

Life in
Numbers

What Is Average?



Lesley Ward

Publishing Credits

Rachelle Cracchiolo, M.S.Ed., *Publisher*
Conni Medina, M.A.Ed., *Managing Editor*
Nika Fabienke, Ed.D., *Series Developer*
June Kikuchi, *Content Director*
Susan Daddis, M.A.Ed., *Editor*
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What Is Average?

The word *average* can have different definitions. So, what exactly *is* an average? When you use math, an average, or mean, is a “balancing point” for a set of data. You calculate an average by adding numbers and dividing the total by how many numbers there are. The result is the average.

For example, to find the average of 4, 5, and 9, just add them up. The answer is 18. Now, divide 18 by 3, which is how many numbers you added. Easy—the answer is 6. So 6 is the average, or mean, of 4, 5, and 9.

Average can also mean not out of the ordinary. Many people equate average with boring, so they try not to be average or ordinary. They would rather be extraordinary and find difficult or unique things to make them stand out from the crowd.

Above-Average IQ

The average person has an intelligence quotient (IQ) of around 100. In 2016, Kashmea Wahí, an 11-year-old from England, scored 162 on an IQ test. That’s two points higher than Albert Einstein! Wahí took the test because she figured that if she got a good score, her parents would know she was studying enough.



Batter Up!

Baseball players' batting averages are the number of hits divided by how many times they have been at bat. Pros today have a batting average of around .260. Ted Williams played for the Boston Red Sox for three years. In 1941, he had the highest batting average that season—an incredible .406! No one has hit above .400 for a season since.

Everyday Averages

Averages play a part in our daily lives. A farmer might check the average monthly rainfall so he or she knows exactly when to plant crops. An engaged couple might check weather records, too, so they can plan their **nuptials** when there's the least chance of rain.

Have you heard the saying “April showers bring May flowers”? On average, the rainiest month in the United States is not April. It's June!

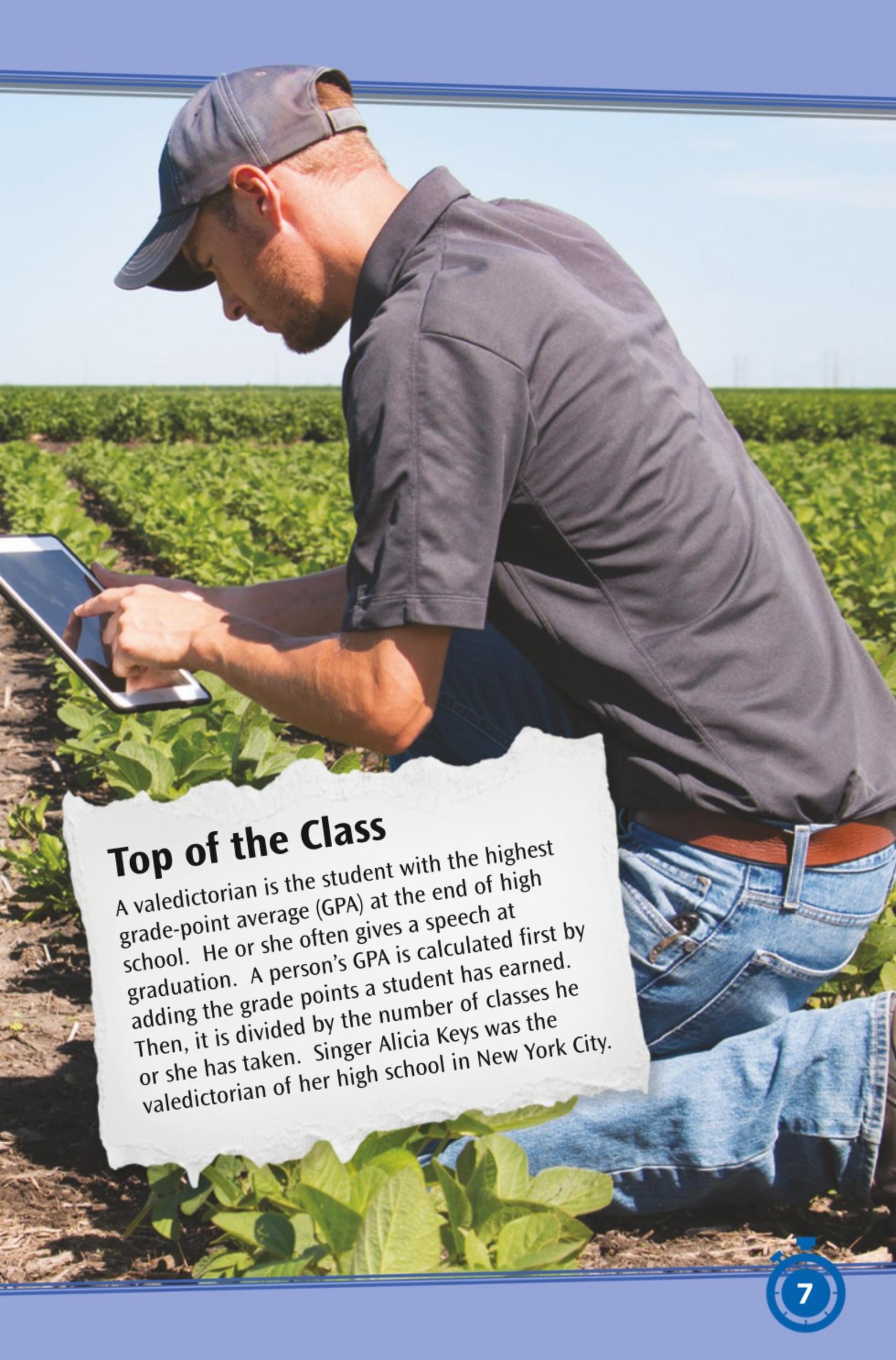
Students are affected by averages when they take tests. Does your teacher tell you the average score the class got on a test? Your teacher added everyone's test scores and divided the total by the number of students in the class.

