

Top 10 Ways to Help Your Kids Do Well in Math

by Peggy Gisler, Ed.S. and Marge Eberts, Ed.S.

Mastering Math

Mastering mathematics is absolutely essential for future opportunities in school and careers. Your children will need to reach a certain level of competency in math to take many advanced high-school courses, to be admitted to college, and to have a wide variety of career choices. Here's how you can help them maximize their math-smarts.

1. Make sure your children understand mathematical concepts.

Otherwise, math becomes a meaningless mental exercise of just memorizing rules and doing rote drills. Have your children manipulate objects to figure out basic concepts. For addition, they could add one, two, or more blocks to a pile of blocks and then tell you how many blocks are in the pile.

2. Help them master the basic facts.

Mastery of a basic fact means that children can give an answer in less than three seconds. Considerable drill is required for children to give quick responses. Use flash cards to help your children learn the basic facts. When they don't know an answer, have them lay out objects to solve the problem.

3. Teach them to write their numbers neatly.

Twenty-five percent of all errors in solving math problems can be traced back to sloppy number writing. Improve your children's number-writing skills by having them trace over numbers that you have written. Suggest they use graph paper to keep the numbers in problems neatly aligned.

4. Provide help immediately when your children need it.

Math is one subject in which everything builds upon what has been previously learned. For example, a failure to understand the concept of percent leads to problems with decimals. If a teacher is unable to help your children, provide the help yourself or use a tutor or learning center.

5. Show them how to handle their math homework.

Doing math homework reinforces the skills your children are learning in class. Teach them to begin every assignment by studying the textbook or

worksheet examples. Then have them redo the examples before beginning the assignment to make sure they understand the lesson.

6. Encourage your children to do more than the assigned problems.

Considerable practice is necessary for your children to hone their math skills. If the teacher only assigns the even problems, having them do some of the odd ones will strengthen their skills. The more time your children spend practicing their skills, the sooner they will develop confidence in their abilities.

7. Explain how to solve word problems.

Mathematicians have an expression: To learn to solve problems, you must solve problems. Teach your children to read a word problem several times. Also, have them draw a picture or diagram to describe it. Make it easier for them to understand the steps in a problem by teaching them to substitute smaller numbers for larger ones.

8. Help your children learn the vocabulary of mathematics.

They will never get a real feeling for math nor learn more advanced concepts without an understanding of its vocabulary. Check that your children can define new terms. If not, have them use models and simple problems to show you they understand how the term is used.

9. Teach them how to do math "in their head."

One of the major ways to solve problems is by using mental math. Kids should use this method frequently instead of using pencil and paper or a calculator. When helping your children with a problem, help them determine when it would be appropriate to use mental math.

10. Make mathematics part of your children's daily life.

Mathematics will become more meaningful when your kids see how important it is in so many real-life situations. Encourage them to use math in practical ways. For example, ask them to space new plants a certain distance apart, double a recipe, and pay bills in stores.

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