

TEST-TAKING TIPS: TRICKS FOR MATH



Math Test-Taking Strategy

Look over all the items.

Identify those problems you definitely know how to do right away, and those that you expect to have to think about.

Do the easy problems first so you don't miss any sure points just because you run out of time.

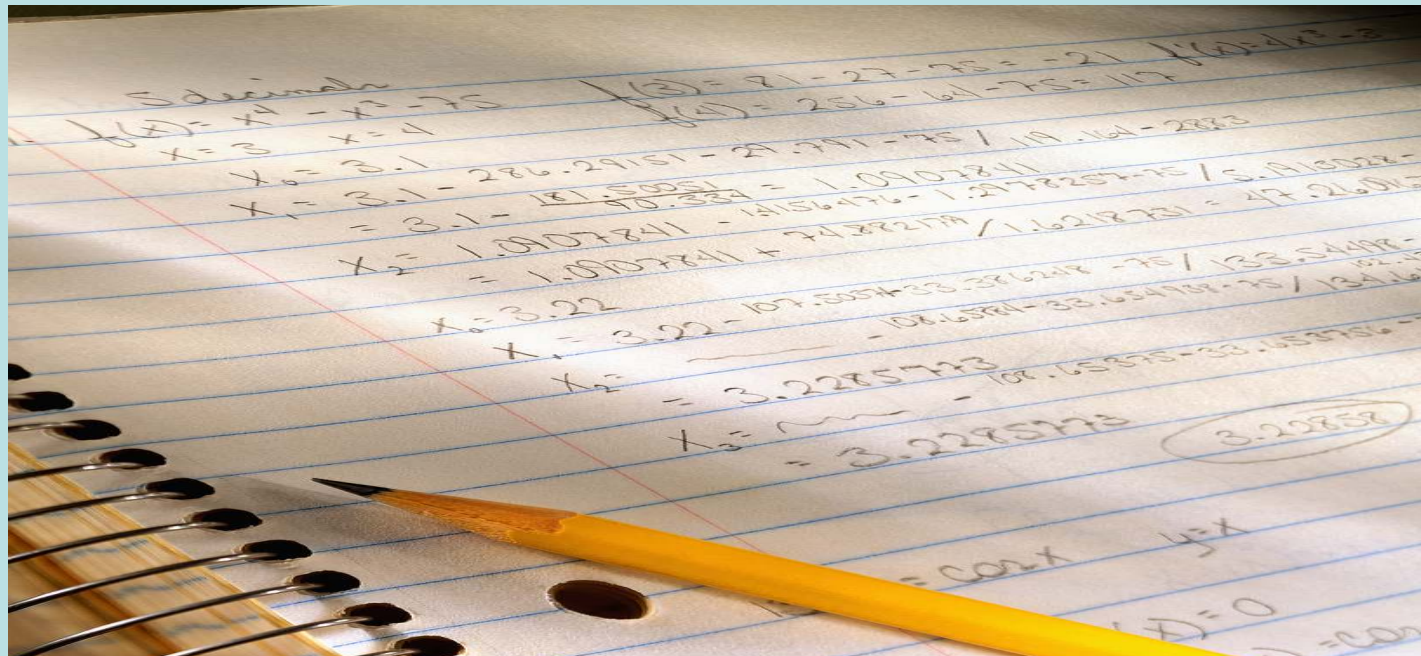
Then do the problems you think you can figure out.

Finally try the ones you are least sure about.

Use Scratch Paper to Figure Your Work

On many difficult questions, the obvious answer is wrong-do not guess unless you have worked the problem out on scratch paper.

If there is time, do the problem twice.



