Pearson Edexcel

Simplifying algebraic fractions

A LEVEL LINKS
Scheme of work: 1a. Algebraic expressions – basic algebraic manipulation, indices and surds

Example 1 Factorise $x^2 + 3x - 10$

$b = 3$, $ac = -10$ So $x^2 + 3x - 10 = x^2 + 5x - 2x - 10$ $= x(x + 5) - 2(x + 5)$ $= (x + 5)(x - 2)$	**1** Work out the two factors of $ac = -10$ which add to give $b = 3$ (5 and -2) **2** Rewrite the b term ($3x$) using these two factors **3** Factorise the first two terms and the last two terms **4** $(x + 5)$ is a factor of both terms

Example 2 Factorise $6x^2 - 11x - 10$

$b = -11$, $ac = -60$ So $6x^2 - 11x - 10 = 6x^2 - 15x + 4x - 10$ $= 3x(2x - 5) + 2(2x - 5)$ $= (2x - 5)(3x + 2)$	**1** Work out the two factors of $ac = -60$ which add to give $b = -11$ (-15 and 4) **2** Rewrite the b term ($-11x$) using these two factors **3** Factorise the first two terms and the last two terms **4** $(2x - 5)$ is a factor of both terms

Example 3 Factorise $4x^2 - 25y^2$

$4x^2 - 25y^2 = (2x + 5y)(2x - 5y)$	This is the difference of two squares as the two terms can be written as $(2x)^2$ and $(5y)^2$

Example 4 Simplify $\dfrac{x^2-4x-21}{2x^2+9x+9}$

$\dfrac{x^2-4x-21}{2x^2+9x+9}$	**1** Factorise the numerator and the denominator
For the numerator: $b = -4$, $ac = -21$	**2** Work out the two factors of $ac = -21$ which add to give $b = -4$ (-7 and 3)
So $x^2 - 4x - 21 = x^2 - 7x + 3x - 21$	**3** Rewrite the b term ($-4x$) using these two factors
$= x(x - 7) + 3(x - 7)$	**4** Factorise the first two terms and the last two terms
$= (x - 7)(x + 3)$	**5** $(x - 7)$ is a factor of both terms
For the denominator: $b = 9$, $ac = 18$	**6** Work out the two factors of $ac = 18$ which add to give $b = 9$ (6 and 3)
So $2x^2 + 9x + 9 = 2x^2 + 6x + 3x + 9$	**7** Rewrite the b term ($9x$) using these two factors
$= 2x(x + 3) + 3(x + 3)$	**8** Factorise the first two terms and the last two terms
$= (x + 3)(2x + 3)$	**9** $(x + 3)$ is a factor of both terms
So $\dfrac{x^2-4x-21}{2x^2+9x+9} = \dfrac{(x-7)(x+3)}{(x+3)(2x+3)}$	**10** $(x + 3)$ is a factor of both the numerator and denominator so cancels out as a value divided by itself is 1
$= \dfrac{x-7}{2x+3}$	

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Practice questions

1 Simplify the algebraic fractions.

a $\dfrac{2x^2+4x}{x^2-x}$

b $\dfrac{x^2+3x}{x^2+2x-3}$

c $\dfrac{x^2-2x-8}{x^2-4x}$

d $\dfrac{x^2-5x}{x^2-25}$

e $\dfrac{x^2-x-12}{x^2-4x}$

f $\dfrac{2x^2+14x}{2x^2+4x-70}$

2 Simplify

a $\dfrac{9x^2-16}{3x^2+17x-28}$

b $\dfrac{2x^2-7x-15}{3x^2-17x+10}$

c $\dfrac{4-25x^2}{10x^2-11x-6}$

d $\dfrac{6x^2-x-1}{2x^2+7x-4}$

Extend

3 Simplify $\sqrt{x^2+10x+25}$

4 Simplify $\dfrac{(x+2)^2+3(x+2)^2}{x^2-4}$

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Answers

1 **a** $\frac{2(x+2)}{x-1}$ **b** $\frac{x}{x-1}$

c $\frac{x+2}{x}$ **d** $\frac{x}{x+5}$

e $\frac{x+3}{x}$ **f** $\frac{x}{x-5}$

2 **a** $\frac{3x+4}{x+7}$ **b** $\frac{2x+3}{3x-2}$

c $\frac{2-5x}{2x-3}$ **d** $\frac{3x+1}{x+4}$

3 $(x+5)$

4 $\frac{4(x+2)}{x-2}$