

Remembering Your Order of Operations

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Carrie was in fourth grade. She was having a hard time in math class. They gave her problems like this: $3 + 2^2 \times (1 + 8)$ She thought the answer was 33, but it was marked wrong on her test.

She had to learn her order of operations to get her answers right. But Carrie could not remember all of the operations in the right order. She always forgot them, and her teacher wanted to help her. So, her teacher taught her a trick.

The trick was that she just had to remember a silly sentence. The sentence was: *Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally*. How did this crazy sentence help with Order of Operations? Each word stood for an operation, and they helped her remember the order. The first letter of each word matched the first letter of an operation.

Here is how it worked:

(P)lease – Parentheses always go first

(E)xcuse – Exponents and Roots next

(M)y – Multiplication and **(D)ear** – division third from left to right

(A)unt – Addition and **(S)ally** – Subtraction last from left to right

Now Carrie remembered how to do her math in order! She found that the answer was actually:

$$3 + 2^2 \times (1 + 8) = ?$$

$$3 + 2^2 \times 9 = ?$$

$$3 + 4 \times 9 = ?$$

$$3 + 36 = \underline{39}$$



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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What does Carrie need to learn?
 - A. order of operations
 - B. her times tables
 - C. her addition facts
 - D. her basic division facts

2. What incorrect answer does Carrie have on her test problem?
 - A. 33
 - B. 35
 - C. 37
 - D. 39

3. What does the teacher do to help Carrie remember?
 - A. The teacher yells at her.
 - B. The teacher gives her more homework.
 - C. The teacher teaches her a funny sentence to help her remember.
 - D. The teacher doesn't help her.

4. What was the correct answer to the test problem?
 - A. 33
 - B. 35
 - C. 37
 - D. 39

5. Which word is NOT correctly matched with its operation?
 - A. My - Multiplication
 - B. Excuse – Exponents and Roots
 - C. Aunt - Arithmetic
 - D. Sally - Subtraction

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