

## Tips to help kids do better in math

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

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Math is a source of stress for many students, becoming a progressively more daunting subject as they move through their school careers. It doesn't have to be this way.

Parents can do lots of easy things with children to get them comfortable with numbers so they will ultimately perform better in this crucial subject.

Parents of pre-schoolers and grade school students, in particular, can help lay the foundation for a positive attitude toward math, in large part by making numbers and math skills fun.

"The games we play with our children when they are young go a long way toward helping them develop the necessary foundation for math skills. It's also important to connect math to the real world around kids, to demonstrate how we all use numbers in our daily routines," says Susan Bolotin, editor-in-chief of Workman Publishing, the publisher of the "Brain Quest" educational card game series.

Here are several easy ways to help make math fun and improve children's arithmetic skills:

—Make math part of kids' routines, from the time they wake up to bedtime. Count clothing items together ("One sock. Two socks."). Go for a special "counting walk," where you keep a tally of flowers, trees, clouds or butterflies. You can even take things home—such as leaves or pebbles—and start a special "counting collection" that your child can keep in a special box. Have kids count cars on the road between home and school. Encourage them to count items in your grocery cart; older children can help pay the bill at check-out and count the change you receive.

—Play math games. There are several math games and activities available, such as the "Brain Quest" card game quiz series and the "Math Basics" series that you can play with kids of different ages. Many are portable enough to take in the car, train or plane when going on vacation.

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—Reinforce math skills for grade school kids. At home, use fun educational workbooks, games and books to reinforce math skills learned at school. Make sure the workbooks you choose are curriculum-based, such as the “Brain Quest Workbooks” for Pre-K through Grade 4; random math books may not be attuned to the national curriculum children follow at school. You can ask your child’s teacher to review a workbook before you use it.

—Teach problem-solving processes throughout childhood. Knowing how to find an answer is as important as the right answer. Math is about learning to develop problem-solving skills so kids can press ahead without giving up on a problem or simply guessing. Teach children how to find a pattern, how to test different answers before choosing one and other skills. Your child’s teacher can be a great resource to help you know what to emphasize.

—Make math fun, even for older kids. Reward them when they complete homework assignments with stickers, certificates of completion or even a small math toy or game. Help children who are reluctant to complete an assignment by turning it into an interactive game or contest.

For more information on making math fun and for free educational games, visit [www.brainquest.com](http://www.brainquest.com).

“Math skills can be improved as children develop. It’s important to help them hone these skills throughout childhood,” says Bolotin.