

## Steps to Solving Word Problems

There are many attempts at creating steps to follow for word problems. But there are so many types of word problems, the steps become overly general. Here's my attempt:



1. Read over the problem and identify the problem **type**.  
Look over the handout on Word Problems Types. Is this problem a type of geometric (area, perimeter), financial (coins, interest, profit), distance-rate-time, mixture, work, percentages, etc?
2. Find the **question(s)** and write them briefly at the top of your work space.
3. Re-read the problem and think about a real-life **situation**. Draw, set up structure (chart, diagram), use simpler numbers, pretend it's you in the problem, etc. Write down any known formulas you think you will use (Area, consecutive numbers, Pythagorean, etc).
4. Copy any comparison phrases (they use math language and phrases like more, shorter than, twice as much) and **translate** them.  
Look over the handouts on Comparison Sentences, and on Literal Translations in the Word Problems folder of the Math Handouts page for information on how to locate and translate these.



5. Choose letter(s) for your **variable(s)** and *write what they stand for* – in the upper left part of your work space.
6. Do you have enough **information** to set up your equation? Look over your chart or drawing, or re-read the problem. In many charts your equation is developed going down the third column, or across columns and adding them. If you have more than one letter and no translation phrases, you'll probably need more than one equation.
7. Set up the **equation(s)**.
8. **Solve** the equation(s). Use the variables information in the upper left part of your work space and write the numbers you got for them.
9. Go back to the question(s) at the top of your workspace. **Answer** the question(s).

