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Let's Taco 'Bout Algebraic Expression

By: Amanda Martin
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**Math
Grades 9–12**

Introduction

Students will learn about and identify the parts of an algebraic expression and will practice identifying the parts of an expression with a partner through various examples. Students will learn how to simplify expressions. Students will discuss the ingredients that make up a taco (to grab student attention) and will realize that expressions are made up of "ingredients" just like tacos.

Learning Objectives

- Students will interpret expressions that represent a quantity in terms of its context (Common Core State Standards: Math HSA.SSE.A.1)
- Students will interpret parts of an expression, such as terms, factors, and coefficients (Common Core State Standards: Math HSA.SSE.A.1.A)

Materials Needed

- Notebooks/journals/paper

Procedure

1. Draw a taco on the board. Ask students to think about the following question: What special ingredients go inside a taco? Allow a few students to respond, and while doing so, write student responses on the board. Ask students to look at all the ingredients and tell them that tacos have to have the ingredients in order to be classified as a taco! The same is true of expressions. Expressions have special "ingredients" called terms, factors, and coefficients. Inform students that expressions are different from equations, because they do not use an equal sign!

2. Define the parts of an expression. Students should write down the definitions in their notebooks. Be sure to review the definitions of variable and constant, too.

   - Variable: a symbol that represents a number that is not known yet
   - Constant: a fixed value (single number)
   - Term: can be a constant, a single variable, or the product of a number
   - Factor: something that is multiplied by something else
   - Coefficients: the number before the variable

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3. On the board, display the following expression, 4x + y -12. Model for the class how to identify each element of the expression. It may be helpful to draw arrows and brackets and use different colors to label each part.

4. Students should partner up. On the board, display the following expressions (last page). Ask students to work together and label the parts of each expression in their notebooks. Allow students roughly 15-20 minutes to complete this portion of the lesson. When time is up, ask various students to come to the board and label the parts of the expressions. Students should compare their work to that on the board to ensure accuracy and make corrections as needed.

5. Now, students will practice simplifying the expressions. Model how to do this on the board by simplifying the first two expressions for the class. The value for x is 2, and the value for y is 3. Ask students to simplify the remaining expressions alone.

6. As a ticket to leave, students should turn in their completed expressions for a daily grade. In addition to the completed expressions, students should answer the following question on their paper: *What are the five parts of an expression, and how is an expression different from an equation?*

Additional Resources: [This web file](#) includes some student worksheets for further practice if needed:

Evaluation

The ticket to leave will serve as the student's assessment for the lesson. The teacher should evaluate each student's expressions to ensure that he or she correctly simplified them. Each student should also be evaluated on his or her ability to correctly define the parts of an expression and how expressions are different from equations. Based on this evaluation, the teacher can determine if students are ready to proceed to new content and/or if more practice with expressions is needed.

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Algebraic Expressions

$2x + 3$	$x + 6y - 11$	$50 + 20x - 10y$
$5x + 3y - 2$	$12 + 3x - 5y$	$24x + 150$
$13x - 4$	$6x + 3y + 15$	$5x - 8y$
$10x + 12y + 9$	$200x - 75$	$40x + 2y - 20$