

Word Problem Strategy Sheet

A step-by-step approach to solving any word problem. Use the CUBES strategy and keyword chart to set up equations correctly.

CUBES Strategy

C - Circle the numbers in the problem

U - Underline the question being asked

B - Box the key words that tell you which operation to use

E - Evaluate and draw a picture or diagram if it helps

S - Solve and check your answer

Key Words Chart

Operation	Key Words
Addition (+)	total, sum, altogether, combined, in all, increase, more than
Subtraction (-)	difference, less, remain, decrease, fewer, how many more, left over
Multiplication (x)	times, each, every, product, double, triple, of
Division (/)	share, per, split, divide, each gets, ratio, average

Setting Up Equations

1. Define your variable (let $x = \dots$)
2. Translate words into math symbols
3. Write the equation
4. Solve for the variable
5. Check: plug answer back in

Common Problem Types

Age problems: "In 5 years..." - use x and $x+5$

Distance/Rate/Time: $d = r \times t$

Mixture: $\text{amount1} \times \text{value1} + \text{amount2} \times \text{value2}$

Work rate: $1/\text{time1} + 1/\text{time2} = 1/\text{total}$

Always re-read the question after solving. Ask yourself: "Does my answer make sense?" If a problem asks for someone's age and you get -3, something went wrong.