

Basic Arithmetic
Skill-Builder # W - 6
Subtracting Whole Numbers

When subtracting whole numbers, one has to align the digits according to their place value. Perform the subtraction from right to left. If the difference is negative, borrow 1 from the digit in the next column on the left.

Examples

1. $37 - 9$

Solution:

$$\begin{array}{r} \overset{2}{\cancel{3}} 17 \\ - \quad 9 \\ \hline 28 \end{array}$$

Here's what happened:

Since we cannot subtract 9 from 7 (we get a negative answer) we "borrow" 1 from 3. This 1 that we borrowed from 3 is really worth 10 since 3 is in the tens position. So what we really borrowed was 10 and we add this to 7 to get 17 and now we can subtract 9 from 17. Now 3 (which is really worth 30) becomes 2 (which is really worth 20). Finally, subtract 0 from 2 to get 2.

2. $304 - 56$

Solution:

$$\begin{array}{r} \overset{2}{\cancel{3}} \overset{9}{\cancel{0}} 14 \\ - \quad 56 \\ \hline 248 \end{array}$$

Here's what happened:

Since we cannot subtract 6 from 4 we have to borrow 1 from the next **nonzero** digit on the left. The digit immediately to the left of 4 is 0 so we cannot borrow from 0. We borrow 1 from 3. Now since 3 is in the hundreds place, the 1 that we borrowed from 3 is really worth 100. Since we only need to add 10 to 4 to make it 14, then we are left with 90 that we put as 9 in the tens place.

Try to explain what happened to this next example:

3. $6,002 - 4,985$

Solution:

$$\begin{array}{r} \overset{5}{\cancel{6}}, \overset{9}{\cancel{0}}, \overset{9}{\cancel{0}} 12 \\ - 4,985 \\ \hline 1,017 \end{array}$$

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Subtract.

1. $64 - 9$

2. $482 - 77$

3. $114 - 85$

4. $2,080 - 789$

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Answers

1. 55
2. 405
3. 29
4. 1,291

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