

2nd Grade: One-step and Two-step Word Problems

In word problems, you are finding the equation that matches the story to solve for the missing number. On this page you will find tools to use when solving a word problem. On the next page you will find a word problem example.

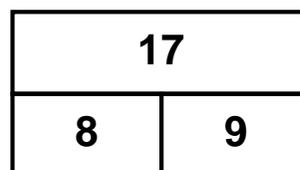
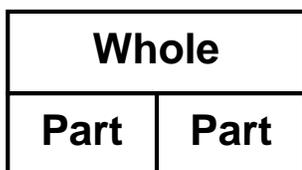
Below is an acronym that can help your child approach a word problem.

Below are some math “action” words to help identify the operation needed.

C	Circle key numbers and units. What do I know?
U	Underline the question. What am I being asked to solve?
B	Box math “action” words. Am I going to add or subtract?
E	Evaluate and eliminate. What steps do I take? What information don’t I need?
S	Show your work and check. Does my answer make sense? How can I double check?

Operation Clue Words	
Addition Sum In all Total Together Altogether More than Combined And	Subtraction Difference Decrease Minus Less than How much...than Separate Fewer Remain How many

Below is an organizational tool called a **bar model**. This tool organizes fact families. In word problems, it allows you to place the numbers the problem gives you and to then create an equation to solve for the missing number. (Your child may use **number bonds** or **tape diagrams** in class. They all do the same thing.)



To create equations using this tool, remember:

$$\text{Part} + \text{Part} = \text{Whole}$$

$$\text{Whole} - \text{Part} = \text{Part}$$

For example,

$$\mathbf{P + P = W} \qquad \mathbf{W - P = P}$$

$$8 + 9 = 17 \qquad 17 - 8 = 9$$

$$9 + 8 = 17 \qquad 17 - 9 = 8$$

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One-Step Word Problem:

Annie's family has 5 pets. One of the pets just had some puppies. Now Annie's family has 13 pets. How many puppies were just born?

1. After reading, then **circle** key numbers and units, **underline** the question, and **box** math "action" words. (Circle the keyword *some*. *Some* usually indicates that there is a missing part.)

Annie's family has 5 pets. One of the pets just had some puppies. Now Annie's family has 13 pets. How many puppies were just born?

2. Now you can **eliminate** what's not needed and **evaluate** what to do with the information given.
3. To begin organizing the key numbers you know into a **bar model**, ask *Do we know the whole number (final total)?* In this problem, we do know the whole number: 13. Then ask *What parts do we know?* Here we know the beginning part was 5 pets. We do not know the second part (the puppies that were born.)

13	
5	?

4. A question mark is used for the unknown part. The action words *How many* tell us that a subtraction equation will likely be easiest to solve this problem.

So, remembering **whole – part = part**, our choice of equations is:

$$13 - 5 = ? \quad \text{or} \quad 13 - ? = 5$$

The first equation, $13 - 5 = ?$, will be easiest to solve this problem.

5. Now that we have an equation, we can **show** our work and check. Your child may choose a mathematical tool to help them solve for the missing part (number line, ten frames, stacking to add or subtract...)

The final answer is $13 - 5 = 8$

To solve a **two-step word problem**, follow the same steps. The difference is that there will be **two** equations used in the problem.