

## 1st Grade Math: Mental Subtraction

**Objective:** Students will learn how to subtract numbers in their heads without using paper, calculators, or physical tools.

### What is Mental Subtraction?

**Mental subtraction** is the ability to subtract numbers in your head without writing anything down. This is helpful for solving everyday problems quickly, such as figuring out change or determining how many items are left after taking some away.

### Tips for Mental Subtraction

1. **Start with small numbers.**  
Practice subtracting numbers like 1 through 10 to get comfortable with basic differences.
2. **Use number facts you know.**  
Just like with addition, some number pairs are easier to subtract. If you know that  $10 - 6 = 4$ , it helps you solve other problems more quickly.
3. **Break up the numbers.**  
For larger numbers, break them down into smaller parts to subtract easily. For example, if you're subtracting  $15 - 8$ , think of it as  $15 - 5 = 10$ , then subtract 3 more to get 7.

### Strategies for Mental Subtraction

1. **Counting Back:**  
Start with the larger number and count backward by the smaller number.
  - Example: For  $9 - 3$ , start at 9 and count back three numbers: 8, 7, 6. The answer is 6.
2. **Use 10 as a Helper:**  
Subtracting numbers close to 10 can be helpful. If the number is close to 10, subtract to 10 first, then the rest.
  - Example: For  $14 - 5$ , think of  $14 - 4 = 10$ , then subtract 1 more to get 9.
3. **Subtraction Facts:**  
Memorize subtraction facts (just like with addition).
  - Example: Know that  $7 - 3 = 4$ , and  $9 - 6 = 3$ , to help you solve problems faster.
4. **Think Addition to Subtract:**  
When subtracting, think of what you need to add to the smaller number to get the larger one.
  - Example: For  $12 - 8$ , ask yourself, "What do I add to 8 to get 12?" The answer is 4.

### Examples and Practice

1. **Counting Back:**  
 $8 - 2 = ?$   
 $6 - 3 = ?$

2. **Use 10 as a Helper:**

$$15 - 7 = ?$$

$$11 - 6 = ?$$

3. **Subtraction Facts:**

$$9 - 4 = ?$$

$$12 - 6 = ?$$

4. **Think Addition to Subtract:**

$$13 - 5 = ?$$

$$10 - 7 = ?$$

## **Real-World Application**

Mental subtraction is useful in everyday life, like:

- Figuring out how much change you get when paying for something.
- Knowing how many items are left after using some.
- Determining how many points you need to win a game.

## **Summary**

Mental subtraction is a powerful skill for quickly solving problems in your head. By using strategies like counting back, using 10 as a helper, and thinking addition, you can improve your subtraction skills and solve problems more efficiently!