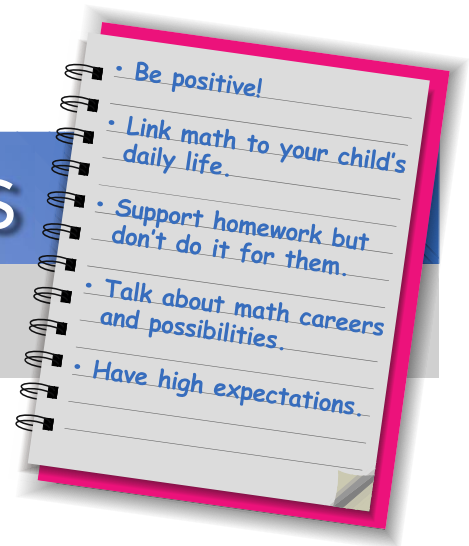


Math Tips for Parents

Supporting math learning and encouraging your child to love math



You are a math teacher!

We all know that reading with a child helps literacy skills, and that playing sports in the backyard teaches the value of teamwork and being physically active. But where are the life lessons for mathematics?

The truth is that we all use mathematics many times each day, but often don't realize it. From trips to the grocery store to swinging in a hammock, math is part of our daily lives.

Don't underestimate your own math skills. You can help your child learn math!

"You are their idol. They look up to you. They don't do a good job listening to you, but they do a fantastic job imitating you." – Karl Subban, retired Toronto school principal and father of three NHL hockey players (P.K., Malcolm and Justin)

Math in everyday life

It is important to help children recognize that everyone uses math all the time. Here are tips to help your child have a positive attitude about mathematics.

- Make learning math a positive experience. Don't talk negatively about math to your child—it can lead to "math anxiety" (a proven cause of low achievement).
- Schedule math homework at the same time in a quiet location every day. Be available during this period to talk with your child. Create a math homework toolkit with pencils, erasers, ruler, protractor, graph paper, counters (beads or beans) and a calculator.
- When helping with homework, follow the method being taught. Don't teach short cuts that could confuse your child. Do not say, "Let me show you my way – it's simpler and faster."
- Be relaxed and positive. You are not expected to be an expert. You are there to encourage learning.

- If your child becomes frustrated, stop. Remind your child of the things they have already learned how to do successfully, such as riding a bicycle, writing a paragraph or speaking a second language.
- Ask your child’s teacher for strategies to use at home that reflect your child’s learning style. If your child asks for help and you do not know the answer, be honest and say, “I don’t know, but let’s figure it out together.” If you continue to be unsuccessful, you can also ask your child’s teacher for help. This gives your child permission to ask for help as well.

Be a math role model

Children learn by imitating the people around them. Imitating a parent’s positive attitude about education helps children develop healthy academic skills.

- Talk out loud as you do everyday tasks. Talking out loud allows children to hear how you think and helps them develop important skills for “thinking things out” and solving problems.
- Do informal math together. On rainy days, family evenings and vacation time, play math games such as *Dino Math Tracks*, *Dominoes* or *Connect Four*. Show your child that math is fun!
- Parents worry about the amount of time that children spend on the computer and the quality of online content, but many educational web-based games, such as *Mathfrog* and *Calculation Nation*, encourage mathematical skills.
- Watch educational television programs like *The Prime Radicals* on TVO or *Cyberchase* on PBS. These programs also have websites with activities to do together, including game apps, math crafts and songs.
- Grocery stores are a great source of math lessons. For example, you can talk aloud about how to weigh fruit on a scale or how to estimate the total cost of groceries as you fill your cart.

This edition of “Math Tips for Parents” was written by Lynda Colgan, Associate Professor and Director, Queen’s Community Outreach Centre, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University

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