

Boost math skills for your elementary school student With at-home fun

Parents and other caring adults can make a difference in a child's academic achievement... just by being there and being involved. In fact, parents are a child's first and best teachers. Here are just a few tips to help you get involved in your child's learning — and boost math skills — at home...

Practicing basic math facts at home...

Here are some tips for helping your child to think mathematically and to practice the basic operations of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing:

- Keep flashcards in your car or purse and practice wherever you are.
- Restaurants are a great place to practice mental math and estimation skills by adding up the bill and practicing percentages by figuring out the tip.
- In your car, while you're standing in line, when you're cooking dinner... call out numbers and ask your child to add them, subtract them, multiply them, or divide them.
- Give your child three numbers and ask her to tell you the addition/subtraction fact family or the multiplication/division fact family to which they belong.
- Practice giving a string of numbers to compute, such as $3 + 2$, $\times 4$, $- 6$, $+ 8$, $\times 2$. What's the number?

Tips for Involved Parents ~

Show me the money... Empty your pocket or purse change each evening and have your child count the money. Ask your child to identify and group the coins, and tell you the total value of each group of coins. Have your child make different combinations of coins that add up to the same amount of money.

It's about time... Have at least one analog clock (with a standard clock face) available in your home. Ask your child to tell you the time throughout the day. Ask your child the following types of questions: "We got to the park at 2:30. It's 3:20 now. How long have we been at the park?" "We need to be at soccer practice at 6. It takes 15 minutes to get to the field. When should we leave?" Ask your child to help you solve some real-life word problems involving time.

Talk the talk... Look for comparisons and use math vocabulary like greater than, less than, greatest, and fewest. Point out patterns. They're all around us... Think walkways, wallpaper, tiles, and windows. Look for graphs in news stories. Talk about how they are used and what they mean. For your older child, discuss fractions used in daily life — recipes, interest rates, carpentry, etc.

A numbers game... Play games that involve doing arithmetic. Dominoes, chess, checkers, and puzzles all reinforce math learning. Ask your child to add up the score after a hand of cards or a round of Scrabble. Ask your child's teacher if there are math games or puzzles at school that your child finds particularly challenging and play those games at home. Many school supply stores have educational games that are fun for both the classroom and home. A number of card games help reinforce basic number facts for your elementary school student. Click on the following links for instructions for some fun math games with cards. Try Addition War and Multiplication War, Salute, 24 with playing cards, or Concentration (for number recognition).

Show me some more money...

When you fill your gas tank, ask an older child to calculate gas mileage. Ask a younger child to refigure the bill if gas prices go up... or down.

Yummy math... Cooking offers many chances to practice math skills. Grab the measuring cups and spoons to talk about fractions. Have a crowd for dinner? Ask your child to double the recipe. Younger children can use cereal or grapes to group and count.

Smart shopper... Store advertisements give your child another opportunity to compare, relating math to everyday situations. Take coupons to the grocery store and ask your child to figure the new price with the discount. When checking out at the store, ask your child to help you select the correct change to make your purchase or determine how much change you will receive.

Learning by helping... Discuss the fractional portions as you fold laundry, especially towels and sheets.

Measure for measure... Help your child improve estimating skills with a tour around the house. Ask your child to estimate the size (length, width, height) of various objects... the sofa, a book, her shoe, a cereal box. Use non-standard measuring tools, such as paper clips or coins. Have your child check his estimate with a ruler or measuring tape. Your older child can estimate measurement in inches, feet, and yards. Filling the wading pool in the backyard? Bring out measuring cups, and clean milk jugs and juice bottles, and let your child measure cups, pints, quarts, gallons, and liters. For your older student, compare and contrast the volume of different household items (cereal boxes, buckets, refrigerator, etc.)

This publication includes tips contributed by Lynn DiCarlo and Elizabeth Rioux of Corley Elementary and Gwinnet Public Schools.