

Pointers For Parents

Easy Math Tips For Parents: Making Math Fun Outside The Classroom

(NAPSA)—As parents, we understand the important role that math plays in our children's education and the impact it has on their lives and our own. Despite this, we don't always recognize the opportunities we have each day to encourage our children's interest in and knowledge of math.

Research has shown that children develop a better understanding of math when mathematical principles are presented to them as part of real-world scenarios. Kasey Bratcher, a former mathematics teacher who develops K–12 math teacher workshops for Carnegie Learning, a publisher of research-based mathematics software and textbooks for middle and high school students, provides the following tips to keep math relevant in your child's life outside the classroom.

1. Ask questions...and answer questions with questions.

When a child asks a question, it is an opportunity to expand his or her learning beyond just a simple response. If your child asks how many minutes it will take to drive to the grocery store, it is perfectly okay to respond with your own question, such as "How many minutes do you think it will take to drive to the store?"

This can lead to a broader discussion about the number of minutes in one hour, one half-hour or one quarter-hour. You can also discuss the length of time required to travel from home to other places, like school or Grandma's house. In all mathematical conversations, do not be too quick to give your child the answer. Allow him or her the time needed to process the information given and formulate the answer on his or her own.

2. Look for mathematics all around you. Relating math to everyday life situations has a direct effect on how well children learn and utilize mathematical principles. Carnegie Learning, collaborating with researchers at Southern Methodist University, found that tailoring word problems to student interests results in as much as a 40 percent improvement in performance, particularly for more difficult problems.



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"Children are more enthusiastic about learning when the topic presented is specific to their personal interests," said Bratcher. "For example, questions related to gaming, sports, food or friends will generate more attention from students than asking them to calculate the square footage of a room."

Parents should also take advantage of everyday events that can incorporate mathematics. For example, helping Mom or Dad in the kitchen provides a great opportunity to practice fractions and measurements, including calculating weights and amounts.

3. Make math a family affair.

Everyone in the family can play a role in keeping math an ever-present part of a child's day. Bratcher often engages her kids through friendly competitions at one of their favorite restaurants. She encourages her kids to figure out the sale price of their soft drink or milk shake by finding half, starting with questions like "What's half of \$2.00?" and moving to more difficult questions, like "What's half of \$1.80?"

Math is all around us, and opportunities to deepen a child's understanding of math principles abound. By employing mathematics to the world around them, kids can sharpen their basic math skills and even teach parents a thing or two.