Types of Math Questions Typically Found on Instructional Aide Tests

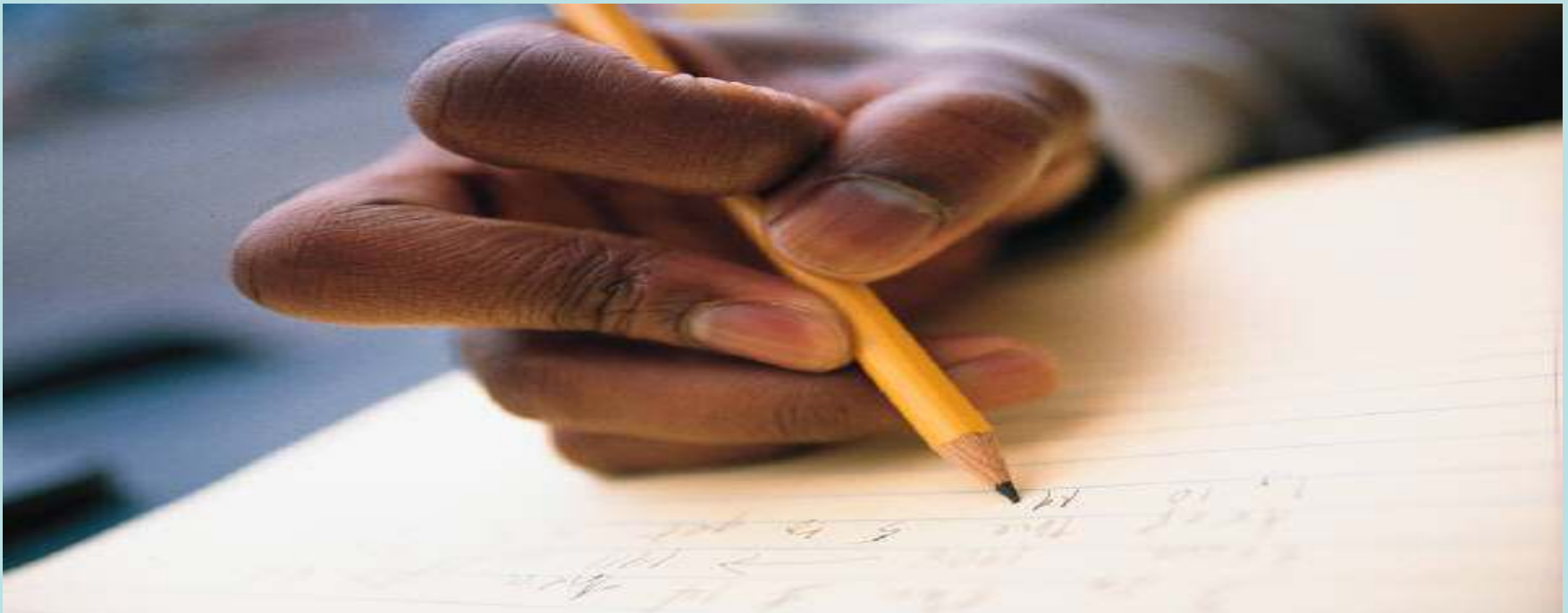
- Fractions
- Decimals
- Percent
- Estimation
- Averaging
- Probability
- Pre-Algebra/Basic Algebra
- Simplifying
- Factoring
- Grid Graphs
- Geometry Basics



Word Problems

If you are having a difficult time with a word problem, look for a simpler approach-the problem may be difficult, but the math is usually easy.

Always read every word of the problem and all of the answer choices.



Key Words and Converting Words to Equations

Sometimes keywords are used in math questions. Understanding these key words will help you figure out what the problem is asking for.



A photograph of a green surface with a white circle drawn around the formula $R = \frac{\text{circumference}}{2\pi}$. The text is written in a cursive-like font.

Equations from Words

What is the sum of 8 and y ? $8 + y$

Four less than y $y - 4$

y multiplied by thirteen $13y$



Word Problems

Many times words are used to indicate mathematical operations in word problems or in instructions.



OPERATION

OTHER WORDS WHICH INDICATE THE OPERATION

- **Addition**
 - **Subtraction**
 - **Multiplication**
 - **Division**
 - **Equal**
 - **Per**
 - **Percent**
- Increased by; more than; combined together; total of; sum; added to; symbol +
 - Decreased by; minus; difference between/of; less than; fewer than; symbol –
 - Times; multiplied by; product of ($4 + 4 + 4 = 4 \times 3$); symbols \times and \bullet
 - Per; a; out of; ratio of; quotient of; percent (divide by 100); symbol \div
 - Is; are; was; will be; gives; yields; sold for; symbol =
 - Divided by; symbol /
 - Divide by 100; symbol %

Take the Words and Make an Equation to Answer the Problem

A car dealership has 15 new cars and 12 used cars. How many cars do they have?

- Define the unknown variable:

Let x = Total Cars

- Translate the problem into an equation and plug known values in:

$$15 + 12 = x$$

- Solve the equation:

$$27 = x$$

- Answer:

There are 27 total cars

Breaking Down the Question into Mathematical Terms:

Sample facts from a word problem-

The perimeter is the distance around an object.

A square has 4 equal sides.

If one side is 20 ft. then to determine what the 4 sides would equal would be:

$$4 \times 20 = 80$$

The Facts in Word Problem Format:

What is the perimeter of a square garden if one of its sides is 20 ft.?

- a. 40 ft.
- b. 60 ft.
- *c. 80 ft.
- d. 100 ft.

Fractions

The background of the slide is a photograph of a piece of lined paper with several handwritten math problems. The problems involve adding and subtracting fractions with different denominators. For example, one problem shows $\frac{7}{12} + \frac{9}{12}$ and another shows $\frac{7}{12} + \frac{3}{4}$. The handwriting is in black ink on blue-lined paper.

- In order to accurately solve fraction problems it is important to distinguish between the numerator and denominator

Numerator: top number

Denominator: bottom number

Decimal Equivalents

To make these type problems clearer try substituting the decimal equivalent of the fraction whenever possible.

Divide the numerator by the denominator to get the decimal equivalent.

