



In math, *accuracy*, which just means having the right calculation, is important. Students should be able to accurately check their work to make sure their solutions are correct and they have not made an error when solving. One way to do this is to *work backward*.

To use this strategy students begin with the solution and *work backward* using their knowledge of inverse operations to check their solution’s accuracy. (The *inverse*, or *opposite*, operation of addition is subtraction. The inverse of multiplication is division.)

Example

Jacob has \$275 in his checking account. He still has three bills to pay this month: one for \$50, another for \$65, and a third for \$80. How much money will be left in Jacob’s checking account after he pays these bills?

Method of Solving Problem	Checking Solution Using the Work Backward Strategy
$\$275 - (\$50 + \$65 + \$80) = \text{remaining balance}$ $\$275 - \$195 = \$80 \text{ remaining after paying bills}$	<p>Begin with the remaining \$80.</p> $\$80 \text{ remaining balance} + \$80 \text{ bill} = \$160$ $\$160 + \$65 \text{ bill} = \$225$ $\$225 + \$50 \text{ bill} = \$275$ <p>My calculations were correct because when I worked backward, I arrived at the starting balance!</p>

How You Can Help Your Child with This Strategy at Home

1. Provide your child with opportunities to use this strategy. If you model *how* to solve a certain problem, have them check *your* work using the Work Backward strategy.
2. When your child brings home practice math work, select several problems where they can use the Work Backward strategy to check their solution. Have them demonstrate how this strategy works. If they get stuck, help them.