# Don't require your users to have a degree in philosophy

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Help text is not the place to put logic puzzles. In Windows Vista, when you go to the System control panel, you are shown a number that describes your computer's rating. But are higher numbers better or worse? If I had a choice, would it be better to have a 1 rating or a 5 rating? In earlier betas of Windows Vista, you had to have a degree in philosophy to figure this out. If you clicked the "Help" button on the System control panel page, you were sent to a page of help text that tried to explain the performance rating. When it got around to explaining what the number means, the text said, paraphrased, "When looking for software to run on this computer, you should choose programs whose rating is less than or equal to the rating of this computer." So does this mean that bigger ratings are better? "Well, if a program's rating is small, then the computer's rating needs to be bigger than that, so a program wants its rating to be as small as possible so more computers can run it. If my computer's rating is small, programs will be fighting to get a rating low enough that I can run it. That's a good thing for me, right? No wait, but what if the program I want has a high rating? Then my computer will need a higher rating. If my computer had a low rating, then that wouldn't be less than or equal to the program's rating. No wait, I got it backwards, it's the program that needs to be less than or equal to the computer, not the other way around. If the program's rating needs to be less than or equal to the computer's rating, then that means that the computer's rating needs to be greater than or equal to the program's rating. If my computer rating were higher, than it could run more programs." "I think."

"Why can't they just say, 'Bigger numbers are better'?"

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