Missing Numbers in Addition and Subtraction

Mystery Box Math

What You'll Need

- Index cards or small pieces of paper
- Box or bowl
- Pen or pencil

Getting Ready

1. On separate index cards or pieces of paper, write simple addition or subtraction equations (or both) with one number missing. Use a blank line or a square for the unknown value. Here are some examples:

   - $\_\_ + 5 = 12$
   - $\square - 5 = 4$

2. Place all the cards in the box or bowl.

How to Play

1. Draw a card from the box or bowl.
2. Read the equation aloud and ask your child to solve for the missing number.
3. Ask your child to write the missing number on the line or in the square and to say the complete equation aloud to reinforce learning.
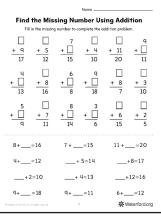
Fun Ideas to Try

- Time your child and see how many equations they can solve in 2 minutes.
- **Use Objects** Use small household items (like buttons or coins) to visualize the problem. For example, if the equation is $\_\_ + 3 = 8$, arrange 3 coins and figure out how many more you need to make or equal 8.
- **Story Problems** Turn equations into a story, such as "I had some apples, then I bought 3 more, and now I have 8 apples. How many did I have to start with?"

Additional Support

Use the Find the Missing Number Using Addition and Find the Missing Number Using Subtraction worksheets to continue to practice finding the unknown whole number in an addition or subtraction equation.

Vocabulary Knowledge Builder

Addition—putting things together to find the total

Subtraction—taking away one number from another to find out how much is left

Value—the number or amount something stands for

Digit—a single number from 0 to 9

Equation—a math problem that shows two sides are equal using an equal sign

Equal—the same in amount or value

Find the Missing Number Using Addition

Find the Missing Number Using Subtraction

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