

Column subtraction – How to: step by step

$$538 - 274$$

1. Write out the subtraction in column method

$$\begin{array}{r} 538 \\ - 274 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Make sure to line up your columns

2. Subtract the ones from each other (8 - 4)

$$\begin{array}{r} 538 \\ - 274 \\ \hline 4 \end{array}$$

4 - Write the 4 in the ones column

3. Subtract the tens from each other (3 - 7)

$$\begin{array}{r} \overset{4}{\cancel{5}}\overset{1}{3}8 \\ - 274 \\ \hline 64 \end{array}$$

I can't take 7 from 3 as 7 is a bigger number. I must borrow 1 from the column to the left.

$13 - 7 = 6$. Write the 6 in the tens column

4. Subtract the hundreds from each other (4 - 2)

$$\begin{array}{r} \overset{4}{\cancel{5}}\overset{1}{3}8 \\ - 274 \\ \hline 264 \end{array}$$

2 - Write the 2 in the hundreds column

$$538 - 274 = 264$$