



## Algebra 1

## 2.3 Solving for a Variable

Use the same rules as for solving equations

The equations  $2x + 5 = 11$  and  $6x + 3 = 15$  have the general form  $ax + b = c$ .The equation  $ax + b = c$  is called a **literal equation** because the coefficients and constants have been replaced by letters.ex 1) Solve  $ax + b = c$  for  $x$ 

$$ax + b = c$$

$$\frac{ax}{a} = \frac{c-b}{a}$$

$$x = \frac{c-b}{a}$$

$$6x + 3 = 15$$

$$x = \frac{15-3}{6} = \frac{12}{6} = 2$$

ex 2)

Solve  $ax + b = c$  for  $x$ Then use the solution to solve  $2x + 5 = 11$ 

$$x = \frac{c-b}{a}$$

$$x = \frac{11-5}{2} = \frac{6}{2}$$

$$x = 3$$

$$\text{ex 3) } \frac{a}{-a} - bx = \frac{c}{-a}$$

$$\frac{-bx}{-b} = \frac{c-a}{-b}$$

$$x = \frac{c-a}{-b}$$

$$15 - 3x = -3$$

$$a = 15$$

$$b = 3$$

$$c = -3$$

$$x = \frac{-3 - 15}{-3} = \frac{-18}{-3}$$

$$x = 6$$

$$\text{ex 4) } \frac{ax}{+bx} = \frac{c - bx}{+bx}$$

$$ax + bx = c$$

$$\frac{(a+b)x}{a+b} = \frac{c}{a+b}$$

$$x = \frac{c}{a+b}$$

$$2x = 3 - 4x$$

$$(2+4)x$$

$$6x$$

$$a = 2$$

$$b = 4$$

$$c = 3$$

$$x = \frac{3}{2+4} = \frac{3}{6}$$

$$x = \frac{1}{2}$$

Note:

**VARIABLES IN DENOMINATORS** In Example 1, you must assume that  $a \neq 0$  in order to divide by  $a$ . In general, if you have to divide by a variable when solving a literal equation, you should assume that the variable does not equal 0.

Try this:

Solve the literal equation for  $x$ . Then use the solution to solve the specific equation.

$$1. \quad a - bx = c; \quad 12 - 5x = -3$$

$$\begin{array}{r} a - bx = c \\ -a \quad -a \\ \hline -bx = c - a \\ \frac{-bx}{-b} = \frac{c-a}{-b} \\ x = \frac{c-a}{-b} \\ x = \frac{-3-12}{-5} \\ x = \frac{-15}{-5} \\ x = 3 \end{array}$$

$$2. \quad ax = bx + c; \quad 11x = 6x + 20$$

$$\begin{array}{r} ax = bx + c \\ -b \quad -b \\ \hline (a-b)x = c \\ \frac{(a-b)x}{a-b} = \frac{c}{a-b} \\ x = \frac{20}{11-6} \\ x = \frac{20}{5} \\ x = 4 \end{array}$$

**TWO OR MORE VARIABLES** An equation in two variables, such as  $3x + 2y = 8$ , or a formula in two or more variables, such as  $A = \frac{1}{2}bh$ , can be rewritten so that one variable is a function of the other variable(s).

ex) Write  $-2x + 3y = 6$  so that  $y$  is a function of  $x$ .

$$\begin{array}{r} -2x + 3y = 6 \\ +2x \quad +2x \\ \hline 3y = 2x + 6 \\ \frac{3y}{3} = \frac{2x}{3} + \frac{6}{3} \\ y = \frac{2}{3}x + 2 \end{array}$$

ex) Write  $4x - 6y = 24$  so that  $y$  is a function of  $x$ .

$$\begin{array}{r} 4x - 6y = 24 \\ -4x \quad -4x \\ \hline -6y = -4x + 24 \\ \frac{-6y}{-6} = \frac{-4x}{-6} + \frac{24}{-6} \\ y = \frac{2}{3}x - 4 \end{array}$$

ex) Write  $-8x - 5y = -40$  so that  $x$  is a function of  $y$ .

$$\begin{array}{r} -8x - 5y = -40 \\ +5y \quad +5y \\ \hline -8x = -5y - 40 \\ \frac{-8x}{-8} = \frac{-5y}{-8} - \frac{40}{-8} \\ x = -\frac{5}{8}y + 5 \end{array}$$

ex) The area for a rectangle is given by the formula  $A = lw$ , where  $l$  is the length and  $w$  is the width.

a) Solve the formula for the length  $l$ .

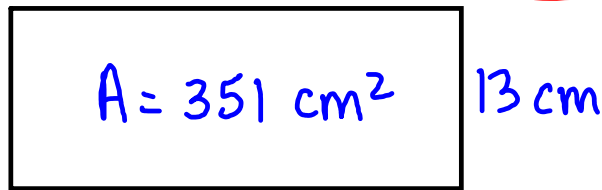
$$\frac{A}{w} = \frac{lw}{w}$$

$$\frac{A}{w} = l$$

b) Use the rewritten formula to find the length of this rectangle.

$$l = \frac{351}{13}$$

$$l = 27 \text{ cm}$$

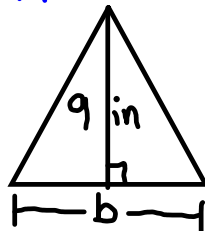


ex) For the formula  $A = \frac{1}{2}bh$  solve for  $b$ .

$$\frac{2}{1} \cdot \frac{A}{\cancel{\frac{1}{2}h}} = b$$

$$\frac{2A}{h} = b$$

Use the rewritten formula to solve for the base of the triangle below when the  $A = 36 \text{ in}^2$



$$\frac{2A}{h} = b$$

$$\frac{2 \cdot 36}{9} = \frac{72}{9} = 8$$

$$b = 8 \text{ in}$$

Try this:

3. Write  $5x + 4y = 20$  so that  $y$  is a function of  $x$ .

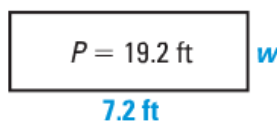
$$\begin{aligned} 4y &= \frac{-5x + 20}{4} \\ y &= \frac{-5}{4}x + 5 \end{aligned}$$

4. The perimeter  $P$  of a rectangle is given by the formula  $P = 2l + 2w$  where  $l$  is the length and  $w$  is the width.

- a. Solve the formula for the width  $w$ .

$$\begin{aligned} P &= 2l + 2w \\ \frac{P}{2} - 2l &= 2w \\ \frac{P}{2} - l &= w \end{aligned}$$

- b. Use the rewritten formula to find the width of the rectangle shown.



$$\begin{aligned} \frac{19.2}{2} - 7.2 \\ 2.4 \text{ ft} \end{aligned}$$



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