

# Help with Word Problems

Students must write down the original problem for ALL homework problems – even if they can “do it in their heads.” However, many struggle with the correct procedure for word problems, which is as follows:

**Explore:** Read the problem carefully (reading out loud sometimes helps too), list the GIVEN facts, and list what to FIND. Listing the given and find can be done instead of copying the entire paragraph for a word problem. This procedure gets the kids to focus on what is important because they ultimately want to write down as little as possible.

**Plan:** Think of ways to solve the problem. In Algebra (& many times Pre-Algebra) this will be to write an equation – even if you can do the problem another way. *After all, equation solving is what these classes are all about!*

**Solve:**

Step 1: Define any unknowns with a “let” statement (ex. Let  $x$  = the # of green pencils). (This usually represents what is listed under FIND.)

Step 2: Write a Verbal model (words in the boxes) if necessary or list the formula you are going to use.

Step 3: Write an equation by translating the information given in the word problem, substituting into the verbal model, or substituting into the formula.

Step 4: Solve the equation by showing all the steps.

**Examine:** Does your answer make sense for the question asked? (ex. Can you have a negative side length to a rectangle?) Answer the problem in the context of the question that was asked (include correct units).