

Ten Ways to Help Your Child Do Better in Math

1. **Be positive.** If you let your child know that you believe everyone can be successful in math, your child will believe it too. Realize that your children reflect your attitudes and aspirations.
2. **Play family games** that use math and are lots of fun. Card games like “Go Fish” or “War” teach children to count, sort, and use strategy. Many games use “play money” and teach how to make change. Games played in the car that estimate distance or identify specific shapes along the road help build mathematical thinking.
3. **Avoid stereotypes that set limits on what any child can be.** Regardless of a child’s race or sex, we know that anyone with the right encouragement and training can excel at math. Early success in mathematics is *essential* for all learners.
4. **Choose gifts** for birthdays or holidays that are fun and develop problem-solving skills. Puzzles are great for young children, and games such as Monopoly © that require choices to be made from among options or use strategy are fun for students in the upper elementary grades.
5. **Expand your child’s horizons in terms of possible career choices.** Kindergarteners may want to be doctors, nurses, or firefighters, but you can also expose them to other exciting jobs such as weather forecasters, astronomers, airline pilots, or forest rangers. All require a sound base in mathematics. Ask the school to host presentations so children can understand the range of options they will have in pursuing various careers if they have a solid foundation in math.
6. **Borrow from the library or buy books that use math.** Counting books or books about shapes and colors are just as important as books on the alphabet.
7. **Connect math to the real world.** As you and your child go to the store, bank, restaurant, etc., point out ways math is used on bills, deposit slips, menus, or tipping.
8. **Visit museums, libraries, and other community centers often** to see what materials and resources they have available. Notice what interests your child.
9. **Talk with teachers and other school staff.** Learn more about your child’s studies, and see what you can do to help reinforce math skills.
10. **Encourage children to solve problems.** As a child is trying to solve a problem, ask helpful questions—but let him find “how to do it.” Learning how to find answers is a lifelong skill.

(Adapted from Math Matters, with permission from The National PTA.)

Math Skills for Everyday

Connect math to the real world: use everyday chores and happenings to show your child how you use math.

AT HOME:

- Have your child help you make a favorite recipe and let him do the measuring. Next time ask him to help you double the recipe and talk about how important using fractions is in cooking.
- Use paper napkins to talk about fractions. Fold napkins into halves, fourths, eighths, and sixteenths, using marking pens to label the fractions.
- Use paper napkins to talk about shapes by folding them into squares, rectangles, and triangles. Ask your child to set the table and fold the napkins in a special way.
- Estimate how much things weigh and then check it out on the bathroom scale. Does a cup of water weigh more or less than a cup of flour; a cup of rice or beans; a cup of tacks or nails? Who weighs more—the dog or the cat—and how can I find out the cat's weight while holding it?
- Use cards to teach numbers, the sequence of numbers, how to match pairs of numbers, and which numbers are less than or greater than other numbers.
- Guess how tall people or household objects (doors, windows, rugs) are and then use a ruler and tape measure to see who is closest in estimating the size.

AT THE STORE:

- Help your child pick six oranges or apples and see how much they weigh. Help him estimate the cost and then use the scale to see how close he came.
- Have your child pick a special dish to make and help him list what has to be bought at the store. Have him find the ingredients, estimate how much they will cost, and see how close the estimate was to the total on the checkout tape.
- Show your child how much gas costs at different stations, how many gallons you have to buy, and then how much you can get for \$5.00 or \$10.00. Figure the miles per gallon your car gets in town or if you take a trip.
- Help your child measure himself for clothes and find the sizes he will need at the store. Have him find which store ads show the best prices for favorite shoes or pants.

IN THE CAR:

- Using maps of your area, help your child find the safest way to school and chart the way to the library or the shopping center. Plan a special outing to the museum, the beach, or the park and have your child show the way on the map. Estimate the distance and then check to see how close you came.
- On a trip, use the map and highway signs to figure the distance from point to point; also, check the speed limit signs and see what the speedometer reads. Count the number of certain cars or trucks, and count to see which colors are used more than others, etc.