



# Building Mathematics Models

*Delano Wegener*

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Critical thinking, deductive reasoning, use of abstraction, use of generalization, study and use of structures, patterns, and relationships are absent from most mathematics classrooms. These tools extend far beyond the mathematics classroom into almost every aspect of the life of an educated person. These are the primary reasons for teaching mathematics and they have been stripped from our classrooms.

This short article demonstrates a consistent mathematics method for building models of classic word problems. The method teaches critical thinking and deductive reasoning involving a fundamental mathematical principle, The Transitive Property of Equality. The methods presented here will foster sound mathematics reasoning in the mathematics classroom.

The Transitive Property of Equality and Deductive Reasoning to construct mathematics models for each of these classic word problems demonstrates that these problems are essentially the same in a mathematical sense. This consistent and uniform approach to each of these problems should convince the student that mathematics dictates the solution process not the problem or its context. Recognition of this sameness will also foster an understanding that one of the strengths of mathematics as an applied tool is the fact that it is a detached language.

Common textbook methods for constructing mathematics models for these problems are usually justified with the argument that they produce the correct answer. This is never an acceptable justification of a mathematics procedure. Every argument in mathematics **MUST** be based on sound mathematics principles. The Transitive Property of Equality is one such sound mathematics principle which justifies the construction of mathematics models.

Algebra textbooks rarely mention The Transitive Property of Equality in the context of building mathematics models. The most common approach seems to teach the student to imitate a process advocated by that textbook. Students are expected to practice a collection of exercises, by repeating prescribed steps as are associated with each different problem type. Those steps will soon be forgotten and the student will have lost the ability to use mathematics to solve even simple problems.

The important mathematics involved with model building is critical thinking, deductive reasoning, use of abstraction, use of generalization, study and use of structures, patterns, and relationships. However, students normally are not taught to critically analyze the problem and construct a sound mathematical argument which solves the problem. The approach presented in this short essay teaches the student to construct an irrefutable mathematical solution based on a critical analysis of the problem combined with mathematics principles and deductive reasoning.

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