MATHEMATICS · KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 3

Missing-number addition problems

Difficulty level: Easy

Mathematics: Kindergarten to Grade 3

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Overview of the concept

This is how you find the missing part of a sum, like working out how many more points you need to reach a target score. A missing number problem is just a sum with one piece hidden, and finding it is the first step toward algebra. You use it to work out how much more you need to save for something, how many points you still need to win a game, or how many items are missing from a set.



Rule

To find a missing part in addition, subtract the part you know from the total.

Missing number = total - known part.

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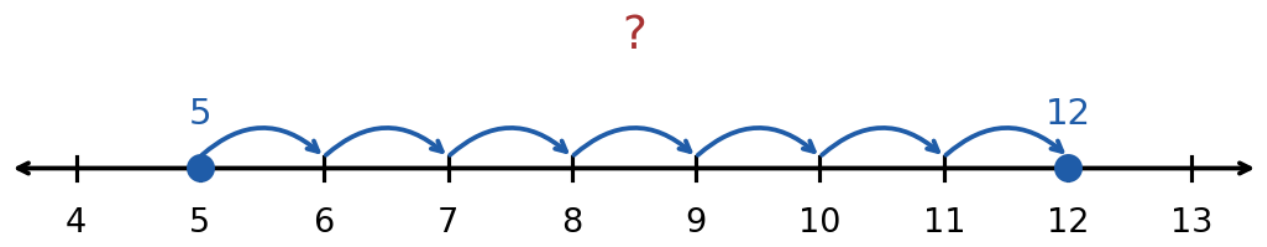
Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q $5 + ? = 12$



SOLUTION

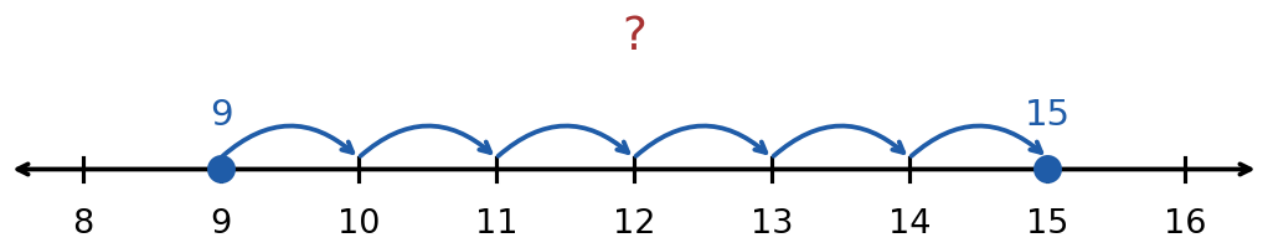
You know one part is 5 and the total is 12.

Count on from 5 to 12: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, which is 7 steps.

So the missing number is 7.

EXAMPLE 2

Q $? + 6 = 15$



SOLUTION

You know one part is 6 and the total is 15.

Take 6 from 15 to find the other part.

15 - 6 = 9, so the missing number is 9.

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Practice questions

1. You have 3 marbles and get some more. Now you have 9. The number sentence is 3 + ? = 9. What is the missing number?

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2. Some children join 4 children on a bus, and now there are 11 children. The number sentence is ? + 4 = 11. What is the missing number?

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3. 6 + ? + 4 = 15. What is the missing number?

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4 Tom has some stickers. He gets 9 more, then gives away 4. Now he has 13. How many stickers did he start with?

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5 A box holds 20 pencils. Some more are added, then 5 are taken out. Now it holds 35. How many pencils were added?

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6 Tom has 9 stickers and gets some more. Now he has 16. How big is the jump from 9 to 16? That is how many he got.

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7 The missing number is 8. Which addition sentence has 8 as its missing number?

- **A** 5 + ? = 13
- **B** 6 + ? = 13
- **C** 9 + ? = 13
- **D** 7 + ? = 13

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8 Why do you subtract to find the missing number in 7 + ? = 15?

- **A** The missing part is the whole minus the known part, 15 - 7 = 8
- **B** The missing part is the whole plus the known part, 15 + 7 = 22
- **C** You add, because the missing number is a part: 7 + 8 = 15

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9 Which one has the largest missing number?

A 3 + ? = 10

B ? + 6 = 14

C 5 + ? = 12

D 9 + ? = 15

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10 Which one has a different missing number from the others?

A 4 + ? = 10

B ? + 3 = 9

C 6 + ? = 12

D 2 + ? = 10

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ANSWER KEY

1. 6

2. 7

3. 5

4. 8

5. 20

6. 7

7. 5 + ? = 13

8. The missing part is the whole minus the known part, 15 - 7 = 8

9. ? + 6 = 14

10. 2 + ? = 10

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