

Key Words for Solving Word Problems

The hardest part of solving a word problem is actually understanding the problem and determining the operation (or operations) that needs to be performed. Listed below are a few of the most commonly used key words in word problems and the operations that they signal. Keep in mind that same key words may signal more than one operation. It is then up to you to picture in your head what is going on and then determine which operation best fits that scenario.

DIVISION	
KEY WORDS / PHRASES	SELECTED EXAMPLES
each	Pens cost \$1 each. How many pens can you buy with \$6?
equal / equally	The items were packed equally into three bags. How many items were in each bag?
per	The car gets 23 miles per gallon. How many gallons will it take to go 470 miles?
separate	If the money was separated into equal shares, how much did each person get?
a	Steak cost \$3.69 a pound. How many pounds can you buy for \$20?
“ratio” or “ratio of”	If the student to teacher ratio was 27 to 1, how many teachers are there for 756 students?
“quotient” or “quotient of”	
percent (division by 100)	What percent of the population was over 18?

EQUALS
Is, are, was, were, will be, gives, yields