Writing a Decimal as a Fraction

	Decimal	Fraction	Final Answer
<i>For a number in the tenths place, remove the decimal, divide by ten, and simplify</i>	.5	$\frac{5}{10}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
<i>For a number in the hundredths place, remove the decimal, divide by 100, and simplify</i>	.05	$\frac{5}{100}$	$\frac{1}{20}$
<i>For a number in the thousandths place, remove the decimal, divide by 1,000, and simplify</i>	.005	$\frac{5}{1,000}$	$\frac{1}{200}$

For Example:

$$\frac{1}{2}(x + 4) = 14$$

Change $\frac{1}{2}$ to a decimal by dividing 1 by 2 which equals .5

Then finish the problem:

$$.5(x + 4) = 14$$

$$.5(x) + .5(4) = 14$$

$$.5x + 2 = 14$$

$$.5x = 14 - 2$$

$$.5x = 12$$

$$x = 24$$

Adding Fractions is Straightforward:

SAMPLE	$\frac{5}{13}$	+	$\frac{6}{13}$
<i>The denominator remains the same, then add the top numbers</i>	$\frac{5 + 6}{13}$		
<i>Answer</i>	$\frac{11}{13}$		

Find the common denominator by multiplying the first denominator by the second denominator.

- $3/5 + 2/7$
- *Find the common denominator by multiplying 5 x 7*
- $5 \times 7 = 35$
- *To get new numerators, multiply the numerator by the same number as the denominator was multiplied by*
- $3 \times 7 = 21$
- $2 \times 5 = 10$
- *Insert the new numbers into the numerator and add the fractions*
- $21/35 + 10/35$
- *Answer* $31/35$

Simplifying Fractions

Use the rules of divisibility:

- Start with 2: Even numbers (ones that end with 2, 4, 6, 8, or 0) can be divided by two without a remainder.
- Then go to 3: Find the sum of the digits (add the digits together). If the sum can be divided by three then the number is divisible by 3.
- Next try 5: Numbers that end with 5 or 0 are divisible by five.
- Go on to 7, 11, 13, 17, and so on: Unfortunately there is no easy way to determine whether the number will be divisible by these--you just have to try dividing by each.
- You can stop trying when the number is less than the divisor.

SAMPLE	Simplify	$\frac{26}{65}$
<i>Twenty-six can be divided by two without a remainder (because its even), but 65 can't</i>	$26 \div 2 = 13$ $65 \div 2 = 32.5$	YES NO
<i>The digits do not add up to three</i>	$2 + 6 = 8 \div 3$ $6 + 5 = 11 \div 3$	NO NO
<i>Sixty-five can be divided by five without a remainder, but 26 can't</i>	$65 \div 5 = 13$ $26 \div 5 = 5.2$	YES NO
<i>Try 7</i>	$26 \div 7 = 3.7$ $65 \div 7 = 9.3$	NO NO
<i>Try 11</i>	$26 \div 11 = 2.4$ $65 \div 11 = 5.9$	NO NO
<i>Try 13- and it works!!!</i>	$26 \div 13 = 2$ $65 \div 13 = 5$	YES YES
<i>Answer</i>	$\frac{2}{5}$	

Dividing Fractions

Invert one fraction and multiply

$\frac{1}{5}$	\div	$\frac{2}{3}$
$\frac{1 \times 3}{5 \times 2}$		
$\frac{3}{10}$		

Statistics / Average

Find the average by adding up the data and dividing by the number of data elements

SAMPLE

- **What is the average of 79, 67, 81, 99, 88, and 72?**
- **Add the numbers above**
- **$79 + 67 + 81 + 99 + 88 + 72 = 486$**
- **Divide by the total by the number of data elements (number of individual numbers)**
- **$486 \div 6$**
- ***Answer:* 81**

Exponents

An exponent is a superscript, or small number written at the top right corner of a number, variable, or parenthesis. This tells you to multiply 1 by the number as many times as the exponent says.

$$3^2 = 3 \times 3 = 9$$

SAMPLE	Simplify 2^4
<i>Multiply one by three multiplied by itself four times</i>	$1 (2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2)$
	$1 (16)$
<i>Answer</i>	16
SAMPLE	Simplify -2^4
<i>The location of the negative sign is not contained by parenthesis, so the sign will be attached at the end</i>	-2^4
<i>Simplify the exponent first</i>	$1 (2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2)$
	$1 (16)$
	16
<i>Add the negative at the end</i>	- 16
<i>Answer</i>	- 16

SOME OTHER TIPS ON EXPONENTS

- Anything to the zero power equals one

SAMPLE

$$1002^0 = 1$$

- Zero to any power except zero is always zero

SAMPLE

$$0^{1,250} = 0; \text{ but } 0^0 = 1$$

- For any number raised to the first power, simply remove the exponent

SAMPLE

$$1002^1 = 1002$$

- Ten to any power can be simplified by placing the number of zeros the exponent says after a one

