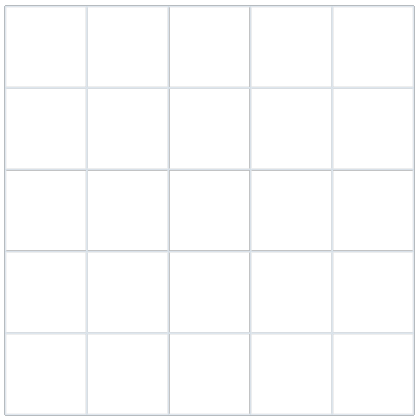
Year 4 - Column Subtraction — Lesson Guide

Step 1

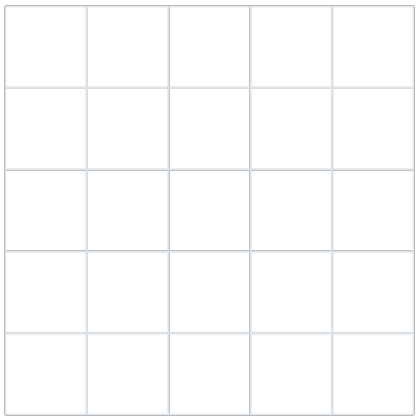
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



First, we circle the minus sign so we know to subtract and find the difference.

Step 2

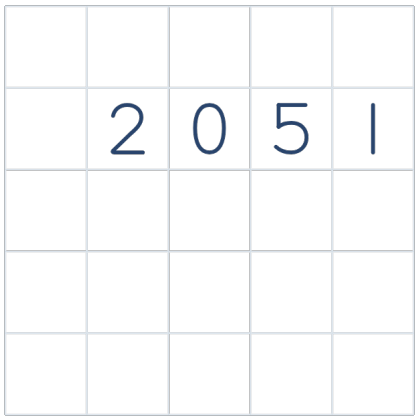
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



First, check whether a mental method would be quicker. Look at the ones. We have 1 one and need to subtract 4 ones. Column subtraction helps us record the exchange.

Step 3

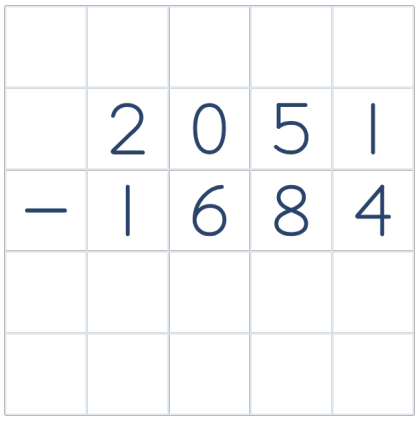
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



The first digit of 2,051, 2, is in the thousands column, so we start there. Now, we write 2,051 in the correct columns, with one digit in each box.

Step 4

2,051 – 1,684 = ☐

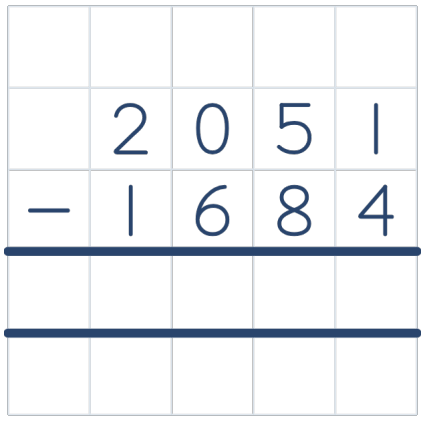


Remember: There must always be a digit in the ones column, even if it is a 0.

Then, we write a minus sign on the left of the calculation. The first digit of 1,684, 1, is in the thousands column, so we start there. We write 1,684 in the correct columns, with one digit in each box.

Step 5

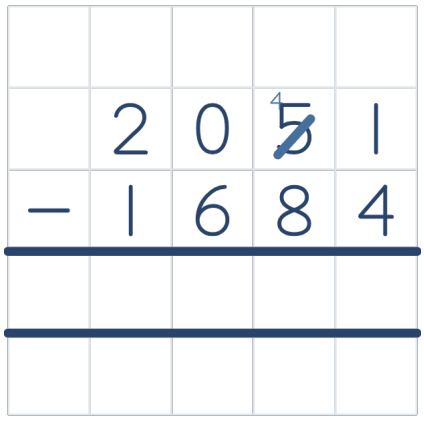
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



Draw a line under 1,684. Leave one row for the difference, then draw the second line below that row.

