

# Subtracting Fractions Handout

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**When subtracting fractions, treat the bottom numbers the same way you do for addition.**

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$$\frac{9}{16} - \frac{5}{16} =$$

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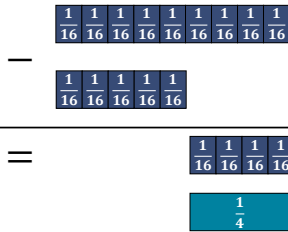
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$$\frac{9}{16} - \frac{5}{16} = \frac{4}{16} = \frac{1}{4}$$




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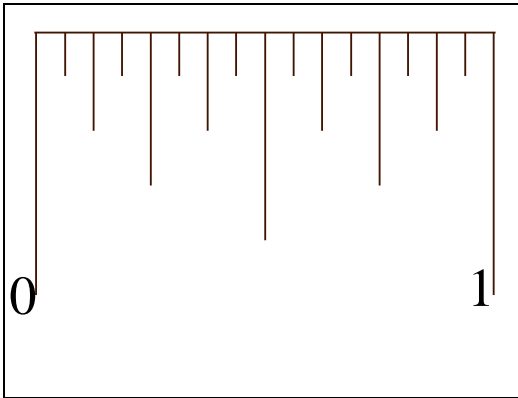
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$3 - \frac{1}{8} =$




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**When subtracting a fraction from a whole number, borrow a 1 from the whole number, then rename it as a fraction.**

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$3 - \frac{1}{8} =$

ONE WHOLE

ONE WHOLE

ONE WHOLE

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$$3 - \frac{1}{8} = 2\frac{8}{8} - \frac{1}{8}$$

ONE WHOLE

ONE WHOLE




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$$3 - \frac{1}{8} = 2\frac{8}{8} - \frac{1}{8} = 2\frac{7}{8}$$

ONE WHOLE

ONE WHOLE




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$$2 - \frac{3}{4} =$$




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$$19 - \frac{13}{16} =$$

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**Subtract whole numbers first,  
borrow if necessary,  
subtract the fractions,  
then combine.**

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**Weight in =  $45 \frac{3}{4}$  tons**

**Weight out =  $23 \frac{1}{4}$  tons**

$$45 \frac{3}{4} \text{ tons} - 23 \frac{1}{4} \text{ tons} =$$

$$45 \text{ tons} - 23 \text{ tons} = 22 \text{ tons}$$

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**Weight in =  $45 \frac{3}{4}$  tons**

**Weight out =  $23 \frac{1}{4}$  tons**

$$45 \frac{3}{4} \text{ tons} - 23 \frac{1}{4} \text{ tons} =$$

$$\frac{3}{4} \text{ tons} - \frac{1}{4} \text{ tons} = \frac{2}{4} \text{ tons} = \frac{1}{2} \text{ tons}$$

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**Weight in =  $45 \frac{3}{4}$  tons**

**Weight out =  $23 \frac{1}{4}$  tons**

**Weight of  
scrap left =  $22 \frac{1}{2}$  tons  
at the  
dump**

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$$2\frac{1}{8} - \frac{7}{8} =$$



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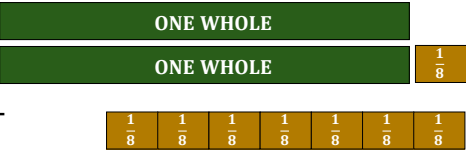
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$$2\frac{1}{8} - \frac{7}{8} =$$



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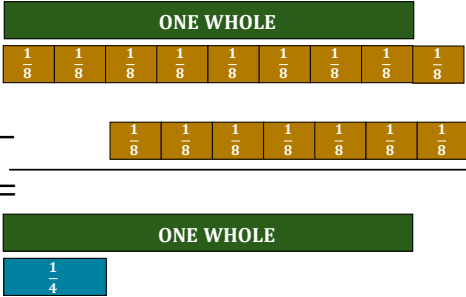
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$$2\frac{1}{8} - \frac{7}{8} = 1\frac{2}{8} = 1\frac{1}{4}$$



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$$15\frac{1}{16} - 4\frac{5}{16} =$$



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$$26\frac{15}{16} - 11\frac{11}{16} =$$

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**Like with addition,  
fractions must have the  
same bottom number to  
subtract them.**

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$$\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{4} =$$



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**If the bottom number of one (or more) of the fractions divides evenly into the bottom number of another fraction, rename the fraction(s) so they have the larger bottom number.**

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$$\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{4}$$

The diagram illustrates the subtraction of  $\frac{1}{4}$  from  $\frac{1}{2}$ . It shows two blue blocks, each labeled  $\frac{1}{4}$ , representing  $\frac{1}{2}$ . A minus sign is followed by one blue block labeled  $\frac{1}{4}$ , representing the subtraction. Below this, an equals sign is followed by one blue block labeled  $\frac{1}{4}$ , representing the result.

