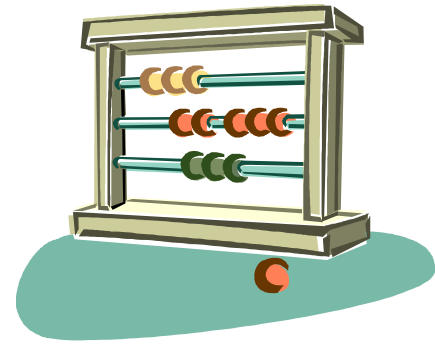


Helping with Maths

Mathematics is one of the most important subjects that your child studies at school. Numbers are all around us and even if you don't feel yourself to be a mathematics genius, there is plenty that you can do. In fact, your child should enjoy most of the suggested activities so much that she won't even realise that it's educational! Current teaching methods for maths and even the way that sums are recorded appear very different from those used twenty years ago. As a result, parents are sometimes reluctant to help their children with maths homework for fear of doing things in the wrong way. However, children do really benefit when parents take a keen interest in their mathematical learning. You can help your child to gain confidence and develop a positive attitude towards mathematics by talking about what has been taught at school and helping her to notice and use mathematics in an everyday context.



Ideas and tips

Try some of these to reinforce learning that has taken place at school:

- A key part of every numeracy session in school is mental maths, so practise at home. Children must get used to solving problems in their heads, rather than resorting to a calculator. Play games with your child: throw two dice and multiply the numbers, then move on to multiplying the sum of two throws by the sum of another two throws. Try to get some pace into the game!
- Play snakes and ladders, cribbage, darts, dominoes and other games that depend on numbers, counting, calculation and scoring. 'Battleships' is a fun way to use graphs. Invest in a range of maths puzzle books.
- Talk about pocket money with your child. Help her to add it up week by week, and work out whether she can afford a particular toy or treat. Shop using money and calculate change.

- Capitalise on hobbies. If your child is car-mad, talk about relative engine sizes, fuel economy, speed and performance. If she has a favourite pop group, get her to compile a list of statistics such as the number of weeks each single is in the charts. Watch and play sports that involve scoring, timing, counting, measuring.
- Add number apparatus to your child's toy collection - counters, a purse full of change, dice, dominoes, a tape measure, ruler, pack of cards, timer, different shapes - and use them to make mathematics come alive.

- Be creative! Ask your child to look out for patterns and shapes on floors, wallpaper, plants, animals, buildings - anything from the arrangement of tiles in the kitchen to the markings on the cat. Draw objects made entirely of triangles, rectangles or squares: make 'butterfly' pictures by painting on one half of the paper and folding it over so that the image is mirrored. Make mobiles by suspending objects from coat hangers and ensuring they balance.

- Think about time. Look at clocks, both digital and analogue. Estimate how long a certain activity will take to do and see if you are right! Work out how long it is until the next mealtime. Play games: how long is a minute, starting from now?

- Think about calendars and dates too. Make a timeline that includes the birthdays of each member of the family and work out how far apart each one is. Use different units: months, weeks and days, even hours, minutes and seconds. Add other important events, such as a family holiday, and encourage your child to count down to the big day.

- Cooking is great for helping your child get to know simple weights and measures. An old-fashioned set of balance scales is ideal. Count out spoonfuls of ingredients. Let your child help you set the timer and count down to teatime! Later on, this is a good way to introduce the idea of ratios and proportions, too. Bear in mind that your child will be learning the metric system at school, so try to measure amounts in grams and kilograms.

- Use learning games on educational websites: check out the [BBC Schools Games Machine](#) for lots of ideas