The equals sign: both sides count

1. What belongs in the box?

8 + 4 = ____ + 5. Find the missing number. Explain how you know both sides have the same value.

2. True or false? Explain.

A. 9 = 4 + 5
B. 5 + 3 = 3 + 5
C. 6 + 2 = 8 + 1
Correct any false statement by changing one number.

3. Make your own

Write a true equation with addition on both sides and a total of 12 on each side. Optional challenge: 27 + 15 = 28 + ____. Find the missing number and explain the change.

Teacher notes and possible answers

Checked answers

1: 7, because 8 + 4 = 12 and 7 + 5 = 12. 2A true; 2B true; 2C false, because 8 does not equal 9. Valid repairs include 6 + 3 = 8 + 1, 6 + 2 = 8 + 0 or 6 + 2 = 7 + 1; others may work. 3: Many answers, such as 7 + 5 = 10 + 2. Challenge: 14; increasing one addend by 1 requires decreasing the other by 1 to keep the total at 42.

What to model

Core prerequisite: addition within 20. Challenge uses addition within 100. Allow 10–15 minutes. Read = as “has the same value as”. Put counters in two groups on each side and compare totals. Do not teach it as a command to write the answer next.

Investigate an unexpected answer

If a pupil writes 12 in question 1, substitute it: the right side becomes 12 + 5 = 17. Ask whether the two sides still match. If they reject 9 = 4 + 5, compare it with 4 + 5 = 9 using objects. Listen before assigning a cause to the response.

Support, stretch and revisit

Start with 3 + 2 = 4 + [ ] (1) using counters. Accept different true equations in task 3. Revisit later with 7 + 6 = [ ] + 8 (5). Ask pupils to check both sides explicitly; speed and memorised phrases are not the aim.

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