MATHEMATICS · GRADES 4-6

Finding missing values

Difficulty level: Intermediate

Mathematics: Grades 4-6

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Overview of the concept

This is how you work out a number that is hidden in a calculation. A missing price on a receipt can be found when you know the total and all the other prices. The same idea works for a missing score, a missing length, or any number that is hiding in an equation. It is the skill of working backwards from what you know to what you do not.



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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Find the missing number $? + 7 = 15$.

SOLUTION

This is a missing-value question, and the one rule to remember is to undo the operation: addition is undone by subtraction, and the missing number is what is left.

Undo the addition by subtracting: 15 - 7 = 8

Check by putting it back: 8 + 7 = 15, so the missing number is 8

EXAMPLE 2

Q Find the missing number $? \div 7 = 9$.

SOLUTION

The missing number is the one being divided, so undo the division by multiplying.

9 × 7 = 63, so the missing number is 63

Check by putting it back: 63 ÷ 7 = 9

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Practice questions

1. A box has some marbles. After adding 7 more, there are 15. How many marbles were in the box at first?

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2. A farmer plants 6 rows with the same number of plants in each row. There are 42 plants in all. How many plants are in each row?

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3. Sara has 14 stickers and gives some away. She has 9 left. How many stickers did she give away?

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4 A number - 5 = 11. What is the number?

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5 A shop has 9 pens and orders some more. Now it has 20 pens. How many pens did it order?

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6 $\frac{72}{?} = 8$. What is the missing number?

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7 Maya has some stickers. She buys 6 more, then gives 4 away. Now she has 20 stickers. How many stickers did she have at first?

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8 Some pencils are shared equally into 8 boxes, with 6 pencils in each box. How many pencils are there in all?

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9 A number × 4 = 28. What is the number?

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10 **A number is multiplied by 3, then 4 is added. The result is 25. What is the number?**

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ANSWER KEY

1. 8

2. 7

3. 5

4. 16

5. 11

6. 9

7. 18

8. 48

9. 7

10. 7

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