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10 ways to build math skills this summer

Check out these 10 quick and easy ways to work math into your summer routine and help your child develop numbers sense.

by: *GreatSchools Staff* (<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/author/greatschoolsstaff/>) | June 5, 2018



Helping your child become a mathematical thinker is an important way to support your child's classroom learning.

Avoiding the summer brain drain

Children typically forget some of what they learned during the school year if they don't engage in learning activities over the summer. This is particularly true in math. A study by researchers at the University of Missouri shows that on average, students lost about 2.6 months of math learning over the summer.

That means classroom teachers spend weeks reviewing math facts and concepts in the first few weeks of school.

Third grade teacher Linda Eisinger, a GreatSchools consultant and the 2005 Missouri Teacher of the Year, asks her students to take the flashcards they have made home for the summer.

“Math is so sequential,” she said. “We tell parents that children just cannot forget everything we teach them during the year.”

She also suggests a math twist for a license plate game families can play in the car. Ask your children to add up the numbers in the license plates of passing cars. You can assign a value to the letters, for example, every letter equals 5. Older children can multiply the numbers.

“Children love ideas like this that are kind of quirky,” she said. “They seem more fun, not like work.”

10 more ways to work math into your summer routine

1 **Note numbers.**

Increase your child's awareness of numbers by looking around the house to find examples: the kitchen clock, the calendar, a cereal box, a TV dial, a stamp or inside her shoe. Have her write down the numbers she sees, or give her a number and ask her to look around the house for examples of the number. Boost your older child's awareness of how numbers are used by pointing out the movie times, weather forecasts and sports statistics in your daily newspaper.

2 **Two, four, six, eight, now it's time to estimate.**

Estimation is one way to increase a child's number sense. Before you put a stack of folded towels on a shelf or fill a bowl with peaches, ask your child to estimate how many will fit. Then count afterward to compare the actual number to the estimate. Helping your child learn to make appropriate predictions will help her see how numbers are used in everyday life. Learning to ask, “Is my answer reasonable?” will help her as she tackles math problems in the classroom.

3

What does a hundred look like?

Great!
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Understanding the concept of 100 is difficult for young children, even if they can count that far. Suggest that your child start making collections of 100 things — rubber bands, watermelon seeds, pebbles or buttons. You can divide the objects in groups of 10 or 2 or 5 to see how these smaller groups add up to 100 in different ways. Glue the objects onto a piece of colored construction paper for a math collage. Seeing 100 will help her conceptualize it.

4

Unlock the code.

Help your child recognize numbers and think critically by appealing to his love of mystery. Write out all the letters in the alphabet on a sheet of paper, leaving room underneath each letter for a number. Under each letter, write the numbers from 1 to 26. In other words, a=1, b=2, etc. Practice writing coded messages using numbers rather than letters. You can use the code to leave simple messages from one another.

5

How tall are you?

Many families record the height of their child on a door or wall chart. If you do the same for everyone in the family, your child can join in the measuring and see how the heights compare. Measurement and understanding relationships between numbers are crucial to the development of mathematical thinking.

6

Play grocery store math.

The supermarket is an ideal place to use math skills, particularly for older children. Point out that yogurt is \$2.59 a six-pack. Ask how much it would cost to buy 3? Your child can round up to \$2.60 or \$3.00 and figure this out. Talk about how he arrived at that number, point out how the estimate differs from the true cost. Or get the latest advertisement announcing sales from the grocery store. Have her look at the specials on fruit and determine how to spend \$10.00. Supply her with paper and pencil, and maybe a calculator, as well, so she can practice using calculators the way adults use them every day.

7

What's on the menu?

The next time you go to a restaurant, hang on to the menu while you are waiting for your meal and play some math games with your child. Ask him to find the least expensive item on the menu, then all the items that cost between \$5 and \$10 or three items whose total cost is between \$9 and \$20. This will not only fill the time while you're waiting to eat, it will show your child how math is used every day.

8

Cook up a math game.

The kitchen is a great place to practice math, as long as there's an adult home to supervise. How many tomatoes will you need to double the recipe for sauce? If you put 10 slices of mushroom on the pizza, ask your child to put twice as many olive slices. How many is that? If there are three people in your family and 15 strawberries to divide equally among them, how many strawberries will each person get?

9

Measure the distance.

You don't have to leave home for this game, although it's ideal for vacations. Get out a map that indicates the distance in miles between cities. Measure the distance between Los Angeles and San Francisco, and between Phoenix and San Francisco. Which is greater? How does that compare to the distance between New York City and Chicago?

10

Change up.

Give your child an assortment of quarters, dimes, nickels and pennies. Put a piece of fruit on the table and tell him it costs 45 cents. Tell him he needs to find five coin combinations that equal 45 cents. Change the item, raise the price and find five more. Keep a tally of all the ways to pay for each item.



About the author

GreatSchools Staff

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