



## hp calculators

HP 17bII+ Frequently Asked Questions



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1. Q. Why are some functions shown on the keyboard in color?
  - A. That is to distinguish them from the functions shown in white on the face of the key. If you press a key, you will activate that function shown in white on the key face or, in the case of two keys, in white just below the key. If you press the color shift key ('SK') near the lower lefthand corner of the keyboard just before pressing another key, the function shown in color on the base of that key will be activated.
  
2. Q. The calculator has menus. What are menus?
  - A. A menu in your HP 17bII+ is an array of choices shown in the display, each of which you can activate by pressing the key right below the menu choice. Pressing one menu choice can lead to a subsequent menu shown in the display giving you more choices. With these different menu levels your calculator offers you far more functions to perform than could possibly be offered on a static keyboard only.
  
3. Q. How do I use the menus?
  - A. They really have three roles. One, pressing a menu label can move you to subsequent levels of that menu, such as when you press 'FIN' and that then gives you a choice of five financial functions. Pressing 'TVM' after that, for example, presents you with five financial variables to consider. You use menus to navigate.  
  
Secondly, the menus allow you to store information. Tell the calculator about a loan you are considering by pressing the loan amount in the PV register, the annual interest rate into the I%YR register and the repayment period into the N register.  
  
Pressing 'PMT' after storing the loan information described above illustrates the third purpose of the menus: they calculate information for you, in this case figuring out for you the periodic payment needed to pay back a loan.
  
4. Q. What if I get lost in a menu and don't know where to go?
  - A. You can reverse your direction of travel a backstep at a time by pressing 'EXIT.' If you are anxious to get out quickly, press 'SK' and 'MAIN.' That will bring you back to the main menu in one leap.
  
5. Q. If I change the number of places to the right of the decimal in the display, will that change my answer?
  - A. It will change it to the extent that it rounds the last digit shown to the right in the display. Internally, your calculator carries 12 digits regardless of how many you show in the display.

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6. Q. Does the rounding function have something to do with the decimal places shown in the display?
  - A. Yes. Pressing the shift key ('SK') and 'RND' will round the number held internally within the calculator to the number of decimal places shown in the display. That is, it "zeroes out" the digits to the right that you can't see.
7. Q. Which mode for arithmetic operations should I use: Algebraic or Reverse Polish Notation?
  - A. You should use the mode with which you are more comfortable. You may find RPN to be more efficient because you do not have to use parentheses and it may require less keystrokes than the same calculation using Algebraic.
8. Q. Why is clearing my calculator so important after I have finished one calculation and want to do another?
  - A. Your HP 17bII+ retains numbers in its memory banks until you decide to remove them. You can do that by zeroing out, that is, replacing a number with zero. Or, you can use a clearing operation. Numbers not cleared may interfere with subsequent calculations and it is a good habit in using your calculator to clear with 'SK' and 'CLR DATA' in order to clear your menu before starting a new calculation.
9. Q. If I make a mistake in keying in a digit, may I remove the last digit I keyed in without having to clear the entire number?
  - A. Yes. Clear it with the sideways arrow key pointing to the left.
10. Q. If I am in the RPN mode, how can I check numbers I have previously keyed in or calculated?
  - A. You can "roll down the stack," using the R arrow down key, to view a maximum of three numbers held above the number you see in the display. You can also use the "LAST X" function, pressing 'SK' and 'LAST,' which allows you to see the number that was in the 'X' register, the display, just prior to the last arithmetic operation.
11. Q. When I am putting numbers into the time-value-of-money menu, does it make any difference in what sequence I enter the number for the five variables?
  - A. No. Each variable in the TVM menu is an individual electronic slot waiting to receive the information or to calculate new information based on the numbers placed in the other variables. This is true of other menus in your calculator as well.
12. Q. In financial calculations using the TVM menu why do my answers often have negative signs?
  - A. Both plus and minus signs indicate the direction of cash flow. If, for example, you put in a loan amount as a positive into PV (present value), you are inserting this information from the viewpoint of the borrower, because the money is going to the borrower from the lender. The payment you then

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calculate to amortize the loan will have a negative sign, indicating that payment is flowing away from the borrower to the lender as the borrower is repaying the loan.

