

# The “Write” Way: Mathematics Journal Prompts for Grades 3–4

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## Sample Journal Prompts

### Content Prompts

#### Number and Operations

**Kenya rounded a number to 800. Find a number that Kenya could have used. Explain why it could be rounded to 800. Find at least two more numbers that could be rounded to 800.**

*Some students may round from the tens position and others from the hundreds position. Students may give numbers that involve fractions or decimals. For example, 790 and 803 could both be rounded to 800 reasonably. So could 800.7 or  $775\frac{1}{2}$ . There are multiple solutions.*

**Amanda solved a division problem.**

$$79 \div 24 = 3R7$$

**Tino asked, “What does the remainder 7 mean?”  
What do you think she told him?**

*Students may indicate that 7 represents the amount left over when you group the 79 into groups of 24. Or they may indicate that it is the amount left over when you put 79 into 24 groups.*

#### Patterns and Algebra

**In multiplication,  $3 \times 2$  gives the same product as  $2 \times 3$ . Is this true for division? Why or why not?**

*No, it is not true for division. The quotient is not the same when the order of the numbers is reversed.*

### **Measurement**

**Courtney said, “I can draw an angle that measures less than  $90^\circ$ .” What would Courtney’s angle look like? Draw her angle and describe how you know it will measure less than  $90^\circ$ .**

*Answers will vary. Responses should include a picture and an explanation that describes how a student knew it would be less than  $90^\circ$ .*

### **Geometry**

**Pam thought that a rectangle and a square are the same thing. Is she right? Prove it.**

*Students may comment on like qualities such as congruent sides. However, a rectangle may not have sides of equal lengths. A square is a special case of a rectangle.*

### **Data Analysis and Probability**

**“The probability is  $\frac{3}{4}$  that I will draw a blue block out of the bag,” said Elise. Does that mean there are no red blocks in the bag? What do you think? Explain your thinking.**

*Answers will vary. Some students will say you cannot tell how many red blocks there are in the bag. But you know that there are a lot of blue blocks compared to the number of other colored blocks. To extend this prompt, ask students to tell you what could be in the bag. Test the students’ suggestions.*

## Process Prompts

**Explain to a second-grader how to estimate when using three-digit numbers.**

*Responses should include a reference to a cut-off number, such as if the number has a 5 or larger in the tens place, the number should be rounded to the next 100. Or another strategy for estimating may be used besides rounding. Responses could describe a compatible number, front-end, or cluster strategy.*

## Affective/Attitudinal Prompts

**A person who uses a lot of math is \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .**

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