

computation, *n.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /kəmpjə'teɪʃn/, U.S. /kampjə'teɪʃ(ə)n/

Forms: lME **computacioun**, lME **computacyoun**, lME–16 **computacion**, lME– **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 participle stem of *computāre* COMPUTE *v.* + *-iō* -ION *suffix*¹. Compare Spanish *computación* (late 15th cent. as *computaçōn*), Portuguese *computaçō* (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) l. l. 2774 (MED), Pe 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 *Horologiographia* 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 sixth 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 Gentrie* 126 A large reuennue..if you will consider the computation and alleys 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 lyuydiste 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 *Observator 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. Jnrl.* (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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