

Making Math Commonplace and Real for Our Children

Parents can best support the mathematical development of their children by making mathematics commonplace and fun whenever and wherever it occurs naturally in our daily lives. Questions can be simple and informal and answers can be responded to with "How did you get that?" or "Share with us your thinking?" For example:

At McDonalds or any other fast food restaurant – in line or at the drive-thru:

- How much do you think your order will cost?
- What's the least and most expensive reasonable meal we could order?
- Can we all get a meal and spend less than \$20? How?
- About how much should the tax be?
- Is a Happy Meal a good deal?
- Does it make sense to order large soda if there are free refills?

At the Restaurant:

- You can spend up to \$8 without going over. What could you order?
- So how much do you think the bill will be?
- What's the most expensive reasonable meal we could order?
- How much should we tip?

At the gas station and on a trip:

- So about how many miles per gallon are we getting?
- So if gas is \$4.09/gallon, about how much will we spend?
- If we only have \$30, how many gallons of gas can we get?
- About how much longer should it take us to there (looking at mileage signs)?
- If it's 1:30 now, when do you think we'll get there?

At the grocery store:

- How much do you think we just spent (looking at a full shopping cart)?
- What fractional part of the items is taxable (looking at the register tape)?
- About how much do we pay per item in the cart?
- What should the scale say if we order 1 ½ pounds of cheese?
- About how much will three-quarters of a pound of ham cost?
- What's the unit price? Which is the best buy?
- What's it say on the nutrition label?

At the bank:

- What's a withdrawal? What's a deposit? Which is addition and which is subtraction?
- If I have \$_____, how much will I have after a deposit/withdraw \$_____?

(over)

In the kitchen:

- Recipes (Can you measure that much out?, How much more or less? Suppose we doubled/halved the recipe?)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Ounces, cups, pints, quarts and gallons, ounces and pounds

From the newspaper:

- Graphs and tables
- Sports statistics
- Scavenger hunts (for percents, for numbers greater than 1000, etc.)

Just for fun anytime:

- About how big is that? (height, width, weight, capacity)
- About how many would fit? (For example: How many dogs could be fit in the car? How many McNuggets boxes could fit in the trunk? About how people could fit in this room?)

Powerful games:

- Yahtzee
- Cribbage
- Card games

Some thoughts from Steve Leinwand, American Institutes for Research