

Solving Single-Step Word Problems

Mathematics, Problem Solving

Grade 3- 4

Objective

Students use a five-step plan and secret code words to solve single-step word problems.

Directions

In this activity, students will learn to apply basic math computational skills in word problem formats and with real-life applications.

Introduce students to the five-step plan to solve single-step word problems:

Step 1: Read the problem carefully. Check the meaning of unknown words. Read the problem in parts. Use periods and commas as a guide.

Step 2: State the problem to be solved. Restate the problem in your own words. Use the fewest possible words to describe what you have to find out.

Step 3: Determine the operation to be used. There are only four operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Choose the most likely operation using the clues you have found. (See the secret code words.)

Step 4: Do the operation. Check to see that you made no careless errors and that your work is accurate.

Step 5: Check the answer to see if it is reasonable. Compare your answer to the original problem to see if it makes sense.

Students should use the secret code words to help them select the correct operation.
Addition Secret Code Words: altogether, in all, sum, perimeter, entire cost, total, total cost

Subtraction Secret Code Words: change, how much more, difference, how much less, how many fewer, minus, how much left, how much saved, how much taller

Multiplication Secret Code Words: times, compute the area, product, find the volume, percent, of (fractions), percent of discount, percent of tax, times as many as

Division Secret Code Words: split evenly, divided by, quotient, find the average, shooting percentage, shared evenly

Go over the following example with students:

Problem: Your mother had \$100.00 when she went to the mall. She had \$39.47 when she left the mall. How much money did your mother spend at the mall.

Ask students the following questions:

What do you need to find out in this problem? (how much money was spent)

What is the most likely operation to try? (subtraction--because money was spent or taken away)

Do you know how to do the operation? (line up the numbers with the larger number on

top and subtract by borrowing)

Does your answer make sense when you read over the problem? (yes, because $\$39.47$ and $\$60.53$ equal $\$100.00$)

Distribute copies of the Making Sense of the Answer activity sheets to students and have them try some problems on their own.

Resources

- **Making Sense of the Answer activity sheet (one per student)**
- **pencils**

The Sweet 'n Sour Candy Shoppe is stocked floor to ceiling with baskets of Lickem Lollipops, piles of Marshmallow Munchies, barrels of Hard Rock Candies, mounds of Super Sour Suckers, stacks of Chocolate Covered Peanut Bars, and mountains of Ultra Chewy Tooth Yankers.



Directions: Read each problem below. Underline code words, if any are used. Write the operation that you use to solve each problem. Explain why each answer makes sense.

1. Your best friend bought 9 buckets of Ultra Chewy Tooth Yankers. Each bucket contains 136 Tooth Yankers. How many Tooth Yankers did your friend buy?

Operation: _____ **Answer:** _____

The answer makes sense because _____

2. Your mother bought 975 Chocolate Covered Peanut Bars. You eat 5 Chocolate Peanut Bars every week. How many weeks will the supply of bars last?

Operation: _____ **Answer:** _____

The answer makes sense because _____

3. Your teacher bought a barrel of 1,345 Hard Rock Candies to use as rewards. She used 419 candies one month. How many Hard Rock Candies does she have left?

Operation: _____ **Answer:** _____

The answer makes sense because _____

4. Your principal bought 2,345 Lickem Lollipops, 987 Super Sour Suckers, and 1,008 Marshmallow Munchies for a school carnival. How many candies did the principal buy altogether?

Operation: _____ **Answer:** _____

The answer makes sense because _____

5. Marshmallow Munchies come in a bag with 2,000 Munchies. A group of 5 girls decided to split them evenly. How many Marshmallow Munchies did each girl receive?

Operation: _____ **Answer:** _____

The answer makes sense because _____

6. Your best friend was given 15 bags of Super Sour Suckers. Each bag had 95 suckers. How many Super Sour Suckers was your friend given?

Operation: _____ **Answer:** _____

The answer makes sense because _____



Answer Key

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1. multiplication; 1,224 Tooth Yankers
2. division; 195 days
3. subtraction; 926 Hard Rock Candies
4. addition; 4,340 candies
5. division; 400 Munchies
6. multiplication; 1,425 Super Sour Suckers