MATHEMATICS · KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 3

Subtraction using number lines

Difficulty level: Easy

Mathematics: Kindergarten to Grade 3

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Overview of the concept

This is how you see subtraction as jumps backwards on a line, like counting back the stops on a bus route or the floors down in an elevator, so the answer is visible instead of hidden in your head. Each jump back is one less, and where you land is the answer. Seeing the jumps makes it clear why subtracting moves you left, and how far you have travelled. That picture helps when the numbers are bigger too, because you can still see the distance between where you started and where you ended.



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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q How do you work out 10 - 4 on a number line?



SOLUTION

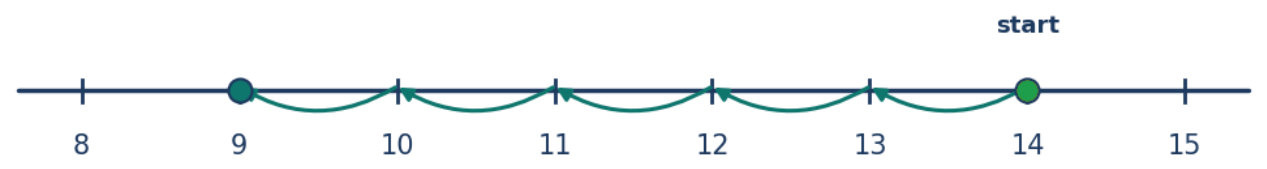
Start at 10 on the line.

Jump backward 4: 9, 8, 7, 6.

You land on 6, so 10 - 4 = 6

EXAMPLE 2

Q How do you work out 14 - 5 on a number line?



SOLUTION

Start at 14 on the line.

Jump backward 5: 13, 12, 11, 10, 9.

You land on 9, so 14 - 5 = 9

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Practice questions

1 Sara has 9 apples. She eats 3. How many apples are left?

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2 The jumps start at 12 and end on 8. How many jumps are there?



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3 One big jump goes back from 7 to 5. How many spaces does the jump cover?

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4 The jumps end on 9. Count back along the jumps in the other direction. What number did they start from?



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5 It is 11 degrees outside. The temperature falls 7 degrees. What is the new temperature?

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6 A frog sits on 7. It jumps forward 3 spaces. What number is it on?

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7 On a number line, which number is 3 less than 8?

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8 Ben has 15 dollars. He spends 5 dollars, then spends 3 more dollars. How many dollars does he have left?

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9 A frog sits on 11. It jumps back 4 spaces each time. After 2 jumps, what number is it on?

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10 A frog sits on 10. It jumps back 10 spaces to the start of the line. What number is it?

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ANSWER KEY

1. 6

2. 4

3. 2

4. 15

5. 4

6. 10

7. 5

8. 7

9. 3

10. 0

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