Maths at home with young children: A guide for families

There are many ways to support your child's maths before and during their schooling. These activities are suitable for young children.

Through play

- Encourage counting every day. Children need practise, e.g. count the steps from the kitchen to the bathroom
- Use songs and rhymes, e.g. ten in the bed, five little ducks
- > Sorting and classifying activities, e.g. recycling
- Hunting for numbers on signs, in books or on everyday items
- Card games e.g. memory, snap, ordering playing card numbers – largest to smallest and smallest to largest
- Create a mini shop with prices on sticky notes. Use toy money, shopping catalogues and play with your child to share what you know
- Playing games e.g. board games with dice, 'I Spy' to identify shapes, numbers and patterns
- Playing with shapes e.g. jigsaw puzzles, sorting, draw shapes and cut them out
- Paper planes create them using angles, shapes, halving and symmetry, then fly them and measure distances
- Creating towers with blocks, then count the blocks, and identify which block is taller or smaller; ask your child to build a different tower and tell you why it is different.



Shopping, the kitchen and outdoors

- Searching for and creating patterns, e.g. using shells, different rocks, leaves, and blocks
- Identifying shapes in the environment and everyday life, e.g. find and talk about different shapes in the playground
- Noticing and talking about numbers
- Handling and talking about money, e.g. identify different coins and notes
- Discussing measurements when cooking, e.g. teaspoons, millilitres, litres and cups
- Describing movements in the playground, e.g. climb over to develop spatial awareness and location language
- Movement ideas including: counting how many times you can throw, catch a ball, how many jumps to the park, how many steps?
- Measuring everything you can, e.g. a home height chart, and giving your child a piece of string and ask them to find things that are shorter, longer or the same length
- Use different items for measuring, e.g. paddle pop sticks, footprints or hand lengths
- Filling and pouring different sized containers to see which holds none, the most, more or less
- Measuring the weather, e.g. create a rain gauge with a plastic bottle and write down how much rain you get each day; use a thermometer to see how hot it is.

Through conversations

Talking about maths with your child/ren will help them develop their understanding and confidence. It is important to ask them to explain their thinking.

- Using specific terms, e.g. 1 litre of milk or 1 kilogram of flour
- Naming and discussing the properties of shapes e.g. shapes with angles, curves, corners and edges
- Asking your child to draw, create and describe the patterns they create.
- Comparing objects e.g. smaller/bigger, taller/ shorter
- Asking questions, e.g. who can jump the furthest, or stand on one foot the longest, or how many marbles can fit in a cup?
 - What shapes can you see?
 - How can we measure?
 - What is the best way to share?
 - > What is closer the tree or the swing?
 - How tall can you build the tower before it falls over?

Free online resources to support maths at home

- > The Mathematics Hub Families
- > Online number games and activities
- > Use a video to help you talk about maths with your child
- Dr. Paul Swan's Excellence in Mathematics website



