

Simplifying Algebraic Expressions

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 26

Q Quick Review

Like terms are terms with the *same variable* raised to the *same power*. So $5x$ and $-3x$ are like terms; $5x$ and $5x^2$ are not (different powers); and $5x$ and $5y$ are not either (different variables). To combine like terms, you just add or subtract their coefficients: $5x + (-3x) = 2x$. The **Distributive Property** ($a(b + c) = ab + ac$) lets you clear parentheses by handing the outside number to each piece inside. The full simplification rhythm is three steps: **(1)** distribute to clear all parentheses, **(2)** group like terms, **(3)** combine the coefficients. The most common mistake is forgetting that a minus sign in front of parentheses flips *every* sign inside — think of it as multiplying by -1 .

PRACTICE

Simplify each expression by combining like terms.

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1. $5x + 3x$ | _____ | 11. $\frac{1}{2}(4x + 8)$ | _____ |
| 2. $7a - 2a + 4$ | _____ | 12. $-4(x - 3) + 4x$ | _____ |
| 3. $2(x + 6)$ | _____ | 13. $6x + 2y - 3x + y$ | _____ |
| 4. $-3(2y - 5)$ | _____ | 14. $-(x + 5) + 2x$ | _____ |
| 5. $4m + 3 - 2m + 1$ | _____ | 15. $3(x^2 + 2) - x^2$ | _____ |
| 6. $6(n + 2) - 4n$ | _____ | 16. $5(2x - 3) - 2(x + 4)$ | _____ |
| 7. $3(x - 4) + 2(x + 1)$ | _____ | 17. $\frac{1}{3}(9x - 6) + x$ | _____ |
| 8. $-5(2p + 3) + 8p$ | _____ | 18. $4 - 2(3 - x)$ | _____ |
| 9. $7 - 3(k - 2)$ | _____ | 19. $8x + 3 - (2x - 5)$ | _____ |
| 10. $2(a + b) + 3(a - b)$ | _____ | 20. $2(x + y) - 2(x - y)$ | _____ |

◆ VISUAL PRACTICE

Use the graph, table, chart, or diagram to answer the question.

21. Use the area model to write the simplified expression.

x^2	$4x$
$3x$	12

Answer: _____

22. The figure is a rectangle. Write and simplify an expression for the area.

Answer: _____

◆ Word Problems

23. A rectangular garden has length $(3x + 2)$ ft and width $(x + 4)$ ft. Write and simplify an expression for the perimeter. _____
24. Mia buys 3 notebooks at $(n + 1)$ dollars each and 2 pens at $(n - 2)$ dollars each. Write and simplify an expression for her total cost. _____
25. A square has side length $(2x + 5)$ inches. Write and simplify an expression for its perimeter. _____
26. Devon has $\$(4x + 20)$ in his wallet and spends $\$(x + 6)$ on lunch. Write and simplify an expression for how much money he has left. _____



Answer Keys

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 1. $8x$ | 14. $x - 5$ |
| 2. $5a + 4$ | 15. $2x^2 + 6$ |
| 3. $2x + 12$ | 16. $8x - 23$ |
| 4. $-6y + 15$ | 17. $4x - 2$ |
| 5. $2m + 4$ | 18. $2x - 2$ |
| 6. $2n + 12$ | 19. $6x + 8$ |
| 7. $5x - 10$ | 20. $4y$ |
| 8. $-2p - 15$ | 21. $x^2 + 7x + 12$ |
| 9. $-3k + 13$ | 22. $3x + 12$ |
| 10. $5a - b$ | 23. $(8x + 12)$ ft |
| 11. $2x + 4$ | 24. $\$(5n - 1)$ |
| 12. 12 | 25. $(8x + 20)$ in |
| 13. $3x + 3y$ | 26. $\$(3x + 14)$ |

