Maths Accelerator Centre

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P5 Problem Sums – Mini Lesson

Term 1 Lesson 1

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✏️ Strategy: Working Backwards

Description:
Working Backwards is a problem-solving method where you start from the *final condition* or outcome given in the question, then trace the steps in reverse to uncover the unknowns. Instead of moving forward with assumptions, you use the end state as your anchor and reconstruct the path that led there.

🔑 Key Takeaway

- Begin with the result or condition stated at the end.
- Express unknowns in terms of variables.
- Reverse the steps logically to form an equation.
- Solve and verify to ensure consistency.

👉 This strategy is especially powerful when the problem gives you the *final balance* or *equal condition* after certain actions have been taken.

Discussion Question

Follow the trainer in this video and solve this question.

Mr Rahmat had a total of 480 exercise books and files in his shop. He sold half of the exercise books and 105 files. In the end, he had an equal number of exercise books and files left. Find the number of files he had at first.

Practice Time

Here are **4 practice questions** based on this strategy.
Follow the step-by-step method we discussed in the video to solve each one.

☑ Work through the problems carefully.
☑ Check your solutions against the **Answer Key** provided on the last page.

Question 1

Mrs Tan had a total of **360 pencils and erasers** in her shop.
She sold **half of the pencils** and **75 erasers**.
In the end, she had an equal number of pencils and erasers left.
Find the number of erasers she had at first.

Question 2

A bookstore had a total of **540 storybooks and magazines**.
The owner sold **half of the storybooks** and **120 magazines**.
At the end, the number of storybooks left was equal to the number of magazines left.
Find the number of magazines the bookstore had at first.

Question 3

Mr Lee had a total of **400 rulers and markers** in his shop.
He sold **half of the rulers** and **70 markers**.
Finally, the number of rulers left was the same as the number of markers left.
Find the number of markers he had at first.

Question 4

A stationery shop had a total of **600 notebooks and folders**.
The shopkeeper sold **half of the notebooks** and **150 folders**.
In the end, the number of notebooks left equaled the number of folders left.
Find the number of folders the shop had at first.

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Answer Key

1. 170 erasers

2. 260 magazines

3. 180 markers

4. 300 folders