

# Distributive Property Word Problem

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Unlocking the Power of the Distributive Property

Word Problems Made Easy

Ever felt like math problems just threw a bunch of numbers at you and said figure it out? Well when it comes to the distributive property, you're actually handed a superpower to simplify things. Imagine you're at the grocery store. You need 3 bags of chips and 2 bottles of soda. Each bag of chips costs \$2 and each soda costs \$1.50. How do you figure out the total cost without adding everything separately? This is where the distributive property comes in. It's like a magic trick that lets you break down complex calculations into simpler ones.

What is the Distributive Property? In simple terms, the distributive property allows you to multiply a sum by a number by multiplying each term inside the sum separately. It looks like this:  $a(b + c) = ab + ac$ . The number outside the parentheses,  $b$  and  $c$ , are the terms inside the parentheses. Let's apply this to our grocery shopping scenario:

Total cost:  $3 \times 2 + 2 \times 1.50 = 6 + 3 = 9$

Instead of multiplying the quantities by the prices and then adding them up, we used the distributive property to distribute the multiplication across the sum. Applying the Distributive Property to Word Problems:

Word problems can often be tricky, but the distributive property provides a powerful tool to make them easier. Here's how you can apply it:

1. Identify the Key Information: Read the problem carefully and determine the quantities and values involved.
2. Translate the Problem: Represent the information using variables and mathematical expressions.
3. Apply the Distributive Property: Use the distributive property to simplify the expressions.
4. Solve for the Unknown: Perform the necessary calculations to find the solution.

Here's an example problem: Sarah is buying 5 boxes of crayons, each containing 8 crayons, and 3 boxes of markers, each containing 12 markers. How many total crayons and markers does Sarah have?

**Solution:**

Key information: 5 boxes of crayons, 8 crayons each; 3 boxes of markers, 12 markers each.

Translation: Total crayons =  $5 \times 8$ ; Total markers =  $3 \times 12$ .

Applying the Distributive Property (not needed in this case but can be helpful for more complex problems):

Total crayons =  $5(8) = 40$

Total markers =  $3(12) = 36$

**Total crayons and markers:**  $40 + 36 = 76$

**Tips for Solving Distributive Property Word Problems:**

- 1. Read carefully and understand the context of the problem.
- 2. Identify the key information.
- 3. Break it down into smaller parts.
- 4. Use variables to represent the unknowns.

quantities with variables to make the problem more organized. Practice The more you practice the more comfortable you will become with applying the distributive property. Beyond Basic Applications The distributive property isn't just for simple word problems. It's a fundamental concept in algebra and plays a crucial role in solving equations and simplifying complex expressions. Understanding it is essential for success in higher-level math. Conclusion The distributive property is a powerful tool that simplifies calculations and makes solving word problems much easier. By understanding its concept and practicing its application you can gain a deeper understanding of mathematics and unlock a world of possibilities. So the next time you face a seemingly complex problem remember the distributive property and use it to your advantage.

FAQs

1. Can the distributive property be used with subtraction? Yes, the distributive property applies to both addition and subtraction. It can be expressed as  $ab - c = ab - ac$ .
2. What are some real-life examples of the distributive property? Besides our grocery shopping example, you can find the distributive property in action when calculating discounts, finding the area of a rectangle, or even when figuring out the total cost of a purchase with sales tax.
3. Is the distributive property the same as factoring? While they're related, they are not the same. Factoring involves finding the factors of an expression, while the distributive property is used to expand expressions.
4. How can I improve my understanding of the distributive property? Practice solving different types of word problems, review examples, and consult with your teacher or tutor if you have any questions.
5. Is the distributive property only useful in math? The concept of distributing a factor over multiple terms is applicable beyond math, such as in logic, computer programming, and even finance. Remember, the distributive property is your secret weapon for tackling math problems. So keep practicing and watch your confidence soar!

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