We write $\sin 30° = 0.5$ to mean that the sine of the angle $30°$ is equal to 0.5.

We can express this *same* relationship another way using an inverse function, where the input and the output are reversed. The -1 is used here to indicate an inverse function. So we write $\sin^{-1} 0.5 = 30°$ to mean the angle whose sine equals 0.5 is $30°$.