☑ Checklist for Writing Good Word Problems

☐ Is there more to the problem than keywords?

We don't want students to just "game" the problem and circumvent deep reasoning.

- When possible, avoid give-away terms like "add" or "take away"
- Rephrase those keywords to describe the action in the situations

Before

Juan has 4 apples in his basket and adds 3 more apples. How many apples does he have now?

After

Juan has 4 apples in his basket. He picks 3 more apples from the tree. How many apples does he have now?

☐ Is the language accessible?

Remember, it's not about words. It's about problem solving and mathematical reasoning. Simplify the language so that students can get to the heart of the problem with minimal barriers.

- Use clear and concise wording
- Watch out for unnecessary fluff
- Avoid ambiguous grammatical structures

Before

Sara and her mom love oranges. She buys 7 oranges for breakfast. Sara then receives 3 oranges from a neighbor. How many oranges does Sara have?

After

Sara loves oranges. She has 7 oranges already and her neighbor hands her 3 more. How many oranges does Sara now have?

☐ Are students having to make sense of the situation?

When students get into the problem, they can think deeply and decide what math to use.

- Make sure the question isn't just plug-and-chug
- Require more than just a memorized formula
- Allow a variety of approaches to solving the problem and let students discuss the solutions

Before

A basket has oranges for $2 and avocados for $5. A basket of fruit cost $60. The basket has 21 pieces of fruit. How many of each type of fruit is in the basket?

After

A basket of oranges and avocados costs $60. If oranges are $2 and avocados are $5, how many oranges and avocados could be in the basket? Think of some different combinations.