

Multi-step word problems and operation choice

WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES

A multi-step word problem needs more than one calculation before you reach the answer. Signal words like each or change tell you which operation to choose first.

- Buy 4 sandwiches at €3 each then split between 2 people: first multiply then divide.
- Buy 6 buns at €2 each and pay with €20: multiply then subtract for change.

MODEL THIS ON THE BOARD

PLAN EACH STEP BEFORE CALCULATING

- 1 Read the problem and name the first operation using signal words.
- 2 **Calculate** the first step and write the result.
- 3 Use that result for the second operation to finish.

DISCUSSION STARTER

REFLECT How do you decide which operation a word problem is really asking for?

ANSWER KEY

Scaffold: visual check on the page

Q1: €9

Q2: €8

Q3: €4

Q4: €52

a) Never — The order depends on the signal words not a fixed rule.

b) Always — Estimates catch errors like missing a zero.

c) Never — Some need three steps as in the harder clues.

d) Never — Each usually signals multiplication of price by quantity.

EXTENSION SHEET · STRETCH ANSWERS

S1: 5142

S2: 272

S3: 321

S4: 34

S5: 1398

Investigation: Plan a class trip — open-ended; scan pupils' working for valid solution paths rather than a single answer.