

WHY FAIRNESS MATTERS

There is something even more important than medals, rankings, or prizes.

INTEGRITY

The International Mathematics Competition exists to celebrate talent, creativity, perseverance, and the joy of mathematics. Every participant has travelled here from their university—often from the other side of the world—to challenge themselves with difficult mathematical problems in a spirit of friendship, mutual respect, and intellectual curiosity.

That spirit can exist only if the competition is fair.

Cheating, or gaining an unfair advantage in any form, is not simply a violation of the rules. It is a betrayal of every competitor who has devoted months, and often years, to preparing honestly. It diminishes the achievements of those who have earned their success through hard work, and it undermines the trust upon which competitions like the IMC are built.

Mathematics itself is founded on truth. A theorem is true because it has been proved. A proof is either correct or it is not. There are no shortcuts to genuine understanding, and there are no shortcuts to genuine achievement. Your score should reflect only your own knowledge, your own reasoning, and your own effort.

Fortunately, this is the principle by which the overwhelming majority of IMC participants live. Year after year we witness remarkable honesty, sportsmanship, and respect. Competitors congratulate one another, celebrate each other's successes, and accept disappointment with dignity. These qualities are every bit as impressive as mathematical brilliance, and they are among the reasons why the IMC has earned such a respected place in the international mathematical community.

The lessons you learn here extend far beyond this competition. Many of you will become researchers, professors, engineers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders. Throughout your careers, your reputation will rest not only on your intelligence and accomplishments, but also on your character. Ability may earn admiration, but integrity earns trust. And trust is the foundation upon which every successful career and every lasting achievement is built.

Winning by dishonest means is never a true victory. A medal obtained unfairly may impress people for a moment, but it cannot bring genuine pride or lasting respect. An honest competitor who gives their very best—even without winning a medal—has achieved something of far greater value.

As you compete, remember that the true measure of success is not simply your position in the final rankings. It is whether you competed honourably, respected your fellow competitors, and upheld the values that mathematics has always represented: honesty, truth, fairness, and the pursuit of knowledge.

The IMC hopes that every participant will leave not only as a better mathematician, but also as a person whose integrity is as strong as their intellect.

Excellence and integrity belong together. Neither has lasting value without the other.