group of numbers, and it's important to know when to use each one.

The Mean

The **mean** is what most people think of as the 'average'. To find it, you add up all the numbers and divide by how many numbers there are. For example, if you scored **8, 9, 7, and 10** on four tests, the mean is **(8 + 9 + 7 + 10) ÷ 4 = 8.5**.

Think of it like: If everyone in your friend group pooled all their pocket money together and split it equally, each person would get the mean amount.

The Median

The **median** is the middle number when you arrange all your numbers in order from smallest to largest. Using the same test scores (**7, 8, 9, 10**), the median is between **8** and **9**, so it's **8.5**. If you had five numbers, the median would be the third one.

Think of it like: If you line up all your classmates by height, the median is the person standing right in the middle of the line.

The Mode

The **mode** is the number that appears most often in your list. If your test scores were **7, 8, 8, 9, and 10**, the mode would be **8** because it appears twice while the others appear once.

Think of it like: If you asked everyone in your class their favourite ice cream flavour, the mode would be the flavour that the most people chose.

When Should You Use Each One?

The **mean** is useful when you want a general overview of your data, like average test scores. The **median** is better when you have some really high or really low numbers that might skew the mean unfairly. The **mode** is helpful when you want to know what's most popular or common.

Understanding these three tools helps you make sense of numbers and statistics in the real world!