



How to help your child with maths at home

Helping your child with maths at home can be a little daunting, especially if you feel a little unsure about maths yourself. The important thing is to not avoid it. Be positive about your abilities in front of your child and help them to see that we all use maths every day in our lives. The maths work your child is doing at school may look very different to the kind of 'sums' you remember. This is because children are encouraged to work mentally or in their heads, where possible, using personal jottings to help support their thinking. Even when children are taught more formal written methods, they are only encouraged to use these methods for calculations they cannot solve in their heads. If you are unsure of some of the mathematical language the children are using or how they are learning to do something at school ask them to explain it to you. They will love being your teacher!

The Golden Rules

Keep it simple – practise what they are already learning at school.

Keep it fun – there are lots of games and computer games available on our school website.

Keep it real – practise maths for real purposes such as going shopping, sorting out laundry, measuring for cooking etc. Children are more motivated to learn when there is a real purpose for their learning.

Here are some ideas to help you get started:

Shape, Space and Measure

- Choose a shape of the week e.g. cylinder. Look for this shape in the environment (tins, packaging etc). Ask your child to describe the shape to you (2 circular faces, 2 curved edges ..)
- Play 'guess my shape'. You think of a shape. Your child asks questions to try to identify it but you can only answer 'yes' or 'no' (e.g. Does it have more than 4 corners? Does it have any curved sides?)
- Hunt for right angles around your home. Can your child spot any angles bigger or smaller than a right angle?
- Look for symmetrical objects. Help your child to draw or paint symmetrical pictures / patterns?
- Make a model using boxes/containers of different shapes and sizes. Ask your child to describe their model.
- Practise measuring the lengths or heights of objects (in metres or cm or even with your hands or pencils or pens). Help your child to use different rulers and tape measures correctly. Encourage them to estimate before measuring.

- Let your child help with cooking at home. Help them to measure ingredients accurately using weighing scales or measuring jugs. Talk about what each division on the scale stands for.
- Choose some food items out of the cupboard. Try to put the objects in order of weight, by feel alone. Check by looking at the amounts on the packets.
- Practise telling the time with your child. Use both digital and analogue clocks. Ask your child to be a 'timekeeper' (e.g. tell me when it is half past four because then we are going swimming).

Practising Number Facts

- Find out which number facts your child is learning at school (addition facts to 10, times tables, doubles etc). Try to practise for a few minutes each day using a range of vocabulary.
- Have a 'fact of the day'. Pin this fact up around the house. Practise reading it in a quiet, loud, squeaky voice. Ask your child over the day if they can recall the fact.
- Play 'ping pong' to practise complements with your child. You say a number. They reply with how much more is needed to make 10. You can also play this game with numbers totalling 20, 100 or 1000. Encourage your child to answer quickly, without counting or using fingers.
- Throw 2 dice. Ask your child to find the total of the numbers (+), the difference between them (-) or the product (x). Can they do this without counting?
- Use a set of playing cards (no pictures). Turn over two cards and ask your child to add or multiply the numbers. If they answer correctly, they keep the cards. How many cards can they collect in 2 minutes?
- Play Bingo. Each player chooses five answers (e.g. numbers to 10 to practise simple addition, multiples of 5 to practise the five times tables). Ask a question and if a player has the answer, they can cross it off. The winner is the first player to cross off all their answers.
- Give your child an answer. Ask them to write as many addition sentences as they can with this answer (e.g. $10 = 6 + 4$ or $10 = 5 + 5$). Try with multiplication or subtraction.
- Give your child a number fact (e.g. $5+3=8$). Ask them what else they can find out from this fact (e.g. $3+5=8$, $8-5=3$, $8-3=5$, $50+30=80$, $500+300=800$, $5+4=9$, $15+3=18$).

Real Life Problems

- Go shopping with your child to buy two or three items. Ask them to work out the total amount spent and how much change you will get.
- Plan an outing during the holidays. Ask your child to think about what time you will need to set off and how much money you will need to take.
- Use a TV guide. Ask your child to work out the length of their favourite programmes. Can they calculate how long they spend watching TV each day / each week?
- Use a bus or train timetable. Ask your child to work out how long a journey between two places should take? Go on the journey. Do you arrive earlier or later than expected? How much earlier/later?
- Help your child to scale a recipe up or down to feed the right amount of people.

Finally...

When faced with a problem, encourage your child to ask these questions...

- Can I do this in my head?
- Could I use drawings or jottings to help me?
- Do I need to use a written method?
- Can I estimate and check the answer?
- Does the answer sound right?