SAMPLE

$$10^3 = 1,000$$

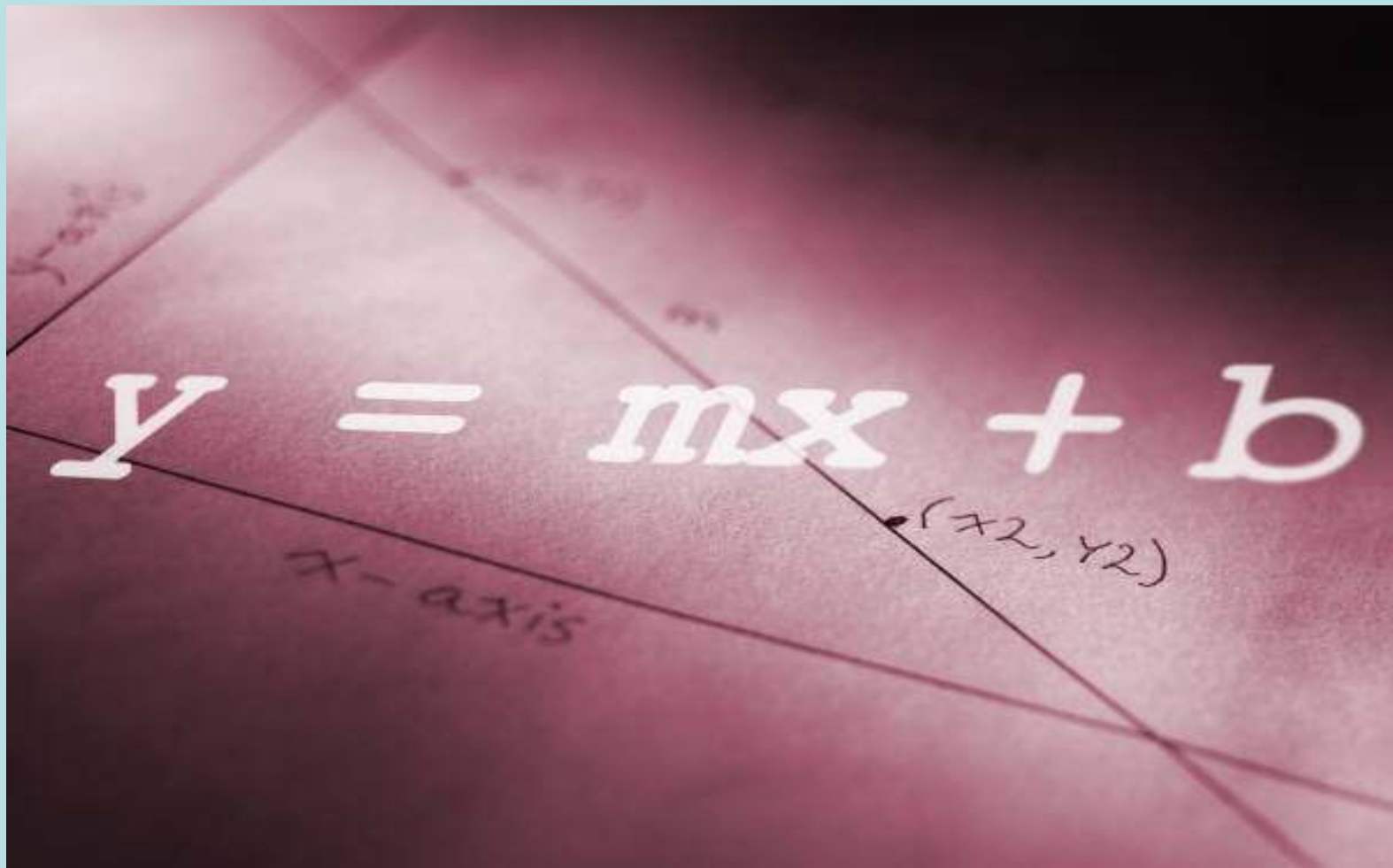
When dividing exponents:

SAMPLE	Simplify	$\frac{x^6}{x^2}$
<i>Subtract the superscripts ⁶ and ²</i>	x^{6-2}	
<i>Answer</i>	x^4	

When raising a product to a power, multiply exponents

SAMPLE	Simplify $(x^2x)^3$
<i>Multiply the exponent on each variable in parenthesis by the exponent outside of the parenthesis</i>	$x^{2 \times 3} x^{1 \times 3}$
<i>Add the superscripts</i>	x^6x^3
<i>Answer</i>	x^9

Pre-Algebra/Algebra



SPECIAL NOTATION FOR DIVISION AND MULTIPLICATION WITH VARIABLES

Here are some examples of special notations and what they mean:

