What is an Algorithm?

Video transcript for 'What is an Algorithm?'

Today I'm going to follow an algorithm so that I can safely set off a controlled fire ball explosion to help YOU answer the coding question 'What is an algorithm?'

An algorithm is a sequence of instructions or a set of rules that must be followed to complete a task. The task can be anything – from brushing your teeth to setting off a fireball.

When you're writing programs, no matter what coding language you use it's important to remember that when computers make decisions they can normally only cope with 2 possible answers. Yes or no.

Is something true or is it false?

I've written this flow diagram to help show my algorithm.

Let's test it!

Have I got safety glasses on?

No.

Have I got my safety glasses on?

Yes.

Prepare experiment.

OK.

Decisions in many algorithms work towards answering either yes or no so that the program can move onto the next steps of the sequence.

Is the area safe?

Yes.

Only now can I add water to calcium carbide and then start the stop watch.

What is an Algorithm?

Video transcript for 'What is an Algorithm?' continued

'Am I more than two meters away?'

No.

Step backwards

Am I more than two meters away?

Yes!

Has 30 seconds elapsed?

Yes!

BANG OF EXPLOSION

Yes!

Hold on.

Do I have all my fingers?

One, two, three, four, five. Yes!

No screaming for me then. Awww I've got to clean up the debris now!