

Supporting Your Child in Mathematics



Children develop positive feelings about mathematics when they have fun experiences “doing math things” with their family members. Here are some ideas to help you support your child’s mathematical learning.

Have a positive attitude about the mathematical abilities your child already has.

Parents are impressed and proud when their children recognize letters and write their names. Your child’s developing math abilities (recognizing numbers, counting and representing quantities with pictures or numbers, identifying shapes, learning days of the week, and so on) deserve just as much admiration and praise as their developing literacy skills.

Read Home Links.

Teachers periodically send home Home Link pages. They include Family Notes that describe what your child is learning so you can help. They also suggest fun and easy math activities you can do at home. Consider keeping these pages in a special folder to refer to time and again.

Think aloud when you use math.

Notice the times you use math each day, and share your thinking aloud with your child. For example, let your child know how you decide which coins to give a cashier. (*I need to keep my quarters, so I’m going to give her two dimes and a nickel.*) Share the calculations you do during activities. (*Last week I ran a mile in 11 minutes, and this week it took me only 9 minutes, so I’m 2 minutes faster!*) You’ll be surprised at how interested your child is in math.

Play games.

Children learn best through play. In addition to the math games your child’s teacher sends home, teach your child the traditional games you played as a child. Many of them use counting or mathematical thinking, such as hopscotch, hide-and-seek, go fish, and checkers.

Use numbers in practical ways.

Numbers can be used to solve problems and to get things done. When two children have a disagreement, write down a number between one and ten and have the children try to guess the number. The child who makes the closest guess “wins.” When you are grocery shopping, give your child simple directions involving numbers. (*Put five apples in the cart. Find Aisle 7. Choose enough oranges for our whole family.*) You can also use numbers to keep track of things. (*Your library books are due in two weeks. Let’s mark that date on the calendar.*) Whenever you can, let your child help with tasks that involve numbers.

Give hints, not answers.

Always give your child a chance to think through a problem rather than give your child an answer he or she might not understand. Everyone likes to be able to “get it” or solve a problem on his or her own. The more your child is able to do this, the more confident he or she will become.