13. Q. After I have used the amortization functions of my calculator to amortize the first 12 payments, what do I do to amortize the loan for the next payment, the 13th?
- A. Just press '1' and '#P' in the amortization menu. Remember that the amortization function works in a cumulative manner. That means the next period to amortize after the loan has already been amortized for 12 payments is the 13th. So pressing '1' for the number of the payments here does not mean the very first payment on this loan. It means the next one after the 12th, that is, the 13th payment.
14. Q. To calculate present value, what dictates whether I use the TVM menu or the discounted cash flow functions?
- A. Use the TVM menu when the payments are equally spaced apart and are the same each period. If the payments are not equally spaced apart and/or the payments are not the same each period, use the discounted cash flow functions.
15. Q. What is discounting?
- A. Think of it as the opposite of compounding. It is estimating the present value of a future benefit, what \$10,000. you are not going to get until five years from now is worth to you today. With compounding, on the other hand, you know how much you have today but want to figure out how much you will have down the road after you let your present sum earn interest for awhile. Compounding gives you a future value.
16. Q. What am I getting when I calculate present value with my HP 17bII+?
- A. You are coming up with what future benefits, such as income you expect to earn in the future or what you will receive when you sell an asset, are worth to you today under given investment conditions. This is important to a potential purchaser deciding what to pay for an asset projected to bring in these benefits.
17. Q. What, then, is net present value?
- A. It is the difference between what an asset is worth and what is paid to purchase that asset.  $\text{Net Present Value} = \text{Present Value} - \text{Purchase Price}$ . It is a measure of whether someone has overpaid, underpaid, or paid just what an asset is worth.
18. Q. And what is meant by the internal rate of return?
- A. The average periodic rate of return that an asset generates, expressed as a percentage of the purchase price of that asset.
19. Q. If I turn my calculator off, will I lose the information in the display or the information I have stored?

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A. No, your calculator has what is called "continuous memory." That means you won't lose information in your calculator when you turn it off or when it turns itself off, which occurs about ten minutes after you last used it.

20. Q. How can I darken or lighten my display?

A. Hold down the 'CLR' key and press the '+' to darken and the '-' to lighten.

21. Q. What are the reasons for having two lines in my display?

A. The bottom line identifies the menus and the various menu levels. The top line, called the "calculator line," show the numbers you enter and the results of your calculations. It also show instructions from time to time, indicating what you should be keying in next. Annunciators are shown above the calculator line.

The concept of the HP 17bII+ , indeed, its mission, is to provide a powerful computing machine that is efficient and simple to use.

22. Q. May I "write" with my calculator?

A. Yes. Press the 'SOLVE' menu label in the main menu and then press 'NEW.' That will take you to alphabetic choices for writing formulas and equations.

23. Q. How about symbols?

A. Those too. After pressing the group letter key of the alphabetic choices, you will see to the right of the individual letter choices the 'OTHER' key. Press it for symbols and then, to the right of the symbols, press 'MORE' for more symbols.

24. Q. What is an error message in my display saying?

A. It is telling you that you have asked the calculator to do something it cannot, such as divide by zero. There is a list of error messages at the back of your Owner's Handbook.

25. Q. What does it mean when my calculator beeps?

A. One of three things: an error message is coming up, an appointment alarm is going off, or you have pressed the wrong key in a required sequence of keystrokes.

You can do something about that beep. Press 'SK' and 'MODES' and then pressing 'BEEP' three times will show you the choices of "BEEPER ON," "BEEPER ON: APPTS ONLY," and "BEEPER OFF."

26. Q. How much memory do I have in the HP 17bII+?

A. 30,740 bytes of user memory is available.

27. Q. How can I check how much memory I have left?

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- A. Press 'SK' and 'MEM.'
28. Q. Where are the math functions of the calculator?
- A. You'll find some of them on the keyboard and others in the math menu by pressing 'SK' and 'MATH.'
29. Q. How can I convert from the annual nominal interest rate to the actual effective rate?
- A. Press 'FIN' and 'ICNV' to get to the interest rate conversion menu.
30. Q. What menu label do I press to get to the statistical functions?
- A. In the main menu press 'SUM.'
31. Q. What does the TIME menu do?
- A. It has a clock and a calendar. You can find out the day of the week of a particular day and you can count the number of days between two dates. And, you can set appointments with an alarm and message.
32. Q. Can I connect my calculator to a printer?
- A. Yes, with the HP 82240 Infrared Printer.
33. Q. What am I doing wrong if I am getting an incorrect answer for simple arithmetic?
- A. You may be in the wrong mode for the keystrokes you are using. Press 'SK' and 'MODES' to select Algebraic or RPN.
34. Q. My TVM answers don't look right. What could I be doing wrong?
- A. The most common error is not clearing the menu before starting a new calculation. Press 'SK' and 'CLR DATA' to clear all the five variables when you are in the TVM menu. Other possibilities are you are in the wrong payment mode - Begin versus End - and the payments per year are not set properly for your calculation.
35. Q. How long do I have left in battery life when the battery annunciator appears in the display?
- A. You have several hours of continuous use left. If you turn the calculator off, your continuous memory will be preserved for about two weeks.
36. Q. Is it possible to lose information stored in the calculator when I change batteries?
- A. Turn the calculator off when changing batteries. The continuous memory can be erased if you change batteries with the calculator on. If you take over 30 seconds after removing the old batteries to install the new ones, you can lose the continuous memory. Remove one old battery and replace it

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with the new one. Then remove the second old battery and replace it. Be sure for both new batteries the "+" sign is facing out after you have installed them.

37. Q. Does my HP 17bII+ have the ability to make currency conversion calculations?

A. Yes. Press 'CURRX' in the main menu, the last key to the right. You select the two currencies in which you are interested and enter the exchange rate.

38. Q. Can I select a language for the display other than English?

A. Yes. Press 'SK' and 'MODES.' To the far right of the menu that comes up you should see "INTL." Press this international key and you will see a choice of five languages in addition to English.