



Figuring it out

How to help your child develop a love of math

For all grades

Research shows that students do better at school when their parents are involved in their education. So, how can you help your children learn math, and enjoy it, without getting into a constant battle with them?

Here are some tips for math success:

- Be positive. Your positive attitudes and fears are catching, but so are your negative attitudes and fears.
- Never criticize your children's teacher in front of them. When teachers and parents work together as a team, everyone wins, and children are the beneficiaries.
- Let your children know that you think math is important.
- Encourage persistence. Some problems take time to solve, and sometimes you and your children need to take a break, and return with fresh enthusiasm.
- Build on their strengths and what they already know.
- Take care not to be critical of an incorrect answer or to be excessive in your praise of correct ones. Wrong answers should, however, be corrected.
- Appreciate the value of "not knowing" and use these occasions as opportunities for growth rather than anxiety.
- Invite your children to share their thinking and understanding (or lack of it) in a safe and relaxed atmosphere. Remember, listening is harder than telling and takes skill and patience.
- Children develop a love of reading when parents read to them on a regular basis. A love for math develops in a similar way.
- Help your children make connections between school math and math in their everyday world:
 - ✓ Can you see a number pattern in a telephone book?
 - ✓ How many litres of water does our family drink in a day? In a week? In a year?
 - ✓ Can you find a car license plate that adds up to 15?
 - ✓ What never happens in our house? Always happens? Sometimes happens?
 - ✓ How many cylinders can we spot on the way home?

When a family has fun working together and respects each other's thought processes, everyone benefits.

This tip sheet was prepared by Dr. Barry Onslow,
Professor, University of Western Ontario.