



## What's an easy way to make sense of what I'm doing when I use the mixed-sign rule?

### Think of the mixed-sign rule as a tug-of-war.

From life, you know that there are positive and negative forces in the world. You can think of the mixed-sign rule as a tug-of-war between the positive forces and the negative forces.

To see an example, look at the problem:  $-3 + 8 = +5$ . Imagine an actual tug-of-war. Consider the " $-3$ " as three people pulling for the negative team; consider the " $+8$ " as eight people pulling for the positive team. If all people are equally strong, it's obvious that the positive team will win because it has five more people pulling than the negative team has. And that's why the answer to this problem is  $+5$ . It's **positive** because the positive team wins; it's **5** because the positive team has five more people than the negative team.

Apply this thinking whenever you use the mixed-sign rule. It always works.

**To get the answer's sign, put down the sign of the team that wins the tug-of-war.**

**To get the answer's numerical value, see how many more people are on the winning team than are on the losing team, and put that number down after the sign.**

