

Make Math Part of Everyday Life (Scholastic.Com)

Leave the flashcards, workbooks, and other skill-and-drill stuff to the teacher. At home, the best way to help your child learn to love math is to play with numbers, and to frequently point out the various ways in which math makes our lives easier. By working with tangible objects, and counting, sorting, estimating, measuring, looking for patterns, and solving real-life problems, children learn to think in mathematical terms, without worrying whether or not they're "smart enough" to do math.

Almost anything you do that involves numbers and/or problem solving will build your child's math skills. Here are just a few ideas to get you started:

- ✍ Have your child set the table (counting and sorting the sets of plates, napkins, cups, and silverware).
- ✍ Challenge him to guess at things, and then find the answers. For example: How many bowls of cereal do you think we can get out of this box? How many M&Ms do you think are in your (snack size) bag? How many minutes do you think it will take to clear off the table?
- ✍ Ask your child to help you create a pattern for a quilt square or an abstract picture using markers and paper; construction paper in different colors, cut into square, triangle, and other shapes; or shapes cut out of different fabrics.
- ✍ Play board games, dice games, and card games (such as War) with your child. Encourage her to make up her own games.
- ✍ Talk about how you use math when: balancing your checkbook, paying cashiers, changing bills for coins, setting your household budget, depositing money in the bank, buying birthday gifts, etc.
- ✍ Teach your child to budget his own money – by helping him save up for a special toy or activity.
- ✍ Involve your child in measuring ingredients for recipes.
- ✍ Ask for help with food shopping ("Which is the better deal here?"; "How much does each one cost per pound?"). Let him bring his calculator to the grocery store.
- ✍ Encourage your child to think of different solutions to problems. For example: "You have \$20 of birthday money to spend. Try to come up with three different ways to spend it."
- ✍ Most of all, try to be positive about math – even if it was your worst subject in school. If your child's having trouble in it, or starts complaining that it's too hard or too boring, act as though you know that if she keeps on trying, she'll improve. "Everyone learns at different rates and in different ways," you could say. "That's why we have teachers. But I know you can do it if you keep on trying."

What Can Parents Do To Help Support Math Education?

(Department of Defense Dependents' Schools Guide for Parents)

- ✍ Let your children know you believe they can be successful in mathematics.
- ✍ Encourage your children to solve problems with you. Help them identify different methods or strategies to use in finding solutions.
- ✍ Select birthday or holiday gifts that will enhance the development of problem solving skills.
- ✍ Provide opportunities for your children to explain and justify their thinking.
- ✍ Connect mathematics to real-life. Emphasizing the mathematics around us gives relevance to mathematics education.
- ✍ Encourage your children to sort objects, make estimates, collect and organize data, and make measurements using a variety of units.
- ✍ Encourage your children to continue studying mathematics in high school. Successful completion of algebra and geometry has proven to be the best single predictor of success in college or university work.