The Easy way to subtract!

Ask someone to read this out loud to you if you are an "auditory" learner. (That means you learn things best by hearing.)

To use this paper you need to know your subtraction facts in your head (no counting on fingers) as well as how to carry and borrow. If you don't, this paper probably won't seem very easy just yet!

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I'd like to show you an easier way to subtract numbers using just your head and NOT a pencil and paper! Take a look!

When you see a problem like 92 – 58 = ? you usually have to think about it. There is some borrowing that needs to be done. You might think of it as I show in the picture below:
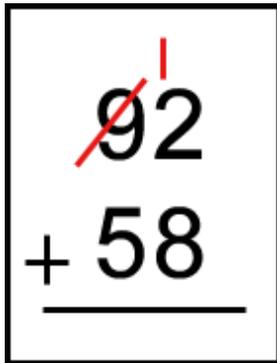
See how I had to borrow a ten from the 9 tens and bring it over to the units place to turn the 2 into a 12? Sometimes that can be hard to do in your "head". It's a lot easier to do it on paper.

There is a "trick" though that lets you do a problem like this in your head in a much faster and easier way!

Take a look at the two problems that follow and tell me which is easier to do:

92 – 58 = ? or **94 – 60 = ?** I think the second problem is the easiest!

I know right away by looking at it that I don't have to do any borrowing. In fact I can just subtract the tens (9 tens take away 6 tens) and then subtract the units – units are just the "ones" in a problem - (4 units take away 0 units). My answer is 3 tens and 4 units, or 34.

Now usually when you subtract something on paper you always start subtracting from the units column first and then move on to the tens and hundreds and so on (like in my picture example up above). That is subtracting from the right to the left. However, when we do "mental" math (that means math you do in your head), it's easier if we can find a way to subtract from left to right.

I found a way to do that by making 58 turn into 60 in the problem above. I did that by adding 2 to the 58 (because 58 + 2 = 60). Did you notice what else I had to do? I also had to add a 2 to the 92 (so my 92 became a 94). You can't just go adding numbers to an equation (math problem with an equal sign) out of the blue. If you do it to one number, you have to do it to the other as well.

Let me show you with something easier so you can see what I mean:

10 – 5 = ? We know the answer is 5.

Let's add 1 to both numbers:

11 – 6 = ? Hey! The answer is also 5.
Let's (just for the fun of it) try adding 3 to both numbers:

14 – 9 = ? The answer is still 5.

It doesn't matter what we add to both numbers, as long as we add the **SAME** number to both numbers.

You can try this out with any numbers and every time it will work.

So now that we know this "rule" about subtraction, we can use our trick to "change" numbers in problems to make them easier for use to do.

Try it out with the following problems. I'll help you with some of the first ones.

Original Problem	Easier Problem	Answer
38 – 19 = ? Let's change the 19 to a 20. Remember, we can do that by adding a 1, but that means we have to add a 1 to the other number (38) too! The 38 is now a 39.	**39 –20 = ?** Subtract the tens first and then the units. You get a quick and easy answer.	**19**
43 – 27 = ? Let's change the 27 to a 30. We do that by adding 3. That means we also have to add 3 to 43 (which makes 46).	**46 – 30 = ?**	**16**

Now it's your turn to do it all on your own. Use the blank spaces to make up your own problems.

Original Problem	Easier Problem	Answer
55 – 29 =		
76 – 28 =		
45 – 39 =		
94 – 36 =		
36 – 17 =		
88 – 59 =		
45 – 18 =		
57 – 29 =		
61 – 26 =		
85 – 46 =		
104 – 46 =		
84 – 17 =		

Answers are on the following paper.

P.S. I'm a mom and I didn't even know how to subtract this "easy" way until recently. My "big" kids didn't know either and they are in Algebra.
Now **you** can now do something that some big kids can't! Show your family members what you just learned!

Answers: 26, 48, 6, 58, 19, 29, 27, 28, 35, 39, 58, 67