

computation, *n.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /,kɒmpjətʃən/ , U.S. /,kɑmpjətʃ(ə)n/

Forms: IME **computacioun**, IME **computacyoun**, IME–16 **computacion**, IME– **computation**; Sc. pre-17 **computacion**, pre-17 **computatioun**, pre-17 **computatyown**, pre-17 17– **computation**.

Etymology: < Anglo-Norman and Middle French *computation* calculation (14th cent. in Anglo-Norman; French *computation*) and its etymon classical Latin *computātiōn-*, *computātiō* calculation, reckoning, form or result of a particular calculation < *computāt-* , past participial stem of *computāre* COMPUTE *v.* + *-iō* *-ION* *suffix*¹. Compare Spanish *computación* (late 15th cent. as *computaçion*), Portuguese *computação* (1563), Italian *computazione* (a1499).

1.

a. The action or process of computing, reckoning, or counting; arithmetical or mathematical calculation; an instance of this.

- c1425 LYDGATE *Troyes Bk.* (Augustus A.iv) i. l. 2774 (*MED*), Þe mone..passed was in hir cours ful riȝt..Thre signes ful, by computacioun.
- 1447 O. BOKENHAM *Lives of Saints* l. 4983 (*MED*), The yer of grace..A thowsand fourhundryd fourty & fyue Aftyr þe cherche of Romys computacyoun.
- a1530 (►c1425) ANDREW OF WYNTOUN *Oryg. Cron. Scotl.* (Royal) viii. xxii. 4 A thowsand thre hundyr and twenty yhere..Be ewynlyk computatyown.
- 1555 R. EDEN tr. G. F. de Oviedo y Valdés *Summarie Gen. Hist. West Indies* in tr. Peter Martyr of Angleria *Decades of Newe Worlde* f. 180^v, By the computation of Venice .iiii. graines make a carette.
- 1593 T. FALE *Horologigraphia* f. 60, This Table of Sines may seeme obscure and hard to them who are not acquainted with Sinicall computation.
- 1633 T. STAFFORD *Pacata Hibernia* i. ii. 21 Tuesday the sixt of March according to the new Computation.
- 1665 R. BOYLE *Disc. in Occas. Refl.* iv. i. sig. E3, The whole Earth..by the probablest computation, contains above ten thousand millions of Cubick German Leagues.
- 1695 I. NEWTON *Let.* 19 Jan. in *Corr.* (1967) IV. 67, I find that ye mean motion gathered by my computations differs sometime from that in your Synopses.
- 1735 T. DYCHE & W. PARDON *New Gen. Eng. Dict.*, *Logist*, one expert in Computation, or that understands Accompts.
- 1792 A. F. T. WOODHOUSELEE *Robbers* i. 26 Wretches, whose income is beyond computation, have worn my threshold in dunning payment of a few miserable debts.
- 1873 J. F. W. HERSCHEL *Pop. Lect. Sci.* ii. 54 It is easy to find, by computation, the angles included between..the two lines of direction.
- 1884 *Ann. Math.* 1 39 The data..can themselves be relied on only to three significant figures and the results of computations based on them can of course possess no higher degree of precision.
- 1940 'N. SHUTE' *Landfall* vii. 180 Plodding through endless computations with slide rule, graphs, and the little black comptometer.
- 1964 J. BERNSTEIN *Analyt. Engine* (1965) ii. 46 The Difference Engine..was a relatively modest affair— basically an adding machine that was specially designed for the computation of polynomials.

1999 M. J. FRIEDMAN *My Brother's Keeper* II. iv. 82 Gleaning the numbers from his monitors, the lieutenant carried out the computation in his head.

b. A computed number or amount, a reckoning. Now *rare*.

1586 J. FERNE *Blazon of Gentry* 126 A large reuennue..if you will consider the computation and alley of money then currant.

1688 A. BEHN *Translator's Pref.* in A. Behn tr. M. de Fontenelle *Discov. New Worlds* 23 All these Numbers added together, make five hundred and eighty Years; which Computation differs an hundred Years from that in 1 King. 6.1. which is but four hundred and eighty.

1746 *Acct. French Settlem. N. Amer.* 18 In the year 1700, it was computed, that there were about five thousand able, effective men in Canada;..some judicious people think it is a pretty round computation.

1776 GIBBON *Decline & Fall* I. xvii. 468 The revenue fell short of the computation.

1878 T. H. HUXLEY *Physiogr.* (ed. 2) 295 The most niggardly computation which lies within the bounds of possibility.

2007 *Canada NewsWire* (Nexis) 8 Feb., Capitalization rate, as computed by the REIT, may differ from similar computations as reported by other similar organizations.

†2. In wider sense: estimation, reckoning; consideration. *Obs.*

1558 W. FORREST *Hist. Grisild the Second* (1875) xvii. 128 But thowe..So eauenlye lyuydite in thy vocation..That soone was made thy computation.

1581 J. MARBECK *Bk. Notes & Common Places* 1099 Least she should abase him in computation, more then ther was cause.

1656 T. HOBBS *Elem. Philos.* 5 We must not..thinke that Computation, that is Ratiocination, has place onely in numbers.

1684 R. L'ESTRANGE in *Observer in Dialogue* Pref. p. ii, Upon a Full Computation of the Matter, *Pro* and *Con*; I Resolv'd, at last, to Put pen to paper.

3. The use of (electronic) computers, esp. as a field of study or research; computer science.

1953 *Proc. IRE* 41 1234/1 This paper reviews briefly some of the recent developments in the field of automata and nonnumerical computation.

1969 A. MCCAFFREY *Ship who Sang* 3 Helva scooted around in her shell..studying her lessons in trajectory, propulsion techniques, computation, logistics, mental hygiene, basic alien psychology, philology.

1988 R. GIBBONS in R. Poirier *Raritan Reading* (1990) 129 The neologism establishes languages as a kind of quantifiable material to be manipulated by computation.

2005 *Wall St. Jrnl.* (Central ed.) 14 Nov. A16/6 The lab's electrical bill for computers has swelled to more than \$10 million a year,..says..its deputy associate director for computation.

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