2b means 2 x b

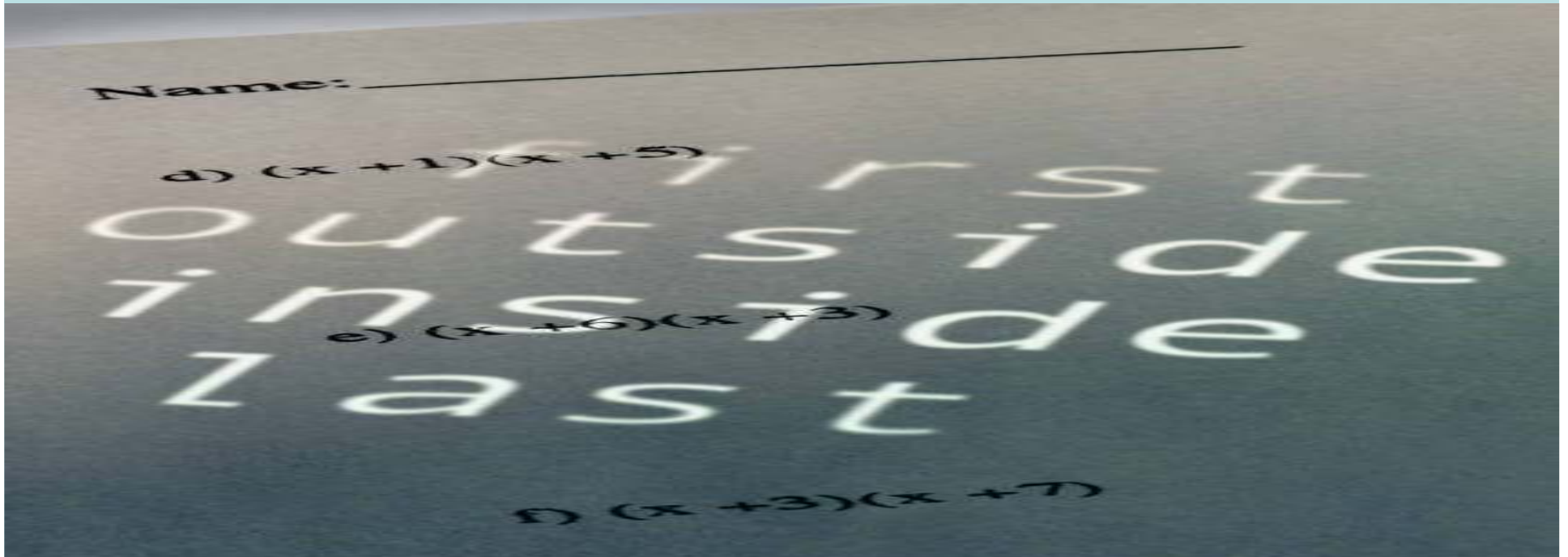
2(a + 5) means twice the sum of a number (a) and five

bc means b x c

4bc means 4 x b x c

d/5 means d ÷ 5

FOIL Method



First - Multiply the first term in each set of parentheses

Outer – Multiply the outer term in each set of parentheses

Innner – Multiply the inner term in each set of parentheses

Last - Multiply the last term in each set of parentheses

$$(3+7x)(6+2x)$$

- **Multiply the first term in each set of parenthesis**

$$3 \times 6 = 18$$

- **Multiply the outer terms**

$$3 \times 2x = 6x$$

So far we have:

$$18 \times 6x$$

$$(3+7x)(6+2x)$$

- **Add the inners**
 $7x \text{ times } 6 = 42x$
- **Finally add the last terms**
 $7x \text{ times } 2x = 14x^2$
- **Now we have**
 $18 + 6x + 42x + 14x^2$
- **Combine the like terms**
 $6x + 42x = 48x$
- **Answer:** $18 + 48x + 14x^2$

THE COORDINATE SYSTEM

GRID GRAPHS

The location of any point on a grid can be indicated by an ordered pair of numbers (X,Y) where X represents the number of units on the horizontal line stemming away from zero (called the x -axis), and Y represents the number of units on the vertical line stemming away from zero (called the y -axis). The X is always listed first, and the Y is always listed second in an ordered pair.



The numbers in an ordered pair are called coordinates.

For example if the x-coordinate is -3 and the y-coordinate is 5, the ordered pair for the point would be $(-3,5)$.

The x-intercept is the point where a line crosses the x-axis. It is found by setting $y = 0$ and solving the resulting equation.

The y-intercept is the point where a line crosses the y-axis. It is found by setting $x = 0$ and solving the resulting equation.