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$$\frac{3}{16} - \frac{1}{8} =$$



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$$\frac{3}{16} - \frac{1}{8} = \frac{3}{16} - \frac{2}{16} = \frac{1}{16}$$

$\frac{1}{8}$

$\frac{1}{8}$

**is the  
same  
as**

$\frac{2}{16}$

$\frac{1}{16} \frac{1}{16}$

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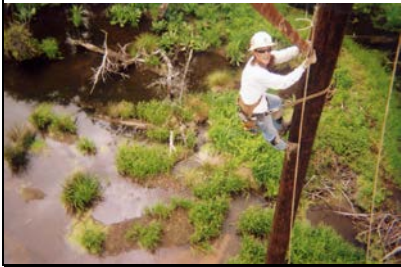
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$$\frac{7}{8} - \frac{3}{4} =$$


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$$\frac{11}{16} - \frac{1}{2} =$$



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$$7\frac{3}{8} - 3\frac{1}{4} =$$



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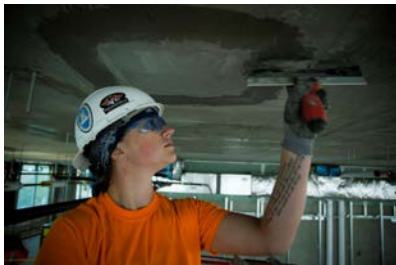
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$$19\frac{15}{16} - 9\frac{1}{2} =$$



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$$31 \frac{1}{4} - 8 \frac{15}{16} =$$



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$$13 \frac{1}{2} - 6 \frac{5}{8} =$$



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**You are working on a plumbing job and need a piece of pipe that is  $5 \frac{7}{8}$ . The pipe you have is  $10 \frac{1}{4}$ . How much pipe will be left after you cut the piece you need?**

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# Subtracting Fractions Practice

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Find the answer for each of the following. Simplify your answers if necessary.

1.  $\frac{3}{4} - \frac{1}{4} =$

2.  $\frac{13}{16} - \frac{5}{16} =$

3.  $\frac{5}{8} - \frac{1}{8} =$

4.  $\frac{7}{8} - \frac{5}{8} =$

5.  $\frac{9}{16} - \frac{3}{16} =$

6.  $5 - \frac{1}{4} =$

7.  $7 - \frac{15}{16} =$

8.  $6 - \frac{3}{8} =$

$$9. \quad 3 - \frac{5}{8} =$$

$$10. \quad 4 - \frac{3}{16} =$$

$$11. \quad 8\frac{3}{16} - 3\frac{1}{16} =$$

$$12. \quad 5\frac{5}{16} - 3\frac{7}{16} =$$

$$13. \quad 4\frac{3}{4} - 3\frac{1}{4} =$$

$$14. \quad 5\frac{1}{2} - 3\frac{1}{2} =$$

$$15. \quad 6\frac{1}{8} - 4\frac{5}{8} =$$

$$16. \quad 4\frac{5}{8} - 3\frac{3}{4} =$$

$$17. \quad 7\frac{1}{2} - 2\frac{3}{4} =$$

18.  $6\frac{1}{4} - 2\frac{1}{8} =$

19.  $13\frac{1}{8} - 4\frac{1}{2} =$

20.  $3\frac{5}{16} - 1\frac{1}{4} =$

**For each of the following, write out the fractions and find the answer. Simplify your answer if necessary.**

21. You need a piece of 2x4 lumber that is  $9\frac{5}{8}$  inches long. If you start with a piece that is  $20\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, how much will you need to cut off?

22. You saw  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch off a board that is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. How wide is the board after you finish sawing it?

23. The top of a kitchen countertop must be exactly 36 inches from the floor. The cabinets under the countertop are  $34\frac{1}{2}$  inches tall. How thick will the countertop need to be?

