

Algebra: Solving Word Problems

When solving word problems in mathematics, invoke these steps:

1. Read the problem thoroughly to make sure you understand it. Two or more readings may be necessary.
2. Draw a picture of the situation to help you see the problem; i.e., translate words to a picture.
3. Name the answer. Determine what the problem is asking you to find and name it like this: Let x = what you need to find.
4. Write down a basic formula that fits the situation (e.g., area formula of a circle, etc.).
5. If there is no formula that fits the problem perfectly, you must build your own using algebraic notation. You may have to combine multiple formulas, or apply more than one formula in multiple steps. If you can do this step, you are on your way to becoming an accomplished algebraist.