

WORD PROBLEM KEY WORDS

Ten key words for addition and subtraction, honestly framed as clues and never as a rule, plus two sort activities and four practice sets of single-step word problems within 20. An answer key, a tracker, a class grid and a family page. Print, or type the names and trackers. PDF.

ANCHOR CHART WORD PROBLEM KEY WORDS

Read the whole problem first. A key word can be a clue — it is never a rule you can always trust.

Addition clues

in all, total, altogether, combined, sum

Subtraction clues

left, fewer, difference, how many more, remain

Key words can be clues, not rules

- A key word points toward an operation, but the same word can show up in a problem that needs the other one.
- Some problems that need addition or subtraction use none of these words at all.
- Always picture what is happening in the problem before circling a key word and choosing an operation.

Three steps every time

- Read the whole problem. Read it start to finish before touching a pencil.

Try it together before the worksheets

Say a problem out loud that uses one of the ten words, but make the story disagree with it on purpose — for example, 10 apples are combined into two 5-apple bags.

SORT IT 1 SORT BY OPERATION: PHRASES

Read each phrase. Write a + if it is an addition clue, or a - if it is a subtraction clue.

#	PHRASE OR SHORT PROBLEM	ADDITION (+)	SUBTRACTION (-)
9	"How many altogether?"	X	-
1	How many in all?		
2	What is the total?		
3	They put their money together, combined.		

PRACTICE A ADDITION WORD PROBLEMS

Circle the key word or words. Then show your thinking and write the number sentence and the answer. The anchor chart is on page 6.

- Maya has 6 red crayons and 5 blue crayons. How many crayons does she have in all?
KEY WORD | CIRCLED: _____
SHOW YOUR THINKING: _____
NUMBER SENTENCE AND ANSWER: _____
- Chen collected 8 shells on Monday and 7 shells on Tuesday. What is the total number of shells he collected?
KEY WORD | CIRCLED: _____
SHOW YOUR THINKING: _____
NUMBER SENTENCE AND ANSWER: _____
- Priya read 4 books last week and 9 books this week. How many books did she read altogether?
KEY WORD | CIRCLED: _____

MIXED PRACTICE 2

Circle the key word or words. Then show your thinking and write the number sentence and the answer. The anchor chart is on page 6.

- Ivy has 11 party favors. Leo brings 8 more. How many do they have altogether?
KEY WORD | CIRCLED: _____
SHOW YOUR THINKING: _____
NUMBER SENTENCE AND ANSWER: _____
- A parking lot had 20 cars, then 13 cars. What is the difference between the two counts?
KEY WORD | CIRCLED: _____
SHOW YOUR THINKING: _____
NUMBER SENTENCE AND ANSWER: _____
- The shelf has 12 blue books and 7 red books. What is the sum of the books?
KEY WORD | CIRCLED: _____
SHOW YOUR THINKING: _____
NUMBER SENTENCE AND ANSWER: _____

ANSWER KEY SORT IT AND PRACTICE ANSWERS

Every answer below is computed from the problem's own numbers, not typed by hand.

Sort It 1 and Sort It 2
Sort It 1 (page 8): Items 1–3 are addition, 4–6 are subtraction. Sort It 2 (page 9): Items 1–4 are addition, 5–8 are subtraction.

#	KEY WORD	NUMBER SENTENCE	ANSWER
1	in all	$6 + 5$	11
2	total	$8 + 7$	15
3	altogether	$4 + 9$	13
4	combined	$10 + 6$	16
5	sum	$9 + 8$	17
6	left	$14 - 5$	9
7	fewer	$12 - 4$	8
8	difference	$16 - 9$	7
9	how many more	$15 - 6$	9
10	remain	$18 - 10$	8

PRACTICE TRACKER

STUDENT	TEACHER	DATE	
ACTIVITY	ITEMS	SCORE	NOTES
Sort It 1	6		
Sort It 2	8		
Practice A: Addition	5		
Practice B: Subtraction	5		



One complete kit for teaching word-problem key words honestly: the ten words, two ways to practice spotting them, four practice sets to solve, and the record-keeping to show it.

THREE STEPS

1 Post or hand out the chart

The anchor chart (page 6) and the mini cut-apart cards (page 7) carry the same ten words and the same caution: key words can be clues, not rules.

2 Sort, then solve

Sort It 1 and 2 (pages 8–9) practice spotting the clue without solving. Practice A, B and the two mixed sets (pages 10–13) circle the clue and solve.

3 Record it, send the family page

Score each activity on the tracker (page 15), roll the class up on page 16, and send the family page (page 18) home. A filled example is on page 17.

