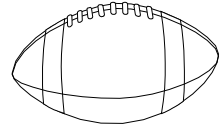


5 Steps to Solve Algebra Story Problems



(1) What do you want to find?

- Write it down!
- “Answer = ?”

(2) What do you know?

- Write it down!
- Don't try to absorb the facts in the problem all at once. Take one bite at a time, and chew each bite well. (See step #3.)
- Use words or use variables to turn each sentence into math. You CAN do algebra with words, and many students find that story problems make more sense that way.
- “This = something + (or – or \times or \div) that”

(3) Do what you can!

- Chew each bite thoroughly before going on.
- Simplify each math sentence.
- Look for “fact families”:
$$\text{This} + \text{That} = \text{Number}$$
$$\text{This} = \text{Number} - \text{That}$$
$$\text{That} = \text{Number} - \text{This}$$
- Combine your new bite with earlier facts, if possible.
- Do any calculations that you can.

(4) If you get stumped, try an algebra rule.

- Can you **Substitute** one thing for another?
- Can you use the **Distributive Law** to simplify your expression?
- Can you use the **Balance Rule** to simplify your equation?

(5) Go back and check the original question.

- Did you answer what the problem asked?
- Does your answer make sense?
- Mark your answer clearly so *anyone* (even a teacher!) can tell exactly what you mean.