



# What Does This Mean? An Algebraic Expression Activity

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Math  
Grades 6–8



## Introduction

Have the students put on their monocles and detective caps, as they will need to do a little work before solving these problems! The students will need to read algebraic expressions written in words, decipher what the problem is that needs to be solved, and will then solve the problem. In the last two problems, students will need to work backwards and write the phrase the expression represents! Who is up for a challenge?

## Learning Objectives

[CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.6.EE.A.2.A](#), [CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.6.EE.B.6](#)

- WALT write an algebraic expression from a description that includes operations, numbers, and variables.

[CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.6.EE.A.1](#)

- WALT evaluate numerical expressions involving whole number exponents.

## Materials Needed

- [Write/Solve Numerical Expressions Sheet](#)
- Clipboard/Pencil

## Procedure

1. Before beginning this activity, have students review writing algebraic expressions. You can write the phrases on the board and have students complete problems on their whiteboards or on scrap paper. First, have the students write the expression, and once you give the thumbs up that it is correct, have students solve the problem.
  - Multiply 67 by 8, and then subtract 183.  $(67 \times 8) - 183 = 353$
  - Add 56 to the quotient of 375 and 25.  $(375/25) + 56 = 71$
  - Find the product of 7 and 8, and subtract it from the product of 9 and 9.  $(9 \times 9) - (7 \times 8) = 25$
2. Pass out the activity to the students. Have the students pair up or put the students into pairs. Go over the assignment (there are 10 questions), and tell students it is similar to a two-part question. If the students do not get the correct expression, then the answer will not be correct. This is good practice for standardized tests where there are multiple parts to questions and you must get “Part A” correct in order to get “Part B” correct.

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3. Students will complete the assignment, and you can choose how you wish to go over this activity. It can be an activity that counts as a classwork grade or one that counts as a quiz grade (depending how much time has been previously spent in class on this topic). The teacher(s) should walk around and monitor and help as needed. You may go over this as a class or have students hand in and you can correct, and then go over with students in either small groups or as a class.
4. For early finishers, you can have students work on:
  - Existing Math Centers in the classroom
  - Prodigy, Freckle, or any other online platform for individual goals
  - Games to Extend Learning
    - <https://www.mathgames.com/skill/6.147-write-variable-expressions>
    - <https://www.mathgames.com/skill/6.8-evaluate-variable-expressions-with-decimals-and-fractions>
    - <https://www.mathgames.com/skill/6.148-write-variable-equations-to-represent>

## Evaluation

There is no rubric with this activity. You can use this as a classwork grade, or grade it as a quiz grade. You can either score it according to a percentage or grade it on a scale, whatever suits your classroom best.