

## Teacher Resources

### Recommended Books

- 1) *How to Solve Word Problems in Algebra*, by Mildred Johnson  
ISBN 978-0071343077.
- 2) *Solving Algebra Word Problems*, by Judy Barclay, ISBN 978-0534495732
- 3) *501 Math Word Problems*, by Learning Express, ISBN 978-1576854396

### Recommended Web Sites

- 1) [http://www.hawaii.edu/suremath/intro\\_algebra.html](http://www.hawaii.edu/suremath/intro_algebra.html)
- 2) <http://www.purplemath.com/modules/index.htm>
- 3) <http://math.about.com/library/weekly/aa071002a.htm>
- 4) [www.themathpage.com/Alg/word-problems.htm](http://www.themathpage.com/Alg/word-problems.htm)



### TMW MEDIA GROUP

2321 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice, CA 90291  
(310) 577-8581 Fax (310) 574-0886  
Email: [sale@tmwmedia.com](mailto:sale@tmwmedia.com)  
Web: [www.tmwmedia.com](http://www.tmwmedia.com)

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# LEARNING by Example

the

# Algebra Word Problem tutor

## ACCELERATE YOUR ALGEBRA SKILLS!

# User Instructions & Teachers Resource Guide

Grade Level: 9 - College

## **Introduction**

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*The Algebra Word Problem Tutor* contains essential material necessary to master solving word problems in Algebra. Word problems are frequently hard for students to master because they have to learn how to read them, extract the information out of the problem and decide how to set up the problem for solution - and there are usually many ways to do this. This series teaches by examples how to set up algebra word problems and solve them. The skills learned in this series will aid students in more advanced areas of math and science such as Physics and Calculus where word problems are typically asked on exams. Each topic in this series is introduced by working example problems, beginning with the easier problems and gradually working to the more difficult. In this way students immediately gain confidence in their abilities to improve homework and exam taking skills.

## **How to Use This Lesson**

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### **In The Classroom**

*Algebra Word Problems* intimidate many students. For this reason, when using this lesson in the classroom, the following techniques may be useful.

After a problem is presented but before the solution begins, pause the program and make sure that each and every student completely understands what information is given in the problem and what needs to be solved.

After the problem has been solved in the lesson, pause the program and make sure that every student understands every step in the solution.

In some cases it is helpful after a student watches the solution to a problem to pause the program, present the very same problem on the chalkboard, and ask the class to solve it again. Even though it is the very same problem, this process reinforces the steps needed to reach the solution and more importantly, gives the student confidence.

### **At Home - Self-Study**

When using this lesson at home for self study, the following tips are useful.

Rewind the program at any time if you do not understand something. It is very important that students understand every single step in the solution in order to gain confidence and understanding of the solution process.

The problems are specifically chosen so that the earlier problems are less difficult than the later problems. For this reason, if a student doesn't understand the solution to problem 1 of the lesson and goes on to problem 2 or problem 3, it will lead to a lack of understanding. Continue repeating a problem solution until it is fully understood prior to continuing on.

### **Homework Strategy**

The method of teaching employed in this lesson is to introduce the concepts by working example problems. This gives the student confidence and the skills to do well on homework and exams.

The best way to master the material and prepare for exams is to work many, many problems and ensure the correct answers are reached every step of the way. It is very beneficial to work the odd numbered problems in the back of the student's textbook and check answers for each problem. Start with the easier problems and work your way to the harder problems.

After homework has been assigned it is useful to have some of your students work the problems out on the board for the benefit of the other students. This allows the student to explain his or her thought process. Sometimes hearing another student's solution will allow other students to "get it".

### **Test Taking Tips**

The following test taking tips are very useful in Algebra Word Problems:

- a) Write down what information is given in the problem.
- b) Write down what is asked to be solved for (the unknown).
- c) Write down any relevant equations to the problem at hand.
- d) Try to devise a strategy in order to solve the problem.
- e) Using the equations and your strategy, begin to solve for the unknowns in a step-by-step fashion.

### **Checking Your Work**

In many cases it is easy to check your solution and not let errors creep into the final solution. The best way to do this is to simply do the calculations a second time and verify the math. Another method is to take the answer and plug it back into the relevant equations to verify that the solution is correct.

### **Final thoughts**

Algebra Word Problems are taught best by working example problems. It will be necessary to give a short lecture at the beginning of the day to explain the concepts, but it is in many cases very helpful to immediately supplement the lecture with worked example problems. When doing this use the methods employed on this lesson. Specifically, state the problem clearly and make sure that every student understands it, form a plan to solve the problem, and work each solution in a step-by-step manner.

When you are done solving a problem do not assume that every student fully understands the solution. Ask the students probing questions to ensure that they have mastered the material. By working many example problems, and by using this lesson as a guide for practice problems, learning how to solve Algebra Word Problems will be easier for the student.