

General Topics

How do I solve word problems?

To solve word problems you need to answer at least three questions:

- 1.) What numbers are needed to answer the question?
- 2.) What mathematical operation(s) are needed to arrive at an answer?
- 3.) Does your answer make sense?

2.) What mathematical operation(s) are needed to arrive at an answer?

In other words, you need to decide if you will add, subtract, multiply, or divide.

Let's practice determining the correct mathematical operation(s) by identifying words that indicate addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division and identifying typical situations where a given operation used.

Addition

There are certain words found in problems that traditionally indicate addition is required:

Example

Determine the total weight of these three boxes: 10 lbs, 12.5 lbs, and 4.3 lbs.

Example

If you are told, "I want you to increase the length of time that casserole stays in the oven by 10 minutes more than what the recipe says (45 minutes)." How long will you keep the casserole in the oven?

Example

This truck has a 10,000 lb load limit. Right now I've got 7500 lbs of cargo on board. If I add 2000 lbs more, will I exceed my truck's load limit?

Example

What is the combined length of these three fence lines?
105 ft, 290 ft, and 756 ft.

Other addition "signals" include *sum, plus, in all, altogether, additional, extra.*