

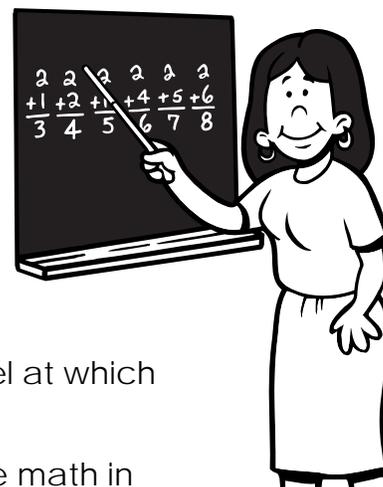
My Child Has Problems With Math! How Can I Help at Home?

By Becky Spivey, M.Ed.

Many parents become frustrated when helping their children with math homework and other assignments. Math programs call for children to perform increasingly advanced exercises or "problems." In addition to routine math problems requiring only one operation, all subjects have questions in which students must apply what they know.

Helping your child at home requires an understanding of how math relates to the world as your child sees it. When choosing real life math activities, carefully consider the skill level at which your child is working.

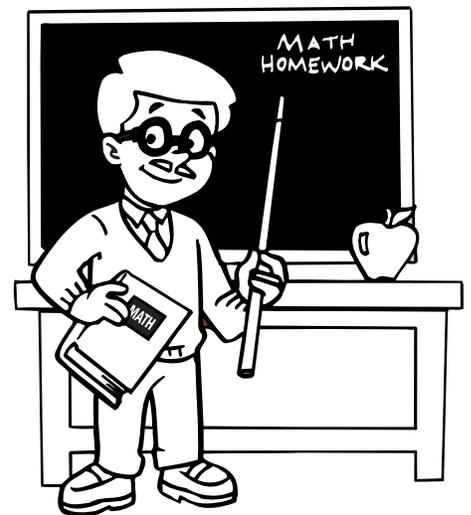
The following are strategies parents may use to introduce math in "real world settings."



- Money! Under your supervision, let your child "pay" for items in cash at the store. Discuss the transaction and how much things cost. Ask, "Do you have enough money? How much more do you need?" Always use real money.
- Keep a record of money earned and money spent. Together, create a large chart for the children to post in their rooms so they may see their money grow or deplete visually!
- Have fun in the kitchen using measuring cups, spoons, and quart and gallon containers. This helps your child in actively understanding quantities, especially when halving or doubling recipes. Make simple recipes at home using the appropriate measuring tools (under your supervision).
- Practice telling time daily on an analog clock (with hands). Routinely ask your child to give you the current time, and then ask, "How many minutes before the next hour?" Estimate time when riding in the car. Predict the time needed to travel to a certain place. Ask, "How many minutes from our house to the market?" Have your child keep the time traveled on your journeys. On longer trips, help him convert the total minutes into hours.
- Use measuring tapes, yardsticks, rulers, and metric sticks to measure spaces or items in and around your home. Assist older children in converting inches to feet and yards, and measuring volume, area, and perimeter.

- Use scales to weigh objects after predicting their weight. Compare the weights of different items. Weigh produce at the market after predicting how much you will need for the family meal.
- Use fractions to help divide the family meals or desserts into equal servings.
- Record the day's temperature on a homemade graph. Also, use graphs to record homework and test grades so your child may see the progress he/she is making.
- Cluster math problems on homework assignments into more manageable "chunks." Break the assignment down by doing a few problems and checking them before moving on. Encourage your child to check homework for mistakes with an inexpensive calculator.
- Review one previously learned skill each day.
- Begin homework as early after school as possible. Provide frequent breaks when necessary.
- Keep in close contact with your child's teacher about his/her progress and ask for other suggestions to try at home.
- Use a computer to find interactive tutorial games at your child's grade level. Many tutorial sites are free! (See below)

Have fun with your children by helping them realize that math is a huge part of everyone's day. Application of skills in the real world will make math seem logical and real, rather than boring and useless!



Suggested Websites

Teach the Children Well
www.teachthechildrenwell.com

National Library of Virtual Manipulatives for Interactive Mathematics
 developed by Utah State University
<http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html>

Brain pop- Math Calculations and Computations
www.brainpop.com