

Hella Good: Scientists Petition to Name a Very Large Number

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(PhysOrg.com) -- As science becomes increasingly precise, and as computers provide the ability to crunch ever larger (and smaller) numbers, scientists are looking to name numbers with lots of zeroes. You've heard of mega, giga and tera. You might have even heard of yotta -- which is a one followed by 24 zeroes. But now some scientists are petitioning the International System of Units to create a [binary prefix](#) for a one followed by 27 zeroes. This number, they think, should be called "hella".

As in, "That's one hella big number."

In fact, there is a Facebook effort underway, with more than 20,000 students and scientists calling for this name. One of the instigators is Austin Sendek, a student in physics at the University of California. [Fox News reports](#) on his reasoning for naming the number hella:

Sendek and his petition signatories believe naming numbers in the 10^{27} category is of "critical importance for scientists in all fields." He said these numbers are vital to representing "the wattage of the sun, distances between galaxies, or the number of atoms in a large sample." ...

"However, [science](#) isn't all that sets Northern California apart from the rest of the world," Sendek wrote. "The area is also notorious for the creation and widespread usage of the English slang 'hella,' which typically means 'very,' or can refer to a large quantity (e.g. 'there are hella stars out tonight')."

But will the International System of Units go for it? That's the question. Calling something "yotta" sounds very like the name of the Star Wars character Yoda, so naming the next big number "hella" wouldn't be so bad. Right? Plus, it would give science an "in" regarding popular culture. But, if numbers continue to get larger, what comes next? How could you express a [number](#) that is even bigger than hella?

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