Step 6

2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



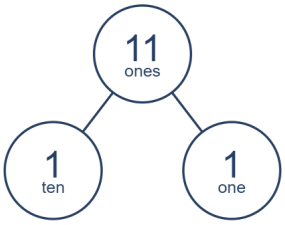
We have 1 one and need to subtract 4 ones. Exchange 1 ten from the 5 tens for 10 ones. Cross out the 5 and write a small 4 at the top left of the tens square. We now have 4 tens in that column.

Step 7

2,051 – 1,684 = ☐

	2	0	4 5	1 1
–	1	6	8	4

Write a small 1 at the top left of the ones square, beside the 1 already there. The small 1 stands for 10 more ones. Read the two digits together as 11 ones. Keep the original 1 in its place.



Step 8

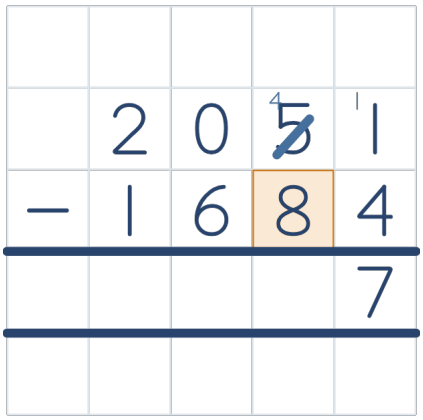
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐

	2	0	4 5	1 1
–	1	6	8	4
				7

11 ones – 4 ones = 7 ones, so we write 7 in the ones column.

Step 9

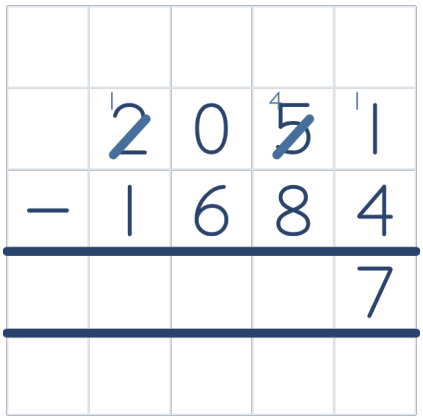
2,051 − 1,684 = ☐



The earlier exchange left 4 tens, so we use that current value instead of the crossed-out 5.

Step 10

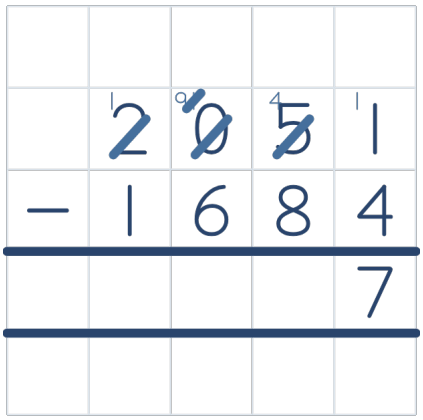
2,051 − 1,684 = ☐



We have 4 tens and need to subtract 8 tens. The hundreds column has 0, so we cannot exchange there. We move left to the thousands column. Exchange 1 thousand from the 2 thousands for 10 hundreds. Cross out the 2 and write a small 1 at the top left of the thousands square. We now have 1 thousand in that column.

Step 11

2,051 − 1,684 = ☐

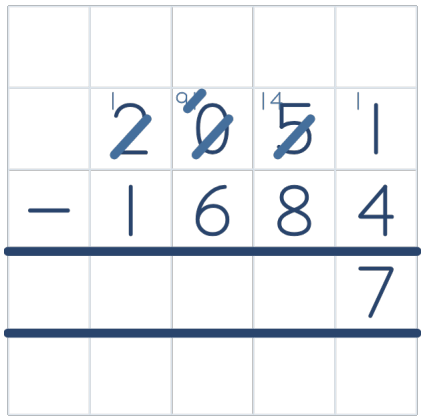


Remember: The hundreds square shows 10 briefly. After the exchange, use the 9 hundreds that remain.

