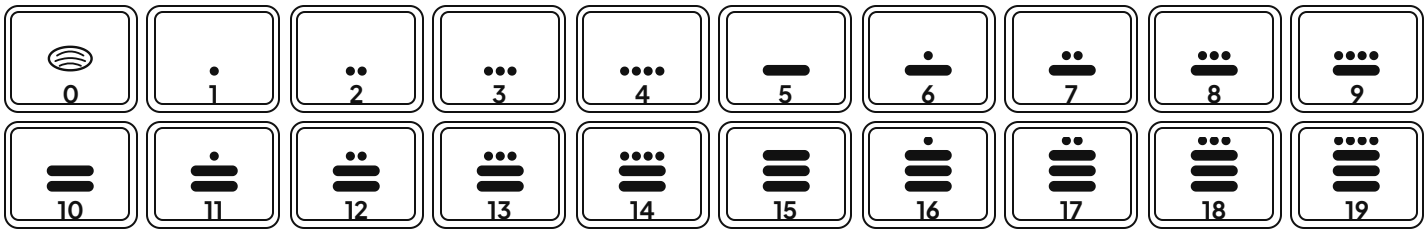
Name _____

READING MAYA NUMBERS

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**

◆ READ THE NUMBERS ◆

1



Venus table, Dresden Codex

in the codex's count, days Venus is hidden near the sun before it rises as the morning star

Number: _____

2



A Haab' month

days in one month of the 365-day calendar

Number: _____

3

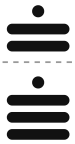


Venus table, Dresden Codex

in the codex's count, days Venus is hidden behind the sun

Number: _____

4



Venus table, Dresden Codex

in the codex's count, days Venus shines as the morning star

Number: _____

5



The Tzolk'in

days in the count of 13 numbers and 20 day names

Number: _____

6



The Haab'

days in the sun-year calendar: 18 months plus the Wayeb'

Number: _____

◆ WRITE THESE NUMBERS IN BARS, DOTS AND SHELLS ◆

A **250**
Days Venus is the evening star in the codex's count (Dresden Codex)

B **13**
Day numbers in the Tzolk'in

C **52**
Years in a Calendar Round

D **100**
Cacao beans paid in a trade (for example)

1. **Why does a sign for zero matter? Use the numbers 1 and 20 to explain.**

2. **Why might the Maya have counted in twenties instead of tens?**