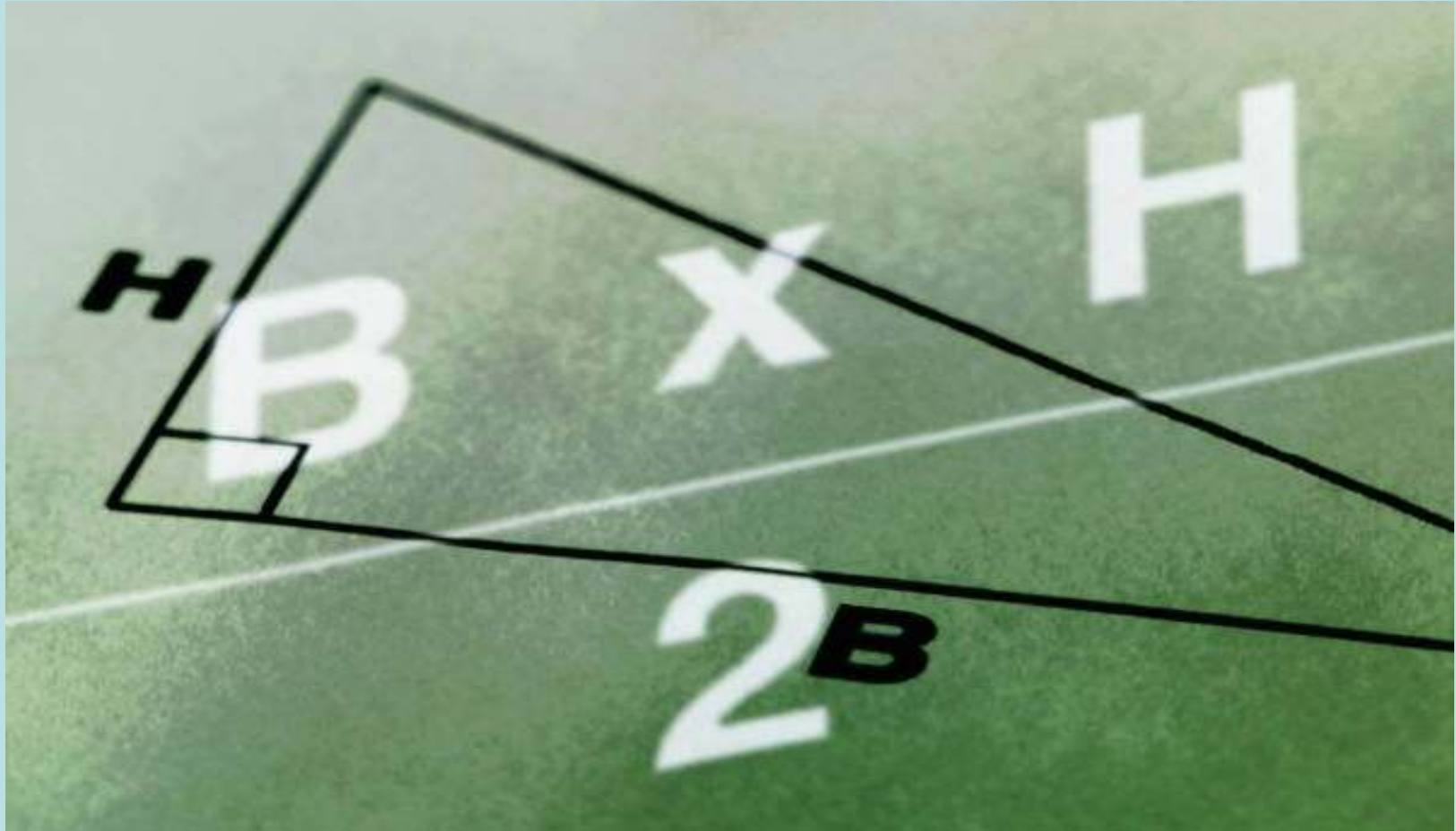
Probability: The odds of an event occurring. 50% means the event will occur 1 out of every 2 times.

- For example there are 120 marbles in a bowl. There are 3 different colors of marbles and an equal amount of each color in the bowl. Each time you randomly pick a marble from the bowl the probability will be of 1 out of 3 times that you will pick one of the three colors of marbles.

Estimation: An answer that has been approximated to be near the actual answer, used to save time when accuracy is not important.

- For example a good estimate of $23 + 24 + 26 + 25$ would be 100 because all the numbers are close to 25 and it is commonly known that $25 \times 4 = 100$ without actually doing the math.

GEOMETRY BASICS



BASICS

- The angles of any four sided figure always add up to 360°
- Two lines are perpendicular (\perp) when they meet at a 90° angle
- Two lines are parallel (\parallel) when they never intersect
- Bisect means to cut in half

SQUARES

- Each of the 4 sides are always equal in length
- Each of the 4 angles is always equal to 90°
- The area (A) of a square is found by squaring the measurement of one side
 - $A = s^2$
- Find the perimeter by adding up the length of all the sides
 - Perimeter = $4s$
- $s =$ sides

RECTANGLES

Opposite sides are always equal

Each of the 4 angles is always equal to 90 degrees

The area of a rectangle is found by multiplying the rectangle's length by its width

$$A = lw$$

Find the perimeter by multiplying the length by two and the width by two and adding those products

$$\text{Perimeter} = 2l + 2w$$

CIRCLES

There are 360 degrees in a circle

Radius = distance from the center to any point on the edge of the circle (r)

Diameter = straight line distance from one point on the circle to another, passing through the center point (d)

Pi = 3.14 (Π)

The area of a circle is found by multiplying Pi by the radius squared

$$A = \Pi r^2$$

Circumference is the distance around the outside of the circle, find it by multiplying two by Pi by the radius

