

Steps and Strategies Intro

Teaching Strategies

Day 7 - Find Clue Words

When detectives are trying to solve a mystery, they look for clues. In the same way, when we are trying to solve “puzzling” problems, clue words can help us! Many teachers find it helpful to teach kids to find certain “clue words” to help them decide which operation will be used to solve word problems. See the chart on page 48 for examples of common clue words. There’s also a blank blackline master on page 49 so that your class can generate their own list of clue words.

Clue Words	
Addition	Subtraction
Both In all Altogether Sum Total Add	Minus Away Difference Remain Less Than How many more . . . How many were left?
Multiplication	Division
Times Each Altogether In all Total	Each Shared Part Per Divided

“E” words such as longer, fewer, faster, farther.

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To use this strategy, have your students underline or highlight any clue words or important numbers in each problem. Focusing on these clue words and key numbers can help some students identify what needs to be done to solve the problem. It gives them a place to start when they feel overwhelmed.

On the other hand, you should be aware that some educators do not feel this strategy is effective. Focusing on clue words may encourage students to look for quick and easy solutions rather than trying to visualize the problem or think through it in a meaningful way. Many clue words point to several different operations. For example, “in all” is frequently found in both addition and multiplication problems. The word “each” commonly appears in both multiplication and division problems.

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If you decide to proceed with a clue word lesson, post the clue word chart briefly while you display the four problems on page 50. Ask different students to come forward and highlight the clue words before having students solve the problems individually.

Answers: #1 - 12 chicks #2 - 30¢ #3 - 4 butterflies #4 - 3 cookies