

The “Write” Way: Mathematics Journal Prompts for Grades 1–2

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Sample Journal Prompts

Content Prompts

Number and Operations

Jack used 5 base-ten blocks to make a number. It was the smallest amount of blocks needed. What number could he have made? Explain your answer. Draw the blocks he used.

This prompt has multiple answers. Some students respond that it could be

5 (5 unit blocks), 50 (5 ten blocks), 14 (1 ten and 4 units), 500 (5 hundred squares), 104 (1 hundred block and 4 units) and so on. Students should draw the blocks they think Jack used. Encourage them to find multiple answers.

**Josh said, “I was fifth in line and I was also last in line.”
Can this be true? Why or why not?**

It can be true if there are only five people in line. Students may explain this with a drawing.

Patterns and Algebra

Sandy said, “I am adding two numbers. If one of the numbers is increased by three, what will happen to the sum?” What would you tell Sandy?

Students should note that if one addend is increased by three, the sum will also increase by three. If students have a difficult time with the wording, show an example such as $1 + 3 = 4$, $1 + 6 = \Delta$. What do you notice?

Measurement

Kenna said, “My arm is the length of 15 paper clips.” Jim said, “That’s impossible.” Who do you believe? Why?

Students should disagree with Kenna. They may support their statement with a reference to the length of one paper clip in relation to the length of their arm.

Geometry

“A sphere is like a ball,” said Drew. “Is a cube like a box?” asked Ben. What will Drew say?

Most students respond that it is like a box. A few students may notice that not all boxes are cubes. Cubes have six faces and some boxes have open-tops. Additionally, some boxes are rectangular prisms instead of cubes. To extend the question, ask students to explain their answer.

Data Analysis and Probability

Sara predicted that she would pick a three out of a deck of cards. What does *predict* mean?

Answers will vary. You may want to focus on the word’s sense using events rather than cards.

Process Prompts

When I hear or see a math word I don't know, I . . .

Answers will vary. Students should describe strategies they use for making sense of something they are not familiar with

Affective/Attitudinal Prompts

Math will help me when I grow up because . . .

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