

Rutgers Learning Centers

At Camden Campus

MATH: SOLVING WORD PROBLEMS

1. Read the entire problem. This will make you familiar with what you are being asked to solve.

Example: A five-foot ladder which costs twenty dollars is placed four feet from the wall.
How far up the wall is the ladder?

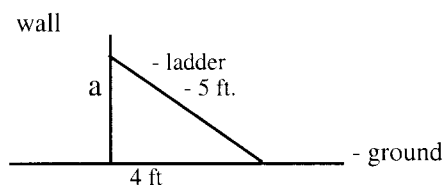
2. Pick out what you are being asked to find.

How far up the wall is the ladder?

3. Pick out what you are given. *Some of this information may not be used to solve the problem.*

five-foot ladder; four feet from the wall;
ladder costs twenty dollars (not used.)

4. Draw a picture if you can. A visual aid will help you solve the problem.



5. What formula could you use to solve the problem?

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

6. Substitute the given information into the formula.

$$a^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$$

7. Solve for the unknown. Use the equation from 5.

$$a^2 + 16 = 25$$

$$a^2 = 9$$

$$a = 3$$

8. Answer the question from number 2. *Sometimes the answer to the equation is not the answer to the problem.*

the ladder is three feet up the wall.

9. Check your answer. Does it seem reasonable? If it doesn't, rework the problem.

For more information, visit or call your nearest Rutgers Learning Center, or visit our website:<http://rlc.rutgers.edu>

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