$$\text{Circumference} = \Pi 2r$$

Geometric Problems and Equations

Perimeter of Rectangle $P = 2L + 2W$

Area of a Rectangle $A = L \times W$

Perimeter of Square $P = 4S$

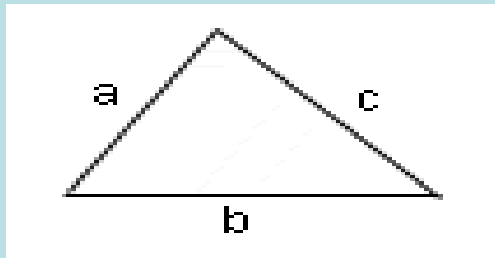
Area of Square $A = S \times S$

L = length **W = width** **S = side**

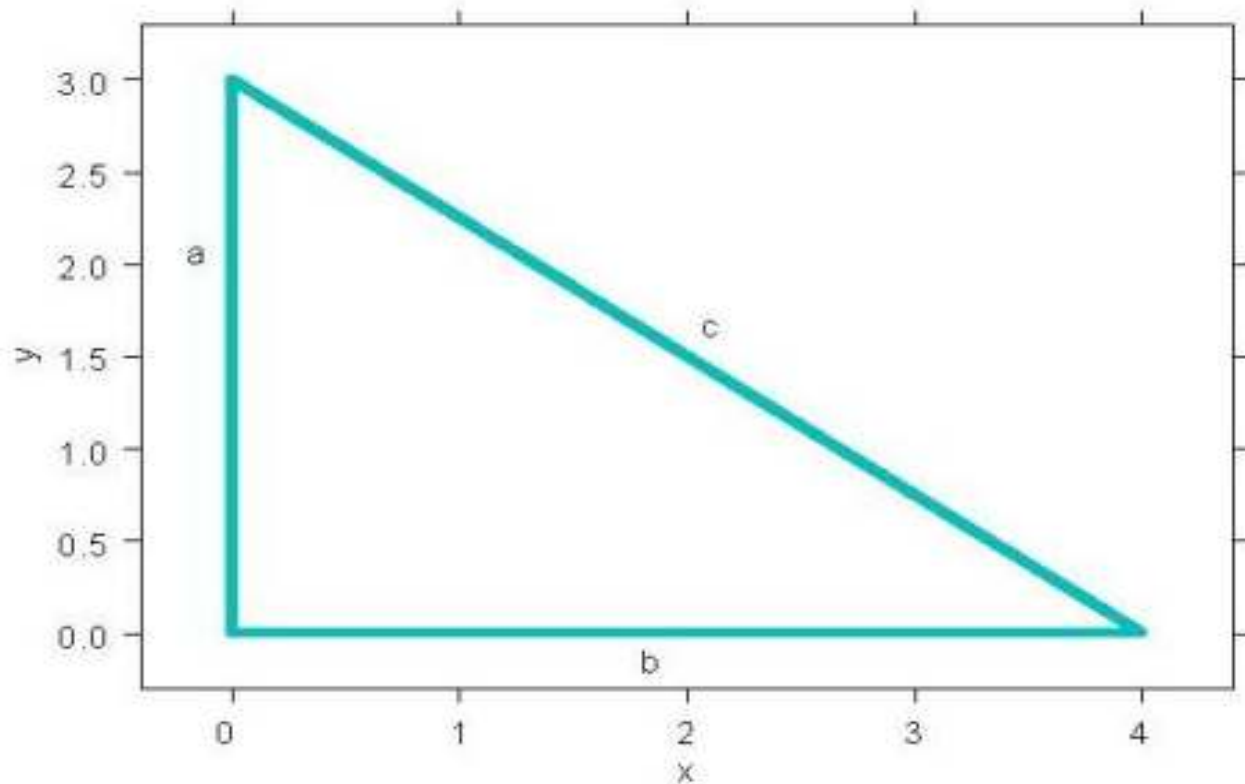
Triangles

Each of the 3 angles will always add up to 180 degrees

- On right triangles two sides intersect to form a 90 degree angle
- The area of a triangle is found by multiplying the triangle's base by its height and dividing the product in half: $A = \frac{1}{2} bh$
- Find the perimeter by adding up the length of all the sides



- A hypotenuse is the side of a right triangle that is opposite the right (90°) angle. By using the Pythagorean theorem one can find the length of an unknown side of a right triangle.
- The Pythagorean Theorem is: $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, where c equals the hypotenuse.



Using this triangle as an example, the hypotenuse is side c . We have $a = 3$, and $b = 4$. So:

$$c^2 = 3^2 + 4^2$$

$$c^2 = 9 + 16$$

$$c^2 = 25$$

To find the length of c , all we do is take the square root of both sides. In this case, $c = 5$.

3

STUDY

10

and

18

PRACTICE

Learning New Math Concepts

Math is learned by doing problems.

The problems help you learn the formulas and techniques you do need to know, as well as improve your problem-solving ability.

Math builds on previous skills so if you need to review math basics do so before attempting higher level problems.

LEARN BY DOING
Over, and over again



SELF HELP

Libraries contain many books on mathematics and test taking

Use student workbooks or textbooks to practice taking multiple choice written tests



Workbooks are available in most bookstores and other stores that carry children's books.

Training Programs

- **Community Colleges**
- **Private and public college certificate programs**
- **Adult Education**
- **In-service days**
- **CSEA Training Courses**
- **On-line classes**

Questions for Tutors/Instructors

Work through sample problems that may appear on the test. Make a list of the type of problems you have trouble with and ask questions.

Ask specific questions: Instead of making a comment like, “I don’t understand algebra” ask, “I don’t understand why $r(x + p)$ doesn’t equal $r(x) + p$ ”.

Specific questions will get a very specific response and hopefully clear up your difficulty.

More good questions

“This is how I tried to answer the problem, what did I do wrong?” This will focus the response on your thought process.

Right after you get help with a problem, work another similar problem by yourself.



