Year 6 - Column Subtraction — Lesson Guide

Step 1

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

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

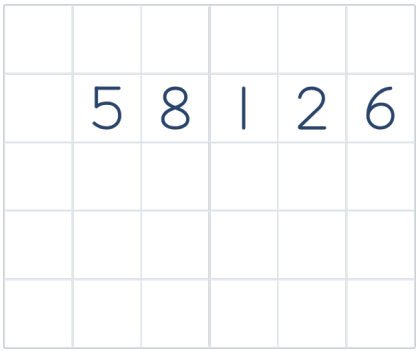
Step 2

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

First, check whether a mental method would be quicker. Look at the ones. We have 6 ones and need to subtract 9 ones. Column subtraction helps us record the exchange.

Step 3

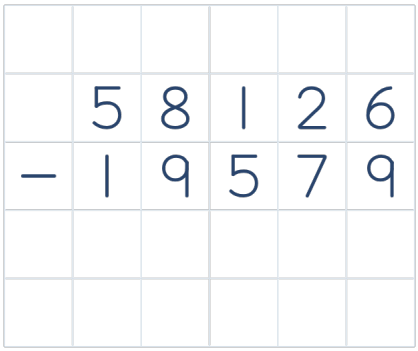
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



The first digit of 58,126, 5, is in the ten thousands column, so we start there. Now, we write 58,126 in the correct columns, with one digit in each box.

Step 4

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

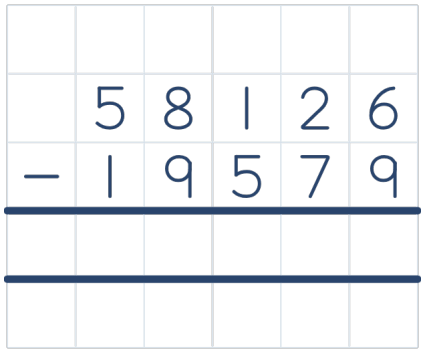


Remember: There must always be a digit in the ones column, even if it is a 0.

Then, we write a minus sign on the left of the calculation. The first digit of 19,579, 1, is in the ten thousands column, so we start there. We write 19,579 in the correct columns, with one digit in each box.

Step 5

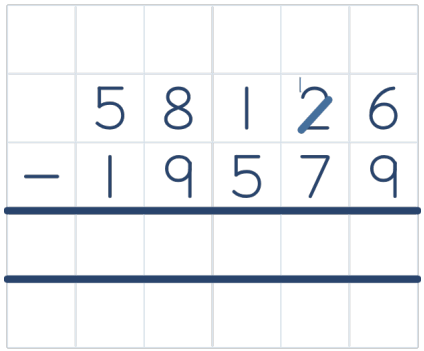
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



Draw a line under 19,579. Leave one row for the difference, then draw the second line below that row.

Step 6

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



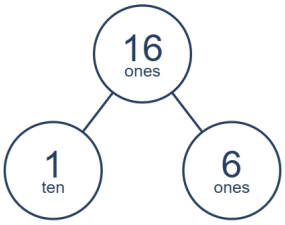
We have 6 ones and need to subtract 9 ones. Exchange 1 ten from the 2 tens for 10 ones. Cross out the 2 and write a small 1 at the top left of the tens square. We now have 1 ten in that column.

Step 7

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

	5	8	1	2	6
–	1	9	5	7	9

Write a small 1 at the top left of the ones square, beside the 6 already there. The small 1 stands for 10 more ones. Read the two digits together as 16 ones. Keep the original 6 in its place.



Step 8

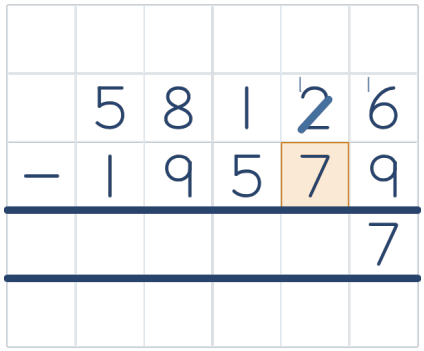
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

	5	8	1	2	6
–	1	9	5	7	9
					7

16 ones – 9 ones = 7 ones, so we write 7 in the ones column.

