

The Marble Jar Mix-Up



Figure 1: A bright classroom table covered in colourful marbles sorted into groups of ten, with a wooden ruler and a piece of string laid beside

Maya counted her marbles. Ten blue, ten red, ten yellow.
Her friend Sam said, "That is thirty! Let's add ten more."
Maya grouped them into tens. "Ten plus ten plus ten plus ten equals forty," she said. "It does not matter which group I add first."
Sam grabbed his ruler. "My string is forty centimetres long. Yours is thirty. How much longer is mine?"
Maya thought. "Forty minus thirty equals ten."
Sam checked it. "Ten plus thirty equals forty. You are right!"
Then Maya spilled some marbles. "I had forty, now I see thirty five. How many rolled away?"
Sam counted the gap. "Five! Let's check by adding five back."
They laughed, stacking tens until they reached one hundred.

Words to know

- **sum**: the answer when you add numbers together
- **difference**: the answer when you subtract one number from another
- **addends**: the numbers you add together
- **inverse operation**: the opposite action, like subtraction undoing addition

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