



Written Subtraction

Subtraction is the calculation we use to find the **difference** between two or more numbers.

That's me!

We use the **minus** symbol for subtraction: -

A lot of subtractions can be calculated mentally, but with bigger numbers it is usually easier to use a written method called **column subtraction**.



Method

1

We line up the numbers in columns, by **place value**.

For example, we line up 48,352 and 5,238 by making sure the ones are in the same column.

	Th	H	T	O
	4	8	3	5
				2
-		5	2	3
				8

2

Then we subtract the numbers, column by column, **starting with the rightmost column**.

Ones: $12 - 8 = 4$

Tens: $4 - 3 = 1$

	Th	H	T	O
	4	8	3	5 ¹²
				2
-		5	2	3
				8
				4

We had to exchange 1 ten for 10 ones



	Th	H	T	O
	4	8	3	5 ¹²
				2
-		5	2	3
				8
			1	4

3

We continue solving each column one by one, going left.

$3 - 2 = 1$

$8 - 5 = 3$

$4 - 0 = 4$

	Th	H	T	O
	4	8	3	5 ¹²
				2
-		5	2	3
				8
		1	1	4



	Th	H	T	O
	4	8	3	5 ¹²
				2
-		5	2	3
				8
	3	1	1	4



	Th	H	T	O
	4	8	3	5 ¹²
				2
-		5	2	3
				8
	4	3	1	1
				4

The difference is 43,114!



Example Question

What is the missing digit in the following subtraction?

	Th	H	T	O
	6	8	5	7
				7
-	1	□	1	9
				5
	4	9	3	8
				2

A 1

B 4

C 6

D 8

E 9

1

There are no exchanges in the ones column. Let's move on!

2

In the **tens column**, we can see that an **exchange** occurs.

We cannot subtract 9 tens from 7 tens, so we need to **exchange** 1 hundred for 10 tens.

We cross out the 5 in the hundreds column and replace it with a little 4.

We add a little 1 in the **tens column**.

	Th	H	T	O
	6	8	5 ¹⁷	7
				7
-	1	□	1	9
				5
	4	9	3	8
				2

3

Now we can just solve the calculation in the thousands column, using number facts.

$8 - \square = 9$

This is impossible! There must be an **exchange**.

We need to **exchange** 1 ten thousand for 10 thousands.

We cross out the 6 in the ten thousands column and replace it with a little 5.

We add a little 1 in the **thousands column**.

	Th	H	T	O
	6 ¹⁸	8	5 ¹⁷	7
				7
-	1	9	1	9
				5
	4	9	3	8
				2

$18 - \square = 9$

Now we can fill in the gap: $18 - 9 = 9$

✓

The missing digit is 9!