

PEMDAS Reference Chart

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Work every expression top-down through the ladder — and mind the left-to-right rules.

P

Parentheses

Do what's inside grouping symbols first — (), [], and fraction bars.

E

Exponents

Powers and square roots next: 3^2 means $3 \times 3 = 9$.

MD

Multiply & Divide

Together, LEFT to RIGHT — whichever comes first. Neither outranks the other.

AS

Add & Subtract

Together, LEFT to RIGHT — whichever comes first. Last of all.

Worked example: $5 + (8 - 3)^2 \times 2 \div 5$

Parentheses	$5 + (8 - 3)^2 \times 2 \div 5$	$\rightarrow 5 + 5^2 \times 2 \div 5$
Exponents	$5 + 5^2 \times 2 \div 5$	$\rightarrow 5 + 25 \times 2 \div 5$
Multiply (left first)	$5 + 25 \times 2 \div 5$	$\rightarrow 5 + 50 \div 5$
Divide	$5 + 50 \div 5$	$\rightarrow 5 + 10$
Add	$5 + 10$	$\rightarrow 15$

⚠ The three classic traps

$8 \div 2 \times 4 = 16$, not 1 — multiply/divide go left to right; division doesn't wait.

$10 - 4 + 3 = 9$, not 3 — add/subtract go left to right too.

$-3^2 = -9$, but $(-3)^2 = 9$ — the exponent binds before the minus sign.