















Five Step Plan for Word Problems

U: Understand the problem.

-  Read the problem once to become familiar with it.
Make sure you note at the end what the question is asking for.
-  Reread the problem looking for the important information.
-  List this important information on your paper.
-  Select variables to represent any unknown quantities.
(It usually helps to be descriptive with your selection of variables.
i.e. t = flight time, in hours; p = monthly pay, in dollars; d = distance, in miles; etc.)
-  Remembering to list the units with the description of the variables is especially helpful!
-  Where helpful, organize the information in tables.
This is especially helpful with distance and mixture problems where you usually end up combining to equations into one.
-  Make and label any drawings that would help you to visualize the scenario.
-  Imagine yourself actually acting out the word problem/scenario.
A lot of times this will actually help you in formulating the equation in the next step.




P: Make a Plan.

-  Determine what operation is needed to solve the problem.
(Refer to the [Key Words for Word Problems](#) chart.)
-  Determine if any special formulas are needed to solve the problem.
-  Construct an equation (mathematical model) to describe the problem needing to be solved.
-  Sometimes it is helpful to first write out the equation in words and then translate into variables.





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S: Solve

-  Solve the equation (mathematical model) created in the previous step.
-  Be sure to follow the [Order of Operations](#).
-  Be sure to include appropriate units with your answer.
(i.e. feet, pounds, girls, books, etc.)

Check

-  Check your work and your answer.
-  **Is it reasonable? Does it make sense for the word problem?**

State

-  State your answer clearly in the form of a sentence. (It is best to state your answer by rewriting the original question as a statement.)
-  Failure to do this step causes you to lose points in my class!
Show everyone and yourself, that you actually understand what that number you found represents.

