MATHEMATICS · GRADES 7-9

Terms and expressions

Difficulty level: Intermediate

Mathematics: Grades 7-9

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Overview of the concept

This is how you split an algebra expression into its pieces, like separating the items on a receipt, so you can simplify and solve it one piece at a time. Each term is one piece, joined to the next by a + or – sign, and each piece has its own number and letters. Seeing the pieces separately keeps you from mixing them up when you simplify or collect like terms. That is how you take a long expression apart, deal with one piece at a time, and put it back together in a simpler form.



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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q In the expression $4x + 3y - 7$, name the terms, the coefficient of x, and the constant term.

SOLUTION

This is an identify the parts question, so the one rule to remember is: terms are the pieces separated by + and – signs, the coefficient is the number stuck to a letter, and the constant is the number standing alone.

Split at the signs: the terms are 4x, 3y and –7.

The number stuck to x is 4, so the coefficient of x is 4, and the number standing alone is –7, so the constant term is –7.

EXAMPLE 2

Q How many terms does $5a^2 - 2a + 9 - a^2$ have when it is simplified?

SOLUTION

This is the same question type with a twist: count the terms only after combining the like terms, because two terms can collapse into one.

The like terms are $5a^2$ and $-a^2$, which combine to $4a^2$, so the expression becomes $4a^2 - 2a + 9$.

Now there are three pieces separated by signs, so it has 3 terms.

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Practice questions

1 How many terms are in the expression $3x + 2y - 5$?

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2 What is the coefficient of y in the expression $6y - 4$?

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3 What is the constant term in the expression $8m + 3n - 12$?

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4 List the terms in the expression $2a - 5b + 7$

- A 2a, -5b, 7
- B 2a, 5b, 7
- C 2a, -5b, -7
- D -2a, -5b, 7

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5 Which of these is a term in $9x^2 + 4x - 1$?

- A 9x
- B 4x
- C 9

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6 Is $5p + 3$ a monomial, a binomial, or a trinomial?

- A Monomial
- B Binomial
- C Trinomial

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7 What is the coefficient of the first a term in $-3a + 2b - a$?

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8 A shop charges $4 per pen and $3 per pencil. The expression $4p + 3q$ shows the cost of p pens and q pencils. What does the 4 stand for?

- **A** The price of one pen
- **B** The price of one pencil
- **C** The number of pens

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9 How many terms contain the variable x in $3x + 2y - x + 5$?

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10

True or false: in $7 - 2x$, the constant term is 7 and the coefficient of x is 2

A True

B False

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ANSWER KEY

1. 3

2. 6

3. -12

4. 2a, -5b, 7

5. 4x

6. Binomial

7. -3

8. The price of one pen

9. 2

10. False

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