

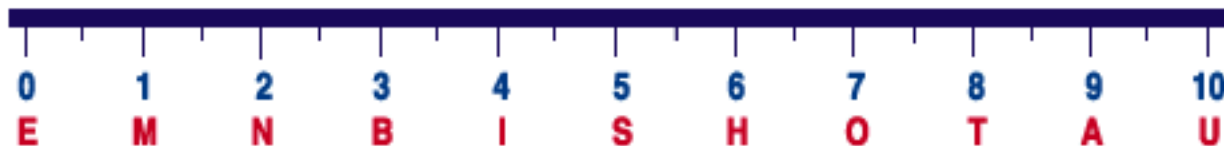


Number Line, USA



Parents and Teachers:

This Together Time activity helps children use a number line to add and subtract while traveling across the country. It's based on the Number Line Express activity in [Mighty Math Zoo Zillions](#).



For this activity, you will need a small object—such as an unpopped popcorn kernel or a button—that your child can use as a “train” to move along the number line. First, print out the activity. Then, place the “train” at zero on the number line. Read the directions below to your child, modifying them to fit your child’s age and familiarity with number lines.

This is a number line train, and you are the engineer! Let's see if you can drive the train where it needs to go. I'm the conductor, so I'll give you the directions for the train. Each time the train stops, write down the letter at that stop. At the end of your trip, you'll spell the name of a city in the United States.

The first train route is: **3 + 4 - 2 + 3 - 1 - 5**

To help your child with this first trip, you can break the problem into single steps and present one step at a

time. Starting at zero, ask your child to move the train “forward 3”. Encourage your engineer to count aloud the number of moves forward or back as he or she moves the train. Where does the train stop? (3.) What letter is at 3? (B.) Ask your child to write the letter “B” on a piece of paper.

Next, the train needs to go “plus 4” or “forward 4” more spaces. Help your child move the train from 3 to 7 and record the letter “O”. The next stop is “minus 2” or “back 2” spaces, landing at 5, which is letter “S”. Continue to help your child travel “plus 3”, “minus 1”, and “minus 5” to land on the remaining letters. What town do the letters spell? (Boston.) Help your child find Boston on a map or globe.

Here are train routes for two more cities that you can help your child reach with this number line:

$$1 + 3 + 5 - 8 + 3$$

$$6 + 1 + 3 - 5 + 3 - 1 - 5$$

You and your child can make up additional trips on the number line! Draw your own number line and write the letters of towns (or the week's spelling words) anywhere along the route. Then write the expression needed to reach each letter in the correct order.

To Adapt This Activity for Younger Children

If your child is not yet ready to add and subtract on a number line, you can modify the activity to help prepare your child to understand these concepts later. Instead of saying “add 2”, just say “go forward 2”. Similarly, say “go back 1” instead of “subtract 1.”

The route to Boston becomes:
forward 3, forward 4, back 2, forward 3, back 1, back 5

All aboard for a great time together!

Ryan Lion helps children pilot the number line train as they learn to count, add, and subtract one- and two-digit numbers in [Mighty Math Zoo Zillions](#).



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