

Is maths really that important at home?

Parents have a great opportunity to develop their children's maths skills at home by involving them in everyday activities. If your children can help you find the best deal for your car insurance or work out which supermarket deal is cheapest, then it's helping them understand maths in real life. It also helps develop their basic maths and problem solving skills, which are really important in the UK primary curriculum.

Don't underestimate yourself, or the power you have as a parent getting involved in your child's learning. Ofsted have specifically stated that parental engagement raises pupil achievement.

So here are some tips and ideas to show how you can improve your child's KS2 maths skills at home.

1 Start with a positive mindset

Do you ever hear yourself saying "I'm really bad at maths"? It's only small, but your children can pick up on negativity towards subjects and, unfortunately, this can be a real barrier to their learning. We advise parents to try using positive language around your children when talking about maths. You may not mean to be negative, but your children may take it to heart. Your positivity may well improve their maths attitude!

2 Play maths games together

Many games use mathematical and logical skills that your children will need in later life - plus they're fun!. Games like jigsaw puzzles help children to develop logical & spatial awareness skills. Board games with dice develop children's counting skills. Other games that may help develop your child's maths skills are darts, scrabble, and chess. Get playing!

3 Learn their maths methods

You can also support your child's learning by getting to grips with the maths they learn, like the grid method and bar modelling. Sometimes parents try to help by teaching their children methods they learned in school. This can confuse children. Try instead to learn the method that your child uses by asking to see the school's Calculation Policy (usually on the school website), speaking to their teacher, or Googling it. This ensures continuity between school and home learning for your child and genuinely improves their learning!

4 Practise reading the time

As we move into digital, many children are growing up not reading analogue clocks. Make sure your child practises reading analogue clocks in everyday life, as this is part of the maths curriculum. It's as simple as reading the clock you may walk past on the side of a building, otherwise how will they ever be able to read the iconic Big Ben?

5 Use fractions in daily life

Fractions can be simple for you to practise with your child. Simple common fractions can be reinforced at home even if you're not too confident with fractions. Stick to fractions you know such as $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$. See a window split into four coloured panels? Ask your child "what fraction of the window is coloured in blue?" You don't have to use rounded shapes such as cakes and pizzas to practise fractions, just make sure the separate parts of the shape are all the same size.

6 Times tables: Practice Practice Practice!

As everybody knows, it's essential for children to learn their times tables in order to access harder maths questions. This is an easy thing for parents to practise with their children - sneak it in when they're bored! Make car journeys go by faster, or distract them on the bus by asking times tables questions. Challenge them to say their times tables backwards if they get bored of reciting them.

7 Involve them with problem solving

The KS2 maths curriculum requires pupils to be able to problem solve in maths. As parents, you can help your children practice these skills every day. You can ask your child to tell you which is the best deal at the supermarket or how much their pair of trousers are worth when there is a 30% sale on in a clothes store, or which internet provider has the best deal when you need to switch.

8 Use open questions

Sometimes it's just plain hard not to work out the correct answer for your child's homework without simply giving it to them. Unfortunately, just giving children the answer to their homework means don't learn to work the answer out for themselves. This means they'll get stuck without you. Next time your child needs help with their homework, try asking prompting questions such as:

"Why did you write that down?" "How did you get that answer?" "What method did you use?"

This will help your child fully understand the maths methods they're using and reinforce independent learning.

9 Play to their love of technology

There's no substitute for personal support with your child's maths, but when you're busy - or even just for a change - giving children short bursts of online practice can be really helpful.

We're spoiled for choice with maths apps on the market and most really engage children. There's definitely no need to spend lots of money. Many are free or economically priced. If you want to know where to start, two of our favourites are Mr Thorne's Maths and DoodleMaths. But there are plenty more!

10 If they need a challenge...

Maths can be very boring for children when they're just repeatedly practising what they already know. If you find that your child needs to challenge themselves more, or gets bored easily. Explore websites such as NRICH (<http://rich.maths.org/>) or Transum (<http://www.transum.org/>).