Step 9

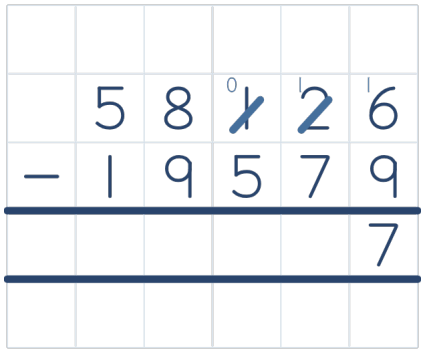
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



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

Step 10

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



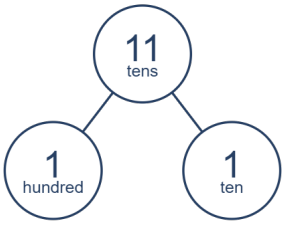
We have 1 ten and need to subtract 7 tens. Exchange 1 hundred from the 1 hundred for 10 tens. Cross out the 1 and write a small 0 at the top left of the hundreds square. We now have 0 hundreds in that column.

Step 11

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

	5	8	0 ~~1~~	11 ~~2~~	6
–	1	9	5	7	9
					7

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



Step 12

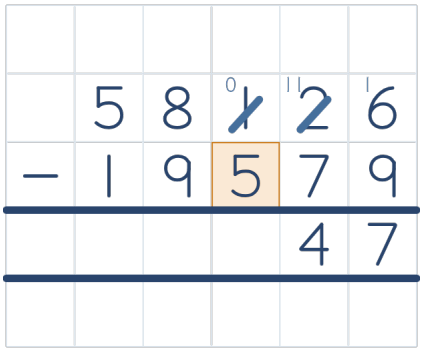
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

	5	8	0 ~~1~~	11 ~~2~~	6
–	1	9	5	7	9
				4	7

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

Step 13

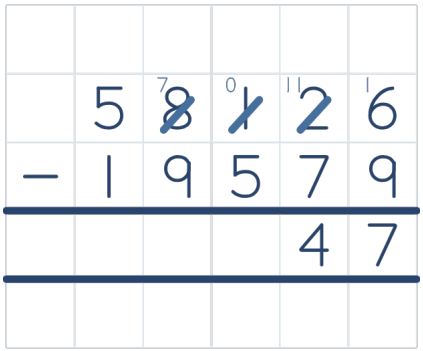
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



The earlier exchange left 0 hundreds, so we use that current value instead of the crossed-out 1.

Step 14

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



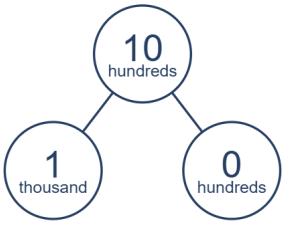
We have 0 hundreds and need to subtract 5 hundreds. Exchange 1 thousand from the 8 thousands for 10 hundreds. Cross out the 8 and write a small 7 at the top left of the thousands square. We now have 7 thousands in that column.

Step 15

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

	5	7 ~~8~~	10 ~~1~~	11 ~~2~~	6
–	1	9	5	7	9
				4	7

Write a small 1 at the top left of the hundreds square, beside the 0 already there. The small 1 stands for 10 more hundreds. Read the two digits together as 10 hundreds. Keep the original 0 in its place.



Step 16

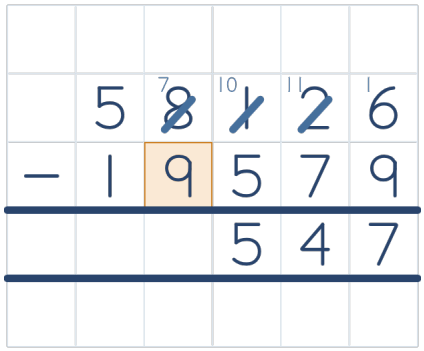
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

	5	7 ~~8~~	10 ~~1~~	11 ~~2~~	6
–	1	9	5	7	9
			5	4	7

10 hundreds – 5 hundreds = 5 hundreds, so we write 5 in the hundreds column.

