



SMP 7 - Look for and Make use of Structure

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1 SMP 7—Look for and Make Use of Structure— is an avenue of thinking that helps students make
2 sense of mathematical problems. This practice encourages students to examine the components of a
3 mathematical situation closely and identify patterns or structures they recognize. By doing so, they
4 develop a deeper understanding of how to approach problems more strategically.

5 For example, first grade students might observe that nine is one less than ten and that when they add
6 nine to a number it is always one less than when they add ten. Recognizing this structure allows them
7 to use what they already know to add larger numbers more efficiently, saying that $19 + 9$ will be one
8 less than $19 + 10$.

9 For teachers, supporting students in looking for and making use of structure means guiding them to
10 look for patterns as they engage with mathematical content. Teachers can prompt students by asking:

- 11 • Can you see any similarities between this problem and a previous one?
- 12 • Do you see a pattern?
- 13 • Can you break this problem into smaller pieces?

14 Looking for and making use of structure is key to helping students make sense of problems and reason
15 across all mathematical domains. When students learn to identify patterns, recognize relationships, and
16 apply what they know, they become more confident and efficient problem solvers.

