

2nd Grade Math: Mental Subtraction

What Is Mental Subtraction?

Mental subtraction is subtracting numbers in your head without writing them down or using a calculator. It helps you solve problems quickly by thinking through the math.

Strategies for Mental Subtraction

1. **Counting Backward:**
 - Start with the larger number and count backward to subtract.
 - **Example:** To subtract $9 - 4$, start at 9 and count back: 8, 7, 6, 5. The difference is 5.
2. **Break Apart the Numbers:**
 - Break numbers into smaller, easier parts.
 - **Example:** To subtract $15 - 7$, break 7 into 5 and 2. Subtract $15 - 5 = 10$, then $10 - 2 = 8$.
3. **Use Tens:**
 - Use the nearest ten to make subtraction easier.
 - **Example:** To subtract $41 - 9$, think of 9 as $10 - 1$. First subtract $41 - 10 = 31$, then add 1: $31 + 1 = 32$.
4. **Round and Adjust:**
 - Round one number to the nearest ten, subtract, then adjust.
 - **Example:** To subtract $32 - 7$, round 32 to 30. Subtract $30 - 7 = 23$, then add back 2: $23 + 2 = 25$.

Example: Mental Subtraction

Problem: What is $17 - 8$?

Solution:

- Break 8 into $7 + 1$.
- Subtract $17 - 7 = 10$, then subtract 1: $10 - 1 = 9$.
- The difference is **9**.

Real-World Example of Mental Subtraction

Scenario: You have 25 stickers, and you give 9 to a friend. How many stickers do you have left?

- Break 9 into $5 + 4$.
- Subtract $25 - 5 = 20$, then subtract 4: $20 - 4 = 16$.
- You have **16 stickers** left.

Practice Problems

1. **Problem:** What is $23 - 6$?
 - **Solution:** Subtract $23 - 6$ by breaking it into 3 and 3. First, $23 - 3 = 20$, then $20 - 3 = 17$.

- The difference is **17**.
- 2. **Problem:** What is $50 - 9$?
 - **Solution:** Round 50 to 49, then subtract $49 - 9 = 40$, add back 1: $40 + 1 = 41$.
 - The difference is **41**.

Benefits of Mental Subtraction

- **Quick Solutions:** You can solve problems without writing or using tools.
- **Everyday Use:** Mental subtraction helps in real-life situations like counting money, measuring time, or solving puzzles.
- **Improves Focus:** Helps you think faster and more efficiently.

Conclusion

Mental subtraction is a valuable skill for solving problems quickly and efficiently. By practicing strategies like **counting backward**, **breaking apart numbers**, and **rounding**, students can master mental subtraction and apply it to everyday situations. Keep practicing to improve your skills!