



Math Study Strategies

Subtraction of Signed Numbers

To subtract two numbers with **different** signs, follow the rules below:

- 1) Keep the sign of the first number as it is
- 2) Change the subtraction sign into addition
- 3) Change the **sign** of the number to the right of the addition sign to the **opposite sign**.
- 4) Follow the rules of addition
 - If the sign of both numbers is the same, add both numbers and carry the sign
 - If the sign of both numbers is different, subtract the two numbers and carry the sign of the larger number

Examples

-5-2 = ?

Step 1 and 2: Change the subtraction sign to addition $-5+2$
Step 3: Change the sign of the number to the right of the addition sign to the opposite sign. $-5+(-2)$
Step 4: The sign of both numbers is the same. Add the two numbers and carry the negative sign. $-5+(-2) = -7$

4-(-1) = ?

Step 1 and 2: Change the subtraction sign to addition $4+(-1)$
Step 3: Change the sign of the number to the right of the addition sign to the opposite sign. $4+(+1)$
Step 4: The sign of both numbers is the same. Add the two numbers and carry the positive sign. $4+(+1) = 5$

-12-4 = ?

Step 1 and 2: Change the subtraction sign to addition $-12+4$
Step 3: Change the sign of the number to the right of the addition sign to the opposite sign. $-12+(-4)$
Step 4: The sign of both numbers is the same. Add the two numbers and carry the negative sign. $-12+(-4) = -16$

-7.5-3 = ?

Step 1 and 2: Change the subtraction sign to addition $-7.5+3$
Step 3: Change the sign of the number to the right of the addition sign to the opposite sign. $-7.5+(-3)$
Step 4: The sign of both numbers is the same. Add the two numbers and carry the negative sign. $-7.5+(-3) = -10.5$