



Top 10 Questions Parents Ask

1. I want to help my child with school. Where do I start?

Here are some things you can do to help him/her at home.

- Provide a space and quiet time for your child to study at home. This place should be free from distractions such as television or radio and should be available to him/her every day.
- Establish a daily home study time in order to encourage your child to take responsibility for his/her learning and to develop good study habits.
- Sit with your child when he/she does homework, if you can.
- Ask your child to share with you what he/she is learning about math in school.

2. How can I help my child if I don't know what is being taught in school?

- Be positive about math. Your own attitudes can influence your child's desire to learn math.
- Discuss with your child the importance of math for his/her future. Math skills are not only important for school success but also are used in virtually every job that your child may choose. In order to go to college, your child will need to take at least four years of math in high school.
- Offer positive encouragement to your child when he/she expresses interest in or makes an effort to practice math activities. Saying phrases such as, "Great job!" or "I like the way you're working!" can encourage your child to continue to work hard and to gain confidence in his/her math abilities.
- Find out about the math program by attending parent conferences, back-to-school nights, and family math classes at your child's school.
- Assure your child that with the necessary effort, he/she can be successful in math.

3. What kind of math is being taught in school?

Developing concepts of numbers, fractions, mixed numbers, and decimals is a major goal of elementary school math. In addition, solving problems from real-life situations has received increased attention because it teaches students how to apply and use math concepts and skills. Knowing basic math facts, mental, and paper-and-pencil computations is still important.

But math is more than working with numbers. In order to use math in real world situations, there are other important math skills that your child needs to learn. For example,

- **Sorting and classifying.** Grouping objects by their size, shape, color, pattern, etc. can build thinking skills and help your child understand how objects relate to one another.
- **Measurement.** Describing the size or amount of something first using a nonstandard unit then standard measurement instruments such as rulers or yardsticks can help your child to answer questions of how much, how big, how long, etc. You can help your child develop measurement skills by asking him/her to estimate and measure objects (length, area) at home.
- **Geometric forms and patterns.** Identifying different shapes and patterns provides your child with experiences that develop an awareness of geometry. In later grades, this awareness is used as a basis for learning additional geometry and algebra concepts.
- **Probability and statistics.** Collecting and analyzing data can help your child make inferences and understand the concept of chance. This skill is enhanced as your child learns to interpret charts and graphs found in daily newspapers.

4. Why is math important? How is math used in everyday life?

Take a moment to think about your day. Without realizing it, chances are that you use some type of math skills on an hourly basis. Math is everywhere. For example:

- When you go shopping to buy things, you use math to figure out how much you can buy and how much change you will receive.
- If you have a checking account, you use counting skills to balance your checkbook.
- If you cook a meal, you use math to estimate and measure the ingredients in a recipe.
- When you wash clothes, you use math skills to sort and group the laundry and measure detergent.
- When you drive, you use math to calculate distances and the time it will take to arrive at your destination.

5. What kinds of jobs require math skills?

Math is an important skill that is used in many jobs. For example:

- Scientists, engineers, and doctors rely on math for a large portion of the work that they perform. The instruments they use and the data they collect rely on a working knowledge of algebra, geometry, statistics and even calculus.
- Pharmacists use sorting, grouping, and proportions to dispense the correct amount of medicine to people.
- Store managers need counting skills to keep track of inventory and wages.
- Carpenters and architects use estimating and measuring skills when designing or building things. They also need to be able to see how shapes fit together.
- Cashiers use counting skills to make change.
- Cooks use estimating, measuring, and timing skills to prepare meals.
- Floor and carpet installers use estimating, measuring, and counting skills to figure out the size of a room and to order the correct amount of material.

6. Should I encourage my child to use a calculator?

Calculators are useful tools for doing arithmetic as well as seeing patterns and number relationships. They do not replace the need to learn basic facts, to compute mentally, or to do reasonable paper-and-pencil computation. A child can learn to solve math problems involving tedious computations by using a calculator. Mental arithmetic and estimation are important for checking the computation and developing “number sense.”

7. What are some math activities that I can practice with my child?

Be creative and use your imagination to find examples of math around your home, at the grocery store, or when making trips around town. By practicing math activities throughout the day as opportunities arise, you can help your child to become excited about math and build a foundation for future educational success.

Some activities that you and your child can practice are:

- Estimating and measuring amounts in cooking. This is a good way to introduce your child to fractions.
- Sorting and grouping clothes, toys, and pictures by color, shape, size, weight, etc. and making comparisons.
- Estimating and measuring distances between places.
- Making change and comparing prices of items by playing “store” or when shopping.

- Making comparisons of distance, length, height, and weight of things around the house or in your backyard.

8. Is there a “right” way to learn math?

- There is often more than one way to solve a math problem. No one strategy is more correct than another if a correct response is obtained with each trail.
- Encourage your child to use different methods to solve problems, such as with calculators or by drawing diagrams.
- Ask your child to explain how he/she solved a problem so that you can share in the thought process. By talking about a math problem, you and your child may find other ways to solve it.

9. Why doesn’t my child have math homework?

- Your child often has homework, but sometimes he/she may finish it at school. It is good you ask your child to show you and talk about his/her homework, as well as work that has been done in math class.
- On days that your child has no assigned math homework, you can do some fun math activities at home with him/her. (See #7)
- During school vacations, it is important to review informally math concepts and skills so that they are not forgotten. This can be done best by taking advantage of opportunities as they arise.

10. My child does not like math. What can I do about it?

- Not doing well in math and not liking math are often closely related. Students normally like what they are successful in and express a dislike for subjects in which they may be struggling. When your child expresses a dislike for math that is a sign that he/she needs additional help. You need to talk to him/her and find out why your child does not like math. It could be something simple such as not knowing how to do a problem or something more serious such as not understanding what is going on in class. After talking to your child, you may want to discuss it with his/her teacher.