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A quick review on adding and subtracting polynomials. Remember to identify the like terms, remove the brackets and combine the like terms. Ready? Click [here](#) to try a few. Need the tutorial first? Click [here](#).

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Equations and Inequalities Unit Quiz

Match each statement on the left with the correct answer by typing the letter of the answer in the box.

Score

- | | | |
|--|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1) $14 = n + 12$ | <input type="text"/> | a. $n = 2$ |
| 2) $2 = \frac{r}{2}$ | <input type="text"/> | b. $n < -1\frac{1}{2}$ |
| 3) $n + 3 > 7$ | <input type="text"/> | c. $r = -2$ |
| 4) $2n < -3$ | <input type="text"/> | d. $r = -5$ |
| 5) $8n = -64$ | <input type="text"/> | e. $r = 4$ |
| 6) Find r in ft/second when $d = 10$ ft and $t = 5$ seconds.
(Formula: $d = rt$) | <input type="text"/> | f. $n = -8$ |
| 7) $10 = -5r$ | <input type="text"/> | g. $n > 4$ |
| 8) $15 = 10 - r$ | <input type="text"/> | h. $r = 2$ |

Calculator Output

Simplifying

$$x + 3 = 5$$

Reorder the terms:

$$3 + x = 5$$

Solving

$$3 + x = 5$$

Move all terms containing x to the left, all other terms to the right.

Add '-3' to each side of the equation.

$$3 + -3 + x = 5 + -3$$

Combine like terms: $3 + -3 = 0$

$$0 + x = 5 + -3$$

$$x = 5 + -3$$

Combine like terms: $5 + -3 = 2$

$$x = 2$$

Simplifying

$$x = 2$$



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Decimal Equivalents of Fractions

$\frac{1}{2}$.5000
$\frac{1}{3}$.3333
$\frac{1}{4}$.2500
$\frac{1}{5}$.2000
$\frac{1}{6}$.1667
$\frac{1}{7}$.1429
$\frac{1}{8}$.1250
$\frac{1}{9}$.1111
$\frac{1}{10}$.1000
$\frac{1}{11}$.0909
$\frac{1}{12}$.0833

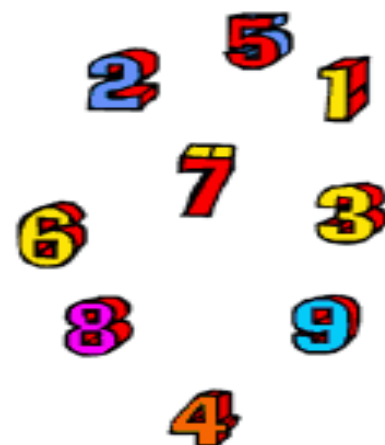
Powers and Exponents

A **power** is the product of **multiplying a number by itself**.

Usually, a power is represented with a **base number** and an **exponent**. The **base number** tells **what number is being multiplied**. The **exponent**, a small number written above and to the right of the base number, tells **how many times** the base number is being multiplied.

For example, "6 to the 5th power" may be written as "6⁵." Here, the base number is 6 and the exponent is 5. This means that 6 is being multiplied by itself 5 times: 6 x 6 x 6 x 6 x 6

$$6 \times 6 \times 6 \times 6 \times 6 = 7,776 \text{ or } 6^5 = 7,776$$



base number	2nd power	3rd power	4th power	5th power
1	1	1	1	1
2	4	8	16	32
3	9	27	81	243
4	16	64	256	1,024
5	25	125	625	3,125
6	36	216	1,296	7,776
7	49	343	2,401	16,807
8	64	512	4,096	32,768
9	81	729	6,561	59,049

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Factoring Numbers

The ability to factor a number is an important skill to learn. You will be required to come up with all the factors of a number quickly when doing more complicated algebra later on in school. This lesson will get you up to speed on the basic ideas of factoring.

A factor of a number is one that divides into the number evenly. That is, 6 is a factor of 12 because 12 divided by 6 is exactly 2. The number 5 is not a factor of 12, because 12 divided by 5 is 2.4.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{not a} \quad 12 \div 6 = 2 \quad \text{factor} \\ \text{factor} \quad 12 \div 5 = 2.4 \end{array}$$

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CAHSEE Online Course

If you don't need to go through our online course, click here for basic information about the [CAHSEE](#).

Our course is heavily focused on "self-help." Here's why:

A) If you are intimately involved in both structuring and completing your test preparation, you will have a better understanding of the experience and reap better results and

B) We recognize that there is great diversity in learning styles. By leaving the

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Summary

- What does $13y$ mean?
- What is a numerator? A denominator?
- What do you do first when you are going to divide a fraction?
- How do you find the average?
- How do you find the perimeter of a square?
- Which is listed first in an ordered pair from a grid graph?
- What does FOIL mean?
- What's the most important thing to remember to increase test scores?

Answers

- $13 \times y$
- top number in a fraction; bottom number in a fraction
- invert and multiply
- total the units by adding and then divide by the number of units
- 4 x the length of one side
- horizontal (x) is listed before vertical (y)
- first, outside, inner and last
- **STUDY!!!**

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