WHICH PAGE, WHEN

WHEN...	USE...
Introducing the ten key words	Anchor chart, page 6, and the mini cards, page 7
Practicing the sort without solving	Sort It 1 (fewer, easier), page 8, then Sort It 2, page 9
Addition only, or subtraction only	Practice A, page 10, and Practice B, page 11
Both operations in one set	Mixed Practice 1, page 12, and Mixed Practice 2, page 13
Checking answers	Answer key, page 14
Sending practice home	Family page, page 18
Writing a progress note	Phrase bank, page 19

Everything inside (21 pages)

- **1 anchor chart** and **1 page of mini cut-apart cards** — the same ten key words, addition and subtraction, five each
- **2 sort activities** (6 and 8 items) that practice spotting the clue without solving
- **22 word problems** across **4 practice sets** — addition only, subtraction only, and two mixed sets — numbers within 20, every answer computed and checked
- **1 answer key**, **1 tracker** (one student) and **1 class grid** (whole class), type-in or print
- **1 family page** with two home-practice problems, **1 filled example** (an invented student), **1 phrase bank**
- **1 binder cover** with spine label and six tabs

The one rule that matters

Every page that shows the key words also says it: they are clues, not rules. Page 6 explains why, with an example, before any child sees a worksheet.





Read the whole problem first. A key word can be a clue — it is never a rule you can always trust.

Addition clues

in all

total

altogether

combined

sum

Subtraction clues

left

fewer

difference

how many more

remain

Key words can be clues, not rules

- A key word points toward an operation, but the same word can show up in a problem that needs the other one.
- Some problems that need addition or subtraction use none of these words at all.
- Always picture what is happening in the problem before circling a key word and choosing an operation.

Three steps every time

1

Read the whole problem

Read it start to finish before touching a pencil.
What is happening?

2

Look for a key word

Circle a word from the chart if the problem has one. Not every problem does.

3

Picture it, then choose

Picture what is happening in the story. If the picture and the key word agree, solve it. If they do not agree, trust the picture.

Try it together before the worksheets

Say a problem out loud that uses one of the ten words, but make the story disagree with it on purpose — for example, “9 stickers are combined into one jar; 3 fall out; how many are left in the jar?” — and ask which one to trust, the word or the story. (The story: left, subtraction.)

One clue in action — addition

“Maya has 6 crayons and gets 5 more. How many does she have in all?” — **in all** points to addition, and adding also matches the story: Maya is getting more crayons, so her total goes up.

One clue in action — subtraction

“Sofia had 14 markers and gave 5 away. How many does she have left?” — **left** points to subtraction, and it matches the story: markers are going away, so the amount goes down.





Read each phrase. Write a + if it is an addition clue, or a – if it is a subtraction clue.

#	PHRASE OR SHORT PROBLEM	ADDITION (+)	SUBTRACTION (–)
e.g.	“How many altogether?”	X	–
1	How many in all?		
2	What is the total?		
3	They put their money together, combined.		
4	How many are left?		
5	How many more does she have?		
6	How many cookies remain?		

Key words on this page

Addition: combined, in all, total

Subtraction: how many more, left, remain



PRACTICE A · ADDITION WORD PROBLEMS



Circle the key word or words. Then show your thinking and write the number sentence and the answer. The anchor chart is on page 6.

1. Maya has 6 red crayons and 5 blue crayons. How many crayons does she have in all?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

2. Chen collected 8 shells on Monday and 7 shells on Tuesday. What is the total number of shells he collected?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

3. Priya read 4 books last week and 9 books this week. How many books did she read altogether?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

4. Andre has 10 stickers and Liam has 6 stickers. How many stickers do they have combined?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

5. There are 9 apples in one basket and 8 apples in another basket. What is the sum of the apples in both baskets?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER





Circle the key word or words. Then show your thinking and write the number sentence and the answer. The anchor chart is on page 6.

1. Noor picked 3 red apples and 4 green apples. How many apples did she pick in all?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

2. Oliver had 10 toy cars. He gave 3 to his brother. How many toy cars does Oliver have left?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

3. Zoe found 5 rocks and 6 more rocks. What is the total number of rocks Zoe found?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

4. Marcus has 9 trading cards. Emma has 2 fewer trading cards than Marcus. How many trading cards does Emma have?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

5. Jayden has 7 blocks and Ruby has 8 blocks. How many blocks do they have combined?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

6. Omar had 12 cookies. He ate 5 cookies. How many cookies remain?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER



SORT IT AND PRACTICE ANSWERS



Every answer below is computed from the problem's own numbers, not typed by hand.

Sort It 1 and Sort It 2

Sort It 1 (page 8): items 1–3 are addition, 4–6 are subtraction. Sort It 2 (page 9): items 1–4 are addition, 5–8 are subtraction.

