

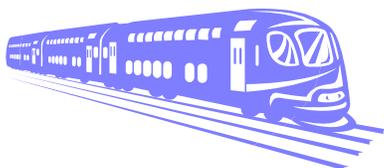
## METHOD FOR SOLVING WORD PROBLEMS

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1. Put the pencil down, and read the problem. If you have the pencil in your hand, you're going to start trying to write things before you finish reading the problem and know what is being asked.
2. Think about the problem. Make sure you understand what you are given, and make sure you know what the question is.
3. Determine what information in the problem is important.
4. Draw a picture if there is any way a picture can help.
5. In your picture, label known mathematical quantities with their numerical value, and label unknown quantities with some variable.
6. Determine the basic formula (distance = rate x time, Pythagorean Theorem, etc.) that will help solve the problem.
7. Adapt the formula to the data in your problem.
8. Solve the equation.
9. Answer the question. "Solving" may give "length = 5 ft." The question may be "what are the dimensions of the rectangle," so you would still need the width.
10. See if your answer makes sense. If you have a bicyclist going 27,000 miles per hour, something is wrong. If you have a basketball team scoring 35.5 baskets, something is wrong.

In early grades, this technique is a bit cumbersome. But use it anyway.\* If you help your children learn this method as early as possible, they'll be much better equipped to handle the complicated word problems later on.



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\* In early grades, "label unknown quantities" could just mean "put a blank in an arithmetic expression," like  $2 + 4 = \underline{\quad}$ . "Determine the formula" could be "realize we need to add some numbers."