

Carl Friedrich Gauss and the formula for the sum of the first n natural numbers

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It is likely that rare are those who haven't heard the story from Gauss' (1777 - 1855) youth: one day his primary school teacher asked the pupils to calculate the sum of the first 100 natural numbers. Gauss quickly announced the result was 5050, which is correct. How did he manage to do that? What was the exact task, to find sum of the first hundred natural numbers, or some other consecutive hundred numbers, as some sources cite? Did Gauss find the formula by himself during the class, or perhaps he knew it all along? The aim of this paper is to search for answers to posed questions.

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Karl Fridrih Gaus i formula za zbir prvih n prirodnih brojeva

Verovatno su retki oni koji nisu čuli priču iz Gausove (1777 - 1855) mladosti: jednog dana njegov učitelj je na času matematike dao svojim đacima zadatak da saberu brojeve od jedan do 100. Ubrzo nakon što je zadatak bio postavljen, Gaus je saopštio da je rezultat 5050, što je tačan odgovor. Kako je došao do njega? Kako je tačno glasio zadatak, da li je zaista trebalo sabrati prvih sto prirodnih brojeva, ili nekih drugih sto uzastopnih brojeva kako navode pojedini izvori? Da li je Gaus, u to vreme osnovac, samostalno došao do formule na času, ili mu je ona možda bila poznata od ranije? Namera autora je da potraži odgovore na navedena pitanja.