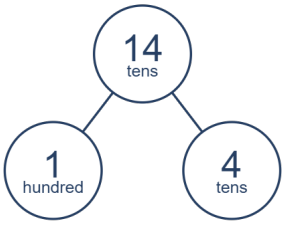
Show 10 hundreds by writing a small 1 beside the 0 at the top left of the hundreds square. Exchange 1 hundred for 10 tens. Cross out the 10 hundreds and write a small 9 to its left. That leaves 9 hundreds. Record the 10 tens in the next step.

Step 12

2,051 – 1,684 = ☐

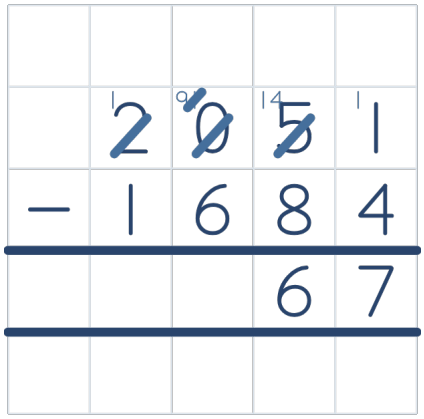


Write a small 1 at the top left of the tens square, beside the 4 already there. The small 1 stands for 10 more tens. Read the two digits together as 14 tens. Keep the original 4 in its place.



Step 13

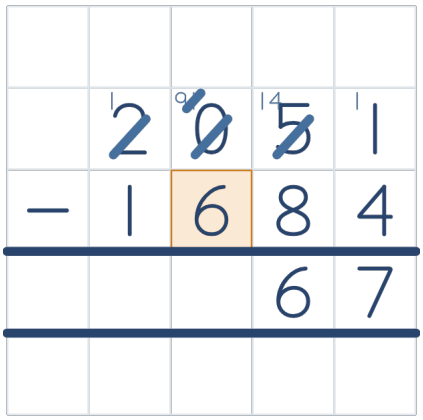
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



14 tens – 8 tens = 6 tens, so we write 6 in the tens column.

Step 14

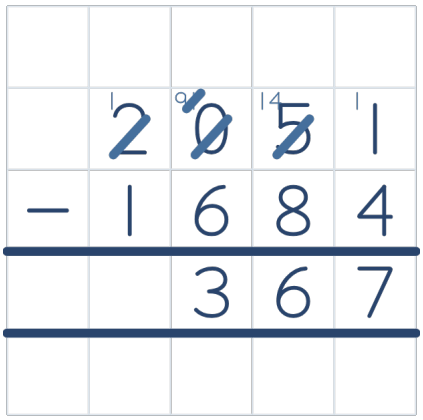
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



The earlier exchange left 9 hundreds, so we use that current value instead of the crossed-out 0.

Step 15

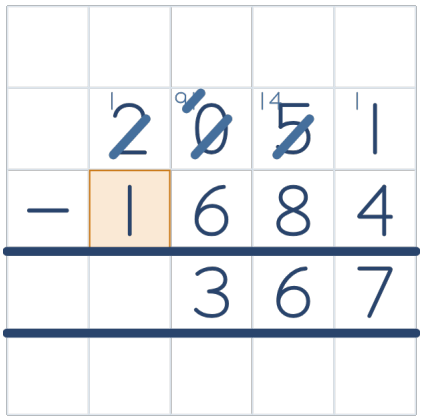
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



Next, we subtract the hundreds, which is 9 hundreds – 6 hundreds. 9 hundreds – 6 hundreds = 3 hundreds, so we write 3 in the hundreds column. No exchange is needed this time.

Step 16

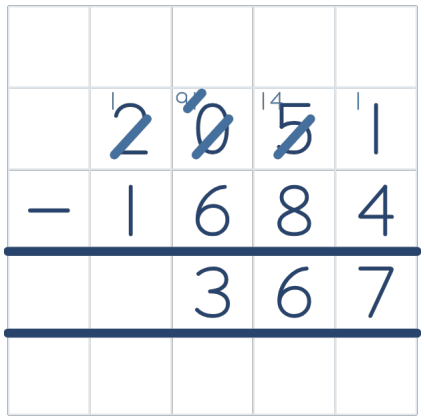
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



The earlier exchange left 1 thousand, so we use that current value instead of the crossed-out 2.

