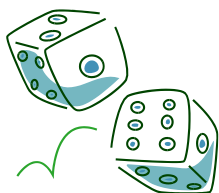


Simple advice on helping an infant child enjoy maths...

As children start school they will try to make connections between the things they are learning to do at school and the mathematics they meet in their everyday lives. It is at this stage that parents can be at their most influential. The number facts children learn, and the understanding they develop, will underpin their progress through the rest of their school career.



Practising our counting - at every opportunity is always a good thing. We can specifically help by making sure that when our child is counting how many of something there are, she matches each number she says to an object by touching or gently moving it- this avoids making mistakes!

Playing games – throwing dice, playing dominoes, as well as track games or card games all help children’s numeracy at this stage. They need to recognise the numbers of dots or shapes without counting them and also to learn to add two or more small numbers. Games are a fun context in which to acquire these skills.

Reading and writing numbers – help your child to write numbers, starting at the top and running the pencil down the numeral. When your child starts to write 2-digit numbers, be sure to emphasise the value of the first digit, reading 65 as sixty-five, stressing that this is sixty and five more.

Memorising their number facts – one of the simplest and most effective ways of supporting your child’s mathematical development is to ensure that they have learned their number facts off by heart. These are the pairs of numbers which add together to make all of the numbers up to and including ten. For example, children need to know that 6 is $5 + 1$, or $4 + 2$, or $3 + 3$; and that 10 is $5 + 5$ or $4 + 6$ or $3 + 7$ or $2 + 8$ or $1 + 9$.

Recognising and naming shapes – the best way to help your child to identify common 2-D shapes is through art and craft. Your child needs to realise that what a shape is does not depend on which way up it is – a square is still a square even if it is standing on its point!

Telling the time – help your child to master this difficult skill by taking it in stages. First stress the ‘o’clocks’. “It’s nearly five o’clock, time for tea!” Children can recognise o’clock times on a digital display (5:00) and on a clock face (big hand pointing up at the 12). Once they are good at this, introduce half past, big hand pointing down or digital 5:30. Finally teach quarter past and quarter to. This allows them to tell the time accurately enough for now!



Golden Rules...

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DO 'little and often'! Counting sultanas as you eat them or stairs when going up to a first floor flat is a much better way of rehearsing counting than sitting over a workbook.

DON'T push a skill, especially if a child is becoming confused or is feeling pressured. It always pays to talk to the teacher if you feel your child is not understanding something, rather than confuse them further by teaching them in a different way.

DO give LOTS of praise. Resist the temptation to say, 'but' or to point out mistakes every time. Children need encouragement and positive reinforcement to be confident, and a confident child makes a better learner.

DON'T force workbooks on your child. They will do plenty of writing in their maths books at school. At home, you have the opportunity to help them memorise their number facts and perform mathematical calculations in their heads.

DO play games! Dice, dominoes, track games and cards all make excellent excuses for using and applying our number skills. And at the same time your child is learning the important skills of losing with grace and winning with style!

DON'T stress written sums laid out as you used to do them! Nowadays it is the development of what we call 'numerical fluency' that counts. Children need to be comfortable with numbers, to understand how they work and to be confident in doing mental calculations.

DO remember that your focussed attention is a far more important and pleasurable commodity for any child than any amount of TV or video game activity. Every child wants to be doing things one-on-one with someone they love and trust.



Helping Your Infant Child with... MATHS