MATHEMATICS · GRADES 4-6

Word problems involving multiple operations

Difficulty level: Intermediate

Mathematics: Grades 4-6

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Overview of the concept

This is how you tackle a real problem that needs more than one calculation, like working out a shopping trip with a discount and tax, by reading carefully and taking each calculation in order. A real problem rarely needs just one operation, it needs a discount, then a tax, then a total, each in the right order. Reading carefully tells you which operation comes first, and each answer feeds into the next calculation. That is how you handle a shopping trip, a budget, or any problem where the answer takes several calculations to reach.



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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Nareena spent 39 minutes practising the piano, then did 6 chores that each took 3 minutes. How long did she spend altogether?

SOLUTION

This is a multi-operation word problem, so the one rule to remember is: work out the repeated part first, then add it to the rest. The 6 chores are 6 groups of 3 minutes, so that part is a multiplication before the addition.

The chores took 6 × 3 = 18 minutes.

Add the piano time: 39 + 18 = 57 minutes altogether

EXAMPLE 2

Q Gabi had 8 boxes of chocolate bars. Each box had 9 bars. After eating some, she has 39 bars left. How many bars did Gabi eat?

SOLUTION

This is the same question type with the answer hidden twice over: first work out how many she started with, then take away what is left.

She started with 8 × 9 = 72 bars.

She ate 72 – 39 = 33 bars.

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Practice questions

1. Jake buys 5 packs of stickers. Each pack has 6 stickers. He already has 3 stickers. How many stickers does he have now?

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2. Mia has 4 packs of crayons with 6 crayons in each pack. She gives 5 crayons to a friend. How many crayons does she have left?

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3. Tom had 36 apples. He gave 14 to his friends and then picked 9 more. How many apples does he have now?

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4 Emily bakes 7 trays of cookies with 8 cookies on each tray. She sells 10 cookies. How many cookies are left?

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5 A farmer puts 6 baskets of apples on his truck. Each basket holds 12 apples. He then adds 15 more apples. How many apples are on the truck?

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6 There are 48 pencils to share equally among 8 students, and each student already has 3 pencils. How many pencils does each student have in the end?

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7 A bus starts with 48 passengers. 19 get off at the first stop, then 12 get on at the second stop and 17 more get on at the third stop. How many passengers are on the bus now?

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8 A library has 7 shelves with 25 books on each shelf. 40 books are checked out and 15 new books are added. How many books are on the shelves now?

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9 Four friends split $360, $520 and $420 from three events equally. How much does each friend get?

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10 A factory has 7 crates with 10 bottles in each crate. 50 bottles are delivered to a shop. How many bottles are left in the factory?

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ANSWER KEY

1. 33

2. 19

3. 31

4. 46

5. 87

6. 9

7. 58

8. 150

9. $325

10. 20

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