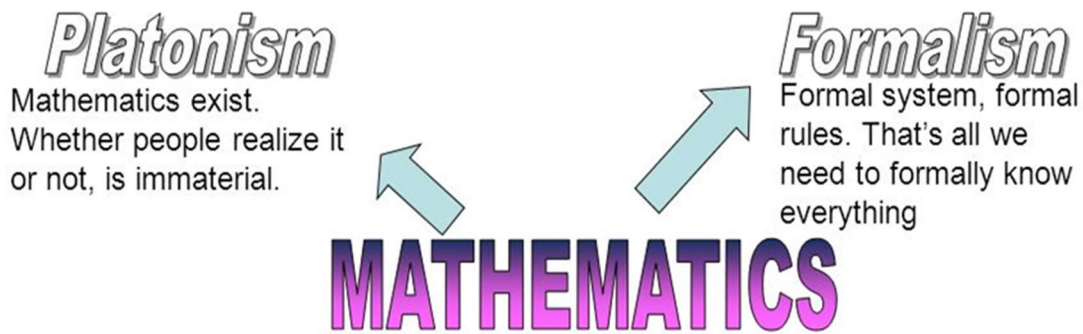


# Mathematicians: Platonists and Formalists

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Working mathematicians often see themselves as Platonists during the week and Formalists on the weekends!



This refers to the two major philosophical schools of thought in mathematics: Platonism and Formalism. Platonism posits that mathematical objects and concepts exist independently of human thought and language, and are discovered rather than invented. Formalism, on the other hand, holds that mathematics is a purely syntactic system of symbols and rules, with no inherent connection to any external reality.

Many mathematicians see themselves as Platonists during the week because they are focused on developing and exploring mathematical concepts and structures, which they believe have an objective existence beyond their own minds. On the weekends, when they are not doing math, they may adopt a more formalist stance, viewing mathematics as a game of symbols and rules to be played and enjoyed for its own sake.

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