

Column Subtraction: Word Problems

Column subtraction is a formal written method used to subtract numbers by arranging them in columns based on their place value. Using a place value chart can enhance your understanding of the process, while estimating your answers helps ensure the final answer is reasonable. Start with simple problems that don't involve exchanging (borrowing) and gradually progress to more complex ones.

How to Solve Word Problems Using Column Subtraction:

1. Understand the Question

- Read the problem carefully, ignoring the numbers for now, to identify what question you need to answer.

2. Identify Key Information

- Once you are certain, ask yourself, "What information do I need to answer this question?"

3. Re-read the Question

- Re-read the question, identifying the relevant numbers or quantities required for the calculation.

4. Use Visual Aids

- Draw a picture or a bar model to represent the problem visually.

5. Undertake Column Subtraction

- Write the calculation in column format, aligning digits by their place value.
- Estimate the answer.
- Use a place value chart, undertaking any exchanges if necessary.
- Record the calculation using the formal written method, showing any exchanges and verifying the final answer against the estimate.

Column Subtraction: Word Problems

How to answer word problems column subtraction on a place value chart (no exchanging):

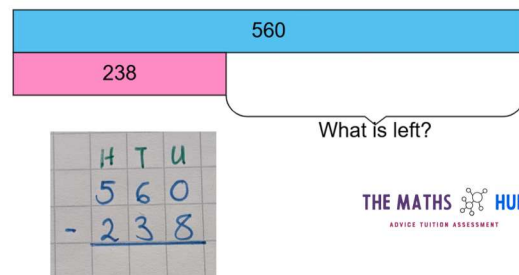
- Understand the question.
- Identify key information.
- Re-read the question.
- Use visual aids.
- Undertake column subtraction.

Visual images were created using free virtual manipulatives available at Mathsbot.com

Example

A warehouse has 560 boxes of goods. After shipping out 238 boxes, how many boxes remain?

- How many boxes are left in the warehouse after some have been shipped out?
- I need to know how many boxes there were to begin with, and how many were shipped out.
- There were originally 560 boxes and 238 were shipped out.



What is left?