

Subtraction notation using bar models activities



1 Build the number sentence

Children put the whole in the bar as two parts, remove one part, then lay the number cards with the minus and equals signs to build “__ - __ = __.”

“Put the whole in. Remove one part — now write it. What goes before the minus? After it? After the equals?”

“Read your sentence out loud — does it match what you removed?”

2 Read the bar, write what is left

Set out a bar with the whole and one part already labelled, and the minus and equals frame in place. Children read the whole and the part being removed, then work out what is left. Use wholes to ten.

“The whole is here, and this part is being removed — what is left? Fill in after the equals sign.”

“What does the minus sign tell you to do? What does the equals sign mean?”

3 Remove the other part

Children write six minus four equals two, then rebuild the same whole and remove the other part to write six minus two equals four. Unlike addition, swapping which part is removed changes the answer.

“Now remove the other part instead — write the new sentence. Is what is left the same as before?”

“Why is the answer different this time, when it wasn’t for addition?”

4 Non-example: the two sides are not equal

Write six minus four equals three and say it is correct. Ask children to check — the equals sign says both sides are the same amount.

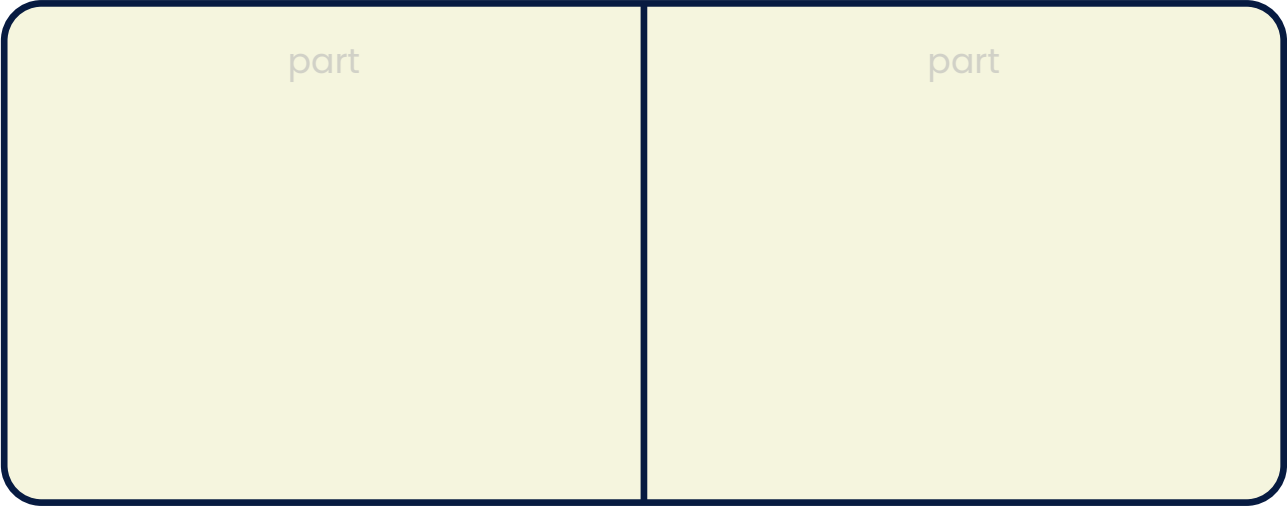
“I wrote six minus four equals three. Are both sides the same? Remove the part and count what is left.”

“What should be left? The equals sign means the sides are equal.”

Subtraction notation mat



the whole



part

part

Number cards 0–10



0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10		

Subtraction and equals cards

