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Solving math word problems by Tutortutor

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In mathematics education, the term word problem is often used to refer to any math exercise where significant background information on the problem is presented as text rather than in mathematical notation. As word problems often involve a narrative of some sort, they are occasionally also referred to as story problems and may vary in the amount of language used.

The most difficult homework assignment for most math students is working story/word problems. Solving word problems requires excellent reading comprehension and translating skills.

Students often have difficulty substituting English terms for algebraic symbols and equations. But once an equation is written, it is usually easily solved. To help you solve word problems follow these 2 steps:

There are two steps to solving math word problems:

Translate the wording into a numeric equation that combines smaller â€œexpressionsâ€•

Solve the equation!

Suggestions:

Read the problem entirely

Get a feel for the whole problem

List information and the variables you identify

Attach units of measure to the variables (gallons, miles, inches, etc.)

Define what answer you need, as well as its units of measure

Work in an organized manner

Working clearly will help you think clearly

Draw and label all graphs and pictures clearly

Note or explain each step of your process; this will help you track variables and remember their meanings

Look for the â€œkeyâ€• words (above)

Certain words indicate certain mathematical operations:

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