

Helping your Oak Tree child with maths



As children start Oak Trees they will try to make connections between the things they are learning to do at school and the mathematics they meet in their everyday lives. It is at this stage that parents can be at their most influential. The number facts children learn, and the understanding they develop, will underpin their progress through the rest of their school career.

Maths around the home – there are many opportunities for maths at home

Practising counting - at every opportunity is always a good thing. We can specifically help by making sure that when your child is counting how many of something there are, they match each number they say to an object by touching or gently moving it- this avoids making mistakes!

Collect information together and create a tally chart, e.g. find out the family's favourite animal or fruit etc.

Solve maths problems at home, e.g. How many apples should we buy at the shop if we need one for each snack time? When you are sharing food like pizza, cake or berries, ask your child to help you share it equally between the people eating

Playing games - throwing dice, playing dominoes, as well as track games or card games all help children's numeracy at this stage. They need to recognise the numbers of dots or shapes without counting them and also to learn to add two or more small numbers. Games are a fun context in which to acquire these skills.

Play games with cards – players take two cards and add the numbers - the player with the highest number wins. Try it with subtraction, multiplication, and division too.

Play 'Think of a number' – you think of a number between 0-100, and they have to guess. They can ask questions like 'is it less than 20?'

Play with blocks like Lego or Jenga – talk about size, colour, shape, weight, texture. Create patterns and structures. Ask them to guess how many blocks they could pile up without them falling down and then build them up to see if they were correct.

Play with containers – e.g. How many sweets are in the jar? Ask your child to guess and then count to see how close they were.

Pick an object and give your child clues to find it by using directional language: up, down, over, under, between, through, beside, behind, in front of, and on top of. Make the game more challenging: give more complicated directions e.g. 'It's on top of the table and to the left of the magazine'.

Play board games like Connect 4, Snakes and Ladders, Dominos.

Other ways to help –

Reading and writing numbers – help your child to write numbers, starting at the top and running the pencil down the numeral. When your child starts to write 2-digit numbers, be sure to emphasise the value of the first digit, reading 65 as sixty-five, stressing that this is sixty and five more. Help your child spot which numbers are facing the incorrect way when they have written them.

Memorising their number facts – one of the simplest and most effective ways of supporting your child's mathematical development is to ensure that they have learned their number facts off by heart. These are the pairs of numbers which add together to make all of the numbers up to and including ten. For example, children need to know that 6 is $5 + 1$, or $4 + 2$, or $3 + 3$; and that 10 is $5 + 5$ or $4 + 6$ or $3 + 7$ or $2 + 8$ or $1 + 9$. We often call these 'Number bonds' to ten, for example.

Recognising and naming shapes – the best way to help your child to identify common 2-D shapes is through art and craft. Your child needs to realise that what a shape is does not depend on which way up it is – a square is still a square even if it is standing on its point! Spot 3D shapes when shopping, out and about etc.

Telling the time - help your child to master this difficult skill by taking it in stages. First stress the 'o'clocks'. "It's nearly five o'clock, time for tea!" Children can recognise o'clock times on a digital display (5:00) and on a clock face (big hand pointing up at the 12). Once they are good at this, introduce half past, big hand pointing down or digital 5:30. Finally teach quarter past and quarter to. This allows them to tell the time accurately enough for now! In Oak Trees we focus on the analogue clock, not digital.

Talk about time - for example, 'What time should we leave the house to get to school on time?' or if they have a 20 minute turn on the computer and they've already used 10 minutes, how much longer can they use the computer for?

Starting the times tables - Of course it is as important as it ever was that children learn their tables. When your child starts to learn their times tables they will begin by learning to count in jumps of 2, 5 or 10. When they are confident with this you can help them by playing simple games with their times tables. Ask your child's teacher if you would like some examples of games you could play!

Money – Help your child to use money in shops. **At the shops** - if you're buying a couple of items in a shop, ask them to guess how much they will cost.

Give them small amounts of pocket money e.g 50p - what can they buy? If they want to save for something, how long with it take them?

Talk about the items you buy - which are more expensive, which are cheaper?

Measuring – Cook, use rulers, point out measurements on packages when shopping, drawing attention to the unit used (ml, g, kg etc.). Measure ingredients and set the timer together when you are cooking.

Golden Rules

DO give LOTS of praise. Resist the temptation to point out mistakes every time a child does a 'sum' wrong. Children need encouragement to be confident, and a confident child makes a better learner.

DON'T push a skill, especially if your child is becoming confused or is feeling pressured. It pays to talk to the teacher if you feel your child is not understanding something, rather than confuse them further by teaching them in a different way.

DO play games! Dice, dominoes, track games and cards all make excellent excuses for using and applying our number skills. The evidence shows that children who play games do better at maths!

DON'T force workbooks on your child. They will do plenty of writing in their maths books at school. At home, it is great to help them memorise number facts and to practise doing simple calculations in our heads as we need them!

DO 'little and often'! For example, talk about the maths you are doing when cooking or down the shops. Play a Times Tables game as you drive to school.

DON'T stress written calculations laid out as you used to do them! Nowadays it is the development of what we call 'numerical fluency' that counts. Children need to be comfortable with numbers, to understand how they work and to be confident in doing mental calculations.

Refer to the school's Calculation Policy to help your child remember how to do calculations