Step 17

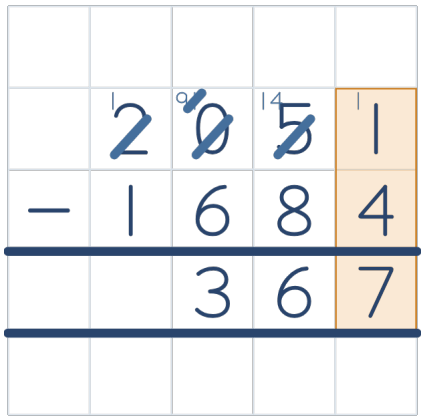
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



Finally, we subtract the thousands, which is 1 thousand – 1 thousand. 1 thousand – 1 thousand = 0 thousands. Leave this unused leading square empty. No exchange is needed this time.

Step 18

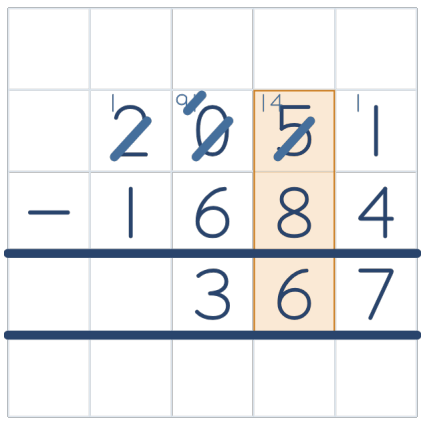
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



Our difference is 367. Before we copy our answer into the answer box, let's check each column, including the exchanges. First, we check the ones: 11 ones – 4 ones = 7 ones. We have correctly written 7 in the ones answer box.

Step 19

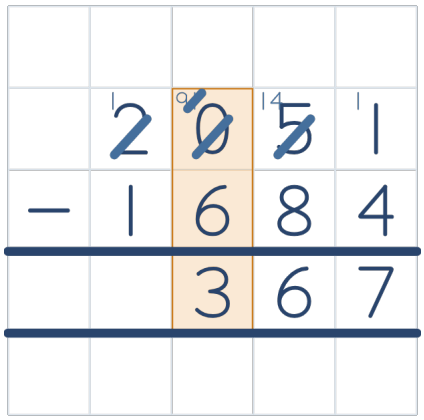
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



Next, we check the tens: 14 tens – 8 tens = 6 tens. We have correctly written 6 in the tens answer box.

Step 20

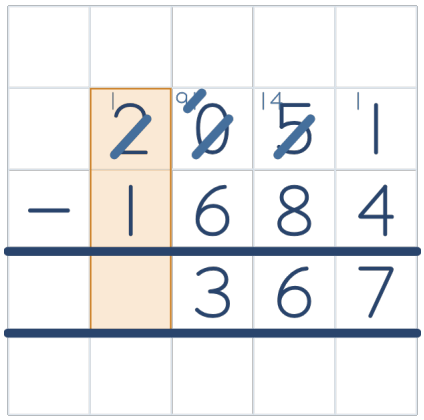
2,051 – 1,684 = ☐



Then, we check the hundreds: 9 hundreds – 6 hundreds = 3 hundreds. We have correctly written 3 in the hundreds answer box.

Step 21

2,051 – 1,684 = ☐

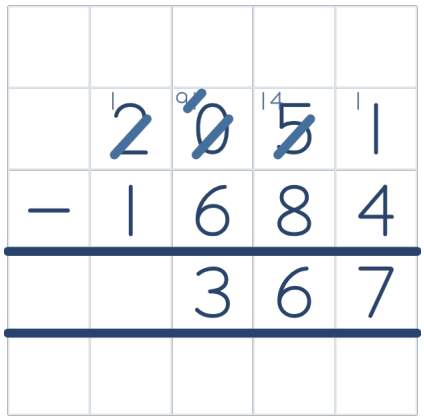


Remember: Leave unused squares before the first answer digit empty. Keep any zero needed inside the answer.

Finally, we check the thousands: 1 thousand – 1 thousand = 0 thousands. The thousands answer square stays empty. Read the difference from the hundreds square. The difference is 367.

Step 22

2,051 – 1,684 = **367**



The difference is 367. Copy 367 into the answer box. Make sure you copy the answer correctly.