

# Why is the Subtraction mat important?



- From our observations most students as well as some adults find addition much easier than subtraction. Many adults subtract by counting up and while this is useful strategy it is important we provide our students with a broader range of strategies so they can select the one most appropriate to particular situation. It often appears that, in classrooms, much more time is spent on addition, counting up than is spent on subtraction and counting back which often results in children being weaker at subtraction than they are at addition.
- In the first instance, given our intention to enable students to have a range of strategies and to be able to select the best one for particular set of numbers, we want students to be fluent with the subtraction facts to 10.
- Suppose that we ask a question, such as:
  - “Which double makes eight?”
- We can then make the link between an addition strategy and a subtraction strategy by following up with:
  - “How does knowing double 4 makes 8 help with knowing  $8 - 4$ ?”
- In everyday life subtraction is not always flagged with words such as *minus*, *subtract* or even *take away*. In the sentence, “I had 6 marbles and lost 2 in my first game. How many do I have now?” students need to be able to identify which operation will solve the problem. With this in mind it is important that we immerse students in the full range of vocabulary that flags subtraction situation.



**Note:** In the long term, we would like to see students dropping the use of words such as *take* and *take away* as these have no place in maths as it is used at a higher level.





The following list is just a starter. We are sure that you and your students will come up with other words that are flags for subtraction.

Change	Lost
Count back	Minus
Difference	Near half
Gave away	Rainbow pair
Half	Remove
How many more	Spend
Left	Subtract
Left over	Take away

## Example sentences

The sentences below contextualize some of the subtraction vocabulary and give ideas for how your students might find the words to add to the *Write a problem to match* section of the mat.

- I have 6 lollies and Claire has 3 what is the difference between how many we each have?
- I have 6 lollies, half are blue, the rest are red. How many are blue?
- My book has 12 pages. I have read 6. How many pages are left to read?
- I have 6 lollies and Kate has 9 lollies. How many more do I have to have so that we both have the same?