



REPORT_{to} PARENTS

RP 31:3

Everyday Activities to Reinforce Math Skills

Everyone knows the importance of reading to their children. But how many parents realize that it's equally essential to help their children understand math—both math concepts and how it's part of their everyday lives? Here are some fun, easy ways to incorporate math learning into your family life—without a lot of time, effort, or expense.

In the kitchen. Cooking and baking using a recipe not only is a terrific way to help children better understand fractions, it's great bonding time. (And you get to eat the results!) With younger children, show them all the different sizes of measuring cups and spoons and show them how measuring two half-cups of flour or sugar gives them exactly the same amount as one full cup. Ask older children to help you cut a recipe in half or double a recipe. Have them write down the new measurements and double-check them together—making sure they understand that, when you cook, it's important to get your math just right.

At the grocery store. Bring a simple calculator with you to the grocery store when you shop with your children. Young children can add up how much you've spent on groceries or saved with coupons. Kids in third grade or higher can help you figure out which size of detergent, for example, is the best value, or whether using a particular coupon will end up costing less than buying the same product from a different manufacturer.

In the garage or driveway. A tire gauge is one of the simplest tools for a child to use, and can help him or her learn about adding and subtracting quantities. Show your children how to measure the pressure in your bicycle or car tires. Explain what the pressure should be, and have them help you figure out how much air you need to add or release. Figuring out gas mileage is another great math skill booster for older kids.

When it's time to relax. Look for games and activities that reinforce math skills, whether they're computer games (like Math Blaster), online programs (there's a great list of children's Internet math games at www.kidsites.com/sites-edu/math.htm), or old favorites like dominoes, card games, or puzzles.

On the road. Long car trips were made for math games. Pick a number from one to 10 and have each child try to find a license plate whose numbers equal the target number. Younger children can add the

numbers together. Children who have learned subtraction can try to find one that involves adding a few of the numbers and then subtracting one. Kids who have learned multiplication and division can put those skills to use.

Money is a powerful teacher. If your children are trying to save up to buy something special for themselves or others, keep a chart of how much money they will need and what they have saved to date.

Create something. Both sewing and building involve a lot of math ability and children love the ability to create. Teach your children how to measure and sew fabrics together and to build basic structures out of wood (just make sure they know to always have adult supervision and to never do any projects like these on their own).

Above all, make sure not to pass any math phobias that you might have on to your children. It's important for children to hear at home that what they're learning is valuable—that all the work they're doing trying to comprehend division or fractions or measurement will pay off their whole lives.

