

Math with Your Second Grader

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Helping with Homework

You show your child that math and school are important when you help with homework. You can also see what your child is learning and make sure that your child is mastering the skills you think are important. The following ideas can help make homework time enjoyable and productive for you and your child.

Attitude

- Approach homework with an open, can-do attitude. Try to show your child that you find math interesting, enjoyable, and do-able.
- Express confidence in your child's and your own ability to do math. Even if you found math frustrating when you were in school, try to avoid saying things like, "Math is so hard." Instead, you could say, "Sometimes I get stuck when I'm doing math, but if I take a break and try again, I might get a new idea."
- Keep interactions about math relaxed and enjoyable. Don't drill your child on facts over dinner.
- Praise persistence and creativity in problem solving, as well as finding the right answer.

Solving Difficult Problems

- If your child is confused, take time to listen before offering help. You'll need to know what is confusing to your child before you can be helpful, and it is important for your child to learn how to describe what is confusing and why.
- If you both get stumped on a problem, take a break and come back to it in a few minutes.
- If you and your child both get stuck, focus on writing a clear question or explanation of what is confusing. Have your child show it to the teacher to get more help. This helps your child take some responsibility for his or her own learning and develop a good relationship with the teacher.

Helpful Problem Solving Strategies

- Have your child solve a similar problem with smaller, easier numbers first.
- Have your child use objects like dried beans, pieces of pasta, or coins to solve a problem.
- Act out the problem or draw a picture of the problem with your child.
- After your child has finished the problem, have him or her check the answer by working the problem backwards. (For example, if she subtracted to find the answer, she would add to check it.) It is important for students to check their own work to be sure their answers make sense and are correct.
- Talk about how you solve problems: your thinking processes and methods may be useful to your child.

If Your Child Struggles

Talk to your child's teacher if he or she struggles with homework. The teacher can suggest or provide games or worksheets for use at home. Set specific goals with the teacher (e.g., master all the neighbors addition facts) and keep track of progress toward them so that practice at home is focused and productive.

If Your Child Excels

Your child's teacher can recommend games and activities to challenge and engage your child. Young students who are talented at math often enjoy learning to play chess and other games that require them to strategize and think ahead. Very talented second graders may find the problems on this Web site engaging:
www.figurethis.org/challenges/challenge_index.htm

For more information about helping your second grader with math, including suggestions about library books related to math and online practice games, go to www.mathlearningcenter.org/resources/materials/parents2.asp.