

Two-Step Word Problems


A two-step problem needs two operations: do one, write the result, then do the next. The hardest part is figuring out which two operations.

Key Concepts

1. A **two-step problem** requires you to do two calculations to find the final answer.
2. Decide what *Step 1* is by asking: “What can I figure out from the numbers the problem gives me?”
3. Use the answer to Step 1 as a starting point for Step 2.
4. Write down each step’s result before moving on. Don’t try to keep both numbers in your head.


Worked Examples

① Sam has 3 bags of 6 apples. He eats 4. How many are left?

 Step 1: total apples to start. Equal groups: $3 \times 6 = 18$. Step 2: subtract the eaten ones. $18 - 4 = 14$. Sam has 14 apples left.


 **Answer:** 14 apples

② Lily had 25 stickers. She got 15 more, then gave 8 away. How many now?

 Step 1: add what she got. $25 + 15 = 40$. Step 2: subtract what she gave away. $40 - 8 = 32$. Lily has 32 stickers now.

 **Answer:** 32 stickers

③ There are 4 rows of 7 chairs. 5 more chairs are added. How many in all?

 Step 1: chairs in the rows. Array: $4 \times 7 = 28$. Step 2: add the new chairs. $28 + 5 = 33$. There are 33 chairs in all.

 **Answer:** 33 chairs

Practice Problems

Find each answer in two steps.

1. 5 packs of 8, eat 7: left? _____

2. $45 + 30 - 18 = ?$ _____

3. 3 rows of 9, add 6: total? _____

4. $100 - 35 + 12 = ?$ _____

5. 4 bags of 5 plus 15 more: ? _____

6. $60 - 24 + 9 = ?$ _____

7. 6×7 then subtract 20: ? _____

8. $50 + 27 - 38 = ?$ _____

9. 8×4 then add 13: ? _____

10. $72 - 19 + 25 = ?$ _____

11. 7 groups of 3 minus 5: ? _____

12. $36 + 48 - 29 = ?$ _____

Study Tips

- 👉 Always write Step 1's answer down before starting Step 2. Re-using numbers from memory is where two-step problems go wrong.
- 👉 If the problem mentions "each" or "rows," that step is usually multiplication. "Add," "more," "gave away," "ate," or "sold" point to addition or subtraction.
- 👉 At the end, re-read the question. Make sure your final answer is what it's actually asking for.

Word Problems

1. A class has 30 students. 8 went on a field trip and the rest split into 2 equal teams for a game. How many students are on each team?

Answer: _____



2. Emma bought 4 packs of markers with 6 markers each. She already had 7 markers at home. How many markers does she have now?

Answer: _____

Answer Key — with Friendly Explanations**Practice Problems**

- Step 1: $5 \times 8 = 40$. Step 2: $40 - 7 = 33$.  **Answer:** 33
- $45 + 30 = 75$, then $75 - 18 = 57$.  **Answer:** 57
- Step 1: $3 \times 9 = 27$. Step 2: $27 + 6 = 33$.  **Answer:** 33
- $100 - 35 = 65$, then $65 + 12 = 77$.  **Answer:** 77
- Step 1: $4 \times 5 = 20$. Step 2: $20 + 15 = 35$.  **Answer:** 35
- $60 - 24 = 36$, then $36 + 9 = 45$.  **Answer:** 45
- Step 1: $6 \times 7 = 42$. Step 2: $42 - 20 = 22$.  **Answer:** 22
- $50 + 27 = 77$, then $77 - 38 = 39$.  **Answer:** 39
- Step 1: $8 \times 4 = 32$. Step 2: $32 + 13 = 45$.  **Answer:** 45
- $72 - 19 = 53$, then $53 + 25 = 78$.  **Answer:** 78
- Step 1: $7 \times 3 = 21$. Step 2: $21 - 5 = 16$.  **Answer:** 16
- $36 + 48 = 84$, then $84 - 29 = 55$.  **Answer:** 55

Word Problems

- $30 - 8 = 22$, then $22 \div 2 = 11$ per team.  **Answer:** 11 *students*
- $4 \times 6 = 24$, then $24 + 7 = 31$.  **Answer:** 31 *markers*

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