Working Backwards Word Problems

Maths Strategy:

Start with the final number in the question. Work backwards, undoing each step until you get back to the start. Check your answer by putting it back into the original question.

Handy Tip!

Use inverse operations to undo the steps.
- Addition and subtraction are inverse operations.
- Multiplication and division are inverse operations.

1. I think of a number. I double it and then subtract 15. My answer is 13. What number was I thinking of to start with?

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2. A farmer grows some tomato plants. Three of the plants die and each of the rest grows twelve tomatoes. If the farmer picks forty-eight tomatoes, how many plants did he start with?

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3. I think of a number. I multiply it by three and then add sixteen. My answer is thirty-seven. What number did I start with?

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4. I go shopping and spend half of my money on books. I then buy an ice-cream for $3.50. If I have $8.50 left, how much money did I start with?

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5. I think of a number. I subtract 5 and then divide by four. Finally, I add 12. My answer is 18. What number was I thinking of to start with?

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6. The netball coach cuts oranges into quarters. At half time, seven players each eat three quarters. If there are eleven quarters left at the end of the match, how many whole oranges were cut up by the coach?

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Maths Challenge:

Now write some of your own questions that use the working backwards strategy.

Working Backwards
Word Problems Answers

1. 14
2. 7
3. 7
4. $24
5. 29
6. 8