

LESSON PLAN

Adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators

Math · Grade 5 · 45 min · Term 3, Week 1

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

Grade 5 Math. CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.5.NF.A.1: Add and subtract fractions with unlike denominators, including mixed numbers, by replacing given fractions with equivalent fractions that have a common denominator.

[Common Core State Standards](#) ↗

LEARNING INTENTION

Add and subtract fractions with unlike denominators

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can find a common denominator for two unlike fractions.
- I can create equivalent fractions using a common denominator.
- I can add two fractions with unlike denominators and simplify the answer.
- I can subtract two fractions with unlike denominators and simplify the answer.

Lesson Structure

HOOK

- Two pizzas: one cut in thirds, one cut in fourths.
- Marisol ate $\frac{1}{3}$. Diego ate $\frac{1}{4}$. Who ate more?
- How much pizza did they eat altogether?

TEACHING

- We can only add fractions with matching denominators.
- I need twelfths. I rename $\frac{1}{3}$ as $\frac{4}{12}$.
- I rename $\frac{1}{4}$ as $\frac{3}{12}$. Now they match.
- $\frac{4}{12} + \frac{3}{12} = \frac{7}{12}$. Same size pieces, so I can add.

PRACTICE

- On whiteboards: find a common denominator for $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$.
- Build the equivalent fractions. Add them. Simplify if needed.
- Hold up boards. Who got the same answer a different way?

CLOSURE

- What does a common denominator mean in your own words?
- Could you add $\frac{2}{5}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$? How would you start?
- Check: can you make equivalent fractions to add?

Differentiated Groups

EMERGING

TASK

- Sort fraction cards by denominator pairs.
- Use fraction strips to find a common denominator.
- Add the renamed fractions. Record each step.

MATERIALS

Fraction strips (1 set per student), fraction addition task cards with denominators 2/3/4/6 only (1 set per pair), step-by-step anchor chart showing rename process (1 per table), whiteboards and markers (1 per student)

TEACHER ROLE

- Sit with this group for first 8 minutes.
- Model renaming one fraction using strips.
- Check each student records the renamed fractions.

DEVELOPING

TASK

- Work through six add/subtract problems independently.
- Use a number line or area model to check answers.
- Simplify each answer and write it in lowest terms.

MATERIALS

Fraction practice worksheet with 6 problems (1 per student), blank number lines (3 per student), fraction tiles for checking (1 set per pair), pencils

TEACHER ROLE

- Check in briefly at minute 5 and minute 12.
- Prompt: How did you find that common denominator?
- Note who simplifies confidently without support.

EXTENDING

TASK

- Create two word problems using unlike fractions.
- Swap with a partner. Solve each other's problems.
- Justify: could a different common denominator still work?

MATERIALS

Blank problem-creation template (2 per student), graph paper for fraction models (2 sheets per student), pencils, answer-checking sheet for peer review (1 per pair)

TEACHER ROLE

- Brief check-in at minute 10.
- Ask: Is your common denominator the least possible?
- Push toward justifying equivalent fraction choices.

ASSESSMENT NOTES

- Criterion 1: Student names a valid common denominator unprompted.
- Criterion 2: Student writes renamed fractions correctly before adding.
- Criterion 3: Student adds and simplifies without skipping rename step.
- Criterion 4: Student subtracts correctly and simplifies the result.

RELIEF TEACHER NOTES

- Fraction strips and anchor charts are on the back supply table.
- Emerging group needs the most direct support. Sit with them first.
- Developing group works from the printed worksheet independently.
- Extending group works in pairs. They self-manage well.