

Brainstorming Template for Word Problems

One of the most difficult parts of a word problem is setting up an equation to solve; the solution method is not usually obvious! You will need to determine what is being asked, develop a strategy and solve the given problem. Use this template to come up with ideas, organize them and mold them into a strategy. When you are finished, you will have a completed strategy guide to help you through future word problems.

You will start out by brainstorming ideas; even though you may not need to use all of them in your final solution, write them down. You can circle the ones you use when your strategy becomes clear. This may not provide enough space for all of your work, use extra paper if you need it.

1. Read the Problem:

- a. Read the question carefully and rewrite it on your paper
- b. What are you being asked to find? Underline the “question” or “command” part of problem and write this down below.
- c. Look for words (adjectives, adverbs) that give direction or show relationships between variables.
- d. Look for given values/data with their corresponding units of measure.
- e. Identify unknowns/variables and label them.
- f. Draw a line through any information you don’t need, circle the important parts (you can use different colors to help identify similar parts.)
- g. Rewrite given values and variables with descriptions in the space provided.

2. Devise a Plan:

- a. Can you draw a picture, diagram, or graph with labels that depicts the relationships of these variables?
- b. Have you seen these or similar variables in other problems? Find examples and try to explain how they are related.
- c. Write down any related equations in the space provided.
- d. Look up unfamiliar terminology.
- e. Try grouping related information.
- f. Write down your final set-up for the problem, and circle the equations and values that you used.
- g. Go back to step 1 if you get stuck!

3. Solve the Problem:

- a. Use your set-up to solve the problem step by step.
- b. Explain each step (in your own words!) in the column next to your work.
- c. Perform basic calculations on scratch paper or at the bottom of page.
- d. Go back to steps 1 and 2 if something goes wrong or doesn’t make sense.

4. Look Back And Conclude:

- a. Check your answer to see if it satisfies your equation and answers the question effectively.
- b. Write a conclusion that restates original problem using the solution(s).
- c. Rewrite your steps and final solution on your homework, and save your template to use as a study guide.

Brainstorming Template for Word Problems

Math Class: _____ Chapter: _____ Page: _____ Date: _____

Problem:

Question	
Draw a picture	
Define variables and given values	Related Equations

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Set-up	
Steps	Explanation
Conclusion	

Scratch work