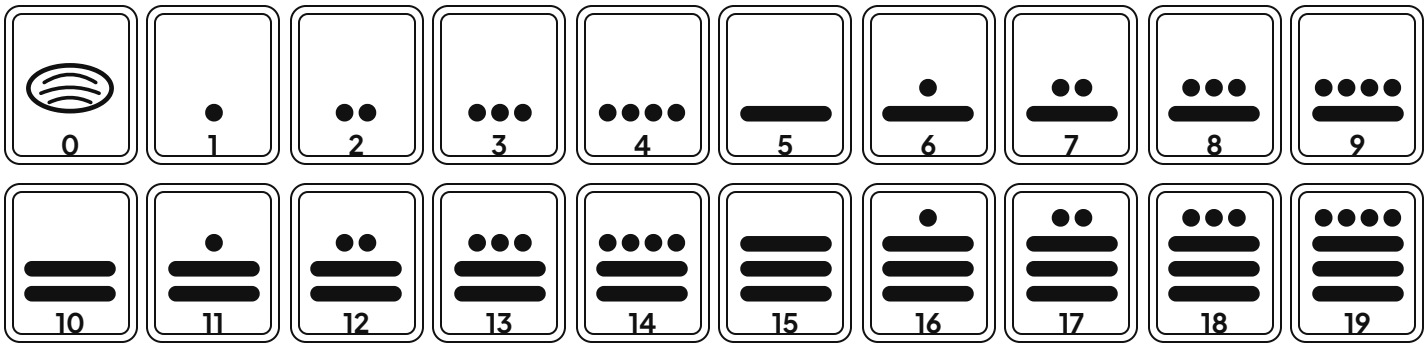
MAYA NUMBERS CHART

The Maya wrote numbers with just three signs: a dot stands for 1, a bar for 5 and a shell for 0. Scribes painted numbers in codices and carved them on stelae to count days, goods and tribute. Numbers were stacked from bottom to top. Each place was usually worth 20 times the place below it (the calendar had one exception, on the next page); many scholars think counting by twenties began with counting on fingers and toes.

THE NUMBERS 0 TO 19



Two places: ones and twenties

The bottom place counts ones, from 0 to 19. The place above it counts twenties. To read a number, multiply the top place by 20 and add the bottom place. If a place is empty, the scribe drew a shell there, so a dot over a shell means one twenty and no ones.



Twenties place (top): 4 → 4 × 20 = 80
Ones place (bottom): 7 → 7 × 1 = 7
80 + 7 = **87**

MORE EXAMPLES



7
7 in the ones place



20
1 twenty (20) + 0 ones = 20



87
4 twenties (80) + 7 ones = 87



260
13 twenties (260) + 0 ones = 260



365
18 twenties (360) + 5 ones = 365

The rules

Five dots make a bar, so a place never has more than four dots. Four bars make 20, so a place never has more than three bars: 20 moves up to the next place as one dot. Dots sit above the bars. Read the top place first.

TRY IT: WRITE THESE NUMBERS IN BARS, DOTS AND SHELLS

9	40	100	213	399