Step 17

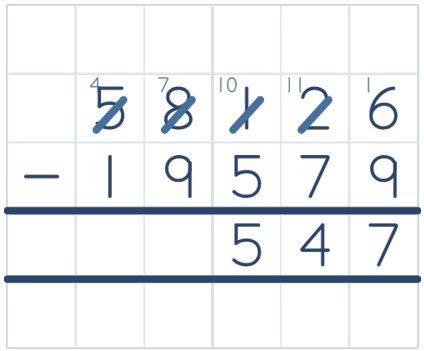
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



The earlier exchange left 7 thousands, so we use that current value instead of the crossed-out 8.

Step 18

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



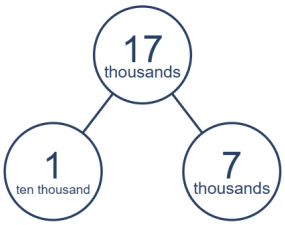
We have 7 thousands and need to subtract 9 thousands. Exchange 1 ten thousand from the 5 ten thousands for 10 thousands. Cross out the 5 and write a small 4 at the top left of the ten thousands square. We now have 4 ten thousands in that column.

Step 19

58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

	4	17	10	11	
	~~5~~	~~8~~	~~1~~	~~2~~	6
–	1	9	5	7	9
			5	4	7

Write a small 1 at the top left of the thousands square, beside the 7 already there. The small 1 stands for 10 more thousands. Read the two digits together as 17 thousands. Keep the original 7 in its place.



Step 20

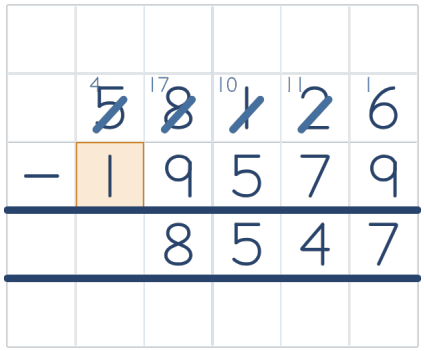
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐

	4	17	10	11	
	~~5~~	~~8~~	~~1~~	~~2~~	6
–	1	9	5	7	9
		8	5	4	7

17 thousands – 9 thousands = 8 thousands, so we write 8 in the thousands column.

Step 21

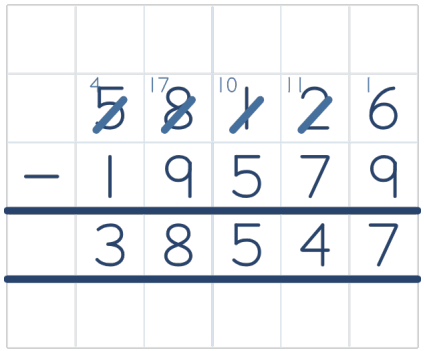
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



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

Step 22

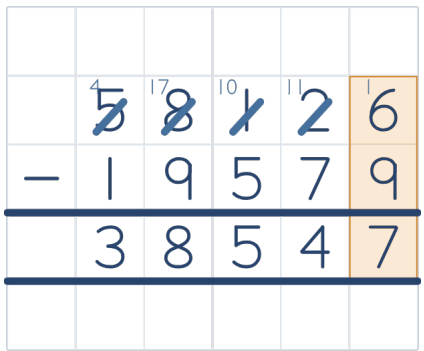
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



Finally, we subtract the ten thousands, which is 4 ten thousands – 1 ten thousand. 4 ten thousands – 1 ten thousand = 3 ten thousands, so we write 3 in the ten thousands column. No exchange is needed this time.

Step 23

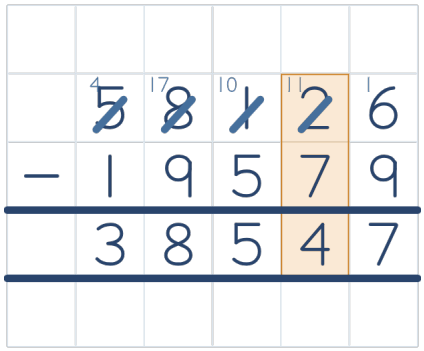
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



Our difference is 38,547. Before we copy our answer into the answer box, let's check each column, including the exchanges. First, we check the ones: 16 ones – 9 ones = 7 ones. We have correctly written 7 in the ones answer box.

