

Math Word-Problem Translation Guide

Words that suggest addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division

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Main Operation Words

Use the words as clues, then decide what is happening in the complete sentence.

+

ADDITION

sum

plus

added to

increased by

more than

total

altogether

combined

in all

gain

older than

longer than

—

SUBTRACTION

difference

minus

subtracted from

decreased by

less than

fewer than

take away

remaining

left

change

how many more

how many fewer

×

MULTIPLICATION

product

times

multiplied by

of

groups of

double

twice

triple

three times

factor

each group has

area of

÷

DIVISION

quotient

divided by

split equally

shared equally

divided into groups

per

ratio

out of

each person gets

average

how many groups

unit rate

IMPORTANT: SOME WORDS NEED CONTEXT

- “Each” may describe multiplication, division, or a rate.
- “Factor” may name a number being multiplied instead of telling you to multiply.
- “More than” and “less than” may describe an operation or an inequality.
- Read the entire sentence before choosing an operation.

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Order-changing phrases, comparisons, and examples

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Words That Can Change the Order

5 less than x

$$\rightarrow x - 5$$

Start with x , then subtract 5.

7 subtracted from y

$$\rightarrow y - 7$$

Seven is taken from y .

The quotient of 12 and n

$$\rightarrow 12 \div n$$

Keep 12 first.

x divided into 20

$$\rightarrow 20 \div x$$

Twenty is separated into groups of x .

Equality and Inequality Words

$=$

is • equals • is the same as

$>$

greater than • more than • exceeds

$<$

less than • fewer than • below

$\geq$

at least • no less than • minimum of

$\leq$

at most • no more than • maximum of

Build Complicated Phrases

Nine more than x

$$x + 9$$

Three times n

$$3n$$

Seven less than twice x

$$2x - 7$$

Half of x , increased by 6

$$x/2 + 6$$

Read your expression back in words.