

Down and Dirty: A “how to” Math Book
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www.DownandDirtyMath.com

How to Write Algebraic Expressions

- (1) Read the problem carefully
- (2) Whenever there is an unknown quantity, designate the unknown with some lower case letter; variables are always written in lower case
- (3) If there are two related unknown quantities, it is generally helpful to let the variable stand for the smallest unknown
- (4) Place the numbers or variables in juxtaposition to indicate multiplication
- (5) Place the numbers or variables in fraction form to indicate division

Examples:

- a) Three times a number decreased by 8 $\leftrightarrow 3n - 8$
- b) A number increased by 12 $\leftrightarrow b + 12$
- c) The product of a number and 9 $\leftrightarrow 9a$
- d) A number divided by 3 $\leftrightarrow \frac{n}{3}$
- e) Four times a number divided by 3 increased by 5 $\leftrightarrow 4\left(\frac{n}{3}\right) + 5$