Step-by-Step Tutor Notes

1. Both are x -terms with the same variable to the same power, so they combine. Just add the coefficients: $5 + 3 = 8$. Result: $8x$.
2. The a -terms combine: $7a - 2a = 5a$. The $+4$ is a constant on its own — nothing else like it — so it tags along unchanged.
3. No like terms to combine, just a distribution. Hand the 2 to both pieces: $2 \cdot x = 2x$ and $2 \cdot 6 = 12$. Final: $2x + 12$.
4. Distribute the -3 carefully. $-3 \cdot 2y = -6y$. Then $-3 \cdot (-5) = +15$ (negative times negative is positive). Result: $-6y + 15$.
5. Focus on the main idea of the problem, then simplify carefully. Sort by type. m -terms: $4m - 2m = 2m$. Constants: $3 + 1 = 4$. Combine: $2m + 4$. So the answer is $2m + 4$.
6. Distribute first: $6n + 12 - 4n$. Now combine n -terms: $6n - 4n = 2n$. The $+12$ stays. Result: $2n + 12$.
7. Distribute both: $3x - 12 + 2x + 2$. Group by type: x -terms are $3x + 2x = 5x$; constants are $-12 + 2 = -10$. Together: $5x - 10$.
8. Distribute: $-10p - 15 + 8p$. Combine p -terms: $-10p + 8p = -2p$. Constant -15 stays. Result: $-2p - 15$.
9. Distribute the -3 : $7 - 3k + 6$. (The minus times -2 is $+6$ — easy to miss.) Now combine constants: $7 + 6 = 13$. Final: $-3k + 13$.
10. Distribute each: $2a + 2b + 3a - 3b$. Group by letter — a -terms: $2a + 3a = 5a$; b -terms: $2b - 3b = -b$. Combine: $5a - b$.
11. Half of $4x$ is $2x$, and half of 8 is 4 . So $2x + 4$. Fractions distribute the same way whole numbers do.
12. Distribute: $-4x + 12 + 4x$. The $-4x$ and $+4x$ cancel each other out, leaving just 12 . (Whenever variables cancel like this, the problem is checking that you noticed.)
13. Two kinds of terms here, so sort them. x -terms: $6x - 3x = 3x$. y -terms: $2y + y = 3y$ (remember the silent 1 in front of y). Result: $3x + 3y$.
14. The bare minus in front of $(x + 5)$ acts like a -1 . So distribute: $-x - 5 + 2x$. Combine x -terms: $-x + 2x = x$. Final: $x - 5$.
15. Distribute: $3x^2 + 6 - x^2$. The x^2 -terms combine (same variable, same power): $3x^2 - x^2 = 2x^2$. Result: $2x^2 + 6$.
16. Distribute both, watching the second negative: $10x - 15$ from the first, and $-2x - 8$ from the second. Combine: $10x - 2x = 8x$, $-15 - 8 = -23$. Final: $8x - 23$.
17. Distribute the $\frac{1}{3}$: one-third of $9x$ is $3x$, one-third of -6 is -2 . So $3x - 2 + x$. Combine x -terms: $3x + x = 4x$. Result: $4x - 2$.
18. Distribute the -2 carefully. $-2 \cdot 3 = -6$ and $-2 \cdot (-x) = +2x$. So $4 - 6 + 2x$. Combine constants: $4 - 6 = -2$. Final: $2x - 2$.
19. That bare minus flips both signs inside the parens: $8x + 3 - 2x + 5$. (The -5 becomes $+5$ — this is where students lose points.) Combine: $8x - 2x = 6x$, $3 + 5 = 8$. Result: $6x + 8$.
20. Distribute each: $2x + 2y - 2x + 2y$. The x -terms cancel completely ($2x - 2x = 0$), and the y -terms add up: $2y + 2y = 4y$. Clean answer: $4y$.
21. Move carefully through the arithmetic; one clean operation usually unlocks the next one. Add the four regions: $x^2 + 4x + 3x + 12 = x^2 + 7x + 12$. After simplifying, the answer is $x^2 + 7x + 12$.
22. Start with the definition the problem is testing, then apply it directly. Area is length times width: $3(x + 4) = 3x + 12$. So the answer is $3x + 12$.
23. Perimeter of a rectangle is $2(\text{length}) + 2(\text{width})$. Replace the length and width: $2(3x + 2) + 2(x + 4)$. Distribute both: $6x + 4 + 2x + 8$. Combine: $6x + 2x = 8x$, $4 + 8 = 12$. Final: $(8x + 12)$ feet.
24. Three notebooks cost $3(n + 1)$ dollars, and two pens cost $2(n - 2)$. Add: $3(n + 1) + 2(n - 2)$. Distribute: $3n + 3 + 2n - 4$. Combine: $3n + 2n = 5n$, $3 - 4 = -1$. Total: $\$(5n - 1)$.
25. A square has four equal sides, so perimeter = $4(2x + 5)$. Distribute: $4 \cdot 2x = 8x$ and $4 \cdot 5 = 20$. Final: $(8x + 20)$ inches.
26. Money left = what he had — what he spent: $(4x + 20) - (x + 6)$. The minus flips both signs in the second parens: $4x + 20 - x - 6$. (That -6 is the easy-to-miss one.) Combine: $4x - x = 3x$, $20 - 6 = 14$. Final: $\$(3x + 14)$.



Keep Building ALEKS Skills

Recommended ALEKS books and bundle



The Most Comprehensive ALEKS Math Preparation Bundle

Prep books, workbooks, full-length tests, detailed explanations, and a formula bonus file in one complete ALEKS study path.



Scan Me
Download Instantly

STUDENT FAVORITE · ALEKS Math for Beginners



ALEKS Math for Beginners 2026

Step-by-step lessons, basic study guides, topic practice, and two full-length ALEKS Math tests for students who need a calm path from review to readiness.

Great companion to these worksheets for self-study, tutoring, and classroom review.

PDF Edition



Scan Me

Amazon



Scan Me

For more ALEKS prep, visit EffortlessMath.com/ALEKS