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5	sum	$9 + 8$	17
6	left	$14 - 5$	9
7	fewer	$12 - 4$	8
8	difference	$16 - 9$	7
9	how many more	$15 - 6$	9
10	remain	$18 - 10$	8
11	in all	$3 + 4$	7
12	left	$10 - 3$	7
13	total	$5 + 6$	11
14	fewer	$9 - 2$	7
15	combined	$7 + 8$	15
16	remain	$12 - 5$	7
17	altogether	$11 + 8$	19
18	difference	$20 - 13$	7
19	sum	$12 + 7$	19
20	how many more	$17 - 9$	8
21	in all	$9 + 10$	19
22	left	$16 - 9$	7



STUDENT

TEACHER

DATE

ACTIVITY	ITEMS	SCORE	NOTES
Sort It 1	6		
Sort It 2	8		
Practice A: Addition	5		
Practice B: Subtraction	5		
Mixed Practice 1	6		
Mixed Practice 2	6		
Total	36		

How to score it

Write the number correct in Score. Sort It counts a correct operation choice; Practice counts a correct number sentence and answer. 36 items in all across the six activities. A filled example is on page 17.

THIS STUDENT IS WORKING ON (A KEY WORD, A NUMBER SENTENCE, ONE OPERATION, BOTH MIXED TOGETHER...)





STUDENT

WEEK OF

How to help at home, in three steps

- Read the whole problem together before picking an operation.
- Ask what is happening in the story, and whether a key word matches it. The words are on the anchor chart, page 6.
- One or two problems is plenty. Say the number sentence out loud before writing it.

Words to listen for while you talk

Addition: in all, total, altogether, combined, sum. **Subtraction:** left, fewer, difference, how many more, remain. The full chart, with the reason a key word is a clue and not a rule, is on page 6.

1. At the store, Dad bought 7 apples and 6 oranges. How many pieces of fruit did he buy altogether?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

2. Mom had 13 grapes. The kids ate 5 grapes. How many grapes are left?

KEY WORD I CIRCLED

SHOW YOUR THINKING

NUMBER SENTENCE AND
ANSWER

KEY WORDS WE TALKED ABOUT

PROBLEMS WE SOLVED TOGETHER

NOTE FROM THE TEACHER

NOTE FROM HOME



CAMILA'S TRACKER, INVENTED



Camila is invented; nothing on this page describes a real student. The blank tracker is on page 15.

STUDENT

Camila R. (an invented student)

TEACHER

Ms. Ortiz (invented)

ACTIVITY	ITEMS	SCORE	NOTES
Sort It 1	6	6	
Sort It 2	8	7	
Practice A: Addition	5	5	
Practice B: Subtraction	5	4	
Mixed Practice 1	6	5	
Mixed Practice 2	6	4	
Total	36	31	

How to read it

Camila scored **31 of 36** items across all six activities. The lowest scores are on Sort It 2 (7 of 8), Practice B: Subtraction (4 of 5), Mixed Practice 1 (5 of 6), Mixed Practice 2 (4 of 6). Both mixed sets combine addition and subtraction, so revisiting the subtraction problems on those two pages with the anchor chart nearby is a reasonable next step — every number here comes from the table above.

Two things the Notes column is for

- What you saw, in plain words: circled the wrong word, added instead of subtracting, skipped the number sentence.
- What you did about it: revisited the anchor chart, tried Sort It again before the next practice set. Never a conclusion about the student — that is the team meeting's job.

The family note this tracker would produce

"This week we practiced word problems using key words like in all, total. Camila is solving addition problems independently and is still working on the mixed sets. At home, read the whole problem together before picking an operation." — every fact in it is a row of the table.





THANK YOU FOR USING THIS RESOURCE

Everything here was built for the teacher who has thirty minutes of planning time and a room where every student needs something different. Key words can be clues, not rules — this file teaches them that way from the first page to the last. If it saved you an hour, it worked. If this helped, leaving feedback on TPT helps other teachers find it.

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NUMBERS TO 20
Teen Numbers, Counting and Comparing — Cut and Paste, 3 Levels

26 PAGES

BRIGHT PATH SPED K-2 · Special Education

Numbers to 20 Cut and Paste, 3 Levels

Counting, comparing and number order to 20, sorted and glued.

SUBTRACTION
Cut and Paste Within 10, 3 Levels

26 PAGES

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Subtraction Within 10 Cut and Paste, 3 Levels

Take-away stories within 10, matched to the number sentence.

PLACE VALUE
Tens and Ones Cut and Paste, 3 Levels

26 PAGES

BRIGHT PATH SPED PreK-2 · Special Education

Place Value Tens and Ones Cut and Paste

Building two-digit numbers with tens and ones, sorted and glued.

SKIP COUNTING
By 2s, 5s and 10s — Cut and Paste, 3 Levels

26 PAGES

BRIGHT PATH SPED K-2 · Special Education

Skip Counting Cut and Paste, 3 Levels

Counting by 2s, 5s and 10s, sorted into the right sequence.

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