

Helping at Home – Mathematics

Mathematics is part of a child's world. It is all around them. It is not only about recognising numbers and learning how to add and subtract.

Mathematics is about 'ideas'. These ideas or concepts help to explain particular qualities such as number, size, weight, height, capacity, time etc as well as relationships and comparisons. The understanding of these mathematical ideas is very important and will play a major part in your child's development. Sorting and comparing encourages children to think about relationships such as smaller/larger, heavier/lighter etc.

Children learn to sort, match and order during play. You can successfully extend your child's mathematics through play and games at home in many different ways.

The following are a few ideas that you may find useful.



- Your child's daily routine is their first real experience of time. Talk about morning, afternoon and evening and the events that happen at those times. They will understand that breakfast time is when they get up; tea time is when they come home from school etc. They will soon learn the days of the week if they can link them to an activity eg. On Saturday we go to the park.

- When they are getting dressed, talk about which way round things go, are the clothes inside out; in which order do you put them on; how do they fasten etc?

- When you go to the shops let them help you. Look at the shapes of things and talk about them so that they become familiar with the words - square, triangle, circle, rectangle etc. Talk about the shopping; do you need a large or small packet of washing powder; how many tins of beans do you need; how much does the chocolate cost? When you pack the groceries let them help you carry them – which bag is the heaviest; can they carry it or can they only manage a lighter one?

- When you return home let them help you sort out the shopping – which go in the fridge, cupboard, vegetable rack, bathroom etc. Can they sort it into packets, tins, boxes; which are heavy, light, large or small etc? Help them count the items you bought by placing your hand on each item as you count.

- Let your child help you around the house. Baking is a valuable way for your child to learn mathematics. They will be able to help with the weighing of ingredients, the order they need to be put into the bowl, counting the spoonfuls of mixture into the paper cases, putting jam into the tarts etc. Even simple activities such as making a sandwich and cutting it into squares will help them.
- Let them help with the washing up too. They can learn a great deal about volume and capacity from water activities.
- When you set the table let them join in and count the number of places needed, Ask them to match forks to the number of knives you have. Can they count out the correct number of spoons needed?
- Family games and singing number rhymes are a good way of helping your child to begin to see sequence and patterns in number eg card games such as 'Snap', 'Happy Families' etc and board games such as 'Snakes and Ladders', 'Ludo', 'Lotto' etc.
- Always talk with your child about what you are doing. By working alongside them you will be helping them to explore mathematics, increase their understanding and extend their learning. Try not to think of them as being in the way or that the job could be done quicker by yourself. Children need to actively join in if they are going to learn.

Whatever the activity, try to enjoy it and show lots of enthusiasm so that they will be as keen to play your game as they are to play their own. Don't take them away from something they are engrossed in or they will resent the interruption and be reluctant to join you. When they are tired and are losing interest, then that is the time to stop. Timing is very important as is the tone of your voice and the expression on your face. Whatever you are doing try not to get impatient or it will lead to frustration in both of you, and you will gain nothing.



Helping at Home – Reading

Your important job in helping your child to read is showing them the fun to be found in a book. To share and enjoy books together will encourage your child to want to read. You can pick up a book at any place and at any time- bedtime stories are particularly special but find other times too, whenever possible Little and often works well- five minutes once a day is better than half an hour once a week!

- Sit quietly and comfortably together. The cuddle often gives as much pleasure as the book itself.
- Make sure that you are both in the mood for reading- don't force it.
- Look at the cover and talk about it. Ask them what they think the book is about. Hold the book and carefully turn the pages together.
- Talk about the pictures. Look for interesting detail.
- Let them see you following the lines of the words with your finger to show the left to right direction of the print and show them that the words you are saying are the ones printed on the page.
- Share a variety of books from stories to poems and information books.
- Let your child see you reading in everyday situations- television listings, recipes, letters, magazines and newspapers.
- If your child enjoys a particular story, read it over and over again. Let the book become a friend.
- Encourage your child to join in with any familiar phrases or catchy rhymes.



Helping at Home – Writing

Many parents have shown an interest in helping their children to write. Here are some ideas which may be of use.

- Encourage your child to engage in play with malleable materials like play dough. Stretching, twisting, squeezing and squashing materials like these will help them to develop the muscles in their hands and arms in preparation for writing development.
- Let your child play with writing toys – magnetic letters, printing sets, blackboard and chalk, computer keyboard etc
- Provide plenty of paper of different sizes, colours and textures as well as a variety of pencils, pens etc – a scrapbook is a very useful way to save their writing.
- Give your child the freedom to scribble and experiment with a wide variety of thick and thin crayons, pencils and washable felt pens.
- Build up the idea that writing and talking are connected.
- Read them letters, notes, cards etc from other people to help them understand that people communicate through writing.
- Help them to be aware of the meaning and purpose of writing in the signs and symbols around them. Talk about the writing seen at home, in shops, adverts, newspapers, road signs etc.
- Let your child see you writing. Encourage them to become involved in day to day writing with you – shopping lists, letters, birthday cards, messages etc.
- Sometimes you could write for your child, letting them dictate the story to you.
- Talk to your child about their writing, showing an interest in what they are doing.
- Show your child that you value their writing – put it up on display alongside their paintings.
- Don't expect your child's writing to look like adult writing.
- Guide your child in sounding out words when they are ready. Praise their efforts even if their spelling is incorrect.
- Don't always make your child copy your writing attempts. Encourage them to have a try for themselves.
- Demonstrate correct letter formation but don't focus too much upon accurate formation in the early stages.
- Your child will probably enjoy writing their own name.
We write names using a capital letter for the first letter
- of each name only: eg Paul Smith, Laura Brown.
- Be positive about your child's mark making.

