

## Homework Tips for Parents



- Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework.
- Make sure the materials your child needs, such as paper, pencils and a dictionary, are available.
- Help your child with time management.
- Be positive about homework.
- When your child does homework, you do homework.
- When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers.
- When the teacher asks that you play a role in homework, do it.
- If homework is meant to be done by your child alone, stay away.
- Stay informed.
- Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework.
- Watch your child for signs of failure and frustration.
- Reward progress in homework.

## Parents Can Help Their Children Succeed in Math

How can parents help their children succeed in mathematics? What is the mathematical equivalent of reading out loud to children every day? When parents maintain *high expectations* for their children's performance in mathematics, regularly *do mathematical activities* with their children, and display a *positive attitude toward mathematics* their children learn and perform at higher levels.

### Children's literacy and mathematics at home

For instance, many parents point out familiar words on package labels to beginning readers, listen while their children read aloud, encourage their children to write, and make up stories and rhymes with their children. These same strategies can help to encourage children with their mathematics skills. There are many opportunities for supporting children's literacy throughout the day, and there are just as many opportunities possible to enjoy mathematics together. Here are a few ideas.



**1. Story time** — Reading together is a wonderful way to explore ideas with children, including mathematical ideas. Many parents naturally pause to ask about characters, objects, and events: “Why do you think Chi-Hoon left the party? What do you think will happen next?” Parents can also include questions about counting; comparing; and finding totals and differences, shapes, and measurements.

For instance, they might ask how many butterflies are in a picture and whether more are likely to be seen on the next page. How many more gold coins does a character need to buy a magic key? How many things shaped like triangles are on the page? Parents can also involve children in estimating amounts and sizes: “It says that this dinosaur was about twenty-five feet long and seven feet high. Would it fit in this room? In our apartment? How could we find out?”



**2. Outdoors** — Just as many mathematical ideas can be explored in storybooks, so are many mathematical concepts found in the world outside. As parents spend time with their children in the neighborhood and backyard and on the playground, they can find things to count, compare, and tally: “How many windows does this house have? How many more windows does it have than our house? Which window in our house is the longest?” Measuring and comparing arise naturally as children work on their athletic skills—can your child jump higher, skip rope longer, or run faster than he or she could last year or last month? Parents can help young children use rulers, tape

## Parents make a BIG difference.

measures, or stop-watches to figure out just how high, how fast, or how long is a certain measure and to keep track of and compare progress. Older children can do more measuring, timing, keeping track, and comparing by themselves. They can also investigate questions that involve rates, speeds, and averages. For instance, children who are interested in running might keep track of their running times or speeds, compute averages, and graph their progress.

3. **On the road** — Car or bus trips are wonderful times to explore numbers, shapes, and counting. One activity appropriate for a wide range of ages is a mathematical scavenger hunt. Family members take turns finding something to watch for, such as a truck with eight wheels, a speed limit over thirty-five, a house number between 995 and 1195, or a road sign shaped like a square. While a parent is driving, the children can keep their eyes open! Another car or bus activity that is fun involves estimating, collecting data, and keeping track. Children can make predictions about how many dogs they will see; whether more traffic lights or stop signs will be found; or whether more billboards on the route will advertise food, clothing, or entertainment. During the trip, they can count and keep track, using tallies, numbers, pictures, or charts. After the trip, parents can work with children to explore the data: “How many more stop signs than traffic lights did you see on the way to school? Why do you think that more stop signs were found? Do you think that it would be true for any road? Let’s count again when we go to the grocery store tomorrow.”



4. **Household chores** — Sometimes asking a mathematical question or two can make children more enthusiastic about participating in household chores. Parents can engage children in matching, sorting, and counting as they do the laundry: “I wonder who has the most clothing in this load of laundry? Let’s sort it to find out.” Household chores can also provide a context for estimating and counting large quantities as children organize their belongings: “How many books do you have? About twenty-five? One hundred? Let’s count them as we arrange them neatly on your bookshelf.” Other chores can involve measuring quantities, reading tables and charts, and working with fractions such as preparing a recipe for half the number of the serving size or when having extra guest doubling the recipe. Parents can discuss fractions as a part of cutting a piece of fruit into smaller parts.



### **Questions to ask your child:**

- ◆ What new idea did you learn today?
- ◆ What was the most interesting idea or fact you learned?
- ◆ What was the most challenging thing you did today?
- ◆ What did you feel most successful with?
- ◆ What was the funniest thing that happened today?

### **Questions and Comments to Support Mathematics Homework**

- ◆ What is the problem you're working on?
- ◆ What do the directions say?
- ◆ What words or directions do you not understand?
- ◆ Where do you think you should begin?
- ◆ What do you already know that can help you work through the problem?
- ◆ What have you done so far?
- ◆ Where can we find help in your textbook or notes?
- ◆ Do you have similar problems to look at?
- ◆ Can you draw a picture or make a diagram?
- ◆ Can you explain what the teacher asked you to do?
- ◆ What problems like this one have you had before?
- ◆ Can you tell me where you are stuck?
- ◆ Who can you call to get help?
- ◆ Can you solve it by using a calculator?
- ◆ Can you go to another problem and come back to this one later?
- ◆ Where can we look for some help on the Internet?
- ◆ What type of partial work does the teacher accept?
- ◆ Can you go in before or after school for help from the teacher?
- ◆ Should we tackle this problem another time?