

Simplifying Variable Expressions

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 18

Quick Review and Helpful Hints

To *simplify* an expression, combine *like terms* – terms with the same variable raised to the same power. First use the *distributive property* to clear parentheses ($a(b + c) = ab + ac$), then add or subtract the like terms. Constants combine with constants.

▶ **Example:** Simplify $3(2x + 4) - 5x + 7$. **Work:** Distribute the 3: $6x + 12 - 5x + 7$. Combine the x -terms: $6x - 5x = x$. Combine the constants: $12 + 7 = 19$.
 ★ **Answer:** $x + 19$

$$3(x + 2)$$

$$= 3x + 6$$

Distribute to each term, then combine.

Practice Problems

Simplify each expression.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. $2x + 5x$ _____</p> <p>2. $8a - 3a$ _____</p> <p>3. $4x + 3 + 2x$ _____</p> <p>4. $7y - 2 - y + 5$ _____</p> <p>5. $3(x + 2)$ _____</p> <p>6. $5(2x - 1)$ _____</p> <p>7. $2(x + 3) + 4x$ _____</p> | <p>8. $6x - 2(x + 1)$ _____</p> <p>9. $4(a + 2) + 3(a - 1)$ _____</p> <p>10. $3x + 2y - x + 4y$ _____</p> <p>11. $-2(3x - 4)$ _____</p> <p>12. $5 + 2(x - 3)$ _____</p> <p>13. $8m - 3(m - 2)$ _____</p> <p>14. $2(x + 5) + 3(2x - 1)$ _____</p> |
|--|---|

Word Problems

15. A rectangle has length $x + 4$ and width 3. Write a simplified expression for its perimeter. _____
16. You buy x shirts at \$7 each and one \$5 cap. Write a simplified expression for the total cost. _____
17. There are 3 boxes that each hold $(x + 2)$ pencils, plus 4 loose pencils. Write a simplified expression for the total. _____
18. A taxi charges \$3 plus \$2 per mile, then a \$4 coupon is applied. Write a simplified expression for the cost of m miles. _____



Answer Keys

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. $7x$ | 7. $6x + 6$ | 13. $5m + 6$ |
| 2. $5a$ | 8. $4x - 2$ | 14. $8x + 7$ |
| 3. $6x + 3$ | 9. $7a + 5$ | 15. $2x + 14$ |
| 4. $6y + 3$ | 10. $2x + 6y$ | 16. $7x + 5$ |
| 5. $3x + 6$ | 11. $-6x + 8$ | 17. $3x + 10$ |
| 6. $10x - 5$ | 12. $2x - 1$ | 18. $2m - 1$ |

Step-by-Step Explanations

1. Start by naming the process: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is These are like terms, so just add the coefficients: $2x + 5x = 7x$. So the final answer is $7x$.
2. A good way to think about this is: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Both terms have a , so subtract the coefficients: $8a - 3a = 5a$. So the final answer is $5a$.
3. Step by step: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Group the x -terms and the numbers: $(4x + 2x) + 3 = 6x + 3$. So the final answer is $6x + 3$.
4. Take it one move at a time: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Combine the y -terms ($7y - y = 6y$) and the constants ($-2 + 5 = 3$): $6y + 3$. So the final answer is $6y + 3$.
5. Start by naming the process: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Distribute the 3 to each term inside: $3 \cdot x + 3 \cdot 2 = 3x + 6$. So the final answer is $3x + 6$.
6. A good way to think about this is: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Distribute the 5: $5 \cdot 2x - 5 \cdot 1 = 10x - 5$. So the final answer is $10x - 5$.
7. Step by step: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Distribute first: $2x + 6$. Then add the $4x$: $2x + 4x + 6 = 6x + 6$. So the final answer is $6x + 6$.
8. Take it one move at a time: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Distribute the -2 : $6x - 2x - 2$. Combine: $4x - 2$. So the final answer is $4x - 2$.
9. Start by naming the process: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Distribute both: $4a + 8$ and $3a - 3$. Combine: $(4a + 3a) + (8 - 3) = 7a + 5$. So the final answer is $7a + 5$.

10. A good way to think about this is: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Combine the x -terms ($3x - x = 2x$) and the y -terms ($2y + 4y = 6y$): $2x + 6y$. So the final answer is $2x + 6y$.
11. Step by step: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is A negative multiplier flips each sign: $-2 \cdot 3x = -6x$ and $-2 \cdot (-4) = +8$, giving $-6x + 8$. So the final answer is $-6x + 8$.
12. Take it one move at a time: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Distribute: $5 + 2x - 6$. Combine the constants $5 - 6 = -1$: $2x - 1$. So the final answer is $2x - 1$.
13. Start by naming the process: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Distribute the -3 : $8m - 3m + 6$. Combine: $5m + 6$. So the final answer is $5m + 6$.
14. A good way to think about this is: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Distribute both: $2x + 10$ and $6x - 3$. Combine: $(2x + 6x) + (10 - 3) = 8x + 7$. So the final answer is $8x + 7$.
15. Step by step: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Perimeter is $2(\text{length} + \text{width}) = 2((x + 4) + 3) = 2(x + 7) = 2x + 14$. So the final answer is $2x + 14$.
16. Take it one move at a time: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Each shirt costs \$7, so x shirts cost $7x$; add the \$5 cap: $7x + 5$. So the final answer is $7x + 5$.
17. Start by naming the process: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is Three boxes give $3(x + 2) = 3x + 6$ pencils; add the 4 loose ones: $3x + 10$. So the final answer is $3x + 10$.
18. A good way to think about this is: Read what the problem is asking, choose the matching rule, write the setup, and then simplify one step at a time. The setup/work is The cost is $3 + 2m$, then subtract the \$4 coupon: $3 + 2m - 4 = 2m - 1$. So the final answer is $2m - 1$.



Keep Building SSAT Middle-Level Math Skills

Recommended Effortless Math resources



SSAT Middle Level Math Comprehensive Prep Bundle

Use the complete SSAT Middle-Level Math resource for review, worked examples, extra practice, and test-style questions after each worksheet.



Scan Me
Download Instantly

STUDENT FAVORITE - SSAT Middle-Level Math for Beginners



SSAT Middle-Level Math for Beginners 2026

Step-by-step lessons, topic practice, and full review support for students who want a calm path through SSAT Middle-Level Math preparation.

A strong companion for self-study, tutoring, homework, and targeted review.

PDF Edition



Scan Me
Download Instantly