People use averages every day. Averages give the amount that is typical for a group of people or things. And they allow people to compare themselves to a group without looking at a whole set of data.

In the Lab

Replication is important in experiments. Scientists repeat experiments in the lab many times. Then, they add up the results and find the average. They do this to **verify** their results.





Top of the Class

A valedictorian is the student with the highest grade-point average (GPA) at the end of high school. He or she often gives a speech at graduation. A person's GPA is calculated first by adding the grade points a student has earned. Then, it is divided by the number of classes he or she has taken. Singer Alicia Keys was the valedictorian of her high school in New York City.

We the People

In 2016, Broc Brown, a 19-year-old from Michigan, was the tallest teenager in the world. He is currently 7 feet 8 inches tall (2 meters 20 centimeters). Brown has grown at a rate of 6 in. (15 cm) a year, and if this continues, he is on course to be the tallest man in the world. Life can be tough for Broc. He can barely squeeze into his mother's car, and his size-28 feet require **custom-made** shoes.

Brown's height is definitely *not* average. The average American man stands about 5 ft. 9.5 in. (1.5 m 24 cm) tall. Average height varies by country. The tallest men are in the Netherlands, where the average height is around 6 ft. (1.8 m). The shortest men, on average, are in Indonesia, at 5 ft. 2 in. (1.5 m 5 cm).

A photograph of two young people standing side-by-side against a dark, starry background. On the right is a very tall young man, Broc Brown, wearing a tan jacket over a red and white striped shirt and grey pants. On the left is a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a red jacket over a black top and blue jeans. Broc has his arm around the woman's shoulder. A teal text box is overlaid on the bottom right of the photo.

Brown poses for a picture with his cousin.

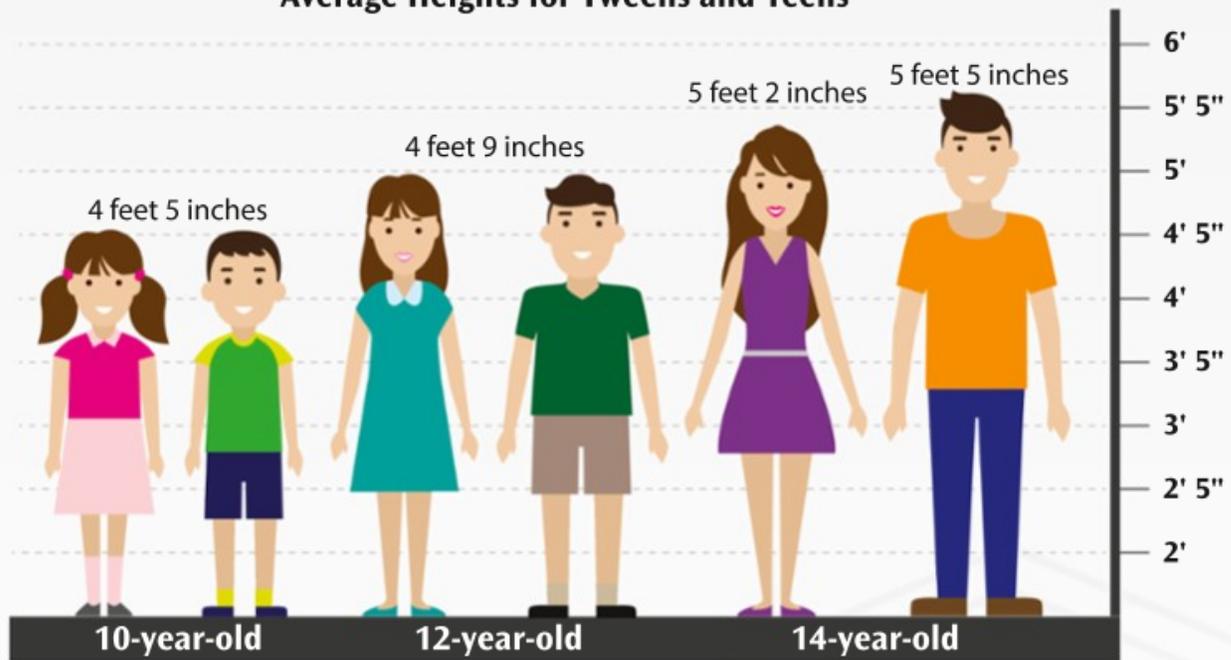
The average height for an American woman is 5 ft. 4 in. (1.5 m 10 cm). That may seem short, but it's not the tiniest. The average woman in Guatemala is 4 ft. 10 in. (1.2 m 25 cm).



STOP! THINK...

Boys and girls can experience growth **sprints** at different times. It's important to remember that no two people are alike, and everyone grows at different rates.

Average Heights for Tweens and Teens



- Grab a tape measure to see how tall you are. Are you above or below average?
- What trends do you notice about growth in teens from the chart?
- Do you eat a healthy diet, get enough sleep, and stay active? These things are **beneficial** to your growth and overall health.

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