

Steps for parsing word problems

Set a **timer** for **20 minutes**. Then, work through as many of the following exercises as you can until time.

1. **Read** the problem **out loud** at a “teacher’s” pace.
2. Carefully **write** the problem out by hand on a sheet of paper. Leave a blank line between each sentence (“**double space**”).
3. **Read** the problem **out loud** again at a “teacher’s” pace, pausing for 5 seconds between each sentence.
4. In each handwritten sentence, **underline** any **given information** (e.g. numerical values or even disguised numerical values, such as “at rest,” which means velocity equals zero) **and information to be determined** (e.g. nouns that follow “determine”).
5. **Read** the problem **out loud** again at a “teacher’s” pace, **pausing** for 5 seconds between each sentence.
6. If possible, draw and label a large **picture**, draw a comic-strip **timeline**, or organize a **table**.
7. Make a **list** of **given** quantities **and** quantities **to be found** not already included on the figure/table.
8. **Read** the problem **out loud** again at a “teacher’s” pace (don’t need to pause too long between sentences).
9. In the handwritten copy of the problem statement, **circle** the sentence or sentences that contain the **information that can be represented as an equation** (or equations). Put little symbols (e.g. star) near each circled sentence.
10. In your workspace below the problem statement, **write each corresponding equation**. Among your equations, lightly **circle the variable** (or variables) you are requested **to solve for**.
11. **Read** the problem **out loud** again at a “teacher’s” pace. **Ask** yourself, “**Would solving the equations for the circled variables actually answer the question?**”