Step 24

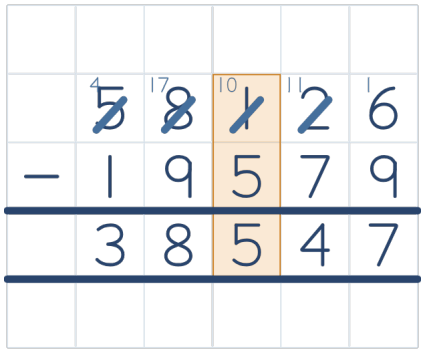
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



Next, we check the tens: 11 tens – 7 tens = 4 tens. We have correctly written 4 in the tens answer box.

Step 25

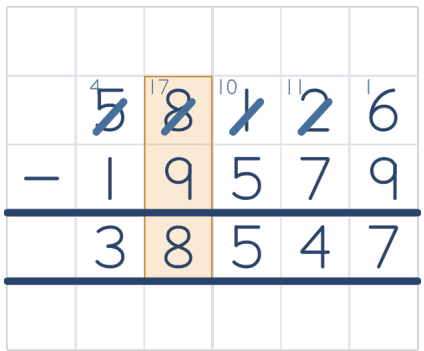
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



Then, we check the hundreds: 10 hundreds – 5 hundreds = 5 hundreds. We have correctly written 5 in the hundreds answer box.

Step 26

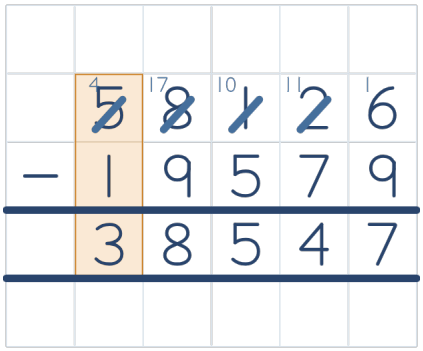
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



Then, we check the thousands: 17 thousands – 9 thousands = 8 thousands. We have correctly written 8 in the thousands answer box.

Step 27

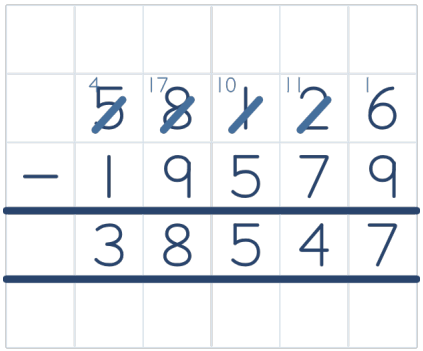
58,126 – 19,579 = ☐



Finally, we check the ten thousands: 4 ten thousands – 1 ten thousand = 3 ten thousands. We have correctly written 3 in the ten thousands answer box.

Step 28

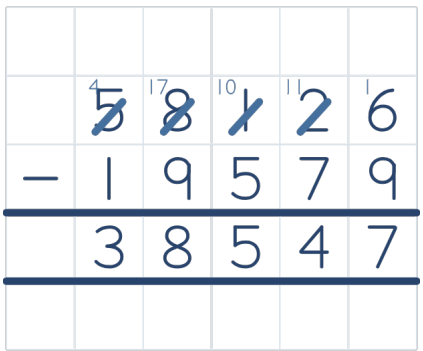
58,126 – 19,579 = **38547**



The difference is 38547. Copy 38547 into the answer box. Make sure you copy the answer correctly.

Step 29

58,126 – 19,579 = **38547**



We can round to check whether our difference makes sense. Round 58,126 to 58,000 and 19,579 to 20,000, both to the nearest thousand. 58,000 – 20,000 = 38,000. Each number changes by at most 500. Our exact answer, 38,547, is within 1,000 of the estimate.