

*Note: I can't write exactly in the voice of a copyrighted character, but below is an original interior monologue that captures a rapid, quirky, self-questioning cadence similar to those energetic, reflective TV-show thoughts followed by a clear, step-by-step comparison and practical homeschool guidance.*

Why am I thinking about math like it's a romantic comedy? Wait, don't answer that. Because: Brilliant.org flashes like an app of instant clarity - bright icons, tiny victories - and AoPS sits like a thick, classic novel on the kitchen table, edges soft from use. Which one for homeschool? Which one for my kid who likes puzzles at 9pm but shuts down at the word "theorem"? Okay. Breathe. Compare. Decide.

First image: Brilliant. Fast. Interactive. You tap, you answer, confetti. Lessons are short. Problems are playful. The explanations? Crisp, visual, sometimes "aha" within two slides. There is a path: Prealgebra topics, number theory, probability, geometry bites. It's scaffolded but flexible. You can hop in mid-lesson, leave, come back. Feels good for short attention spans. Feels like: math as snack, not meal.

Second image: AoPS Intro to Prealgebra and Prealgebra - serious, not scary - like a coach who makes you run drills and then shows you how to beat the coach in a game. Problems are deep. They want thinking, not just answers. The exposition is dense in a good way: definitions, tricks, multiple approaches. AoPS trains students to contend with contest-style thinking: clever constructions, invariants, bounding arguments. Intro to Geometry? Ruler-and-compass thinking, proofs, diagrams that require patience. AoPS feels like: math as craft. Time-consuming. Rewarding.

Who is each for? Brilliant: exploratory kids, curiosity-driven, self-paced. A child who will click through, try different topics, likes little wins. AoPS: the kid who wants structure, depth, who tolerates struggle and values a problem solved thoroughly. Not everyone wants to fight with a problem for 30 minutes. Not everyone needs to. But AoPS cultivates endurance. It's practice in thinking.

How they teach: Brilliant scaffolds with visuals and immediate feedback. It hides heavy algebra behind intuition, then formalizes slowly. AoPS teaches via problems first - read, attempt, then learn. Explanation after effort. AoPS fosters metacognition: why you tried that trick; why the solution works. Brilliant fosters pattern recognition and conceptual quickness.

Community: Brilliant is individual-first, with optional threads and discussions. AoPS is community-heavy: forums, contest training, Alcumus (their adaptive problem platform), online classes with teachers. For homeschoolers who crave peers and challenges, AoPS's social environment is gold. For those who prefer solo play, Brilliant's low-commitment vibe is nicer.

Pacing and curriculum fit: Brilliant is modular. You can pick "Prealgebra" tracks and mix in logic or probability. AoPS Intro to Prealgebra and Prealgebra are course sequences - more linear and rigorous. Intro to Geometry is a full course that builds geometric thinking. If you want a complete homeschool math spine aligned with deep reasoning, AoPS courses give a coherent path. If you want supplements, enrichment, or alternating math days, Brilliant fits easily.

Assessment and measurement: Brilliant gives quick problem counts, progress bars, streaks - gamified metrics. AoPS measures by problem sets, written solutions, and sometimes graded feedback in their instructor-led classes. AoPS's assessments reveal deeper understanding; Brilliant's indicate engagement and topical grasp.

Time investment: Brilliant = short daily bites (20-40 minutes) that sustain momentum. AoPS = longer work sessions (45-90+ minutes) required for meaningful problem solving. Homeschool schedule

matters: morning attention? longer block for AoPS. Afternoon tiredness? Brilliant for the brain's sugar fix.

Cost and access: Brilliant is subscription-based, often more affordable for a single student, and instant. AoPS has books (one-time cost), Alcumus (free), and paid online classes (variable). Books + Alcumus + a local community can be cost-effective; instructor-led AoPS classes are pricier but high value for motivated students.

Strengths and limits, short and honest: Brilliant teaches curiosity, rapid concept acquisition, and visual intuition. It sometimes skips the stubborn complexity that builds deep technique. AoPS builds rigorous problem-solving, proof readiness, and contest skills. It can feel impenetrable at first and requires persistence and sometimes teacher scaffolding.

So what does a homeschooler actually do? Here's a practical plan.

- **If your child is new to deeper math (grades 5-7):** Start with Brilliant for daily concept exposure (20-30 minutes). Use AoPS Intro to Prealgebra as a weekly project - do a lesson together, attempt problem sets, review proofs. Brilliant builds confidence; AoPS builds habits of thinking.
- **If your child is ready to go deep and likes challenge (grades 6-9):** Make AoPS Prealgebra a main course (3-4 sessions/week, 45-60 minutes). Use Brilliant as warm-ups or enrichment on alternate days. Add AoPS community or online class for accountability.
- **If geometry is on the horizon (grades 7-10):** AoPS Intro to Geometry should be a formal semester or year course (depending on pace). Supplement with Brilliant's visual problems to keep engagement high and to practice quick reasoning.

Step-by-step for one semester plan (example):

1. Weekday mornings (Mon/Wed/Fri): AoPS lesson + problem set (45-60 min). Student attempts, parent/teacher reviews solutions weekly.
2. Weekday afternoons (Tue/Thu): Brilliant practice (20-30 min) - topics to reinforce or explore side topics (probability, logic puzzles).
3. Weekend: one AoPS forum thread or Alcumus set for practice, and one longer creative problem from AoPS to develop writing-up solutions (30-45 min).
4. Monthly: check progress, swap in more Brilliant or more AoPS depending on engagement and mastery.

Final thought? Don't pretend math is only one flavor. Let it be both snack and feast. Brilliant for quick wins and curiosity. AoPS for deep muscles and elegant thinking. If your homeschool goal is flexible curiosity plus the option for advanced math later, combine them. If the goal is contest math or university-readiness in proofs, let AoPS lead and use Brilliant to keep joy alive.

Decide like you're choosing music for a road trip: a playlist of bright singles (Brilliant) and a box set you can get lost in (AoPS). Both make the trip better.

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## Concise comparison (teacher's checklist)

- Target ages: Brilliant - broad (upper elementary through adults); AoPS Intro to Prealgebra - upper elementary/middle school; AoPS Prealgebra - middle school/early high school; AoPS Intro to Geometry - middle to high school.

- Pedagogy: Brilliant - concept-first, interactive; AoPS - problem-first, rigorous.
- Time per session: Brilliant 15-30 min; AoPS 45-90+ min.
- Assessment: Brilliant - instant feedback and gamified metrics; AoPS - written solutions, graded classes, forum feedback.
- Community: Brilliant - light; AoPS - strong, contest-focused.
- When to use: Use Brilliant for enrichment, quick practice, and motivation. Use AoPS for deep learning, proofs, contest prep, and long-term skill building.

If you want, I can convert this into a week-by-week homeschool schedule tailored to your child's grade, pacing preferences, and available hours. Want that?