

Check for Understanding: Restate the problem

"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough" is just one paraphrase of Einstein's—and others'—belief about fundamental ideas of science and math. It is important that when students are working on math, they understand what the problem is asking of them. If they understand a concept *well enough*, then they should be able to explain it to themselves in a different, *simple* way. In math, we explain this to students by asking them to *restate the problem using their own words*.

Explaining the problem to themselves in their own words requires students to stop, slow down, and make sense of what they are being asked to do.

Students can ask themselves the following questions to help them get started:

- What is this problem asking me to solve?
- Is there an easier way to think about this problem?
- Have I seen this type of problem before?
 - If so, how did I solve that problem?
 - Will that same method help me with this problem?
- How would I explain this problem to a friend?

How You Can Help Your Child with This Strategy at Home

- 1. Ask your child to restate math problems that they bring home for practice/homework. If they get stuck, model how you can restate the problem in your own words, and then have them try again.
- 2. When you're using math in your daily life (for example, measuring ingredients for a recipe, going to the bank, or paying the bill at a restaurant or store), pose the problem to your child. Then ask them to restate the problem in their own words

Here's an example:

My grocery bill is \$14.00 and I am going to give the cashier \$20.00. How much change will I get back?

How your child might restate the problem: You are going to find the difference, so you would need to subtract \$14.00 from \$20.00.