

FIVE IMPORTANT THINGS YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT MATHEMATICS

You can help your child learn math by offering insights into how to approach math. Your child will develop more confidence in math ability if the following points are understood.

1. PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED IN DIFFERENT WAYS. Although most math problems have only one answer, there may be many ways to get to that answer. Learning math is more than finding the correct answer; it's also a process of solving problems and applying what you've learned to new problems.

2. WRONG ANSWERS SOMETIMES CAN BE USEFUL. Accuracy is always important in math. However, sometimes you can use a wrong answer to help your child figure out why a mistake was made. Analyzing wrong answers can help your child to understand the concepts underlying the problem and to learn to apply reasoning skills to arrive at the correct answer. Ask your child to explain how he/she solved a math problem. The explanation might help you discover if he/she needs help with number skills, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, or with the concepts involved in solving the problem.

3. TAKE RISKS! Help your child to be a risk taker. Help him see the value of trying to solve a problem, even if it's difficult. Give your child time to explore different approaches to solving a difficult problem. As he works, encourage him to talk about what he is thinking. This will help him to strengthen math skills and to become an independent thinker and problem solver.

4. BEING ABLE TO DO MATHEMATICS IN YOUR HEAD IS IMPORTANT. Mathematics isn't restricted to pencil and paper activities. Doing math "in your head" (mental math) is a valuable skill that comes in handy as we make quick calculations of costs in stores, restaurants or gas stations. Let your child know that by using mental math, her math skills will become stronger.

5. IT'S SOMETIMES OK TO USE A CALCULATOR TO SOLVE MATHEMATICS PROBLEMS. It's OK to use calculators to solve math problems—sometimes. They are widely used today, and knowing how to use them correctly is important. The idea is for your child not to fall back on the excuse, "I don't need to know math—I've got a calculator." Let your child know that to use calculators correctly and most efficiently, she will need a strong grounding in math operations— otherwise, how will she know whether the answer she sees displayed is reasonable!