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Sure, you've made your moves on individual variable equations, and now they're not a problem, but what do you do when presented with multiple equations and multiple variables at once? These are what we call equation systems and fortunately for us, these are extremely predictable types of problems with multiple methods of solving them. Depending on how you like to work best, you can basically choose your own adventure when it comes to system problem equations. But before you choose a method that suits you (or individual problems) better, let's look at all the different options you have, as well as the types of questions you'll see come testing day. These questions will always appear once or twice on any test, so better understand all the strategies you have at your disposal. This will be your complete guide to the equation systems issues that they have, the many different ways to address them, and how you will see them on the SAT. What are equation systems? Equation systems are a set of two (or more) equations that have two (or more) variables. Equations rely on each other and can only be solved with the information everyone provides. Most of the time on the SAT, you'll see a system of equations that includes two equations and two variables, but it's certainly not unheard of that you'll see three equations and/or three variables, in any number of combinations. Equation systems can also be solved in many ways. As always with the SAT, how you decide to solve your problems basically depends on how you would like to work better, as well as the time you have to devote to this problem. Three ways to solve the problem of the equation system: #1: Chart No.2: Replacement No.3: Subtraction Let's look at each method and see them in action, using the same system of equations as an example. For our example, let's say that our system of equations: $2y + 3x = 38$ and $3y - 2x = 12$ Method Solution 1: Graph Chart There will only ever be one solution to the system of equations, and that one solution will be crossing two lines. In order to chart our equations, we must first put each equation in tilt-intercept form. If you're familiar with the lines and slopes, you know that the tilt of the intercept form looks like this: $y = m$ and $x = b$ So let's put our two equations in slope-intercept form. $2y + 3x = 38$ $2y = -3x + 38$ $y = -3/2x + 19$ and $3y - 2x = 12$ $3y = 2x + 12$ $y = 2/3x + 4$ Now let's chart each equation to find their crossing point. Once we chart our equation, we can see what the intersection is on (2, 16). So our final results: $x = 2$ and $y = 16$ Method Solution 2: Replacing In order to solve our system of equations by replacing, we have to isolate one variable in one of the equations and then use that found for the second equation of the equation to address the remaining variable. For example, we have two equations, $2y + 3x = 38$ and $3y - 2x = 12$ so let's select just one of the equations and then isolate one of the variables. In this case, let's choose the second equation and isolate our y value. $3y - 2x = 12$ $3y = 2x + 12$ $y = 2/3x + 4$ Now we have to plug that found a variable in the second equation. (In this case, because we used the second equation to isolate our y , we need to plug that y value in the first equation.) $2y + 3x = 38$ $2(2/3x + 4) + 3x = 38$ $4/3x + 8 + 3x = 38$ $4/3x + 9x = 30$ $10/3x = 30$ $x = 9$ Now we have to plug that x value in the first equation. $2y + 3(9) = 38$ $2y + 27 = 38$ $2y = 11$ $y = 5.5$ So our final results: $x = 9$ and $y = 5.5$ Method Solution 3: Subtraction As the last method to solve equation systems, you can subtract one of the variables completely to find the value of the second variable. We do this by subtracting one from the whole equation from another, complete, equation. Note that you can only do this if the variables in question (the one you want to eliminate) are exactly the same. If they are not the same, then we must first multiply the entire equation by the required amount to make them the same. In the case of our two equations, none of our variables is equal. $2y + 3x = 38$ and $3y - 2x = 12$ In this case, let's decide to subtract our values y and cancel them. This means that we must first make them equal, multiplying our second equation by 2, so that both y values are the same. $2y + 3x = 38$ $2(3y - 2x = 12)$ $6y - 4x = 24$ Now we can subtract the second equation from the first. $2y + 3x = 38$ $6y - 4x = 24$ $-4y + 7x = 14$ $7x = 14 + 4y$ $x = 2 + 4/7y$ Now we can plug that x value in the first equation. $2y + 3(2 + 4/7y) = 38$ $2y + 6 + 12/7y = 38$ $14y + 42 + 12y = 266$ $26y = 224$ $y = 8.6$ Now we can plug that y value in the first equation. $2(8.6) + 3x = 38$ $17.2 + 3x = 38$ $3x = 20.8$ $x = 6.9$ So our final results: $x = 6.9$ and $y = 8.6$ While there are many ways to solve your problems, don't let this knowledge overwhelm you; With practice, you will find the best solution method for you. No matter what method we use to solve our problems, the system of equations will have either one solution, meaning that each variable will have a numerical value attached-no solution, or endless solutions. In order for the system of equations to have solutions, each system is actually identical. That means they're same line. In order for the equation system to not have a solution, the values x will be equal when the values of y are set at 1 (which means that both variables - x and y - will be equal). The reason for this is that it will lead to two parallel lines, since the lines will have the same slope. The system has no solution because the two lines will never fit and therefore do not have a point of intersection. For example, since our system won't have a solution when our values y and our values x equal, that means there will be no solution where we eliminated both of our variables by repeating them. In this case, subtraction would be the most appropriate solution to the problem. Why? We can see this because the two values $x = 2x$ ($2x$ and $4x$) are multiples apart, so we can easily multiply one equation in order to equal them. $2x - 5y = 8$ $4x - 10y = 16$ Now let's multiply the top equation to equalize our values in x . So system pair, $2(2x - 5y = 8)$ $4x - 10y = 16$ $4x - 10y = 16$ $-10y - 4x = -16$ $10y = -4x - 16$ $y = -2/5x - 8/5$ Now we can plug that y value in the first equation. $2x - 5(-2/5x - 8/5) = 8$ $2x + 2x + 8 = 8$ $4x + 8 = 8$ $4x = 0$ $x = 0$ Now we can plug that x value in the first equation. $2(0) - 5y = 8$ $-5y = 8$ $y = -1.6$ So our final results: $x = 0$ and $y = -1.6$ Now, we know that the equation system won't have a solution only when each variable balances to zero, so let's equate our two x variables in order to solve k the $2/5(x) - 4/k(x) = 2/5$, $-4/k(x) - 2k/5 = -4$ $2k - 20 = -4k$ $2k + 4k = 20 - 2k$ $6k = 20$ $k = 3.3$ Now, we know that the equation system won't have a solution only when each variable balances to zero, so let's equate our two x variables in order to solve k the $2/5(x) - 4/k(x) = 2/5$, $-4/k(x) - 2k/5 = -4$ $2k - 20 = -4k$ $2k + 4k = 20 - 2k$ $6k = 20$ $k = 3.3$ Now, we know that the equation system won't have a solution only when each variable balances to zero, so let's equate our two x variables in order to solve k the $2/5(x) - 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